



Dade County Commissioners Approve FY-2026 Budget with Major Cuts, Targeted Investments

Posted on June 28, 2025 by Carey Fauscett-Anderson

TRENTON, Ga. — June 28, 2025 — During a special called meeting on Friday, June 27, the Dade County Board of Commissioners officially adopted the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, successfully balancing it without drawing from the county's unsecured fund balance. County Executive and Chair Don Townsend presided over the meeting, joined in person by Commissioners Bob Woods and Bill Pullen, with Commissioner Melissa Bradford participating via telephone. The financial plan was praised as a difficult but responsible budget, with Chief Financial Officer Rebecca Jones receiving credit for guiding it to completion amid rising costs and limited revenue flexibility.

To help maintain balance, commissioners scaled back a previously proposed 4% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for employees to 2.5%, reducing the projected cost from \$275,000 to \$172,000. This single decision alone accounted for more than \$100,000 in savings. Elected officials will not receive salary increases this fiscal year, a move commissioners said reflects their effort to limit spending at the leadership level.

Among the most significant increases in expenditures was a \$250,000 rise in health insurance premiums, representing an 8% increase over last year. Animal Control received an \$80,000 budget increase to support the operations of this relatively new department. The county also approved a \$46,000 increase in departmental supplements, including \$33,000 for the District Attorney's Office and \$13,000 for the Public Library.

Contracted services also saw notable increases totaling \$113,000, spread across areas such as emergency services, information technology, building maintenance, E-911 operations, and the Sheriff's Office. In another structural change, the county created a new Historic Courthouse division with an estimated operating cost of \$16,000. However, officials expect that division to generate approximately \$33,000 in revenue, resulting in a projected net gain of \$17,000.

Offsetting some of the year's increases were targeted reductions across several departments. The Tax Assessor's Office saw a \$56,000 cut, while the Jail saw a reduction in inmate medical costs of \$39,000. The Sanitation Department's landfill fees were also trimmed by \$65,000. Additionally, the Industrial Development Authority (IDA) will now be responsible for the Northwest Georgia Joint Development Authority dues, reducing the county's expenses by \$26,000.

Revenue growth also played a key role in balancing the budget. The county anticipates an additional \$101,000 in revenue from several revenue sources including growth in property, timber, and mobile home taxes. Election activity will also bring in an estimated \$24,000 from the upcoming city and school board races. Grant funding will further support county operations, with \$20,000 expected from the Historic Preservation Commission (HPC) and \$6,000 from the

Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). The county has also sold general fixed assets, adding another \$15,000 to revenue.

Other cost-saving measures included reductions in the Public Health budget totaling \$62,000, Sheriff & Jail group insurance savings of \$25,000, and smaller decreases in administrative expenses, utilities, and supplies. Overall, the adopted budget reflects a strategic combination of targeted spending, careful cuts, and modest revenue increases.

The motion to adopt the FY 2026 budget was made by Commissioner Melissa Bradford and seconded by Commissioner Bob Woods. It passed unanimously by those present.

For more information about the FY 2026 budget or other county business, contact:

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