

Historic Courthouse, Board Chambers, 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
225 North Broad St  
January 27, 2026

The Thomas County Board of Commissioners met on the above date in a regular scheduled meeting at 6:00 p.m. at the Historic Courthouse, Commission Chambers, with the following board members present:

Mark NeSmith, District 4, Chairman	Donnie Baggett, Vice-Chair, District 5
Rev. Jeremy G. Rich, District 1	Moses Gross, District 2
Kenneth E. Hickey, District 3	Wiley Grady, District 6
Phillip V. Brown, District 7	Zippy Vonier, District 8

Staff Present: County Manager Mike Stephenson, County Clerk Tracy Dukes, Purchasing Agent/Deputy Clerk Nisha Thurman, Emergency Services Director Derrick Ogletree, Fire Chief Chris Jones, Street-to-Station Instructor Derek Knight and Clint Chastain

Others present: Amy Carter and Jim Glass, Southern Georgia Technical College  
Paul Fryer with Congressman Sanford Bishop's Office

News/Media Present: None

Chairman Nesmith welcomed everyone and called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Commissioner Rich offered the invocation.

Chairman NeSmith called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 13, 2026, Board of Commissioners Meeting. The motion was made by Commissioner Hickey and seconded by Commissioner Grady. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, Gross, Vonier and Rich voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith called for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 20, 2026, Special Called Board of Commissioners Meeting. The motion was made by Commissioner Grady and seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, Gross, Vonier and Rich voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith called for a motion to approve the January 27, 2026, agenda, with the Pinning Ceremony moved to the end due to an emergency call for the firefighters. The motion was made by Commissioner Baggett and seconded by Commissioner Vonier. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, Gross, Vonier and Rich voting aye.

Chairman NeSmith welcomed Paul Fryer, representative from Congressman Sanford Bishop's office. Mr. Fryer presented the Board of Commissioners with a proclamation celebrating Thomas County's bicentennial. Chairman NeSmith thanked Mr. Fryer and

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Congressman Sanford Bishop, on behalf of the Board, for their support of Thomas County and for recognizing the county's bicentennial.

Chairman NeSmith opened the meeting for public comment. There were no citizens present, and public comment was closed.

**Reports:**

Chairman NeSmith recognized County Manager Michael Stephenson, who updated the Board on the General Assembly, which is currently in session. Mr. Stephenson reported that a bill is being considered to exempt homestead properties from property taxes in Georgia, which could result in an estimated seven-million-dollar revenue loss for Thomas County. Chairman NeSmith stated that the Board should monitor the legislation closely and expressed hope that an alternative solution would be proposed.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Vonier who noted the next Purchasing Meeting will be on February 3, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Baggett who noted the Public Property Meeting has been moved from February 5, 2026, to February 11, 2026, at 8:30 a.m.

**Committees:**

**Purchasing:**

Commissioner Vonier made a motion to ratify the purchase of Diesel Fuel from Petroleum Products for \$2.235/gallon on January 13, 2026. Commissioner Baggett seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, Gross, Vonier and Rich voting aye.

**Public Works:**

Commissioner Hickey made a motion to ratify the appointment and authorization of County Manager Michael Stephenson and Purchasing Agent Nisha Thurman to sign titles upon the sale of a county vehicle. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, Gross, Vonier and Rich voting aye.

**Pinning Ceremony:**

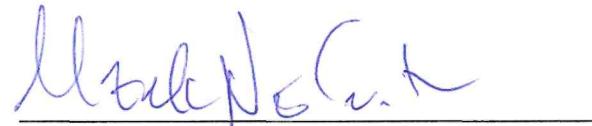
Chairman NeSmith recognized Emergency Services Director Derrick Ogletree, Fire Chief Chris Jones, and Derek Knight who performed a "pinning ceremony" for the 2025 Street-to-Station.

The following recruits successfully complete their Firefighter I (NPQ) Classification:

Brett Gilliard	Satchel Goodrich
Joshua King	Thomas Maher
Montana Manley	JaTwan Moody
Benajmin Sanders	Clayton Taylor
Sean Siddell	

Chairman NeSmith thanked Jim Glass and Amy Carter of Southern Regional Technical College as being instrumental in bringing the Street-to-Station program to fruition and for their partnership with Thomas County.

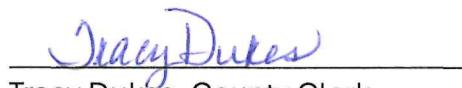
Chairman NeSmith recognized Commissioner Rich who made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Brown seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously with Chairman NeSmith and Commissioners Baggett, Brown, Grady, Hickey, Gross, Vonier and Rich voting aye. The meeting adjourned at 6:21 p.m.



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Mark NeSmith, Chairman

ATTEST:



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Tracy Dukes, County Clerk