



The Commission

of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia

215 McNaughton St Cusseta, Georgia 31805
(706) 989-3602 Fax (706) 989-2005 lisa@ugoccc.com

Charles Coffey, Chairman
Timothy Biddle, Vice Chairman
Gerald Douglas
Damon Hoyte
Jason Frost

Thomas Weaver, County Manager

Lisa Bickel, County Clerk

Bin Minter, County Attorney

MINUTES PUBLIC HEARING I-MILLAGE RATE

Sept. 22, 2025

215 McNaughton St.

PRESENT:

Chairman Coffey
Vice-Chairman Biddle
Commissioner Douglas
Commissioner Hoyte-Absent
Commissioner Frost-Absent

Thomas Weaver, County Manager
Lisa Bickel, County Clerk

Chairman Coffey called the Public Hearing of the *Commission of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia* to order at 10:00 a.m. with Commissioners Biddle and Douglas present, and live streaming on our Facebook page. **Chairman Coffey** asked if everyone would give a moment of silence for Mr. Charlie Kirk and his family.

PUBLIC HEARING

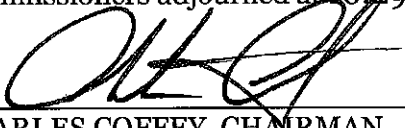
CHAIRMAN COFFEY opened the hearing and stated the following agenda; the Chattahoochee County Board of Commissioners has tentatively adopted a 2025 millage rate which will require an increase in property tax by 15.14 percent. This tentative increase will result in a millage rate of 9.504 mills, an increase of 1.25 mills. Without this tentative increase the rate will be no more than 8.254 mills. The proposed tax increase for a home with a fair market value of \$100,000 is approximately \$50.00 and the proposed tax increase for non-homestead property with a fair market value of \$50,000 is approximately \$25.00. **Commissioner Biddle** wanted to say that nobody wants to raise taxes, we haven't raised taxes since 2008, but to keep the county functioning correctly we have to raise the millage rate, we have to be fair, he doesn't want it, but we have to do it. **Chairman Coffey** also stated if anyone had been watching the budget meetings and with our constitutional officers, and department heads, with all the back-and-forth discussions and hurt feelings, we still came short and couldn't fund what they needed to operate, that is called a deficit and the only way to close that gap is to either go into reserve or raise taxes. If you keep going into your reserve, you won't have money for emergencies. The correct thing to do is bring the millage rate up to run the county to be able to fund it. **Chairman Coffey** also wanted to point out that in November we will have the FLOST on the ballot and if it is passed it will help to offset some relief for property tax, the county portion of property tax. **Commissioner Biddle** asked if FLOST goes in affect does the property value freeze, the **County Manager** said yes that is correct, unless something changes or it is sold. **Commissioner Biddle** stated that we don't receive a lot of money from Ft. Benning, however if the FLOST passes we will start see some then, and then asked **County Manager Weaver** if he could explain that to the public. **County Manager Weaver** stated as of right now we receive a check called PILT, payment in lieu of taxes from FT. Benning for \$1500.00 a year, we will be moving to a sales tax based revenue versus property tax based with FLOST. He then stated we will get all the tax from people making sales purchases now with FLOST. **County Manager Weaver** stated that historically Chattahoochee County is still the lowest property tax collecting county in the state of Georgia. **Chairman Coffey** stated just for the 911

service alone has gone up, that is why we took it back in house, the garbage has gone up, insurance has gone up. **County Manager Weaver** stated that the insurance went up 49%, and this millage rate won't even cover that. **Chairman Coffey** challenges anyone to talk to any constitutional officer in any department and he will guarantee they did not get the funding they needed to run their department that they wanted. **Commissioner Biddle** stated he hears out in the county that people say we are broke and where the money is going, and he thinks the county is doing a pretty good job and asked the **County Manager** to go over the sheet he gave them. **Chairman Coffey** first opened the floor for comments from the public. **County Manager** stated there are Facebook comments out there, and we are in great financial shape, in SPLOST revenues we have over three million, we have to spend on certain projects, HOTEL/MOTEL \$852,000, that can only be tourism and marketing spent from this account. We are not raising taxes because we are going broke, we are raising taxes because we do not want to go broke. **Chairman Coffey** stated we are in sound shape due to past commission, and it is crucial for us to pass a budget that is balanced and not with a deficit. **Commissioner Biddle** also stated that only 18% of this county is nonmilitary, and we are only pulling revenue from that part of the county, he hates the millage rate increase but thinks in the long run it will be worth it. **Chairman Coffey** asked the public again if they have any questions. **Chairman Coffey** stated that when he started as a commissioner there was around \$12 million, and it is still around \$11 million, so sometimes what you hear or see on Facebook, take it with a grain of salt, come to the meeting and ask us yourself, and it might stop the rumors, and spread some truth, before you take it to heart do your research. **Chairman Coffey** read the press release once more on the increase and gave the address and dates. **Chairman Coffey** Closed the hearing.

Motion to adjourn made by **Commissioner Biddle**, Seconded by **Commissioner Douglas**, the vote was unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT

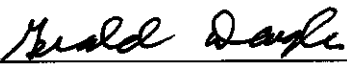
There being no further business to be conducted by and with the Commission of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia, Chairman Coffey declared the Public Hearing of the Board of Commissioners adjourned at 10:29 am on Wed. Sept. 22, 2025.



CHARLES COFFEY, CHAIRMAN



TIMOTHY BIDDLE, VICE CHAIRMAN



GERALD DOUGLAS, COMMISSIONER

Absent

DAMON HOYTE, COMMISSIONER

Absent

JASON FROST, COMMISSIONER

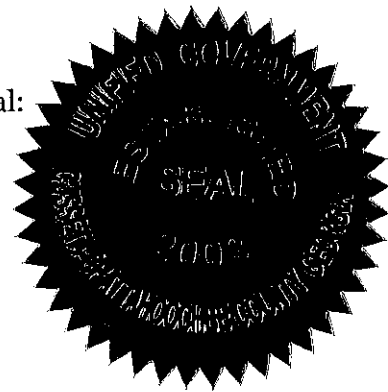
Oct 7, 2025
DATE APPROVED

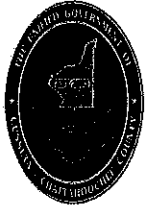
I hereby certify that the foregoing documentation, the Minutes of the Sept. 22, 2025, Public Hearing, was approved via majority vote by the Board of Commissioners in its Oct. 7, 2025, regular meeting.

ATTESTED BY: 

THOMAS WEAVER, COUNTY MANAGER
UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF
CUSSETA-CHATTAHOOCHEE COUNTY

Seal:



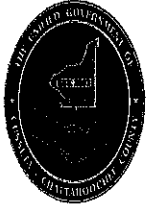


*The Board of Commission
of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia*

September 17, 2025 – Public Hearing Millage Rate I

**PLEASE SIGN IN
SO THAT WE MAY RECORD YOUR ATTENDANCE**

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| 1. <u>Gene Burgamy</u> | 21. _____ |
| 2. <u>Gary Harden</u> | 22. _____ |
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*The Board of Commission
of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia*

September 17, 2025 – Public Hearing Millage Rate I

PLEASE SIGN IN
IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO SPEAK, SPEAKERS GET 10 MINUTES EACH

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Jason Frost

Thomas Weaver, County Manager

Lisa Bickel, County Clerk

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MINUTES PUBLIC HEARING II-MILLAGE RATE

Sept. 22, 2025

215 McNaughton St.

PRESENT:

Chairman Coffey
Vice-Chairman Biddle
Commissioner Douglas
Commissioner Hoyte-Absent
Commissioner Frost

Thomas Weaver, County Manager
Lisa Bickel, County Clerk

Chairman Coffey called the Public Hearing of the *Commission of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia* to order at 6:00 p.m. with the exception of Commissioner Hoyte, and live streaming on our Facebook page.

PUBLIC HEARING II MILLAGE RATE

CHAIRMAN COFFEY opened the hearing and stated the following agenda; we had an issue with our advertising in the paper so we have to readvertise, so because of this we will have three new public hearings, the new dates will be Oct. 1st 10AM and 6 PM and again Oct. 8th 10AM, the Chattahoochee County Board of Commissioners has tentatively adopted a 2025 millage rate which will require an increase in property tax by 15.14 percent. This tentative increase will result in a millage rate of 9.504 mills, an increase of 1.25 mills. Without this tentative increase the rate will be no more than 8.254 mills. The proposed tax increase for a home with a fair market value of \$100,000 is approximately \$50.00 and the proposed tax increase for non-homestead property with a fair market value of \$50,000 is approximately \$25.00. **County Manager Weaver** stated that the ad was supposed to be at least 5x6 and it was 4x6, and the dept of revenue will not accept at that size.

Commissioner Biddle wanted to say the same thing he said this morning, that nobody wants to raise taxes, we haven't raised taxes since 2008, but to keep the county functioning correctly we have to raise the millage rate, we have to be fair, he doesn't want it, but we have to do it. We are way behind our surrounding counties. **County Manager Weaver** stated that Chattahoochee County is still the lowest property tax collecting county in the state of Georgia. **Chairman Coffey** also stated if anyone had been watching the budget meetings and with our constitutional officers, and department heads, with all the back-and-forth discussions and hurt feelings, we still came short and couldn't fund what they needed to operate, that is called a deficit and the only way to close that gap is to either go into reserve or raise taxes. If you keep going into your reserve, you won't have money for emergencies. The correct thing to do is bring the millage rate up to run the county to be able to fund it, he challenges anyone to talk to any constitutional officer in any department, and he will guarantee they did not get the funding they needed to run their department that they wanted.

Chairman Coffey stated there are Facebook comments out there, and we are in great financial shape, in SPLOST revenues we have over three million, we have to spend on certain projects, 1.8 million in TSPLOST, HOTEL/MOTEL \$852,000, that can only be tourism and marketing spent from this account. We are not raising taxes because we are going broke, we are raising taxes because we do not want to go broke. **Chairman Coffey** stated we are in sound shape due to past commission, and it is crucial for us to pass a budget that is balanced and not with a deficit. **Chairman Coffey** also wanted to point out that in November we will have the FLOST on the ballot and if it is passed it will help to offset some relief for property tax, the county portion of property tax.

Commissioner Biddle asked if FLOST goes in affect does the property value freeze, the **County Manager** said yes that is correct, unless something changes or it is sold. **Commissioner Biddle** stated that we don't receive a lot of money from Ft. Benning, however if the FLOST passes we will start to see some then and then asked **County Manager Weaver** if he could explain that to the public. **County Manager Weaver** stated as of right now we receive a check called PILT, payment in lieu of taxes from FT. Benning for \$1500.00 a year, we will be moving to a sales tax-based revenue versus property tax based on FLOST. He then stated we will get all the tax from people making sales purchases now with FLOST. **Chairman Coffey** stated just for the 911 service alone has gone up, that is why we took it back in house, the garbage has gone up, insurance has gone up.

County Manager Weaver stated that the insurance went up 49%, and this millage rate won't even cover that. **Chairman Coffey** first opened the floor for comments from the public. **Chairman Coffey** stated we are in sound shape due to past commission, and it is crucial for us to pass a budget that is balanced and not with a deficit. **Commissioner Biddle** also stated that only 18% of this county is nonmilitary, and we are only pulling revenue from that part of the county, he hates the millage rate increase but thinks in the long run it will be worth it. **Chairman Coffey** asked the public again if they have any questions. **Chairman Coffey** stated that when he started as a commissioner there was around \$12 million, and it is still around \$11 million, so sometimes what you hear or see on Facebook, take it with a grain of salt, come to the meeting and ask us yourself, and it might stop the rumors, and spread some truth, before you take it to heart do your research. **Chairman Coffey** read the press release once more on the increase and gave the address and dates.

Ms. Smith asked if a cost benefit analysis was done for the taxpayers, **Chairman Coffey** said, yes, each department head does this when they submit their budget, and they go line by line and do budget cuts. **Ms. Smith** also asked about tourism taxes, **Commissioner Biddle** replied we aren't allowed to use hotel/motel for anything but parks, recreation or a trail system, it cannot be used for the general fund. **Chairman Coffey** stated we cannot cut spending anymore without losing services for the citizens of the county. If we cut recycle or EMS in the county to try to find the revenue available, it would be hard on our citizens. **Chairman Coffey** asked Ms. Smith if this answered her questions, she replied yes, she then asked what sort of ways did they cut the budget, **Chairman Coffey** said we had departments asking to hire more personnel to be able to function and operate, and we told them they couldn't do it, and he challenges you to go to any department head or constitutional officer and ask them if they got what they needed, we even cut out our own training.

Commissioner Biddle also stated that they eliminated positions in the public works department, we have an iso rating of a 4, that is a big deal for a volunteer fire department, we cut the sheriff department's budget and that's the public safety. **Commissioner Biddle** asked **County Manager Weaver** if the FLOST gets approved wouldn't taxes even be able to go up higher and because of the FLOST the citizens would still see relief on the county portion of the bill, even if we raised it to a 16, but these are just estimates, **County Manager Weaver** stated yes it would, we do better off of sales tax revenue than property tax revenue, the relief is for the county portion, not the school portion. **Chairman Coffey** also gave more examples of tax bills of homesteaded & non homesteaded tax bills. **Bill Webb** had a question about the freeze values and the revaluation, and SB581, he asked about the value, and he read that it will freeze at the 2024 value. The County Manager and Commission said they will look into it, he also asked if we would ever opt out. **Chairman Coffey** said it would benefit the citizens more to stay opted in, but we can opt in, but why would we want to. **Chairman Coffey** asked if there were any more comments, there were none, he closed the hearing.

Motion to adjourn made by **Commissioner Frost**, Seconded by **Commissioner Biddle**, the vote was unanimous.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to be conducted by and with the Commission of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia, Chairman Coffey declared the Public Hearing II of the Board of Commissioners adjourned at 6:41 pm on Wed. Sept. 17, 2025.



CHARLES COFFEY, CHAIRMAN



TIMOTHY BIDDLE, VICE CHAIRMAN



GERALD DOUGLAS, COMMISSIONER

Absent

DAMON HOYTE, COMMISSIONER



JASON FROST, COMMISSIONER

Oct 7, 2025
DATE APPROVED

I hereby certify that the foregoing documentation, the Minutes of the Sept. 17, 2025, Public Hearing, was approved via majority vote by the Board of Commissioners in its Oct. 7, 2025, regular meeting.

ATTESTED BY: 

THOMAS WEAVER, COUNTY MANAGER
UNIFIED GOVERNMENT OF
CUSSETA-CHATTAHOOCHEE COUNTY

Seal:





The Board of Commission
of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia

September 17, 2025 – Public Hearing Millage Rate II

PLEASE SIGN IN
SO THAT WE MAY RECORD YOUR ATTENDANCE

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| 1. <u>Thomas L. Bickel</u> | 21. _____ |
| 2. <u>Bill Webb</u> | 22. _____ |
| 3. <u>Bonnie Webb</u> | 23. _____ |
| 4. <u>Ms Smith</u> | 24. _____ |
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September 17, 2025 – Public Hearing Millage Rate II

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