ROADSIDE MOWING

Effingham County

Board of Commissioners

Commissioner Briefing

Roadside Mowing Service Options

Current Contract • Competitive Solicitation • In-House Model

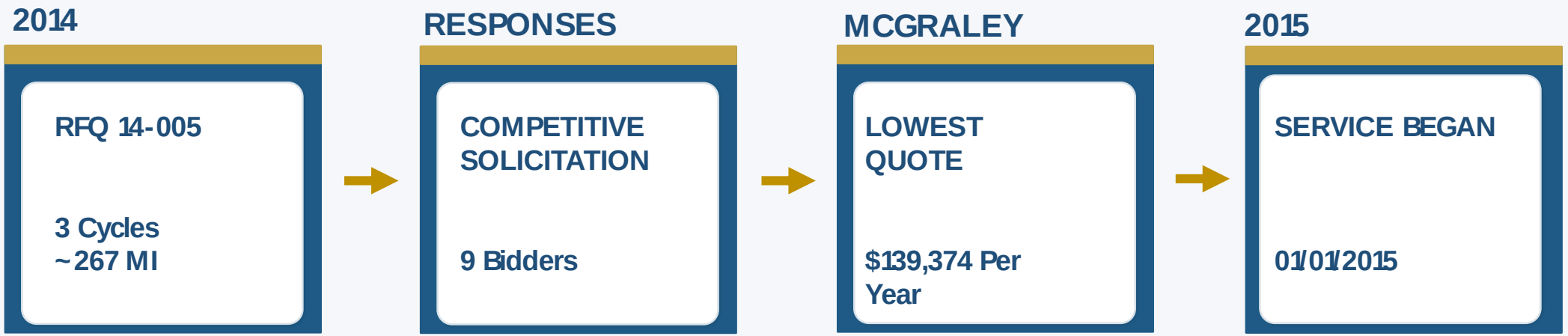
Evaluating cost, service frequency, flexibility, and long-term County control

CURRENT CONTRACT: 4 CYCLES /YEAR

CURRENT TERM ENDS 12/31/2026

Contract Background

How the current roadside mowing contract began:

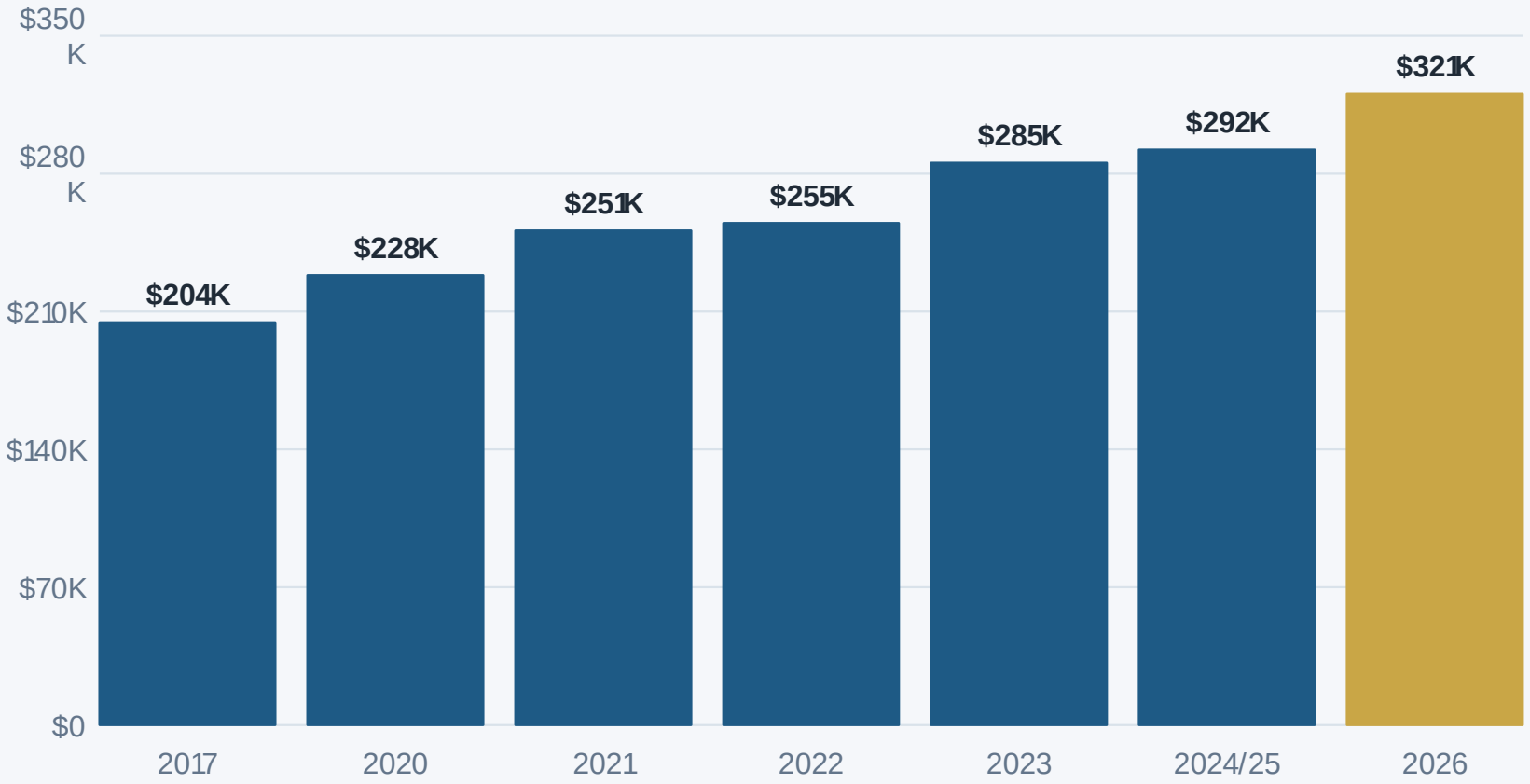


2017: 4TH ANNUAL MOWING CYCLE ADDED

Established the four-cycle service model used in the cost comparison that follows.

Contract Cost Has Continued to Rise

Four-cycle annual mowing cost increased from $204,415 in 2017 to $320,508 in 2026.



2017 TO 2026

+56.8%

Increase in annual four-cycle contract cost.

2026 INCREASE

+10%

Amendment 7 increased the prior annual amount to $320,507.84.

Decision Pressure

Cost growth makes long-term control of the service model increasingly important.

Exploring Options

The County has three viable paths for roadside mowing. The in-house option expands an operation already in place and provides the strongest long-term cost control and flexibility.

OPTION 1

Continue McGraley

Renew the current 4-cycle contract through another amendment or accept McGraley's proposed 7-cycle service level.

OPTION 2

Competitive Solicitation

Test the market for the current 4-cycle mowing scope. Market pricing may be higher than the current contract.

OPTION 3

In-House Model

Expand the County's existing inmate mowing operation to absorb contracted routes and increase control over frequency, service quality, and long-term cost.

Core Decision

Continue contractor dependence, solicit the market again, or expand an existing County operation that can grow with the road network.

Option 1 – Continue with McGraley

Maintain the current contractor relationship through another renewal/amendment or accept McGraley's proposed expanded service level.

PATH A

RENEW CURRENT 4-CYCLE CONTRACT

$320,507.84

Current annual amount • 4 mowing cycles • $80,126.96 per cycle • Next amendment amount is unknown.

PATH B

ACCEPT 7-CYCLE PROPOSAL

~$1.17M

McGraley's proposal for 7 mowings annually with additional trash pickup and weed eating.

Core Consideration

Staying with McGraley provides continuity and avoids new County startup investment; however, the County remains dependent on contractor pricing, fixed cycles, and future increases. Expanding service through McGraley would significantly increase recurring annual cost.

Planning note: Future 4-cycle renewal pricing is not confirmed. The 2026 amendment increased the annual amount by 10%.

Option 2 – Competitive Solicitation

Test the market for the County's current 4-cycle roadside mowing scope.

GEORGIA MARKET BENCHMARK

~$400

per mile / per mowing
Recent comparable Georgia public-sector pricing, removing higher outliers.

ESTIMATED 4-CYCLE BID RANGE

$425K–$435K

Estimated annual cost for 267.18 miles × 4 cycles using market benchmark.

INCREASE OVER CURRENT CONTRACT

~$107K

Estimated annual increase over current McGraley contract if bids align with market benchmark.

Market Consideration

Recent Georgia results suggest the current McGraley four-cycle pricing is competitive. A new solicitation would establish current market pricing, but the County could receive bids higher than the existing contract.

Separate Issue

McGraley has proposed increasing service to 7 mowings at approximately $1.17M annually. This market comparison is based only on the current 4-cycle service level.

Core Takeaway

A competitive solicitation would test the market, but the County should not assume rebidding the current four-cycle scope will reduce costs.

Option 3 – How the In-House Model Would Work

The County already operates an inmate mowing program; Option 3 expands that existing operation to cover the contracted routes.

1

PREP

Dedicated crew removes litter and weed-eats approximately two days ahead of mowing.

2

MOW

Two mowing crews: 12 inmates supervised by 2 existing certified COII officers.

3

ADJUST

Routes and frequency shift based on growth, weather, complaints, or new roads.

4

MAINTAIN

Tractors rotate for preventative maintenance to reduce downtime.

5

OVERSIGHT

Warden manages crews; EOM coordinates routes, standards, and service priorities.

Internal Control Advantage

County inmate crews currently mow approximately 267.94 miles. The remaining McGraley route is approximately 267 miles per mowing cycle, so bringing it in-house would roughly double the mileage under County control while building on an existing operation.

Option 3 – What Is Needed to Build the Program

The County is expanding an existing mowing operation—not starting from zero. The Warden's requested build-out can be phased as additional capacity is needed.

ALREADY IN PLACE

EXISTING EQUIPMENT

$240,825

Two Kubota tractors with 12-foot rotary cutters already purchased.

COUNTY RESOURCES

Workforce

Inmate workforce, existing certified officers, Warden supervision, and EOM route/service coordination.

FULL BUILD-OUT REQUESTED

STAFFING CAPACITY

0 NEW COII

Warden confirmed existing certified officers are sufficient to supervise the proposed mowing crews.

EQUIPMENT NEED

3 + 1

2 batwing tractors • 1 boom mower tractor • 1 pickup with fuel tank.

Phased Implementation

START

Continue current ~267.94-mile in-house route

EXPAND

Add mower capacity as McGraley routes are absorbed

ENHANCE

Add boom mower / fuel truck as workload requires

Key Message

The inmate crews already maintain approximately 267.94 miles. Absorbing the remaining ~267-mile McGraley route is an expansion of existing capacity, and additional equipment can be phased in as operational demand is demonstrated.

Option 3 – Why In-House Provides Long-Term Value

The County already maintains approximately 267.94 miles in-house. Expanding that operation builds County capacity rather than purchasing a fixed number of contractor cycles each year.

COST CONTROL

Capacity

Upfront equipment investment builds capacity with a long useful life instead of paying escalating annual contract costs.

FLEXIBLE FREQUENCY

Responsive

Mow based on growth, weather, complaints, and priority corridors rather than a fixed contractor cycle count.

ROUTE GROWTH

Scalable

Add roads, delete roads, or reprioritize service internally as Effingham County grows.

COMPLETE MAINTENANCE

Cleaner ROW

Coordinate litter removal, weed eating, mowing, vegetation management, and preventative maintenance.

DIRECT ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountable

Warden and EOM can adjust crews and standards directly when service issues arise.

The Real Value

The County is not creating a mowing program from scratch. Inmate crews already maintain approximately 267.94 miles; Option 3 expands that proven operating foundation to absorb the remaining contracted routes and respond to actual conditions throughout the year.

Five-Year Cost Outlook: In-House Investment Pays Back

Planning model conservatively assumes all 3 additional tractors are purchased in Year 1; actual implementation may be phased.

YEAR 1 IN-HOUSE

$474,390

Includes 3 additional tractors + recurring operating costs. Excludes fuel tank upfit and insurance.

RECURRING AFTER STARTUP

$24,390

Conservative fuel, maintenance/consumables, and truck lease estimate. No new COII positions included.

ESTIMATED PAYBACK

Year 2

Preliminary cumulative savings become positive during the second year of operation.

Year	McGraley if +10%	In-House Model	Annual Benefit	Cumulative Benefit	Status
2027	$352,559	$474,390	($121,831)	($121,831)	Startup
2028	$387,814	$24,390	$363,424	$241,593	Positive
2029	$426,596	$24,390	$402,206	$643,799	Positive
2030	$469,256	$24,390	$444,866	$1,088,665	Positive
2031	$516,181	$24,390	$491,791	$1,580,456	Positive

Financial Takeaway

Year 1 funds the modeled equipment build-out. With no new COII positions anticipated, the model recovers startup cost during Year 2 and produces growing cumulative savings thereafter.

7-Cycle Cost Comparison: McGraley vs. In-House

Planning comparison using the same seven-mowing service frequency.

MCGRALEY 7-CYCLE PROPOSAL

$1.168M

2025 annual proposal

7 mowings • 4 crews • trash pickup • weed eating

Proposal dated March 3, 2025 — more than a year old and not current pricing.

IF +10% FOR PLANNING: ~$1.284M

Illustrative only — not a McGraley quote.

COUNTY 7-CYCLE MODEL

~$558K

Estimated Year 1 cost

3 additional tractors 2 batwing + 1 boom mower	$450,000
1 new COII position annual staffing allowance	$72,000
Fuel allowance scaled to 7 cycles	$8,750
Maintenance / consumables scaled to 7 cycles	$17,500
Pickup lease proxy 2500HD annual lease proxy	$9,390

Recurring after startup: ~$107,640 / year

PLANNING TAKEAWAY

Year 1 is approximately $610K lower than McGraley's 2025 proposal — or about $727K lower if the proposal increased 10%.

After startup, modeled County recurring cost is about $108K/year. Existing two Kubotas are already owned and are not counted as new investment.

Planning model only. In-house estimate excludes fuel-tank/upfit and insurance. Fuel and maintenance allowances are scaled from the current 4-cycle planning model by 7/4. Final seven-cycle staffing and route schedule should be confirmed by the Warden/EOM.

Recommended Direction

Expand the existing County-supervised in-house mowing operation to absorb the remaining contracted routes.

Build on an existing operation

Inmate crews already maintain approximately 267.94 miles with existing County staffing and equipment; expansion builds on a working foundation.

Implement in phases

Add equipment as operational demand is demonstrated rather than purchasing the full build-out immediately.

Gain service control

Add roads, increase frequency, and reprioritize crews without contractor amendments or new per-cycle pricing.

Reduce long-term reliance

Create recurring County capacity instead of absorbing escalating private contract costs.

Staff Recommendation

Proceed with expansion of the existing in-house roadside mowing operation using current Prison staffing, phased equipment acquisition, and final operating-budget refinement following expiration of the McGraley contract.

INVEST IN COUNTY CAPACITY. CONTROL THE SERVICE. BUILD LONG-TERM SAVINGS.