HEARD COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS WORK SESSION
May 11, 2026 – 4:00 P.M.

The Heard County Board of Commissioners held a work session on May 11, 2026, at 4:00 p.m. in the Commission Chamber of the Heard County Administration Building. In attendance at the meeting were Chairman Tracy McCormick, District 1 Commissioner Curtis Mock, District 2 Commissioner James Perry, District 3 Commissioner Iris Harris, District 4 Commissioner Larry Hammond, District 5 Commissioner David Walls, and Felicia Adams Director of Finance.

Chairman McCormick stated that this work session was called to review and discuss the proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.

The Board then reviewed departmental budgets. Most departments were reported as remaining flat, with the exception of education-related training needs for new employees. Commissioners discussed the need to formalize pay increases tied to certifications rather than relying on informal practices. The Board also reviewed evaluation schedules and probationary periods, noting that the current 60-day probation period may need to be extended to six months during the upcoming personnel policy update.

Fuel costs were discussed at length, with gasoline and diesel prices significantly impacting departmental budgets, particularly Roads, EMS, and other high-use departments. Commissioners reviewed annualized fuel expenditures and noted that some departments, such as the Sheriff's Office and EMA, were still operating within budgeted amounts, while others were trending higher due to increased activity or operational needs.

The Board discussed staffing challenges across multiple departments, including the jail, fire department, and recreation. Commissioners noted that surrounding counties continue to hire aggressively, often drawing employees away from Heard County. The Board discussed the financial impact of training employees who later leave for higher-paying positions elsewhere. Commissioners

also discussed generational differences in job preferences, noting that younger employees often seek higher-activity environments and may be less motivated by long-term retirement benefits.

A significant portion of the Work Session focused on employee compensation. The Board discussed the possibility of a $2.00 per hour across-the-board increase and the associated cost of approximately one million dollars. Commissioners debated how to balance fairness between long-term employees and new hires, noting concerns that employees with many years of service may feel undervalued if new employees receive identical increases. The Board discussed the need to raise the overall pay scale, establish a merit-based evaluation system, and create a structured progression for employees to advance within their departments. Commissioners acknowledged that the County must first stabilize its pay scale before implementing a full merit system.

The Board also discussed the need for consistent employee evaluations and the development of department-specific evaluation criteria. The current evaluation form includes three ratings—exceeds, meets, or does not meet expectations—but does not provide a mechanism for merit-based pay adjustments. Commissioners agreed that the County must update its personnel policy to support a future merit system once pay levels are improved.

The Board reviewed employee leave policies, including PTO accrual, the 240-hour cap, and the current practice of paying unused leave at 50 percent value. Commissioners expressed interest in allowing full-value payout for unused leave and discussed the challenges faced by employees in single-staff departments who struggle to take time off. The Board also discussed the possibility of allowing employees to donate leave to coworkers in hardship situations and revisiting the requirement that employees wait one full year before accruing PTO. Staff noted that only three employees remain under the County's old leave system, which allowed significantly higher accruals.

The Recreation Department was commended for improvements to field conditions and increased revenue from tournaments. Concession revenue was reported as strong, with several deposits pending that are expected to meet or exceed annual projections.

The Board concluded by reviewing remaining budget items, including departments that did not request increases. Commissioners noted that decisions regarding individual salary adjustments, including requests from constitutional officers, must wait until the Board determines whether an across-the-board adjustment will be implemented.

The next budget meeting is scheduled for Monday, May 21, 2026, at 4:00 p.m.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the Work Session.

The work session ended with no official action being taken.

End time 5:46 p.m.

Katrina Billingsley

County Clerk

Date 06/16/2026

Chairman

COMMISSIONER OF ROADS & REVENUE SEAL HEARD COUNTY, GA.