

July 21, 2023

Via Alternative Electronic Filing

Ms. Sallie Tanner
Executive Secretary
Georgia Public Service Commission
244 Washington Street S.W.
Atlanta, GA 30334-5701

**RE: Amended Petition For Approval to Acquire Real Estate By Condemnation
In Re: Sandersville Railroad Company; Hancock County, Georgia
Acquisition; Docket No. 45045**

Dear Ms. Tanner:

For filing in the above-styled docket, please find the enclosed *Direct Testimony of Allen R. Haywood* on behalf of Sandersville Railroad Company. As required by the electronic filing procedures, a physical copy of this filing will be mailed to the Commission. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our office.

Sincerely,



L. Craig Dowdy
For TAYLOR ENGLISH DUMA LLP

LCD:wf
Enclosure

cc: Nancy G. Gibson (w/encl.)
Rob Trokey (w/encl.)
Steven L. Jones (w/encl.)
Robert Highsmith/Laura Flint (w/encl.)

Don and Sally Garrett (w/encl.)
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Marvin and Pat Smith (w/encl.)
William R. Maurer (w/encl.)

**BEFORE THE
GEORGIA PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION**

**In Re: Sandersville Railroad Company;
Hancock County, Georgia Acquisition**

Docket No.: 45045

**DIRECT TESTIMONY OF
R. ALLEN HAYWOOD**

on behalf of Sandersville Railroad Company

July 21, 2023

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1 **Q. PLEASE STATE YOUR NAME, EMPLOYER, POSITION OR TITLE,**
2 **AND BUSINESS ADDRESS.**

3 A. I am R. Allen Haywood. I have been a City of Sparta (the “City”) and
4 Hancock County, Georgia (the “County”) resident for 39 years. The City of Sparta is
5 the county seat of Hancock County. I am 71 years old and currently serve as Sparta’s
6 mayor. I also work on an hourly contract as the Executive Director of the Sparta
7 Hancock [County] Development Authority (the “SHDA”). My business address is P.O.
8 Box 397 Sparta, GA 31089.

9
10 **Q. ON WHOSE BEHALF ARE YOU TESTIFYING IN THIS**
11 **PROCEEDING?**

12 A. I am testifying on my behalf, as the Mayor of Sparta, Georgia and as the
13 Executive Director of the SHDA, in support of the Sandersville Railroads proposed
14 Spur.

15
16 **Q. HAVE YOU PREVIOUSLY TESTIFIED BEFORE THE**
17 **COMMISSION?**

18 A. I have not previously testified before the Commission.
19

20 **Q. PLEASE SUMMARIZE YOUR BACKGROUND, WORK**
21 **EXPERIENCE, AND CONNECTION TO HANCOCK COUNTY.**

22 A. I grew up in Warrenton and graduated from Warren County Public Schools

1 in 1970. After completing my double major in news-editorial journalism studies at
2 the University of Florida, I returned to my family's weekly newspaper business in
3 1975. I was editor of The Warrenton Clipper from 1975 to 1980. In July 1984, I
4 purchased The Sparta Ishmaelite weekly newspaper and moved to Hancock County.
5 I was owner, editor, publisher, and janitor, sleeping with a scanner next to my bed. I
6 took the photos and wrote the news for every issue until I sold the newspaper in July
7 2005. After that, I took a year off before I began working as a golf host at Reynolds
8 (Plantation) Lake Oconee. In 2012, the Hancock County Board of Commissioners
9 asked me to work as the Executive Director of the SHDA, representing the County at
10 regional meetings. Before I became Executive Director, the SHDA board had been
11 dormant for several years and no efforts were being made to spur economic
12 development in our community. A new board has since been appointed, and we are
13 actively trying to revive the local economy that continues to suffer from job loss and
14 a dwindling population.

15

16 **Q. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF YOUR TESTIMONY?**

17 A. My testimony addresses the current state of Hancock County and Sparta,
18 Georgia as well as their economic decline and population loss. I address the positive
19 impact Sandersville Railroad Company's (the "Railroad" or "Sandersville Railroad")
20 Hanson Spur will have on the local economy and my support for the spur. I also
21 address the positive effect that new and expanded industries along the spur,
22 including the Heidelberg Materials quarry (the "Hanson Quarry"), will have on

1 Hancock County and the City of Sparta, Georgia, especially through the provision of
2 good-paying jobs for the community.

3

4 **Q. WHAT IS THE CURRENT ECONOMIC STATE OF HANCOCK**
5 **COUNTY?**

6 A. Today, Hancock County is among the poorest Counties in Georgia, with
7 limited job opportunities for its citizens. The community has endured the closure of
8 3 sewing plants, a sawmill, 2 granite quarries, a furniture manufacturing plant, and
9 most devastatingly, the shuttering of 70% of our family-owned small businesses. Our
10 citizens must leave the County to find jobs to support their families. After receiving
11 their paychecks from jobs out-of-town, these citizens naturally conduct their shopping
12 out of town, decreasing commerce and economic activity within the County's limits.

13 According to the Bureau of the Census (the "Census Bureau") of the United
14 States Department of Commerce, currently only 31.6% of the population age 16 years
15 or older in Hancock County is employed, meaning **almost 70% of the population**
16 **16 years of age or older in Hancock County is unemployed.**¹ The median
17 household income in Hancock County is \$33,946 and the per capita income is
18 \$18,351.²

19 In neighboring Baldwin County, 51.5% of the population 16 years of age or
20 older is employed, the median household income is \$50,413, and the per capita income

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/hancockcountygeorgia/PST045222>

² *Id.*

1 is \$28,455.³ In the state of Georgia as a whole, 62.9% of the population 16 years of
2 age or older is employed, the median household income is \$65,030, and the per capita
3 income is \$34,516.⁴

4 As a member of the SHDA, and now Mayor of Sparta, I have been involved in
5 efforts to slow the economic decline and the population loss in our County. Despite
6 our efforts, the population of Hancock County is down from 19,189 in 1910⁵ and
7 10,076 in 2000⁶ to 8,850 in 2020.⁷ There are 2 large employers in the County: Hancock
8 State Prison (which employs about 200 people) and Verescence (which employs about
9 260 people).⁸ But, the best paying jobs in our community are quarry jobs.⁹ When the
10 Hanson Spur is built, employment opportunities at the Hanson Quarry and at new
11 and existing industries along the spur will increase.

12 To overcome our County's economic doldrums, we are working hard to
13 encourage new and expanded industries to choose Hancock County and Sparta,
14 Georgia and I am happy that Heidelberg Materials has chosen Hancock County for
15 its expanded operation and that construction of the Railroad's Hanson Spur will aid
16 that expansion and be available to serve other, new, and existing industries located
17 along its length.

18

³ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/baldwincountygeorgia/PST045222>

⁴ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/GA/PST045222>

⁵ <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/decennial/1910/abstract/supplement-ga.pdf> (pg. 18)

⁶ <https://data.census.gov/all?q=population+hancock+county+georgia+2000>

⁷ <https://data.census.gov/table?q=hancock+county+georgia+population&y=2020&tid=DECENNIALPL2020.P1>

⁸ E.g., <https://explorer.gdol.ga.gov/vosnet/mis/Profiles/Counties/Hancock.pdf>

⁹ <https://explorer.gdol.ga.gov/vosnet/mis/Profiles/Counties/Hancock.pdf>

1 **Q. WHAT ARE THE ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT BENEFITS OF**
2 **QUARRIES?**

3 A. Granite quarries provide salaries well-above the average in our community
4 and provide great benefits. The quarries are especially important to our County and
5 city governments because the rocks generate sales taxes. Four cents (\$0.04) is added
6 to every dollar (\$1.00) of granite mined and sold to the direct benefit our County and
7 its citizens. Specifically, Local Option Sales Tax (“LOST”), which includes Special
8 Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (“SPLOST”), Transportation Special Purpose Sales
9 Tax (“TSPLOST”), and Education Special Purpose Sales Tax (“ESPLOST”), is
10 collected on granite sales as well as the goods and services employees of the quarry
11 buy in our community. County and City governments split the LOST tax funds and
12 62% goes to the County and 38% goes to the City. SPLOST funds the County/City jail
13 and other projects. TSPLOST provides the County government with some \$900,000
14 per year, which is about 10% of the County’s annual total budget. From that, the City
15 gets about \$55,000 annually in discretionary funds and in funds earmarked for
16 several designated street projects. ESPLOST funds repairs and rehab construction at
17 the County school facilities. Speaking for the City, our direct benefit from LOST
18 amounts to about \$280,000 per year, which is about 22% of the City’s annual budget.
19 I pay City and County taxes, as do my neighbors, so we benefit from these sales tax
20 revenues just like all County residents do. Expansion of the Hanson Spur will benefit
21 Sparta and Hancock County taxpayers.

1 **Q. WHAT IS YOUR OPINION REGARDING THE EXPANSION OF THE**
2 **HANSON QUARRY?**

3 A. The expansion would provide economic benefit to the City and the County.
4

5 **Q. WHAT IS YOUR OPINION REGARDING THE PROPOSED**
6 **RAILROAD SPUR?**

7 A. It will provide positive economic impact to our community. It will also reduce
8 the number of tractor trailers that traverse our roads daily which would be expected
9 to increase substantially if the Hanson Spur is not constructed. So, I believe it will
10 improve the safety of our community and reduce the wear and tear of our roads and
11 bridges reducing road repair costs and will benefit the local economy through the
12 creation of new jobs and tax-paying industries.

13

14 **Q. DOES THIS CONCLUDE YOUR TESTIMONY?**

15 A. Yes, it does

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CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I certify that I have this day served a copy of the foregoing **Direct Testimony of R. Allen Haywood** upon the following persons by causing electronic copies of the same to be transmitted to each party that has supplied a valid email address and upon all other parties via first class mail with adequate postage affixed thereon and deposited in the United States Mail addressed as follows:

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This 21st day of July 2023.



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