

Hart County Water and Sewer Authority Board of Directors Meeting September 21, 2026

The Hart County Water and Sewer Authority met on September 21, 2026, in the Hart County Cooperative Extension Service Building. Chairman Wade Carlton called the meeting to order. Present were Board Members Larry Haley, Bennie Harper, and Vice-Chair Patti York. Also present were Legal Counsel Kim Higginbotham, Interim Director Charles Cathon, The Hartwell Sun Editor Rose Scoggins, EMI CEO Jerry Hood, EMI Senior Engineer Russ Brink, and several members of the public. Mr. Justice was absent.

Welcome

Approval of Agenda

Ms. York motioned to approve the agenda. Mr. Harper seconded the motioned which passed 4 – 0.

Public Comments; Remarks by invited guests

Ms. Rhea Dingham requested that the HCWSA send letters requesting the Dam Safety Modification Study be done as quickly as possible and urge the Army Corp of Engineers to conduct two bathymetric studies.

Mr. Haley motioned to send the letters as requested. Ms. York seconded the motion which passed 4-0.

Approval of August 17th Regular Meeting Minutes and August 24th Work Session Minutes

Mr. Haley motioned to approve the August 17th regular meeting minutes. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed 4 – 0.

Mr. Harper motioned to approve the August 24th work session minutes. Ms. York seconded the motion which passed 4 – 0.

Financial Report

Mr. Cawthon presented the financial report. Mr. Haley motioned to approve the Financial Report. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed 4 – 0.

Old Business

Reed Creek Expansion Project update

Mr. Hood of EMI reported that the request to extend the Reed Creek Expansion Project through June 2028 has been submitted. He also reported that two GEFA draw requests totaling \$1,190,813.00 have been submitted and are pending approval. Mr. Hood noted that the approval process generally takes six to eight weeks.

Mr. Hood reported that the Water Infrastructure Planning Program (WIPP) grant application had been submitted. The \$140,000 grant, anticipated to be awarded in October 2026, will be used for system GIS asset mapping and redundancy planning.

Mr. Hood discussed EMI's proposal for the remaining approximately 2.5 million remaining in GEFA funding available to install about 41,000 feet of waterline including permitting and design.

Mr. Hood stated that the 2026 additional funding loan pre-application for \$10 million dollars had been submitted and received a relatively high score. He added that the authority could accept the loan in totality or accept a portion of it at a 40% principal forgiveness rate. Mr. Hood said the loan could be used for expansion or storage tanks.

Operational Update

Mr. Brink presented his recommendations for water system improvements at a cost estimate of \$21,600.00. Mr. Cawthon recommended proceeding with Mr. Brink's suggestions.

Ms. York motioned to authorize Mr. Cawthon to sign the prepared proposal and proceed with the recommendations. Mr. Haley seconded by which passed 4 – 0.

Mr. Brink presented his recommendations for the Reed Creek Expansion project extension, including an estimated cost of 3.147 million dollars for "Area 3". The bidding process was also discussed.

Ms. York motioned to proceed with EMI's engineering and design proposal for "Area 3" as recommended. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed 4 - 0.

Mr. Hood stated that EMI would begin the surveying and permitting process, with bids anticipated to be opened in January or February 2027. He suggested that the Board make their final side road selections following the bid opening.

FY27 Operating Budget

Mr. Cawthon presented the second reading of the proposed FY27 Operating Budget.

Ms. York motioned to approve the FY27 Operating Budget. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed 4 - 0.

New Business

None

Director's Comments

Mr. Cawthon reported the following information:

- (1) The water purchase breakdown and stated it will be included in the financial report in future updates.
- (2) A main line break on Royston Hwy., likely caused by a lightning strike, and noted improved workflow compared to the July incident.
- (3) An accident involving Truck #1 and a deer.
- (4) The Performance Evaluation process will begin during the first quarter of the fiscal year.
- (5) Repairs and painting of the Gateway tank would be completed by Thanksgiving.
- (6) Thanks to the City of Lavonia for the use of their work truck for field operations.

Members' Comments

Ms. York expressed her thanks to Mr. Cawthon and the City of Lavonia.

Upcoming Meetings

Monday, October 19th, 2026, and Monday, November 16th, 2026

Executive Session – Personnel and Litigation

Mr. Harper made a motion to enter Executive Session to discuss personnel and litigation. Mr. Haley seconded the motion which passed 4 – 0.

All four Board Members were present in Executive Session. Additionally, Ms. Higginbotham and Mr. Cawthon were in attendance. Mr. Harper moved to exit Executive Session and reconvene the Regular Meeting. Mr. Haley seconded the motion which passed 4 - 0.

Regular Meeting

Ms. York motioned to deny the Olive settlement demand. Mr. Harper seconded the motion which passed 4 – 0.

Adjournment

Ms. York motioned to adjourn. Mr. Haley seconded the motion which passed 4 - 0.

Wade Carlton, Chairman