



**MEETING MINUTES**  
Monday, Jan. 5, 2026- 9:00 am  
Alexander Building - Bynum Conference Room

**BOARD MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Chairman Mike Newberry, Vice Chairman William Davis, Dee Grist, Secretary-Treasurer Steve Singletary, Sam Hattaway and Eric Harris.

**OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE:** Bill Mills, Hank Jester, Charlie Sol. and Susanne Reynolds

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Mike Newberry. Prayer was led by Eric Harris.

A motion to amend the agenda to include the Special Called meeting minutes for December 19, 2025, was made by Steve Singletary and seconded by Dee Grist. All voted in favor.

Meeting minutes from December 1, 2025, and current financials were presented by Susanne Reynolds. An explanation of paying the director's salary to the Early Co. BOC was given by Chairman Mike Newberry. With the challenges surrounding the paper mill closure, the payment was made earlier this year. A motion to approve as presented was made by Sam Hattaway and seconded by Dee Grist. All voted in favor. Minutes for the special called meeting on December 19, 2025 were presented by Steve Singletary. A motion to approve was made by Eric Harris and seconded by Dee Grist. All voted in favor.

**OLD BUSINESS:** N/A

**NEW BUSINESS: Election of 2026 Officers** - A motion was made by Eric Harris to re-elect Mike Newberry as Chairman, William Davis as Vice Chairman, and Steve Singletary as Secretary-Treasurer; and seconded by Dee Grist. All voted in favor. **FAQ Ads with ECN** - A discussion regarding the payment of 4 FAQ QTS Data Center ads was had. A motion to approve the payments for the ads was made by Eric Harris and seconded by Dee Grist. All voted in favor. **Radio Ads Renewal with Flint River Media** - Reynolds explained that the Development Authority did this last year without any financial assistance from other entities that it helped promote in 2025. With a limited budget, it would not be in the Development Authority's best interest to pay for Early County event promotions in 2026. A motion to not renew the contract was made by Sam Hattaway and seconded by Eric Harris. Chairman Newberry commented that the Development Authority could consider radio ads on a case-by-case basis, instead of the yearly commitment. All voted in favor. **Sponsorship: Blakely Chevrolet GMC** - The new owner of the dealership has extended a sponsorship to the Development Authority and economic development initiatives to the Director for work-traveling purposes. It would include use of a Ford F-150, gas, maintenance and insurance. Attorney Bill Mills will draft an MOU highlighting the agreements on using a dealership truck for economic development purposes. A motion to approve was made by Eric Harris and seconded by Dee Grist. All voted in favor. **Rural Center Grant MOU** - The Georgia Rural Center has



awarded a \$200K grant for E-911 (ECBOC) to be used for new equipment or expanding services across the region. A motion to approve the MOU for these purposes was made by Eric Harris and seconded by Dee Grist. All voted in favor. Bill Mills commented that an intergovernmental agreement with county, city and development authority must be signed for the grant.

**OTHER UPDATES: Chairman Report** - Newberry thanked the board for its willingness and commitment to the Development Authority by attending the additional meetings last year. Newberry asked Hank Jester when he thought the county would find itself “crunched” for funds due to the paper mill closure. Jester said it would depend on the mill’s equipment taxes. He also reminded the board that the executive session minute from Dec. 19, 2025 would be approved the next time the board is in executive session. **Director’s Report** - Workforce Recovery Grant is available thru WorkSource GA for those laid off from work at no fault of their own and for employers to retrain the workforce. Small Business Development Center will host a series of classes for business owners, beginning Jan. 15. Reynolds encouraged the board to submit “Early Resolution” cards for 2026.

**Board Member Comments:** Eric Harris commented that everything that was going on in the community right now signals a “turning point” for Early County and its future.

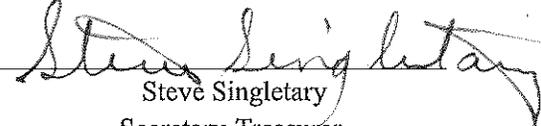
Attorney Bill Mills led a brief discussion regarding the 90-day data center moratorium, which began on Dec. 11, 2025 at the approval of the Early County Board of Commissioners. Mills asked if any of the board members had any thoughts or ideas related to a local data center ordinance to let Hank Jester, the Chairman for the BOC, know. Mills also stated he would circulate a working data center ordinance draft to the Development Authority for feedback prior to it being presented to the ECBOC.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:** Charlie Sol addressed the radio advertising. He said word of mouth travels faster than radio. He also commented on the truck sponsorship. He did not understand why a Chevrolet dealership would give a Ford as a sponsored vehicle. It was explained that the dealership also has “used” and not just “new” vehicles. William Davis explained that the new owner was working on actively being involved in the community.

A motion to adjourn was made by Eric Harris and seconded by Dee Grist. All voted in favor.

**Meeting minutes were recorded by Susanne Reynolds, Director for the Development Authority of Early County.**

  
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Mike Newberry or William Davis  
Chairman or Vice-Chairman

  
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Steve Singletary  
Secretary-Treasurer