

The Newton County Board of Commissioners regular board meeting was held on Tuesday, February 17, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. in the Commissioners meeting room on the 3rd floor in the Historic Courthouse. This meeting was live streamed on the Newton County Government – YouTube Channel.

Present: Linda D. Hays, Interim Madam Chair, Commissioners Stan Edwards, Demond Mason, Andre Cooper, J.C. Henderson, LeAnne Long, James Brown, Acting County Manager, Attorney Stephanie Johnson, and County Clerk Susan G. Nolley. Members of the media staff and other administrative personnel were present.

Madam Chair called the meeting to order. Commissioner Henderson gave the invocation and Commissioner Long led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Madam Chair entertained a motion to amend the agenda to add item 7d.

Board of Commissioners Letter of Support – to Salem Campground to apply for a grant to preserve and restore the Cunningham – Ramsey Tent. Commissioner Henderson moved the motion, seconded by Commissioner Cooper. The motion passed. Vote 5-0.

3. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA Madam Chair entertained a motion for adoption of the agenda. Commissioner Cooper moved the motion, seconded by Commissioner Henderson. The motion passed. Vote 5-0.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS Viewed at <https://youtu.be/fyav-GLcc-8?t=436>

Dennis Taylor Maurice Carter Bill Couch Tina McCray

5. REPORTS FROM THE CHAIRMAN Madam Chair opened the floor to Chief Royce Turner. Chief Turner extended special acknowledgement to Fire Services employees, OIC-Jaared Pettit, FAO - John McCartney and Firefighter Tomas Ramirez for their outstanding service and exceptional performance.

6. REPORTS FROM THE COUNTY MANAGER Budget in Action

A video presentation highlighting the Commissioners' recent site visits was presented.

James Brown commended Fire Services, E-911, Public Works, Sheriff's Office and all other departments for their tireless efforts to ensure safety for the citizens during the recent snow and ice storms.

7. CONSENT AGENDA

7a. BOC Meeting Minutes February 3, 2026

- 1) Special Called Meeting – 6:00 p.m.
- 2) Executive Session
- 3) Regular Session – 7:00 p.m.

7b. Newton County Fire Services to accept the Publix Community Grant in the amount of \$750.00.

7c. Intergovernmental Agreement- Newton County and the City of Covington for the operation of a Winter Warming Shelter 2025-2026 winter season. Cost: Up to \$15,000.00. Unanimously agreed on by the Board December 2, 2025.

Agenda amendment

7d. Board of Commissioners Letter of Support – to Salem Campground to apply for a grant to preserve and restore the Cunningham – Ramsey Tent.

This is the end of the consent agenda. Madam Chair entertained a motion.

Commissioner Mason moved the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Edwards. The motion passed. Vote 5-0

NEW BUSINESS

8. LOYOLA UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OF LAW-GILLIS W. LONG POVERTY LAW CENTER CRIMINAL JUSTICE SUMMER INTERSHIP PROGRAM AGREEMENT

Authorization for the Newton County Public Defender’s Office to receive funding for law student intern for eight to ten weeks commencing in May and terminating in July.

Madam Chair entertained a motion. Commissioner Long moved the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Mason. The motion passed. Vote 5-0.

9. JANUARY 2026 FINANCIAL PRESENTATION Brittany White, Finance Director presented the January 2026 Financial Report. A copy of the report is in the official records of the February 17, 2026 BOC agenda packet.

Discussion from the board included expenditures, revenue and unbudgeted positions.

Brittany clarified to the board that government funds are annual funding, and generally do not transfer from year to year. There was no required action.

10. BUDGET TRANSFER FOR CONTINGENCY FOR NEW POSITIONS

Facilities Management – Maintenance Tech/Custodian/Maintenance Worker/Admin. Specialist

Parks & Recreation – Park Ranger/Custodian/Maintenance Worker

Finance Department – Accounting Specialist II

Human Resources – Human Resources Generalist

For FY26 a total budget of \$217,744.00 has been allocated for the new positions includes salaries and benefits. The funds will be placed in a contingency line and will be transferred to the department budget. Madam Chair entertained a motion. Commissioner Edwards moved the motion to approve, seconded by Commissioner Cooper. The motion passed. Vote 5-0.

11. RESOLUTION #R021726

A RESOLUTION OF THE NEWTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
ENACTING AN EMERGENCY MORATORIUM ON ACCEPTANCE OF APPLICATIONS, REQUESTS, OR SUBMISSIONS THAT
PROPOSE THE DEVELOPMENT OF DATA CENTERS

WHEREAS, the Newton County Board of Commissioners (“Board”) is the governing body of Newton County, Georgia (“County”), and therefore is charged with regulating development and providing appropriate public infrastructure and services to best serve the public interest, including but not limited to such infrastructure and services associated with current and future developments within the County; and

WHEREAS, the Board has recently observed increased interest in the siting and development of data centers within the County; and

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that the potential development of data centers in the County threatens the County’s ability to provide adequate infrastructure, water, utilities, and services; and

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that the County’s existing ordinances and development regulations do not address, except in limited part, or anticipate the unique characteristics and potential impacts of data center developments; and

WHEREAS, the Board intends to study, develop, and consider the adoption of an ordinance to address data center development in a manner consistent with the public interest; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to delay submission and consideration of applications, requests, or submissions that propose, in whole or in part, the development of a data center within the County, including but not limited to applications for rezoning, special use permits, conditional use permits, development permits, site plans, building permits, or other land-disturbing or development approvals related to data center facilities, until such an ordinance has been adequately studied, developed, and considered; and

WHEREAS, a moratorium is a necessary tool enabling local governments to temporarily discontinue applications, requests and submissions in order to update its current ordinances, rules, and regulations; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds a moratorium barring until March 18, 2026, the acceptance of applications, requests, or submissions that propose, in whole or in part, the development of a data center within the County, including but not limited to applications for rezoning, special use permits, conditional use permits, development permits, site plans, building permits, or other land-disturbing or development approvals related to data center facilities to be reasonably necessary, the least restrictive means available, a reasonable exercise of the County’s police power, and in the best interest of the public health, safety, and welfare;

RESOLUTION #R021726 (continued)

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF NEWTON COUNTY, GEORGIA, AS FOLLOWS:

1. The statements set forth in the preamble are incorporated herein by reference and constitute a material part of this Resolution.
2. The Board does hereby enact an emergency moratorium barring until March 18, 2026, the acceptance of applications, requests, or submissions that propose, in whole or in part, the development of a data center within the County, including but not limited to applications for rezoning, special use permits, conditional use permits, development permits, site plans, building permits, or other land-disturbing or development approvals related to data center facilities.
3. The purpose of this emergency moratorium is to allow the County adequate time to study, develop, and consider the adoption of an ordinance to address data center development in a manner consistent with the public interest and the unique characteristics and potential impacts associated with the development of data centers.
4. The moratorium imposed by this Resolution shall terminate on the earliest date of (1) March 18, 2026; (2) approval by the Board of an additional moratorium after a public hearing; or (3) Board action terminating the moratorium; and
5. This Resolution shall be effective upon a majority vote by the Board.

SO RESOLVED this 17th day of February, 2026, the public's health, safety, and welfare demanding it.

Madam Chair entertained a motion. Commissioner Long moved the motion to approve Resolution R021726, seconded by Commissioner Mason.

Board discussion

Addressing concerns for the development of data centers.

Working on a local level with the state to make sure data center concerns are reinforced.

The moratorium will cover the term “data center” as it is used in the governing zoning laws.

Madam Chair called for the vote. The motion passed. Vote 5-0.

12. RESOLUTION #R021726a

A RESOLUTION OF THE NEWTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS ENACTING AN EMERGENCY MORATORIUM ON ACCEPTANCE OF APPLICATIONS, REQUESTS, OR SUBMISSIONS THAT PROPOSE THE DEVELOPMENT OF CONVENIENCE STORES

WHEREAS, the Newton County Board of Commissioners (“Board”) is the governing body of Newton County, Georgia (“County”), and therefore is charged with regulating development and providing appropriate public infrastructure and services to best serve the public interest; and

WHEREAS, the Newton County Unified Development Ordinance (“UDO”) currently authorizes the development and use of convenience stores within the unincorporated areas of the County, including but not limited to “Convenience Store,” “Convenience Store, without gasoline pumps,” and “Convenience Store, with gasoline pumps (commercial)” (collectively, “Convenience Stores”); and

WHEREAS, the County is currently in the process of drafting and considering amendments to the UDO, including sections thereof governing the development and use of Convenience Stores; and

WHEREAS, Convenience Stores may generate significant traffic, including turning movements and ingress/egress conflicts, which can impact roadway capacity, congestion, and public safety; and

WHEREAS, Convenience Stores with gasoline pumps may create environmental concerns, including risks associated with underground storage tanks, fuel spills, stormwater runoff contamination, and long-term soil and groundwater impacts; and

WHEREAS, Convenience Stores may also present land use and planning concerns, including but not limited to noise, lighting, hours of operation, and proximity to residential neighborhoods, parks, and schools; and

WHEREAS, the Board recognizes the implications to the public health, safety, and welfare of County residents associated with Convenience Stores, including but not limited to Increased traffic, emergency access concerns, environmental concerns, and land use and planning considerations; and

WHEREAS, the County's existing zoning, development, and permitting regulations may not adequately address the cumulative impacts, siting considerations, spacing requirements, design standards, and operational characteristics associated with Convenience Stores; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to evaluate and, if necessary, adopt amendments to the UDO to ensure that Convenience Stores are appropriately located and designed to protect the public health, safety, and welfare; and

WHEREAS, the acceptance and consideration of any applications, requests, or

RESOLUTION #R021726a (continued)

submissions that propose, in whole or in part, the development of Convenience Stores prior to the adoption of such amendments could result in development approvals that are inconsistent with future regulations and could irreparably impair the County's ability to enact meaningful standards; and

WHEREAS, the Board desires to delay acceptance and consideration of applications, requests, or submissions that propose, in whole or in part, the development of Convenience Stores within the County, including but not limited to applications for rezoning, special use permits, conditional use permits, development permits, site plans, building permits, or other land-disturbing or development approvals related to Convenience Stores, until such amendments have been adequately studied, developed, and considered; and

WHEREAS, a moratorium is a necessary tool enabling local governments to temporarily discontinue applications, requests and submissions in order to update its current ordinances, rules, and regulations; and

WHEREAS, if a moratorium is not in place, often there will be a rush of applications for parcels affected by the new rules, as owners and developers seek to avoid the new rules while those rules are being prepared and implemented; and

WHEREAS, the Board finds a moratorium barring until March 18, 2026, the acceptance and consideration of applications, requests, or submissions that propose, in whole or in part, the development of Convenience Stores within the County, including but not limited to applications for rezoning, special use permits, conditional use permits, development permits, site plans, building permits, or other land-disturbing and development approvals related to Convenience Stores to be reasonably necessary, the least restrictive means available, a reasonable exercise of the County's police power, and in the best interest of the public health, safety, and welfare;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF NEWTON COUNTY, GEORGIA, AS FOLLOWS:

1. The statements set forth in the preamble are incorporated herein by reference and constitute a material part of this Resolution.
2. The Board does hereby enact an emergency moratorium barring until March 18, 2026, the acceptance of applications, requests, or submissions that propose, in whole or in part, the development of Convenience Stores within the County, including but not limited to applications for rezoning, special use permits, conditional use permits, development permits, site plans, building permits, or other land-disturbing or development approvals related to Convenience Stores.
3. This moratorium shall not apply to:
 - a. Routine maintenance or repair of existing Convenience Stores; and
 - b. Convenience Stores for which all required County development approvals and permits were issued prior to the effective date of this Resolution.
4. The purpose of this emergency moratorium is to allow the County adequate time to study, develop, and consider the adoption of amendments to the UDO to appropriately regulate the development of Convenience Stores in a manner consistent with the public interest.
5. The moratorium imposed by this Resolution shall terminate on the earliest date of (1) March 18, 2026; (2) approval by the Board of an additional moratorium after a public hearing; or (3) Board action terminating the moratorium.
6. This Resolution shall be effective upon a majority vote by the Board.

SO RESOLVED this 17th day of February, 2026, the public's health, safety, and welfare demanding it.

Madam Chair entertained a motion. Commissioner Cooper moved the motion to approve Resolution #R021726a, seconded by Commissioner Mason.

Board discussion

The number of convenience stores in unincorporated Newton County.

The importance of slowing down the development of convenience stores, citizen would like healthier businesses in the community.

The moratorium will affect any new applications for a convenience store with or without pumps effective today.

UDO changes

Shena clarified the key change of UDO will be distance restrictions. Currently there are no distance restrictions.

Fast Food establishment inquiry

Consideration of incorporating Special Use Permits

Madam Chair called for the vote. The motion passed. Vote 4-1. Commissioner Edwards opposed.

13. STANTEC CONSULTING PROFESSIONAL SERVICES AGREEMENT CONTRACT – ENGINEERING SERVICES FOR WATER INFRASTRUCTURE IMPROVEMENTS @ WILLIAMS STREET WATER TREATMENT PLANT

Cost: Pre-Construction Services - \$1,962,653.99 /Post-Construction Services \$1,767,192.09

Funding Source: GEFA (Georgia Environmental Finance Authority) Budgeted: Yes

Madam Chair entertained a motion. Commissioner Edwards moved the motion to approve the Stantec Consulting Professional Services Agreement Contract, seconded by Commissioner Cooper.

Board discussion

Williams Street WTF to be decommissioned

Water tower to be decommissioned

Different options being discussed with the City of Covington

Madam Chair called for the vote. The motion passed. Vote 5-0.

14. PUBLIC COMMENTS Viewed at <https://youtu.be/fyav-GLcc-8?t=4475>

Kimberly Lache Tina McCray Dennis Taylor

Wendell McNeal Pearl Robbins John Clemons

Monica Darrah Audra (last name not stated)

15. BOARD COMMENTS Viewed at <https://youtu.be/fyav-GLcc-8?t=5564>

Commissioner Edwards

Commissioner Mason

Commissioner Cooper

Commissioner Henderson

Commissioner Long

There being no further business for discussion, this meeting was called to adjourn at 8:43 p.m.

Approved this 3rd day of March 2026.

Linda D. Hays Interim Chair

ATTEST:

Susan G. Nolley County Clerk