AGENDA
PUBLIC HEARING
Wednesday, September 3,
2025 7:00 P.M.

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1. Call to Order
2. Invocation and *Pledge of Allegiance*
3. To hear public comment about the Proposed 2025 Millage Rate Increase
4. Adjournment

Board of Commissioners of Candler County
Public Hearing
September 3, 2025
7:00 p.m.

The Board of Commissioners of Candler County met for a Public Hearing Wednesday, September 3, 2025, at 7:00 p.m., in the Commissioners' boardroom at 1075 East Hiawatha Street, Suite A, Metter, Georgia. Chairman Brad Jones presided with Vice-Chairman Blake Hendrix, Commissioners David Morales, Jonathan Williamson and Tre' Ross in attendance. County Administrator Bryan Aasheim, and County Clerk Kellie Lank. County Attorney Kendall Gross was unable to attend this public hearing.

The Metter Advertiser was notified of the meeting, but no representative attended this meeting.

Chris Billingsley and Jimmy Hendrix were present for this public hearing.

1. Call to Order
Chairman Jones called the public hearing to order at 7:00 p.m. and opened the floor for comments about the proposed millage rate increase

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance
Commissioner Ross delivered the invocation and led the *Pledge of Allegiance*.

3. To Hear Public Comment on the Proposed 2025 Millage Rate Increase
Chairman Jones opened the floor for public comments regarding the proposed 2025 mill rate increase.

Mr. Chris Billingsley asked for the dollar amount associated with the proposed increase.
Administrator Aasheim confirmed the increase would total $485,309.

Chairman Jones stated that the commission had worked to keep the budget tight, noting that 74% of the budget is allocated to payroll, employee benefits, payroll taxes, and healthcare, leaving 26% for county operations. He explained that the budget increase is partly due to high EMS call volume, averaging over 220 calls per month. EMS operates 24-hour shifts, averaging approximately 7.5 calls per shift. Additionally, the new jail will require dispatchers and jailers.

Mr. Jimmy Hendrix asked for clarification regarding the new 1% sales tax referendum reported in the newspaper.

Administrator Aasheim explained that state law prevents the Board of Commissioners from taking a position on a referendum in a public meeting. He further explained that the 1% sales tax is intended by the state legislature to offset the homestead exemption, which redistributes the tax burden to large landowners and commercial property owners. If passed, revenue would be collected in a restricted account and applied in the following tax year to offset the county's property tax burden. The current county budget is $11.6 million, with roughly $3.8 million collected from property taxes.

Mr. Hendrix asked if the sales tax revenue could be directed to the hospital. Administrator Aasheim stated that the FLOST sales tax can only be used for county operations, and the county cannot operate the hospital. He further clarified that the county may levy a separate tax of up to seven mills in support of the hospital under Georgia hospital authority law but currently levies only one mill to offset indigent care costs.

Mr. Billingsley addressed the old gymnasium at the recreation park, noting a newspaper article stating the insurance company appraised the damage at $881,000 and paid $441,000, leaving a balance of approximately $440,000. He suggested the board with the county attorney compel the insurance company to release the remaining funds and argued that the $441,000 already received could cover the proposed tax increase of $485,309.

Administrator Aasheim explained that insurance policies pay full replacement cost only if the structure is replaced or reconstructed. He corrected the available funds, noting that after tarping and miscellaneous costs ($120,000–$130,000) and the anticipated cost of demolition, the remaining insurance funds would likely be approximately $125,000. Using these funds would still result in a mill rate increase of about 5.5%, lower than the proposed 8.23%.

Chairman Jones stated that any remaining gymnasium insurance funds after demolition would be returned to the recreation department for the benefit of children.

Administrator Aasheim further discussed the Homestead Exemption (House Bill 581), which freezes the assessed value of homesteaded properties. Over time, this suppression of the residential tax digest forces the county to raise the millage rate to maintain services in the face of rising operational costs and inflation. The proposed FLOST sales tax is intended to offset this effect.

With no further comments of discussion, Chairman Jones called for a motion to adjourn at 7:43 p.m.

4. Adjournment

Commissioner Williamson made a motion to adjourn this public hearing. Commissioner Ross provided a second. The motion carried 5-0.

Miranda K. Lank

Kellie Lank, Clerk
Attest

Chairman, Brad Jones