



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 III-MILLAGE RATE

Oct. 1, 2025

215 McNaughton St.

PRESENT:

Chairman Coffey
Vice-Chairman Biddle
Commissioner Douglas-Absent
Commissioner Hoyte
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 Hoyte present, and live streaming on our Facebook page.

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. Our goal is making sure questions are answered and concerns are addressed. **Chairman Coffey** read verbatim the notices that were put in the paper, with the dates and times. **Chairman Coffey** explained that a revaluation of properties with the Board of Assessors is different and not through the Board of Commission, what they are doing is a millage rate increase. He stated the biggest point is the 15.14% is a percentage of the millage rate, when a citizen came and says what a mil equates to, one mil equates to \$1.00 for every thousand dollars that your value of your property, he has never heard it put that way before, but if it helps people understand it better. He just wanted to state again that the millage rate increase is 1.25 mills, and that is just for property owners, if you don't own property, it doesn't even apply to you. There were also concerns about sales tax and voting, and any tax levy is through the Commission, sales tax would be a vote by the people. Chairman Coffey said we try to answer the wo, why, when, we did do a cost budget analysis, every year when we do our budgets, he stated he didn't answer that question properly at the last public hearing. **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 reserve should be for catastrophic events. The correct thing to do is to bring the millage rate up to run the county to be able to fund it.

We try to look for other ways to bring or generate revenue in the county, property tax is what is affected. **County Manager** and **Commissioner Biddle** stated 18% of our County is taxable, the rest is Ft. Benning. **Chairman Coffey** stated housing is not taxable for us on Ft. Benning.

Jeanette Cameron on 390 Broad St. would like to know where is the extra money is going, what is it being spent on, how will it benefit the community. **Chairman Coffey** stated it is going to the total budget that was short. The **County Manager** stated they eliminated six positions. **Chairman Coffey** stated this funds multiple departments, not just one thing, one cut was animal control. Ms. Cameron understands that it is needed. **Chairman Coffey** stated that if you like the way things are being ran then we have to have this increase, when we had these budget meetings, we didn't have participation like we have now. **Chairman Coffey** said something has to budge somewhere when you don't have it to spend, if you like the services, you are currently getting, to provide what you are currently getting, if not somethings going to suffer. **Commissioner Hoyte** and **Commissioner Biddle** both said that pretty much sums it up.

Jay Sigal 136 Miller Rd., is asking about the \$50,000, and what will that go to, legal fees? **County Manager Weaver** stated he can give an example, and one is health care, the insurance went up 49%, this alone doesn't even cover the increase. **Chairman Coffey** stated insurance for the vehicles also went up. **County Manager Weaver** stated the EMT service, Jay Sigal asked what changed when he first came in, **Chairman Coffey** said within the first year it doubled, since then we have taken on our own ambulance service in house. **County Manager Weaver** said it isn't just one item, it is many items, the last time we had a tax increase was 2008. **Commissioner Biddle** said with the ambulance service, you don't know how much something is going to cost you until you get it started, then the EMT's won't work here for what we were paying. There is no county in the state like our county, where we are mostly taken up by a federal base. **County Manager Weaver** said for two years in and to start from scratch and only be 30,000.00 under with the EMS service, he thinks that is actually pretty solid. **Chairman Coffey** stated people get on Facebook and they speak about things that they truly have no clue about, they didn't do any research, they just go off what they heard or word of mouth, and if they cared they would be here, and we post our meetings on Facebook, which is a courtesy by the way. Mr. Sigal asked about the recycle also, to which **Chairman Coffey** replied if someone is coming from another county they should not be dumping, we are looking for ways to fix it. **Commissioner Hoyte** stated they are looking at other ways to generate revenue for the county, like the intergovernmental agreements with FT. Benning, he also told Mr. Sigal he is out of time, he also said they are exploring expanding more communities coming in with more housing, and his campaign promise was not to raise taxes.

Carol Conner on Red Canyon Rd just wanted to thank the county for the work done on her road.

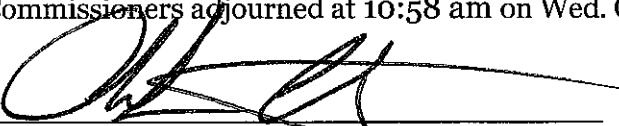
Commissioner Biddle stated we cut budgets everywhere, fire dept, sheriff dept, and our iso rating is a 4, that is unheard of, and we have a volunteer fire dept, this helps our insurance. We cut our sheriff dept, but we don't have a high crime rate, and there are still positives, even with the budget cuts. This doesn't just affect you, this affects him too, it affects him, Mr. Hoyte, and Mr. Coffey. **Chairman Coffey** gave three examples of assessment notices. One example went up tax bill only went up \$61.00 for the county portion. This millage rate only affects the county portion of your tax bill. He states if you have issues with the millage rate that is the Commission, if you have an issue with your property value, you should go to your Board of Assessors, and there is a process for that as well. This is the only option left to bring revenue in and fund the deficit.

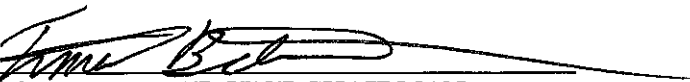
Chairman Coffey read the dates and times once again for the next public hearings.
Chairman Coffey Closed the hearing.

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

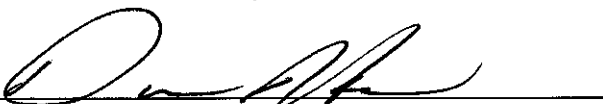
ADJOURNMENT

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 10:58 am on Wed. Oct. 1, 2025.


CHARLES COFFEY, CHAIRMAN


TIMOTHY BIDDLE, VICE CHAIRMAN

Absent
GERALD DOUGLAS, COMMISSIONER


DAMON HOYTE, COMMISSIONER

Absent
JASON FROST, COMMISSIONER

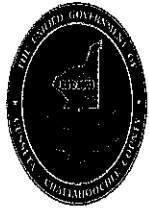
Oct 7, 2025
DATE APPROVED

I hereby certify that the foregoing documentation, the Minutes of the Oct. 1, 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*

Oct. 1, 2025 – BOC Public Hearing IV

PLEASE SIGN IN
So We Can Record Your Attendance

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| 1. Carol Ann Conner | 21. _____ |
| 2. JAY Silver | 22. _____ |
| 3. Jeanette Cameron | 23. _____ |
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The Board of Commission
of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia

Oct. 1, 2025 – BOC Public Hearing IV

PLEASE SIGN IN

If you would like to speak

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. <u>Jeanette Cameron</u> | 21. _____ |
| 2. <u>JAY SIMS</u> | 22. _____ |
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The Commission

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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 IV-MILLAGE RATE

Oct. 1, 2025

215 McNaughton St.

PRESENT:

Chairman Coffey
Vice-Chairman Biddle
Commissioner Douglas-Absent
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 Commissioners Biddle and Frost present, and live streaming on our Facebook page.

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. Our goal is making sure questions are answered and concerns are addressed. **Chairman Coffey** read verbatim the notices that were put in the paper, with the dates and times. **Chairman Coffey** explained that a revaluation of properties with the Board of Assessors is different and not through the Board of Commission, what they are doing is a millage rate increase. He stated the biggest point is the 15.14% is a percentage of the millage rate, when a citizen came and says what a mil equates to, one mil equates to \$1.00 for every thousand dollars that your value of your property, he has never heard it put that way before, but if it helps people understand it better. He just wanted to state again that the millage rate increase is 1.25 mills, and that is just for property owners, if you don't own property, it doesn't even apply to you. **Chairman Coffey** said we try to answer the who, why, what, and when. There were also concerns about sales tax and voting, and any tax levy is through the Commission, sales tax would be a vote by the people. **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 several meetings that started in May, we still came short and couldn't fund what they needed to operate, we had to lay off several positions, and still came up short 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 reserve should be for catastrophic events. The correct thing to do is to bring the millage rate up to run the county to be able to fund it. Nobody wants to raise taxes, but it is the right thing to do.

Commissioner Biddle stated we have come out of reserve, at the recycle center due to it costing us \$300,000.00 per year, and that's why it keeps dwindling down, how many years now, he asked the County Manager, **County Manager Weaver** replied several, **County Manager** stated at some point you have to stop coming out of reserve. **Commissioner Frost** added that the millage rate has not been raised since 2008 and still even in raising rate, we will still be the county with the lowest tax rate in the state. **Commissioner Frost** stated we have to do this to keep the county from getting debt, he doesn't pay more taxes and nobody else wants it, but unfortunately it must be done. **Commissioner Biddle** also stated that only 18% of this county is nonmilitary, so we get no money from Ft. Benning, **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, **Commissioner Biddle** said we are a unique county, we hear it every day, people are amazed how we make it. **Chairman Coffey** stated he was asked this morning how this will affect us, this mainly affects property owners, the ones who pay tax bills, you will get an assessment notice during the year and it has two amounts on it, one for county and one for school, this millage rate increase only affects the county portion, I do encourage if you have questions about your assessment notice or your property value, to go to your Tax Assessors office or Board of Assessors, if you think it is incorrect. The Board of Commission has nothing to do with your assessed value, just the millage rate, the only portion of your tax bill we have any say so over is the county portion, 9.504 is our proposed millage rate, **Chairman Coffey** then gave a few examples of what changes a few bills would be. **Chairman Coffey** then opened the floor for speakers; they each have ten minutes to speak, he was asked about legal fees this morning, and he replied that the legal fees have gone up and no it will not cover it, but yes it will balance the budget.

Carlos Negrón 315 Wells St. asked how much we collect in taxes right now, **County Manager Weaver** replied about \$550,000.00, he asked how much difference this will make, **County Manager Weaver** stated this will make a \$50,000.00 a year difference. He then asked if we are only doing this to balance the budget, **Chairman Coffey** stated yes, we are required by law to pass a balanced budget, he challenges anyone to go to any department head or elected official and ask them if they got the funding needed to run their department, the only two options we had were to raise taxes or go into reserve. Mr. Negrón asked about grants, **County Manager** replied grants do not help with daily operations, they help with sewer and other projects. Mr. Negrón is worried about people on fixed incomes. **Commissioner Biddle** said that is a good point, and remember in November and HB 581 the FLOST, he asked if the **County Manager Weaver** wanted to explain, the FLOST, the county portion will go away, when the FLOST is on the ballot in November if the people vote it in it benefits us, **County Manager Weaver** stated we could go up to a 15-16 millage rate and because of the FLOST the county portion would go away. **Chairman Coffey** stated the FLOST is up to the people in November, but we have to do the millage rate now, because we have to have a plan in place now. **County Manager Weaver** says the downfall is even if the FLOST passes, it will take two years before we see the money from it. **Chairman Coffey** stated they are always looking for revenue sources for the counties.

James Stroud 469 Old Louvale Rd. he does not consent or agree to raising taxes, the county should take from the reserve. He believes we should cut more fat, he then inquired about the IGSA's, and how they work, **County Manager Weaver** then explained how IGSA's work. Mr. Stroud repeatedly said go into the savings. **Commissioner Frost** stated you can only go into your savings so many times and then it is empty, right now we have zero debt, we want to keep it that way for the people of the future, if something catastrophic happens you want to be able to have savings there, but he does hear Mr. Stroud, he doesn't want to see the reserve depleted. **Chairman Coffey** thanked Mr. Stroud for coming, and his service for our country, he explained the role of the Commission and how the part of property tax works for the county and how it is sometimes a gamble. **Chairman Coffey** respects Mr. Stroud and him saying bring it out of savings, but leaders before them have put us in a good financial standing, and they want to keep us in a good financial standing. He thanked Mr. Stroud again. **Commissioner Frost** stated they are only raising the millage rate enough to balance the budget. **Commissioner Biddle** also added that they have been trying to get sewage in the county to Hwy 280/26, and this would bring jobs to the laundry, we got denied the grant, but we are reapplying, you have to have that match when you get the grant, so you have to have that money ready to go, so this is another reason why we need to have money in our savings.

Paris Traweck Paul Revere Dr. wants to know if there is anything she can do as a citizen to help, other than voting for the FLOST, she works for Sandhill. **Commissioner Biddle** stated you can help get the community to rally and help them vote for the FLOST, it takes a little to get a lot. It will help this county tremendously.

Commissioner Frost stated there is a lot this community can do, reach out to your state representatives, the grant with the sewage, we need that. **County Manager Weaver** said after Oct. 1st we get the debrief and can see what they say about where we go next. **Commissioner Frost** said there are so many meetings where we have nobody here, and this is great to see the engagement, this is the only way we can get better and grow. **Chairman Coffey** said come to the meetings and get the correct information, Facebook is a courtesy, but the caution is people speak behind the computer, but they won't speak the truth, be more informed. **County Manager Weaver said** participation is an issue with our county. **Chairman Coffey** thanked everyone for coming. **Commissioner Biddle** also brought up funding with the Health Board and due to people not filling out the census, so health dept is losing funding. **Chairman Coffey** said we try to do better at getting the word out, we have Facebook, our website, and textmygov. **Commissioner Biddle** thanked everyone for coming.

Chairman Coffey read the dates and times once again for the next public hearings.

Chairman Coffey Closed the hearing.

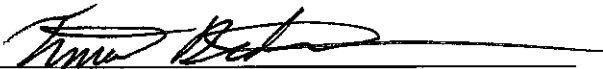
Motion to adjourn by **Commissioner Frost**, Seconded by **Commissioner Biddle**, the vote was unanimous.

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 of the Board of Commissioners adjourned at 7:34 pm on Wed. Oct. 1, 2025.



CHARLES COFFEY, CHAIRMAN



TIMOTHY BIDDLE, VICE CHAIRMAN

Absent

GERALD DOUGLAS, COMMISSIONER

Absent

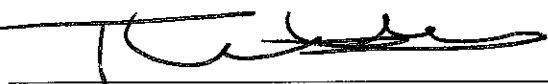
DAMON HOYTE, COMMISSIONER



JASON FROST, COMMISSIONER

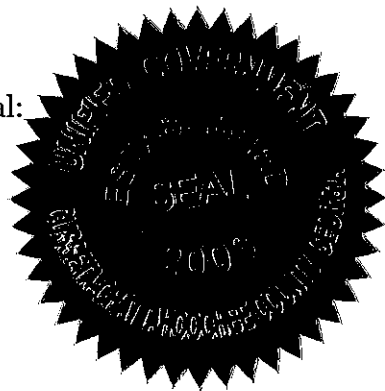
Oct 7, 2025
DATE APPROVED

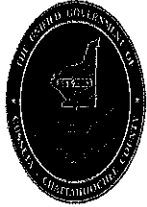
I hereby certify that the foregoing documentation, the Minutes of the Oct. 1, 2025, Public Hearing IV, was approved via majority vote by the Board of Commissioners in its Oct. 7, 2025, regular meeting.

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

Oct. 1, 2025 – BOC Public Hearing IV

PLEASE SIGN IN

So We Can Record Your Attendance

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|-----------------------------|-----------|
| 1. <u>Carlos R. Noguera</u> | 21. _____ |
| 2. <u>James Stroud</u> | 22. _____ |
| 3. <u>J.W. Gator</u> | 23. _____ |
| 4. <u>Judi Contois</u> | 24. _____ |
| 5. <u>Jeanette Cameron</u> | 25. _____ |
| 6. <u>Nelly Negron</u> | 26. _____ |
| 7. <u>Pam Traveck</u> | 27. _____ |
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The Board of Commission
of the Unified Government of Cusseta-Chattahoochee County, Georgia

Oct. 1, 2025 – BOC Public Hearing IV

PLEASE SIGN IN
So You Can Speak

1. *Carter R. Negley*

2. *James Stroud*

3. *AM*

4. *Pats Travers* ?

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