

2019

STATE OF THE COUNTY



Highlighted Sections

- Projects
- Website Redesign
- Habersham Medical Center
- Department Updates
- Facts & Statistics

A look at the current state of Habersham County, ongoing and completed projects, and department updates, from 2019.



Habersham County Board of Commissioners

Stacy Hall, Chairman - District 1

Natalie Crawford, Vice Chair - District 4

Jimmy Tench - District 3

Dustin Mealor - District 2

Currently Vacant - District 5

Habersham County Manager

Phil Sutton

Habersham County Clerk

Lindsay Underwood

PROJECTS COMPLETED IN 2019

During 2019, three major construction projects held grand openings: the new Airport Terminal, the Administration Building, and the Senior Wellness Center. These projects were much anticipated after years of planning and many hours of hard work.

- The new Airport Terminal Building held its Grand Opening on January 7, 2019.
- The new Administration Building held its Dedication Ceremony in December 2018, in honor and celebration of Habersham County's 200th birthday. The facility opened to the public on March 25, 2019.
- The new Senior Wellness Center held its Grand Opening on June 17, 2019.

Airport Terminal Building

The new Habersham County Airport Terminal is roughly 3,000 square feet and features state-of-the art amenities. The project was primarily funded with DOT grant funds and additional funding came from SPLOST VI. Local contractors were used for approximately 70% of the work. The facility includes an aviation training room, conference room, pilots' lounge, and breakroom.



Administration Building

Habersham County's new Administration Building houses the Board of Commissioners' and County Manager's Office, Human Resources, Finance, Tax Commissioner/Tag Office, Tax Assessors, Planning & Development, Elections & Registration, IT, Public Works, and the Environmental Health Office. Residents now have the convenience of accessing a majority of the County's administrative offices and services in one location instead of four different locations.



Senior Wellness Center

The new Habersham County Senior Wellness Center is a 5,214 square foot building located adjacent to the Habersham County Senior Center. The project was in response to a growing need for more space for the expanding Health & Wellness and Meal programs the Senior Center offers. The new facility not only provides space for those programs, but has created more room for other activities at the Senior Center now that Health & Wellness and the Meal programs no longer occupy the Senior Center Building. The project was made possible by a \$750,000 Community Development Block Grant through the Georgia Department of Community Affairs.



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County Website Redesign

On October 1, 2019 Habersham County launched their newly redesigned website located at www.habershamga.com. Redesign of the site was provided by Southfire Media in Augusta, Georgia at no additional cost to the County.

The new website creates a mobile-friendly, responsive site that automatically formats to any size device. It also provides a more user-friendly browsing experience, in addition to giving the site an updated look.

BE IN THE KNOW

New Jail Bond Referendum

LATEST NEWS

Stay up to date on the latest happenings in Habersham County.

- JURY DUTY REPORTING INSTRUCTIONS 10/21/19
- NEWS RELEASE: FEDERAL AND STATE GRANTS
- BID OPPORTUNITY: 2020 ACCOUNTABILITY COURT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES
- NOV. 5 GENERAL SPECIAL ELECTIONS SAMPLE BALLOTS
- NOV. 5 GENERAL SPECIAL ELECTIONS EARLY VOTING DATES, TIMES, AND LOCATIONS

See All the Latest News

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Mark your calendars for our upcoming meetings and community events.

October 2019						
SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
27	28	29	30	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
1	2					

View All Events



HOW DO I...

GET A HANDGUN LICENSE?

Probate Court, 295 Llewellyn St., Clarkesville, GA, 706-839-0320
Handgun Licenses

Click Here for More Answers to Frequently Asked Questions



HELPFUL LINKS

YOUR GOVERNMENT
LIVING & VISITING
BUSINESS & DEVELOPMENT
COUNTY DIRECTORY
SITEMAP

Human Trafficking Notice in compliance with O.C.G.A. 16-5-47. Click to Learn More
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Privacy Policy | Terms of Use | E-Verify Statement | Site Map | Accessibility Policy
Employee Portal | Admin Access

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Sign In

Habersham Medical Center and Northeast Georgia Health Systems 5-Year Plan

Habersham Medical Center (HMC), Northeast Georgia Health Systems (NGHS), and the Habersham County Board of Commissioners have entered into a 5-year agreement that will help stabilize HMC and ultimately lead to an agreement making HMC, located in Demorest, part of Northeast Georgia Health Systems. In addition, this will lessen the debt burden on Habersham County taxpayers.

The 5-year plan calls for NGHS to invest \$3 million annually to help HMC fund capital projects to enhance and expand services provided at the hospital in Demorest. During this 5-year period, any dollars HMC generates beyond 20 days of cash-on-hand to support operations would be transferred to a fund to purchase HMC by NGHS. At the end of the agreement, the Hospital Authority of Habersham County will apply the fund balance to reduce the hospital's bond debt. Modeling suggests we will have \$18 to \$24 million available to purchase the hospital, dependent on community usage.

Additionally, Habersham County has refinanced \$10,615,000 in hospital bonds in order to save \$966,000 over the next seventeen years. This is an additional step to reduce the burden of the hospital bond on Habersham County taxpayers.



PUBLIC SAFETY- SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT

At the September 16, 2019 Commission meeting, the Habersham County Sheriff's Office was recognized for their recertification in the State of Georgia Law Enforcement Certification Program. Chief Bruce Carlisle, Chairman of District Representatives for the Georgia Association of Chiefs of Police, presented Sheriff Joey Terrell with a plaque in honor of the accomplishment. Janice Haslup, Office of Professional Standards for the Sheriff's Department, was also recognized for her work and role in the Certification process.

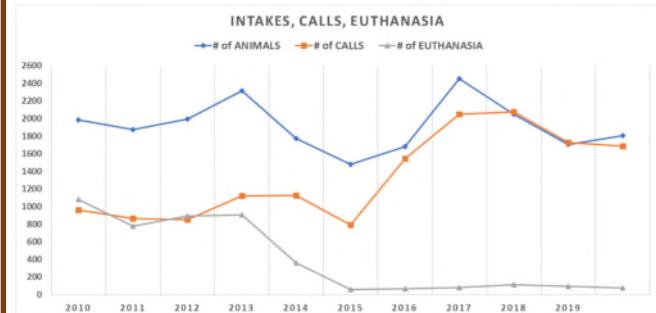


On July 7, 2019, the Habersham County Sheriff's Office School Resource Officer Program hosted the 2019 Georgia Association of School Resource Officers (GASRO) annual conference. There were over 150 participants from 52 different agencies throughout Georgia. During the 3-day conference, participants heard from Chris Hollyfield (actor, professional wrestler, and motivational speaker) regarding the realities of bullying and methods to help students take a stand against it. Chief David Perry of the Florida State University Police Department spoke regarding his personal experience with the realities of an active shooter school incident. Additionally, participants were able to attend a series of breakout training sessions addressing a variety of topics. Because the conference was such a huge success, Habersham County has been asked to host the conference again in 2020.



PUBLIC SAFETY- ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL

Through efforts of the Habersham County Animal Care and Control Department, the euthanasia rate in the Habersham County Animal Shelter was reduced from nearly 1,000 per year to less than 100 per year during the past 5 years. As of September 30th, there have been 1,871 intakes at the Animal Shelter.



PUBLIC SAFETY—EMERGENCY SERVICES

From January 1, 2019 through September 30, 2019, emergency service calls for the Habersham County Emergency Services Department were as follows:



Fire Apparatus Responses: 2,662

EMS Unit Responses: 5,719

Community Paramedicine: 1,122

Total Patient Contacts: 6,861

Total Department Responses: 9,103



Fire ISO Rating Improvements

During FY2019 Habersham County's Fire Department worked diligently to complete their water supply shuttle service. The hard work of our County's dedicated staff of professionals paid off. With the completion of that service, Habersham County's Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating was reduced to a class 5 rating for all residents within a 5 mile radius of a fire station. This means that residents and businesses within 5 miles of a fire station, but who are not on public water, will have the same rating as those on a city water system, which results in improved property insurance rates for those residents and businesses. The new lower ISO rating became effective on July 1, 2019. On average, the new ISO rating for a home without city water will reduce property insurance for a \$200,000 house from \$2,750 to \$1,214, a savings of \$1,548.

Alyssa Delgado's Story

On January 22, 2019, a combination of people from Habersham County E911, Habersham EMS, Habersham County School System, the Sheriff's Department School Resource Office, Habersham Medical Center, Children's Healthcare of Atlanta, and Air Methods assisted in the response and care for Alyssa Delgado, a high school student who suffered a serious stroke while at school. Thanks to the combined efforts of some of our dedicated, highly-trained and experienced emergency service and public safety personnel, Alyssa is alive and well today.

Pilot Program—Blood Product Administration

The Habersham County Emergency Services Department will be one of 3 Pilot Sites in the state of Georgia to show the benefits of administering blood products to trauma patients pre-hospital versus waiting until arriving at a hospital. The administration of blood products in the field was approved by the District Trauma Commission and is a huge step in enhancing the care of patients needing life-saving blood. Allowing our medics to dispense blood products in the field could make the difference between life and death for trauma patients who are suffering from medical conditions such as G.I. Bleeds. The Georgia Trauma Commission will provide funding in the amount of \$26,000 for this pilot program.

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PUBLIC SAFETY—E911 & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

In January 2019, Lynn Smith, E911/EMA Director, became a Certified Public Safety Executive of the Association of Public Safety Communication Professionals International. In April 2019 she was also named Emergency Management Director of the Year.

Additionally, Habersham County met the Incentive Standards outlined in the Georgia Emergency Management Agency/Homeland Security Federal-State-Local Disaster Match Policy, qualifying the County for a reduced local match requirement for public assistance programs.



Annual E911 Children's Fun Fest

The 13th Annual Habersham County E911 Children's Fun Fest was held on October 24, 2019. The event, hosted each year by the Habersham E911 Department, is a free event for the public and allows the community to interact with public safety personnel and other local organizations. This year's Fun Fest was attended by approximately **10,000** participants. The event has been a huge success and continues to grow each year.

ACCOUNTABILITY COURTS

Habersham County's Drug Court began operation in 2011 and now includes all three counties in the Mountain Judicial Circuit: Habersham, Stephens, and Rabun. Drug Court has a capacity for 120 participants. Family Treatment Court, which began in 2015, has a capacity for 30 families. Mental Health Court, the newest accountability court, began in January 2019, and currently has a capacity for 15 participants, but is expected to increase to a capacity for 20 participants within the next 6 months.



During 2019, Habersham County's Drug Court had 113 graduates from the program. Family Treatment Court had 19 graduates, and 28 babies have been born drug-free since the inception of the program. Accountability Court programs are intended to free up space in the already overcrowded jails and prisons, and provide intensive treatment and supervision for individuals and families with the hope that participants will be able to return to, and function as productive members of, our community. For every \$1 invested in Accountability Courts, the state saves over \$10 in incarceration costs. On average, it costs around \$15,000 per year to incarcerate a person. It costs about \$2,000 per year on average to treat someone in Drug Court.

PARKS & RECREATION

In 2019, Habersham County Parks and Recreation registered 975 youth athletes in its sports programs. The gymnastics program currently rosters 32 team members and serves hundreds of kids in class per session. In our local club participation, Rapids Soccer has 600 participants; Little League has 500 participants; Rapids swimming averaged 70 swimmers per month; Hurricanes swimming averaged 30 swimmers per month; Church League Softball had 17 teams and our Pickleball Club has an average of 60 members.

Other highlights include:

- Raised \$14,000 in the 2nd Annual Swing into Spring Scholarship Golf Tournament hosted at Waterfall Club.
- Partnered with Little League Association to renovate ballfields, improve drainage and install safety netting at Diamond Memorial Complex.
- Coordinated work with Public Works Director to add handicap parking spaces at Lower Fairgrounds Soccer Field.
- Board of Commissioners approved proceeding with replacement of Pool Pak air-controlled system at Ruby C. Fulbright Aquatic Center.



SENIOR CENTER



Habersham Senior Center Activity Measurements			
	2018	Projected 2019	Growth Percentage
Congregate Meal Clients	93	271	191%
Meals Served - Congregate	6,961	7,444	7%
Meals Served - Meals on Wheels	35,666	39,717	11%
Senior Trips	11,202	11,600	4%
Senior Trip Miles	31,215	34,728	11%
Wellness Programs Clients	155	352	127%

Programmed Wellness Classes			
	2018	Projected 2019	Growth Percentage
Silver Sneakers Classes	12	28	133%
Other Exercise Classes	4	16	300%
Dance Classes	8	17	113%
Other Social Events	19	42	121%



PUBLIC WORKS

Construction of Landfill Cell 5

Construction of Landfill Cell 5 is underway and completion is expected in December 2019. There has been a significant increase in the amount of waste taken in due to a rise in construction and an increase in local waste collection companies bringing the waste they collect to the Habersham County Landfill. A study conducted by Hodges, Harbin, Newberry & Tribble in 2018 indicated that Cell 4 would reach capacity by October 2020.

After construction of Cell 5 is complete, and once Cell 5 is full, Cells 3, 4, and 5 will be used as a platform to vertically expand the Landfill. This should allow the current Landfill to accommodate Habersham County citizens until 2052.

The estimated cost of this project is \$3.7 million, with \$3.45 million funded by SPLOST VI.



Road Department

LMIG Grant 2019:	\$738,179
SPLOST VI	\$537,499
Total	\$1,275,678 Miles 7.81

- ◆ **Reflective Road Sign Replacement:** New signs and striping will go up on a total of 42.6 miles of roads. The estimated contract value is \$183,000. This project will be administered under the Federal program, which pays 100% of construction costs. The project is expected to bid in October 2019.
- ◆ **LMIG 2019:** This project includes milling, patching, resurfacing, and guardrail replacement for 7.81 miles of roads. The project value is \$1,275,678. Project completion is expected by November 30, 2019.
- ◆ **LMIG 2020:** Projects are currently being identified and estimates are being obtained for inclusion in the LMIG 2020 project. The formula amount is \$781,026 and local match will be 30%.
- ◆ **Right-of-Way Vegetation Control:** Bids were advertised and received for herbicide services for grass suppression on 147 miles of various county roads. The first phase of herbicide treatment has been applied to approximately 80 miles of gravel roads. The next phase is scheduled for this fall for 67 miles of paved roads.
- ◆ **Tugalo Shortcut Road Bridge Replacement:** The Georgia Department of Transportation has selected Tugalo Shortcut Road for bridge replacement through the Office of Bridge Design. An MOA was approved by the Habersham County Board of Commissioners during their April 2018 meeting, which committed the County to provide 50% of Right-of-Way costs. The project is currently in the design phase and has a let date of September 2022.
- ◆ **Coon Creek Road:** The Habersham County Board of Commissioners agreed to accept Coon Creek Rd. into the County maintenance system during their regular meeting held on April 17, 2017. Widening and paving of the road was contingent upon successful right-of-way acquisition. The project included clearing, grading, utility relocation, and paving, and was budgeted at \$368,000. This project is now complete.
- ◆ **Stapleton Dr. Cross-Drain Rehabilitation:** The scope of this project is to rehabilitate a cross-drain pipe under Stapleton Drive to include slip lining the existing metal pipe with a special HDPE pipe made from Contech. The project is estimated at \$45,000. Easements have been secured and excavation and inspection is complete.

Airport Projects

Many years ago, as part of a strategic plan to facilitate future growth and increase air traffic at the Habersham County Airport, a large scale construction project began that included a full parallel taxiway. The project was an essential safety improvement. Due to the complex scope and magnitude of the project, it was necessary to construct it in four phases. A Notice to Proceed was issued for the first phase on August 18, 2014. Since then, countless hours have been invested and all phases of the project were completed in 2019.

Throughout all four phases, approximately 1,090,550 cubic yards of dirt were moved for an approximate cost of \$24,280,346; 90% of funding for this project was provided by the FAA and 5% of the funds were provided by GDOT. The County Grant match was funded by SPLOST VI.

- **Construction of a new ADA bathroom at the east end of the airport, for the flying community to access, is underway. County forces will complete the project at a not-to-exceed budget of \$12,000.**
- **The process to construct new T-hangars has begun. Michael Baker International, engineering consultants for the airport, will begin preparation of design and bid documents for the project.**
- **The Obstruction Survey to identify high ground and penetrations to the approach path has been completed. Mitigation of identified obstructions will determine next Airport improvement projects.**

Air Methods Corporation

With the completion of the new Airport Terminal Building in January, the former airport terminal building was renovated, and a lease was signed between Habersham County and Air Methods Corporation, an air medical transport company that provides air ambulance services. They will lease the building as a base of operations for their air ambulance business for the next five or more years. This will generate revenue and, most importantly, Habersham County is now home to this vital medical service.



United States Forestry Service

The U.S. Forestry Service will be using Habersham County Airport as a home base while their helicopter contract is active. They will occupy a temporary office trailer during that time. USFS personnel and a contracted helicopter will provide services that primarily include fire suppression, controlled burns, and wildlife resources.

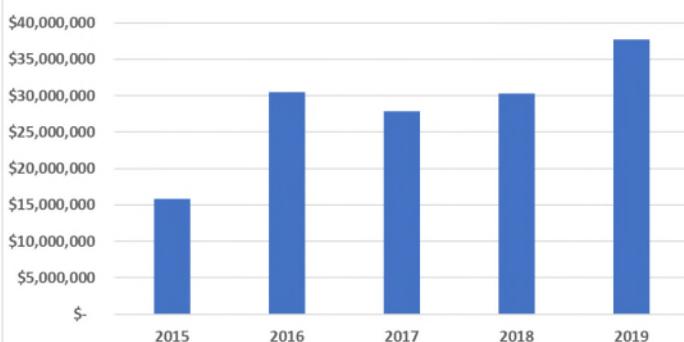


PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

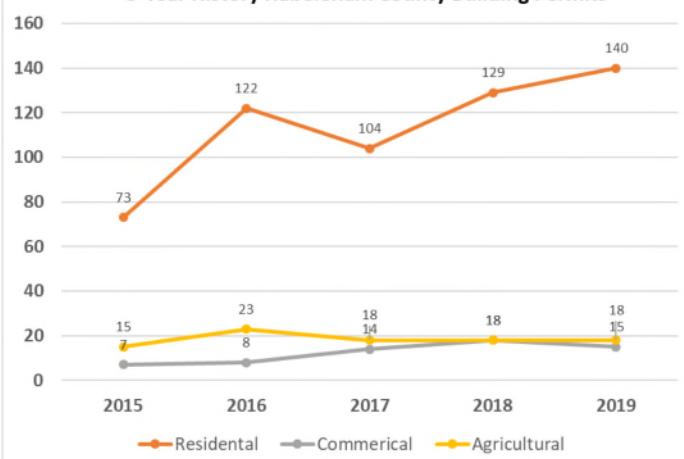
The Habersham County Airport Industrial Park completed drainage and utilities to all development pads in FY2019, and ARC Grant reimbursement for the cost of water and sewer installation was received in April in the amount of \$300,000.

Pads 1, 2, 6, and 9 have sold. Pad 2, owned by Steel Cell, is currently under construction as they expand their business. That construction is expected to be complete by the end of 2019. The Miller Logistics property sold in FY2019 for \$560,000. The Reed property is currently in the design phase. Once design of the Reed property is complete, construction funding options will be investigated. The Windstream Land Swap has been finalized, and grading on pad 10 is expected in 2020. Once graded, pad 10 will be a prime site in the Airport Industrial Park.

5-Year History Habersham County Building Permit Valuation



5-Year History Habersham County Building Permits



GRAD Certification

Georgia Ready for
Accelerated Development

The Georgia Ready for Accelerated Development (GRAD) Program was established by the Georgia Department of Economic Development to assist economic development throughout the state by providing a way for available industrial sites to be prepared and ready for rapid development. Local communities submit applications to a marketing collaboration and partnership established in 1997 between state government and private corporations to help drive economic development in Georgia. Once an application has been reviewed and the industrial site(s) have been verified to meet all required standards, GRAD Certification is awarded.

Properties that are GRAD Certified are at an advanced level of readiness for development. Benefits to this certification include providing potential developers/businesses assurance that all due diligence has been performed and the site is ready for immediate development. GRAD Certification indicates that a site is zoned correctly, utilities are in place, an environmental assessment has been completed, etc. Habersham County is currently in the process of preparing to submit our application for GRAD Certification of the Habersham County Airport Industrial Park.



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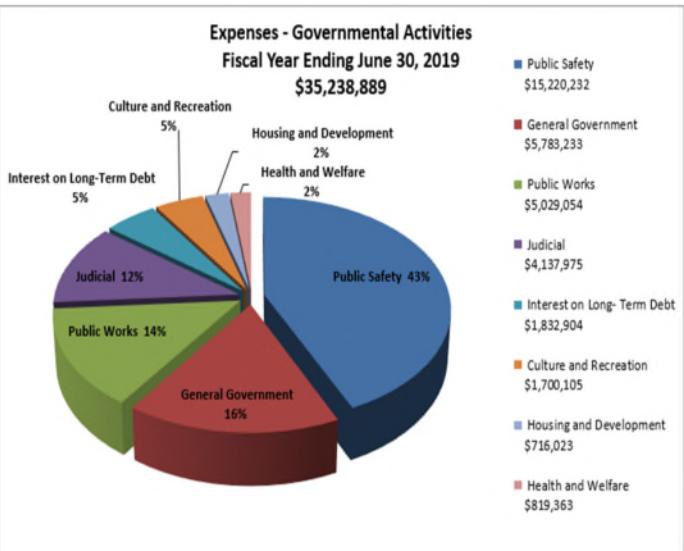
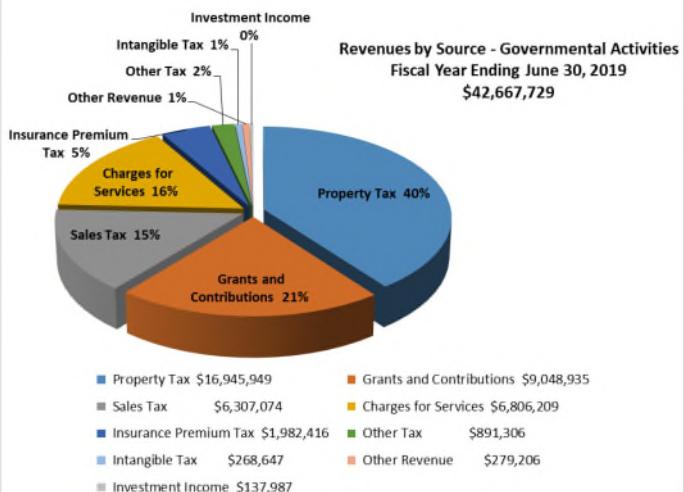
Federal and State Grants

Habersham County has continued with the recent success in obtaining and executing grant-related projects. During Fiscal year 2019, Habersham County received \$8,349,851 in state and federal grants, which were expended over 45 different grant-funded projects.

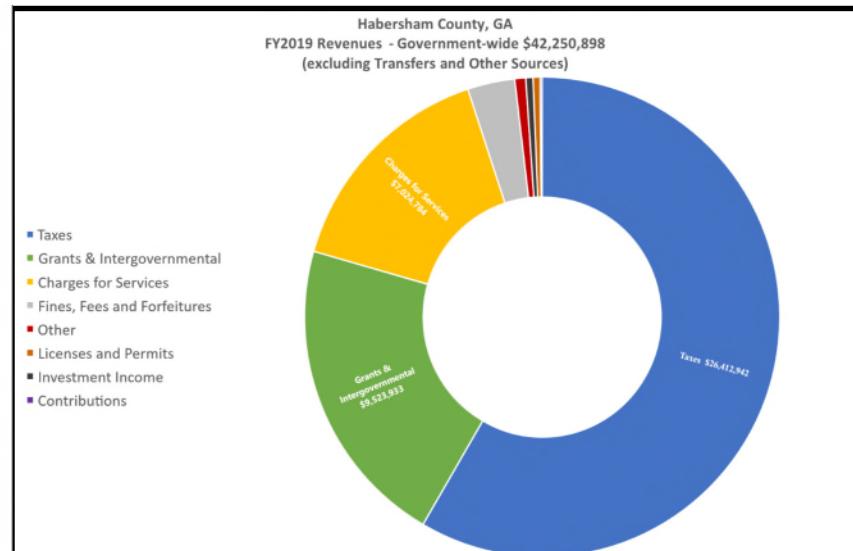
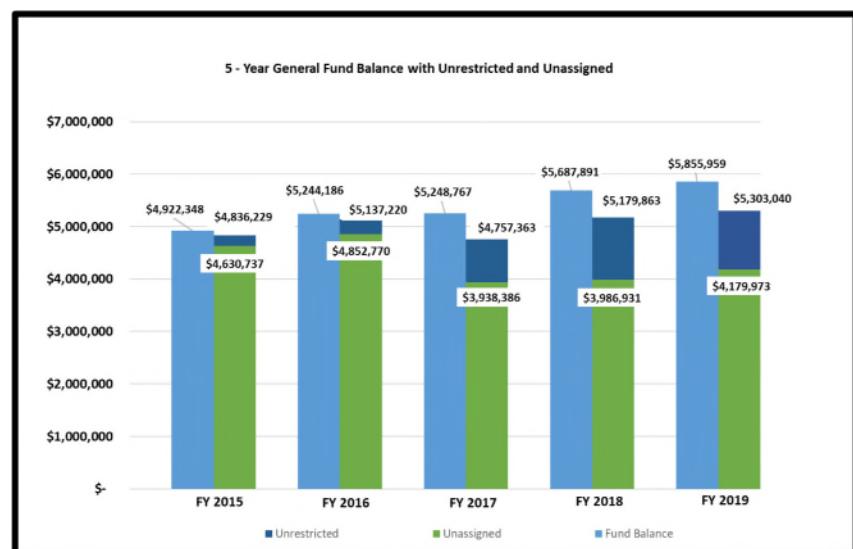
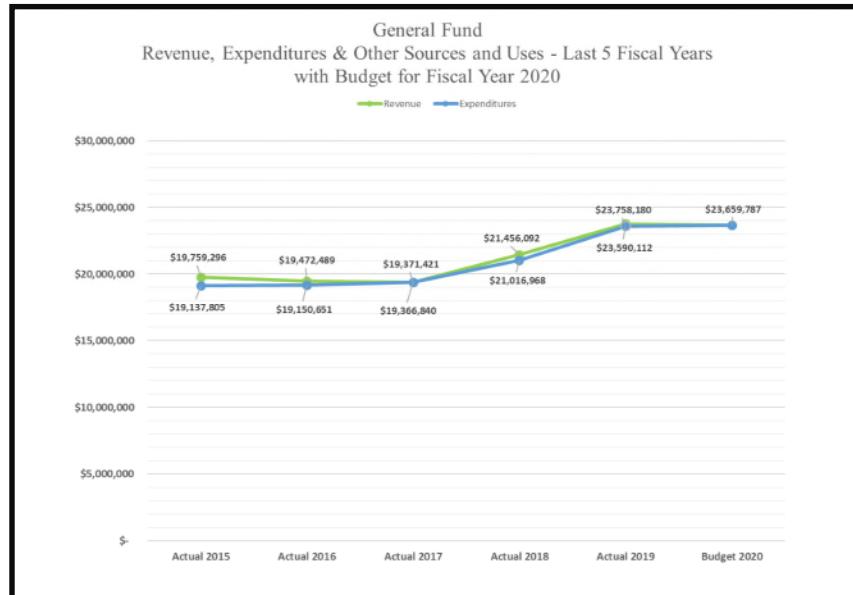
"This means the County's second largest revenue source, after property tax, is state and federal grant funds." said Phil Sutton, County Manager.

"The County's commitment to using grant revenue has lessened the burden on tax payers to provide resources to fund County projects." said Stacy Hall, Commission Chairman.

Over the last four years, Habersham County has taken in \$8,349,851 in FY2019, \$7,874,329 in FY2018, \$4,746,439 in FY2017, and \$6,213,311 in FY2016. The total amount of state and federal grant revenue was over \$27,000,000 during the last four years.



FINANCE DEPARTMENT



2019

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Habersham County Facts and Statistics

POPULATION: 45,388

PER CAPITA INCOME: \$32,867

UNEMPLOYMENT: 2.8%

SCHOOL ENROLLMENT (PK-12): 6,928

REGISTERED VOTERS:

28,197



RESIDENTIAL BUILDING PERMITS ISSUED:
140

TRANSIT TRIPS:
8,419

TRANSIT MILES:
65,906



FACILITIES MANAGEMENT

Manages a total of 38 properties to include:

- Administration Building
- Aquatic Center and Fairgrounds
- EMS Station and 9 Fire Stations
- Judicial Center, Detention Center, E911 Facility
- Health Department, Veterans Services, AVITA
- Senior Center & Senior Wellness Center
- Facilities/Transit, Fleet, and Road Dept. Offices
- Animal Control Office and Animal Shelter
- Airport Terminal and AirLife Headquarters
- Library and Extension Services

- Landfill
- Soque Watershed
- DFCS Office
- Public Defender's Office
- Old Courthouse Building
- 4 Communication Sites



ANIMAL CARE & CONTROL



- ◆ 572 Adoptions
- ◆ 397 Transfers to Rescue
- ◆ 181 Lost Pets Reunited with Families

of ROADS MAINTAINED: 725

TOTAL PAVED: 409

TOTAL GRAVEL: 98

TOTAL ROAD MILES: 507

of BRIDGES MAINTAINED: 56

EMS CALLS

7,236



E911

Total Calls: 214,618

Emergency: 101,790

Non-Emergency: 112,828



Sheriff's Department

CALLS FOR SERVICE: 27,670

TRAFFIC STOPS: 6,326

DUI ARRESTS: 251

DRUG-RELATED ARRESTS: 336



INCIDENT REPORTS: 3,250

HABERSHAM COUNTY AIRPORT

Estimated Annual Operations: 9,515

Consists of: General Aviation: 6,205

Commercial: 685

Military: 350

Medical: 2,190

Forestry: 85

Aircraft Based at Airport: 74

Consists of: Single Engine: 64

Multi Engine: 9

Helicopter: 2



FIRE CALLS

3,755

