

August 5th, 2025

Hancock County Board of Commissioners
12630 Broad Street
Sparta, GA 31087

Subject: Questions Regarding 2025 Proposed General Fund Budget

Dear County Commissioners,

The Hancock County Property Owners Association (HCPOA) acknowledges receipt of the emailed copy of the 2025 Proposed Budget. This document has been shared with our officers and members for review.

Given the limited one-week review period and minimal opportunity for individual discussion prior to the upcoming meeting, HCPOA respectfully requests that the County Commissioners be prepared to address the following questions and provide additional details during the 2025 Proposed General Fund Budget Hearing, scheduled for Thursday, August 7, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. at the Hancock County Courthouse.

We appreciate the effort that goes into preparing the annual budget and offer the following questions in the spirit of transparency, accountability, and collaboration:

1. The proposed budget includes a total of 16 entries for overtime, amounting to \$629,500 — with \$500,000 concentrated in the Sheriff's Department, Jail, and EMS. Given the County's current financial status, please explain why overtime is being prioritized over alternatives such as hiring part-time staff to reduce overall pay.
 - Notably, the Sheriff's Department salary increased by \$122,203, yet overtime also increased by \$15,000.
 - The Jail's salary budget rose by \$79,112, with a \$50,000 overtime increase.
 - EMS salaries increased by \$47,546, with a \$50,000 overtime increase.
 - E911 salaries increased by \$108,152, with a \$5,000 overtime increase.
2. Please clarify why there is no county budget allocation for the Department of Family and Children Services. While some staff are state funded, we understand there are county employees as well. How are their salaries accounted for?
3. The coroner's budget includes a \$6,150 vehicle allowance. Please explain the rationale for this amount given that the County did not fund the vehicle's purchase.
4. Please identify which fire department is receiving the \$146,000 in funding.
5. Please clarify the recipient and intended use of the \$5,000 in Miscellaneous/Contingency funds listed under Tourism.
6. Please clarify the recipient and use of the \$26,000 in Miscellaneous/Contingency funds allocated to the Forestry Commission.
7. Please clarify the recipient and use of the \$124,000 in Miscellaneous/Contingency funds allocated to the library.

8. Kindly explain the annual appropriations for the following agencies:
 - (a) Health Department
 - (b) Development Authority
 - (c) HYOC
9. The final page of the budget includes an item labeled “Hancock County Miscellaneous/Contingencies” in the amount of \$10,000. Please explain the intended use of these funds.
10. With the County’s current financial position, we respectfully ask that no allocations be made to the following accounts:
 - 531799 (Supplies - Miscellaneous)
 - 531800 (Miscellaneous Contingencies)
 - 531801 (Contingency)Please confirm the County’s position on expenditures coded to these accounts.
11. The revenue from school zone speed cameras is not reflected in the 2025 budget. Please explain the exclusion of this revenue projection from the 2025 budget.
12. The Road Department’s requested budget is \$4,757,630.10 — a \$2.65 million increase from 2024. Is this amount related to previously completed paving work, or are there more new projects planned for 2025? A breakdown would be appreciated.
13. The “2025 Property Tax Digest and 5-Year History of Levy” shows a 0.04% increase in taxes, yet projected tax revenue is down by \$788,407.64. Does this indicate a millage rate reduction?
14. Real personal property revenues (vehicles, boats, etc.) are projected to increase to \$1.2 million, \$450,000 more than 2024. Please explain the basis for this increase.
15. The Senior Citizens budget request has nearly doubled from 2024. Please outline any new or expanded services planned for 2025 to justify this increase.
16. General Administration has budgeted \$306,000 in professional fees. Please provide a breakdown of the services and amounts associated with this total.
17. The 2025 audit line is \$110,000, which is higher than the \$50,000 relayed for the audit earlier in the year. Please explain this increase.
18. Two contingency line items under General Administration (accounts 531800 and 531801) are listed separately. Please clarify their purposes and the types of unanticipated expenses they are intended to cover.
19. General Administration shows Miscellaneous/Contingencies at \$152,000 for 2025, down from \$1,648,000 in 2024. Please explain the purpose of this line and reasons for the change.
20. A new line item for "Infrastructure" appears under General Administration for \$156,000. Please explain what this entails.
21. The Tax Commissioner’s budget includes a \$25,000 increase in printing expenses. What accounts for this increase?
22. Under General Government Buildings:
23. Who is covered under “salaries”?
24. What does the \$25,000 in building repair expenses cover?

25. EMS is budgeted at \$1,365,907 while ambulance fee revenue is projected at only \$500,000. Is this typical? Are there efforts in place to improve revenue collection?
26. Jail food costs have doubled from \$40,000 to \$80,000. The Senior Center food budget increased from \$30,000 to \$42,700. While food costs have increased generally, can the larger jump at the Jail be explained?
27. Jail building repairs are budgeted at \$63,000. Were these repairs planned? Please describe the scope of work.
28. The Sheriff's Department has \$61,000 allocated under Machinery/Equipment. Please specify the intended purchases.
29. The Road Department shows a salary decrease of \$125,507 but an increase in Professional Fees of \$182,000. Please explain the nature of these fees and services.
30. Under Solid Waste, there is no line item for the \$20,000 lease on the Hunts Chapel Road facility. Additionally, landfill collections are down \$92,562. Please explain how this aligns with recent concerns about waste management funding and potential facility closures.
31. What does the acronym "B.O.E.R." stand for, and what function does it serve?
32. The Election budget is unchanged from 2024 to 2025, despite fewer elections occurring in 2025. Please explain this consistency in projected costs.
33. Who is the county budget officer?
34. To comply with GA Code 36-81-5 Section D, we are formally requesting that the complete proposed budget in its entirety be published in local news publication, The Sparta Ishmaelite, before the scheduled adoption meeting on August 14th, 2025.
35. In reference to GA Code 36-81-7 Section D, please explain how current proposed budget is compliant. Further explaining how significant increases are justified, when the county should be operating under an audited budget.

We would appreciate it if the Commissioners could address these and any related matters during the budget hearing. HCPOA remains committed to constructive civic engagement and thanks the Board for its continued service to the residents of Hancock County.

Sincerely,

Hancock County Property Owners Association
hcpoa@proton.me

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