



## Commission Advances Elections Building Planning with Cautious Optimism

*Posted on September 9, 2025 by Carey Fauscett-Anderson*

TRENTON, Ga. (Sept. 9, 2025) — Under the guidance of County Executive Don Townsend, the Dade County Commission is advancing the Elections Building project with transparency, practicality, and fiscal responsibility.

Mr. Townsend opened last Thursday's workshop by reviewing the process that led to seven assembled proposals (six qualified), ranging from \$2.9 million to \$3.4 million. Acknowledging public concerns about cost and functionality, he emphasized that no construction decision has been made yet.

At Townsend's direction, County Clerk Gidget Knight—bringing over 30 years of experience from the Better Business Bureau—led the rigorous vetting process. Commissioner Bob Woods praised the process, noting, "I was very pleased with the level of due diligence we conducted—questions were thoughtful, and feedback from previous clients gave us a good idea of the quality of work we can expect."

Commissioner Bill Pullen focused on function over form: "We have buildings like the 4-H building around here, and they've lasted a long time. What matters is that it's economical, keeps it dry, and maintains proper temperatures for sensitive equipment."

Commissioner Melissa Bradford urged simplifying the design by reducing it from two stories to a single level, citing better accessibility and flexibility. She also encouraged the board to seek the contractor's professional input to ensure balance between durability and cost.

Commissioner Phillip Hartline shared his preference for a brick exterior, praising its longevity. He restated the commission's core principle: "We are choosing a contractor—not choosing a price." He commended Robert Roberts LLC of Chattanooga for their stellar reputation, reliability, and fair subcontractor practices—highlighting that selecting the right firm, not the cheapest bidder, was essential.



Pictured above:  
CE Don Townsend,  
Clerk Gidget Knight  
and County  
employee Alex Case  
accept RFPs.

County Executive Townsend outlined the next steps: reaching out to the contractor to discuss a more budget-compatible plan, and conveying a preference for local contractor participation where feasible and cost-effective.

Chairman Townsend summed up the discussion with clarity and commitment: “We’re listening, learning, and moving forward with a focus on excellence and stewardship of taxpayer resources.”



Left and below: Commissioners meet with county staff members, Board of Elections Supervisor Lowanna Vaughan, and an architectural engineer to discuss plan possibilities.

