

The Russell County Commission
Russell County Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes June 10, 2020
9:30 A.M. EDT

An adjourned meeting of the Russell County Commission was called to order by Chairman Lee.

Chairman Lee welcomed everyone for their attendance.

The invocation was given by Reverend Steve Pace with Summerville Baptist Church.

Commissioner Ronnie Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Tasha Hall spoke on behalf of the residents that live on Antioch Road.

Elijah Person, Jr. spoke on behalf of the residents that live on Upshaw Flats Road.

County Administrator LeAnn Horne called roll. Members present were Chairman Gentry Lee, Commissioner Carl Currington, Commissioner Peggy Martin, Commissioner Ronnie Reed, Commissioner Cattie Epps, Commissioner Chance Corbett, and Commissioner Larry Screws. Also, present was the County Attorney Kenneth Funderburk. A quorum was established.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Lee requested approval of the May 13, 2020 Commission Minutes. Commissioner Martin motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was passed.

Chairman Lee requested approval of the May 27, 2020 Commission Minutes. Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Martin. The vote was passed.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Coroner Sumbry stated: Last year in August as I was doing my budget, I was preparing to present to the County Commissioners a possible salary increase, but after hearing from a few elected officials they brought up the discussion to present it to the Legislature. I decided to follow pursuit with doing that. In January, I got with my State Representative to present legislative bill on it for the Legislature. After going through everything we went to, to prepare it to follow-up in March Commissioner Chance Corbett asked if I could meet with him and Representative Chris Blackshear to discuss the possible salary increase of the Coroner's position. Of course, be entitled to the same cost-of-living provided by the other Elected Officials in Russell County. I believe County Commissioner Epps and County Administrator LeAnn Horne was present. We later contacted State Representative Gray by phone. Representative Blackshear explained to him the details of the meeting we had as far as it goes into negotiations and give Commissioner Chance Corbett to present it in a resolution to the County Commissioners to hopefully vote for it to pass. The increase was going to be a 5% salary increase immediately. Then additional 5% in October 2020 which would make that a 10% increase.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Coroner Sumbry is correct we did have a very constructive meeting. Coroner Sumbry had reached out to Representative Gray about trying to get the increase in a little bit larger segment all at once. It was going to be a pretty large pill for us to swallow as far as budget wise. I appreciate the Coroner sitting down and talking to us and come-up with something we can negotiate something a little more manageable. We did agree in that meeting there was a very good chance the Bill would have passed in the Legislature; but there is no guarantee. However, it also could

have failed. The Coroner introduced the number of calls that had increased for the Coroner's office and I think it is appropriate based on the information I have heard in the conversations that we go forward at this time.

I would like to make a motion that we increase the Coroners pay by 5%. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

Commissioner Lee stated: For the record, according to these numbers that will make the Coroners salary \$35,000 up to \$50,700 including benefits. County Administrator indicated his salary, from what she recalls, \$39,000 and some change.

County Administrator polled the Commission. District 1 Lee, no; District 2 Currington, no; District 3, Martin, yes; District 4 Reed, yes; District 5 Epps, yes; District 6 Corbett, yes; District 7 Screws, yes. The motion passed.

Emergency Management Director, Bob Franklin stated: We were awarded a Homeland Security Grant January 2020. Due to COVID-19, this the first opportunity to let the bid for the UTV. This is 100% reimbursable grant for a side-by-side. This is going to be used for hazardous material situations to transport hazmat personnel. I am requesting the Commission approve to send out bids for the UTV and trailer and open bids on June 22, 2020 at 10:00 a.m.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Martin.

County Administrator Horne polled Commissioners. The vote was unanimous.

Emergency Management Director, Bob Franklin stated: Russell County was allocated \$1,737,681 million dollars for COVID-19 relief and Phenix City was allocated \$1,747,413. The State of Alabama received under the CARES ACT (Corona Virus Relief Fund) \$1.8 billion approximately. The first step of the reimbursement process is approve and submit the form that is in your packets today which is a Certificate of Assurances. We will also need to be some additional claim forms in the near future to be signed for reimbursement. Right now, I would like to get approval for the Chair to sign the form so we can move forward and placing the State of Alabama on notice for Russell County's claim.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Epps.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commissioners. The vote was unanimous.

Emergency Management Director, Bob Franklin stated: Normally when we have a disaster, we get declared for category A or B. For this COVID-19 we have a declaration which it is a category B, emergency protective measures. A lot of the things we have done such as installing the walk-up windows and other things we can file through FEMA and get a 75% reimbursement. On the other form that you just approved, the state has given us in writing the authorization we can take that 25% match and apply it to these COVID-19 items. If all goes to plan the County can receive up to a 100% reimbursement on those items. I request that we submit the agreement to the State with the Chairs signature.

Commissioner Epps motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission: The vote was unanimous.

Emergency Management Director, Bob Franklin stated: As you are aware the Secretary of State is going to fund materials and things we need for the elections on July 14, 2020 as well as November 2020. The Sheriff, the Probate Judge and the Absentee Elections Manager, Jodi Sellers, put together the list of items that we believe are going to be needed for the Elections for July 14th. For example, hand sanitizers, plastic shields and etc. In November, the County will have to submit an additional request for the November election expenses. At this time, I request the Commission to approve the Chairman sign this funding request to the Secretary of State so we can submit it in.

Commissioner Reed motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett and Commissioner Epps.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Chair Lee stated: During this time, we have many forms that have to be signed to get reimbursed. I am asking the Commission to authorize the Chairman to have the authority to execute these forms that are necessary as they come in so that the County is timely for submittals for reimbursements and other grant requirements with the State and State agencies. As long as the forms are reimbursement forms and not forms to spend money but to get reimbursed.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Martin.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Assistant County Engineer Ray Martin stated: Alabama Power Company contacted the Engineering Department to get a utilities easement on 14th Street. It is part of the Street Scape Project. They are going to relocate a power pole and it will be next to the old school we are building just right off the edge of the concrete on the grassy noll. They are trying to clean that area up. The request came from Alabama Power Company, but I talked to the City and what they plan to do is run underground utilities to clean the area up.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Martin stated: As on Monday evening as we discussed, we need today to make a decision of the location of the time capsule which we are asking all the District Commissioners to participate in. Our Revenue Commissioner Naomi Elliott is working with that and with the COVID-19 virus it has delayed that. Today we will make a decision hopefully.

I would like to make a motion that we place this capsule at the Judicial Center on 14th Street. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett.

Commissioner Lee asked: If there were any discussion?

Commissioner Reed stated: Discussion. Where is this going to be located? A place?

Chair Lee stated: The Judicial Building as the location. We haven't decided which exact place it is going to be. We have to look at utilities and plumbing underground. The exact place will be determined at a later time.

Commissioner Corbett stated: I feel like that property gives the Historical Commission a charge now to move forward.

County Administrator Horned polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Corbett stated: I brought this up a couple of meetings ago, I think it is very important we look at it as Commissioners. We have had employees since the COVID-19 started that have continued to work their normal days. The reason we are calling it hazardous duty because employees are working with an unknown virus pandemic that is potentially life threatening in cases. Some people were even scared to come to work having to interact with the public. Obviously, the Sheriff's Office and deputies had to respond to the calls. The Courthouse remained open and provided services although some may have been limited to some degree. There were just some things that had to be done. Trash had to be picked up, the roads had to be kept up, Emergency Management, Bob and his team, were working every day to insure the

county had adequate personal protective equipment for hospitals, nursing homes, emergency medical personnel, volunteer fire departments and county personnel. As a County Commissioner, an Elected Official, I want to recognize those employees and also the courthouse which remained operating throughout this time period. The Commission's offices, County Administrator and her staff along with all other departmental employees; plus the ones that are out in the streets.

I want to show our appreciation and recognize them by showing them that we do care. We want to do something for them similar to what some other Counties have done. The biggest thing is they kept this County running during a time that was a pretty scary for the rest of the World and maintained services for our citizens. I do appreciate the Administrator's work on all of this too. She and I were talking at 10:30 p.m. last night. She prepared and presented a draft Monday evening for discussion. On Monday night we talked about an 8-hour shifts, 10-hour shifts and 12-hour shifts. Once discussing it, that got a little confusing while we were talking about days versus hours. Even though we were talking about days versus 8, 10, 12 hour shifts due to the various departments; it still broke down to an hourly rate.

So at this time, what I want to propose, in a motion: We take the period beginning March 27, 2020 ending May 29, 2020. For the employees that worked during those times give hazardous duty pay of \$1.25 per hour for every hour they worked during that time.

County Administrator Horne stated: My latest calculation the COVID-19 Hazard Pay for county employees who physically worked during this time period is \$123,000. I know my estimate on Monday evening was considerably higher; however, we did not have the departmental numbers on days worked in total. In discussions with Mr. Franklin he indicated this is most likely a reimbursable expense.

Commissioner Corbett stated: I would just like the Commissioners consider supporting this to show our employees that we do care and we do really appreciate what they have done during these trying times.

Commissioner Reed seconded the motion and I would like to go into discussion as well.

Chair Lee stated: I am asking for discussion? We did consider the request made by several Commissioners about days off in lieu of pay. If we have to, I would let the Sheriff explain that. It just was not going to work. Some of the employees would only get a fourth of the day or half day. It was just not going to be feasible for some departments to utilize time-off. If you want a better explanation, I would ask the Sheriff to explain it to you.

Commissioner Reed stated: I just...I am straight. Go ahead and get them paid that is it. Don't worry about no time just pay them.

Chair Lee stated: We didn't ignore your request, we worked on it hard it and discussed it.

Commissioner Reed stated: I think they will just like that better. The pay.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

County Attorney Funderburk stated: There is a personnel actions that requires the Commission to go into Executive Session. I have provided the Chairman with the required letter.

Commissioner Reed motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. By show of hands and no dissension votes; the Commission entered into executive session.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commissioners, quorum established and meeting reconvened.

County Attorney indicated that the personnel review board hearing request did not meet the minimum standard and guidelines set forth in the Russell County Commission's Personnel Policy and Procedures and recommends denying.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to deny the request. Commissioner Currington, seconded the motion to deny.

County Administrator polled the Commission. District 1, Lee, yes; District 2, Currington, yes; District 3, Martin, yes; District 4, Reed no; District 5, Epps, no; District 6, Corbett, yes; District 7, Screws, no.

The recommendation to deny the request for personnel review board per the County Attorney passed.

Commissioner Reed motioned to adjourn the meeting.

Attest: _____

County Administrator

Signed: _____

Chair