

**WEAKLEY COUNTY, TENNESSEE
FINANCE, WAYS, AND MEANS COMMITTEE
COMMISSION COURTROOM, WEAKLEY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
Wednesday, January 14, 2026, at 9:00 A.M.**

FWM Committee Members Present: Commissioners Greg Usery, Billy Hazlewood, David Bell, Roger Donaldson, Dennis Doster, Gary Eddings, Marcus Hopper, Larry Taylor, and Jimmy Westbrook

FWM Committee Members Absent: None.

I. CALL TO ORDER -APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chairperson Usery called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and called for consideration of the minutes from the previous meeting, which was held on November 10, 2025. Commissioner Eddings made the motion to approve, and Commissioner Hazlewood seconded. The motion to approve the minutes passed unanimously.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

No application was made for public comment.

III. OLD BUSINESS

None.

IV. NEW BUSINESS

Resolution 2026-28 A Resolution of the Weakley County Board of Commissioners to Allow Weakley County Trustee to Round All Property Taxes (Including Rollback, Public Utility and Interest): Commissioner Westbrook made a motion to place the resolution on the floor and with a second from Commissioner Donaldson the resolution was opened for discussion. Chairperson Usery recognized Weakley County Trustee, Marci Floyd. Trustee Floyd informed the county commission that prior approval had been granted to round taxes on the base amount only, excluding rollback, public utility, or interest amounts. The proposed resolution will authorize Trustee Floyd to apply rounding to all property tax components, including rollback, public utility, and interest. The resolution passed unanimously.

Resolution 2026-29 Resolution Authorizing Budget Amendments to the General Fund for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026: Commissioner Bell made a motion to place the resolution on the floor and with a second from Commissioner Hopper the resolution was opened for discussion. Chairperson Usery recognized Weakley County Sheriff, Terry McDade. Sheriff McDade stated the resolution pertained to a reimbursement received by the sheriff's office from officer academy training. The total amount received was \$18,000; of this, \$3,000 will be allocated to the communications budget for the acquisition of a new CAD system, while the remaining \$15,000 will be designated for the law enforcement equipment. The resolution passed unanimously.

Commissioner Hazlewood made a motion to combine resolutions 2026-30, 2026-31, 2026-32 and 2026-33. Commissioner Donaldson seconded the motion. The resolutions were opened for discussion.

Resolution 2026-30 Resolution Authorizing Budget Amendments to the General-Purpose School Fund for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026: Chairperson Usery recognized Director of Weakley County Schools, Jeff Cupples. Director Cupples reported the schools were awarded \$4,000 for Healthier Schools grant program. The funds from this grant will be transferred to the other supplies and materials budget line.

Resolution 2026-31 Resolution Authorizing Budget Amendments to the General-Purpose School Fund for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026: Chairperson Usery recognized Director of Weakley County Schools, Jeff Cupples. Director Cupples stated the schools were awarded a Public Schools Security Grant for the 2024-2025 fiscal year, with a portion remaining unspent at year-end. The balance of \$81,878 will primarily be allocated to upgrading the school security system from analog to digital.

Resolution 2026-32 Resolution Authorizing Budget Amendments to the General-Purpose School Fund for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026: Chairperson Usery recognized Director of Weakley County Schools, Jeff Cupples. Director Cupples announced that the schools have been awarded two Energy Savings Grants from the Tennessee Valley Authority totaling \$36,190. These funds will be allocated to the other contracted services budget line.

Resolution 2026-33 Resolution Authorizing Budget Amendments to the General-Purpose School Fund for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026: Chairperson Usery recognized Director of Weakley County Schools, Jeff Cupples. Director Cupples stated the schools were awarded a Batelle STEM classroom grant for the Special Education Transition program in the amount of \$960. These funds will be allocated to the other supplies and materials budget line for the program to purchase supplies for their projects.

Commissioner Taylor made a motion to place resolutions 2026-30, 2026-31, 2026-32 and 2026-33 on the floor. Following a second by Commissioner Bell, the resolutions passed unanimously.

Resolution 2026-34 Resolution Authorizing Budget Amendments to the General Fund for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026: Commissioner Doster made a motion to place the resolution on the floor and with a second from Commissioner Westbrook the resolution was opened for discussion. Chairperson Usery recognized Weakley County Finance Director, John Liggett. Director Liggett advised Weakley County was awarded a Broadband Readiness Communities Grant in the 2024-2025 fiscal year and a portion of the award was unspent at the end of the fiscal year. This amount needs to be added to the 2025-2026 fiscal year budget in order to expend the remaining grant funds. The resolution passed unanimously.

Resolution 2026-35 Resolution Authorizing Budget Amendments to the General Fund for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 2026: Commissioner Eddings made a motion to place the resolution on the floor and with a second from Commissioner Doster the resolution was opened for discussion. Chairperson Usery recognized Weakley County Mayor, Dale Hutcherson. Mayor

Hutcherson advised Communications Director/ Executive Assistant Melinda Parham has obtained additional education to pursue and expanded role in the acquisition and facilitation of grant funding for Weakley County. This expanded role has already led to a significant increase in Weakley County's revenue through grant funding. Mayor Hutcherson has proposed increasing the base salary for the position to \$45,000. Chairperson Usery noted that employing a grant writer would be advantageous for the county by assisting in securing additional grants. Commissioner Doster further observed that Melinda Parham frequently works outside of standard courthouse business hours, including nights, weekends, and holidays. The resolution passed unanimously.

V. OTHER BUSINESS

Discussion on USDA/County Employee: Chairperson Usery reported that, during the 2025-2026 budget deliberations, a proposal was presented to the committee regarding the potential hiring of an employee within the agricultural department for grant acquisitions for Weakley County farmers. This topic was tabled during the budget discussions. Commissioner Doster advised he, along with Mayor Hutcherson, had met with representatives from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and USDA to evaluate the addition of a county employee who would facilitate grant acquisition. The funding for this position would be supported in part by state and federal sources, totaling \$20,000 annually, with the remainder of the salary expected to be funded by the county. Chairperson Usery recognized UDSA District Conservationist Gordon Counts. Counts has played a significant role in securing grant and program funding for Weakley County. The county is now ranked third in the state for both agricultural development and overall funding. Under Counts's leadership, his office has secured approximately \$3,000,000 in new federal funds, with \$1.2 million allocated directly to county landowners. When Counts first assumed his position, the county had only one full-time employee and was ranked 40th in the state for funding. He subsequently hired three additional employees, bringing the total staff to five, and successfully obtained nearly \$8 million in funding. Due to administrative changes, two employees were let go. At present, Counts cannot fill any positions without releasing two more employees, which would reduce the office staff to just himself and one additional employee. Counts identified a funding mechanism through a state partnership, in which the federal government would contribute \$8,000 towards an employee's salary, provide office space, training, and necessary resources. The state would cover an additional \$12,000 of the employee's salary, with the county responsible for the remaining portion as well as benefits. This partnership would be established on an annual contract basis. Three other counties in West Tennessee have participated in this funding partnership. If Weakley County chooses to take part, it would enable the office to maintain operations during government shutdowns. Additionally, the USDA could meet annually with the county commission to report on completed projects and grant funding received over the year. Commissioner Eddings made a motion to propose a resolution to the full commission that Weakley County enter into an agreement with the State of Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the USDA to employ an individual at the salary rate of \$45,000 and with a second from Commissioner Bell the resolution passed unanimously.

Discussion Regarding Weakley County Schools Daycare: Chairperson Usery recognized Director of Weakley County Schools, Jeff Cupples. Director Jeff Cupples discussed the establishment of a school-operated childcare facility intended to serve Weakley County School

staff. Director Cupples explained the initiative has shifted from a recruitment tool to a vital retention strategy, noting that the county is currently losing high-quality teachers to neighboring districts that offer childcare. The proposed model involves renovating an existing facility to meet state compliance, with the school system handling payroll and benefits for approximately 10 to 11 employees. While a partnership with the YMCA was discussed for HR management, Director Cupples noted they have been slow to return to the table, leading the district to plan for internal operations similar to their current after-school programs.

Financial sustainability and market impact were primary points of contention among the Commissioners Donaldson and Bell. Commissioners Donaldson and Bell expressed significant concern regarding "government entering private business. Commissioner Bell advised that the program must be self-sustaining and include a profit margin to avoid undercutting private providers. Commissioner Bell advised the proposed tuition rates of \$150 for infants and \$135 for toddlers, which are roughly 17% below the current market rate of \$200–\$250 per week. Director Cupples clarified that the project would be funded by moving money from the school's fund balance, which currently sits at 7.8, above the recommended 7.0 threshold, and utilizing Innovative Career (IC) grants. Director Cupples emphasized that the district is not requesting new funds from the county budget and that the tuition is designed to be "revenue neutral" while covering all recurring expenses.

Commissioner Eddings advised he was for providing childcare for teachers as a necessary "tool in our toolbox" to support a workforce that is already setting national standards. He noted that the plan's reliance on existing grants and fund balances makes it a low-risk, high-reward investment for the county. Director Cupples concluded by noting that a formal resolution to move the necessary funds for renovation will be presented in March once the budget is finalized.

VI. ADJOURN

Seeing no other business, Commissioner Doster made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Commissioner Westbrook seconded, and the meeting was adjourned at 9:59 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Melinda Parham, Secretary
Finance, Ways, and Means Committee

Approved:



Greg Usery, Chairperson
Finance, Ways, and Means Committee

Date: 3/10/26