



Planning and Cost Revisions Continue for Dade County Elections Building

Posted on October 7, 2025 by Carey Fauscett-Anderson

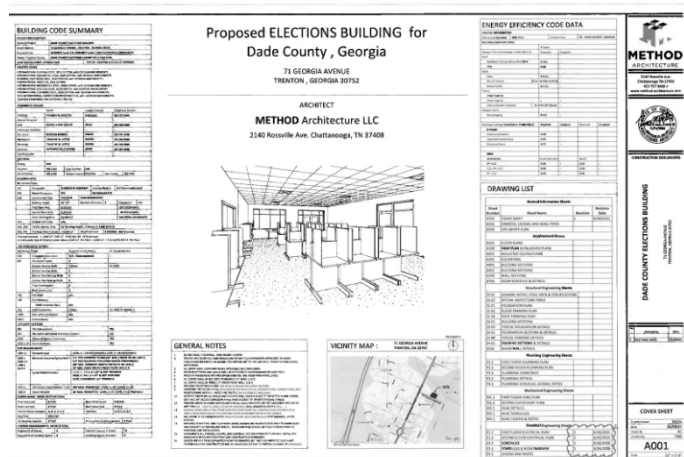
TRENTON, Ga. (October 7, 2025) — During the October workshop of the Dade County Board of Commissioners, discussion turned once again to the long-anticipated Dade County Elections Building — a project still in the design phase but steadily moving forward as the county refines its plans and budget.

Chairman Don Townsend began by emphasizing that construction has not yet begun. “We’re still in the design and planning phase,” he said. “There are several areas where we’ve been able to identify savings and refine the plans before breaking ground.”

Townsend explained that the county and its contractor, Roberts LLC of Chattanooga, have been working together to reduce costs and improve efficiency through a detailed value-engineering review. “The contractor has now come back with a value-engineering proposal that reduces the projected cost by about one million dollars,” he said. “And we are continuing to look for additional savings. We’re doing everything we can to protect taxpayer dollars and still deliver a quality facility.”

The Elections Building will provide dedicated space for the Elections and Registration offices and early voting operations, replacing existing arrangements that have outgrown available space. Townsend explained that the goal is not only to create a secure and functional work environment but also to ensure the building’s construction process remains financially responsible. “We don’t want to rush it,” he said. “We want to make sure every part of it — from the site work to the structure itself — is done right and done once.”

The board reviewed a series of revisions that together make the project more affordable without reducing essential functionality. The current design reduces the overall square footage by about 6,200 feet, streamlining office space while maintaining capacity for staff and equipment. The HVAC system will also be relocated to the rear of the structure to shorten ductwork and lower mechanical costs.



Several commissioners weighed in during the discussion. Commissioner Melissa Bradford noted that the board's methodical approach continues to balance operational needs with fiscal responsibility. Commissioner Bob Woods raised concerns about stormwater management and site maintenance, underscoring the importance of long-term planning before construction begins. Commissioner Bill Pullen focused on engineering timelines, pointing out that geotechnical testing must be completed before site preparation can proceed. Commissioner Phillip Hartline added his support for the current direction, commending the decision to handle site work in-house as a means of keeping costs under control and ensuring accountability throughout the process.

Townsend confirmed that scheduling for the required soil borings and load tests is already underway. "Our preferred contractor is about four weeks out, but we're reaching out to others to see if we can move faster," he said. "The main thing is we don't start building until we know exactly what we're sitting on."

Once those tests are complete, engineers will finalize the foundation and structural plans, and the contractor will re-verify pricing with its subcontractors. Townsend reiterated that the county intends to manage its own excavation and grading, which will further reduce the project's contracted expenses. "By doing that in-house, we're saving a considerable amount," he said. "We'll handle the dirt work and compaction ourselves, then let the contractor take over from there."

The project will be funded through Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (SPLOST) revenues designated for capital improvement projects. Townsend said the board remains committed to transparency and financial prudence as it moves through each stage of the process.

"This project is moving forward," Townsend said in closing. "It's just a matter of taking each step in order and being responsible with every dollar we spend."