

Russell County Commission  
Russell County Commission Chambers  
Meeting Minutes June 23, 2021  
9:30 A.M. EST

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

The invocation was given by Reverend Dr. Warren with Hurts Chapel AME Church.

Commissioner Screws led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

No public comments were made.

Chairman Corbett thanked our partners Cable TV of East Alabama BEAM and The Citizen of East Alabama. The meeting was on Facebook Live for the people of Russell County to watch online. He welcomed our elected officials, department heads, and guests.

Chairman Corbett stated that the agenda was approved at the work session.

Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert called roll of the Commission. Member's present were Commissioner Rod Costello, Commissioner Cattie Epps, Commissioner Scott Chambers, Commissioner Larry Screws, Commissioner Ronnie Reed, Commissioner Gentry Lee, and Chairman Chance Corbett. Also, present was the Interim County Attorney Hope Hicks and Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert, who kept minutes.

A quorum was established by Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Chairman Corbett presented to approve the June 9, 2021. Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert stated that a correction was made on page 10 in the first paragraph where the motion was made by Commissioner Lee and seconded by Commissioner Reed, not both by Lee. Motion to approve by Commissioner Lee. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion to approve the minutes unanimously.

**PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:**

Chairman Corbett presented the proclamation for Ms. Dillie Elliott who recently retired and was a member of the school board. Chairman Corbett included a draft resolution in their packets. He said there will be some pieces of minor information to add but will not change the format of it. He asked for the Commission to approve this proclamation and it will be presented at a later date, at her convenience that she can attend. Motion to approve by Commissioner Lee and

seconded by Commissioner Chambers. Chairman Corbett then stated that they are very proud of the work Ms. Elliott has done and he is proud to bring this to the table to give this proclamation to recognize her service. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously. Chairman Corbett stated that he will get with Ms. Colbert with the date that Ms. Elliott can attend. He also thanked Ms. Naomi Elliott for helping gather the information for the proclamation.

### **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

Chairman Corbett stated there were no discussion items because they took care of those on Monday night (work session). Commissioner Lee clarified so the public understands, they took care of them, and they will be back. Not that they took care of them without a public meeting. Chairman Corbett stated that Monday night was their regular work session and they talked about things, and just no action was needed. They will either come back or was quashed.

### **BUSINESS ITEMS:**

Chairman Corbett presented Heath Crowe with the Appraiser's Office about a vacant position salary adjustment. Chief Appraiser Heath Crowe stated they wanted to change a vacant position in their Appraiser's Office of an Appraiser One. Mr. Crowe asked to change the salary amount from \$40,558 to \$57,946. He said it is so they will be able to have the possibility to advertise and hire an experienced appraiser in the position. Motion to approve by Commissioner Screws. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. Commissioner Lee stated that this demonstrates the purpose of a work session because there were a lot of discussion on this Monday night, and he thinks everyone understands now what they are doing. Call for vote was done by Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert: District 3: Costello, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 4: Reed, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett presented Bill Friend with Enforcement about a dwelling that is an unlivable nuisance complaint. Mr. Friend presented a nuisance complaint at 90 Laconte Street in Pittsview. He stated that they have been working on the project for approximately 6 months now and they have been unable to contact anyone that own this property. Mr. Friend said that he has spoken to the Commissioner in this district about this issue and the property itself is being maintained by the people that live around it, he thinks, but the building itself is falling down. He came here this morning to find out what the pleasure of the Commission is. Mr. Friend is requesting it to be abated. Motion to approve by Commissioner Screws. Seconded by Commissioner Costello. Discussion included Commissioner Lee questioning if anyone was trying to occupy or live in the dwelling? Mr. Friend stated no they are not. Commissioner Lee stated that they have a lot of places that are unlivable that nobody is trying to live in that they are not spending county money to tear them down. Mr. Friend agreed and stated the reason it was brought to the Commission was because it was a call-in complaint and if we don't go through their procedure and then bring it in front of the County Commission, then of course, they'll probably call and say they are not doing what they are supposed to do. Mr. Friend says that's why he is stating that it is a pleasure of the Commission on what they want to do.

Commissioner Lee asked if it appeared to be a danger to anybody, and if no one is in it. Mr. Friend said there is no one in it and he believes the grass is being maintained by the people that own the property around it. It is leaning to the west right now and there is a hole in the roof and items in it looks like have been in it since the building was built, he believes it was 1923 or 1926. Commissioner Lee said that it was brought up to their attention and someone has replaced a window in it because it was different than the rest of them, and he doesn't know who or why. Commissioner Lee stated that he is sure that the people around it probably would like to purchase the place, and if we go and spend \$2,000, that's going to up the price and then it is probably not even worth it. Mr. Friend agreed with him and stated that they just bring it to the Commission and if they want to leave it up, then that is fine and if anyone calls about it, they'll just tell them. Commissioner Lee stated that he didn't want to set a precedent of tearing down unlivable "buildings" when nobody's trying to live in it. Commissioner Screws stated that he thinks one of the problems is that they have done remodeling in the front of those buildings all except that particular building. Commissioner Lee stated he understood. Commissioner Screws said that is where it comes from and that they have tried to contact the individual who owns it with no success. Commissioner Lee said his biggest question is that the way it is listed on the agenda is "unlivable" which no body is actually trying to live in it and there are a lot of properties that are unlivable. Mr. Friend stated that the way House Bill 615 was written up and it's the way they have to present it, either as unlivable or inhabitable. Commissioner Reed stated that once you start picking on one, then you're going to have to do them all, Bill. Commissioner Reed stated that there are a number of places out in the county that are just as bad as that place is. Mr. Friend agreed. Commissioner Reed said that we need to establish some type of policy or some type of rule, like Gentry said, if the people are not trying to live in it so he doesn't see what the rush is to tear it down. He stated he can go find 10 places out in the county that is worse than what that building is. Mr. Friend agreed and said that if one of the Commissioners, or the people out there, or the neighbors call it in as a nuisance complaint as we define one, either it be our regular nuisance complaint or the dwelling nuisance complaint, which are separate. Mr. Friend says his job, or their job, is to go out and assess it, then bring it in front of the County Commission and then it's whatever the county Commission desires, if they say tear it down, they tear it down. If they say leave it alone, they leave it alone. He said the way it is written they have to bring it to the Commission once it's reported as a nuisance. Chairman Corbett stated that he, as a Commissioner, is very familiar with Pittsview, but he does not represent that area. He asked Commissioner Screws what his take on this request? Commissioner Screws suggested that they take the new window out of the front and demolish the building. Commissioner Epps stated that she has the same problem, and Mr. Friend can attest to. She said that out in the rural areas there are a lot of buildings that need to be torn down and done something with, and her concern is with buildings like this and when there are children in the neighborhood there are snakes and everything else that might be in the building, then if a child goes into the building (even with the new window), it could harm the child. She takes these things in consideration when she gets complaints. Commissioner Screws stated that they handle these on an individual basis, and it's not like they just go out and look for it. He said they are brought to us to look at on an individual basis, and that is the policy we select. We can either vote up or vote down. Chairman Corbett added that they do these based on complaints because our people do not ride around and look for them. He agreed it is based on complaints. Chairman Corbett asked if

they have done public hearings in the past on these? Mr. Friend agreed and said yes and that is his next request after the vote. Commissioner Lee asked what the vote was for? Mr. Friend stated at this time he is requesting that by a resolution that the county Commission abate this, and he is also requesting that a public hearing be scheduled for the next meeting, which is the 14<sup>th</sup> of July at 9:30 in the morning. Chairman Corbett stated that the motion has been modified by Commissioner Screws and seconded by Commissioner Epps. Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert polled the Commission as follows: District 3: Costello, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 4: Reed, yes. District 1: Lee, no. District 6: Corbett, yes. Motion was passed 6 to 1 by the Commission and they will have a public meeting at the next meeting.

### **COUNTY ENGINEER:**

Chairman Corbett presented County Engineer Shawn Blakeney to solicit bids for the CRAF projects. Mr. Blakeney stated that he wants to solicit bids for their CRAF money (the new rebuild Alabama funds). He would like to send bids out tomorrow on 6/24 and they will open bids here in the Commission Chamber on 7/21 and award the bids on the 7/28 Commission meetings, the second one in July. Motioned by Commissioner Screws and seconded by Commissioner Epps. Chairman Corbett asked to name the roads for the record. Mr. Blakeney stated that there will be Railroad Street .67 miles, Owens Road 1.88 miles, Cutrate Road 1.22 miles, and Padgett Road (section 2 from Hughley to Hitchitee) which is 3.22 miles. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously. Commissioner Screws asked if Padgett Road, Section 1 was already done? Mr. Blakeney said that will be coming in next.

Chairman Corbett presented County Engineer Shawn Blakeney to solicit bids for planning and paving Russell County Courthouse parking lot. Mr. Blakeney stated it will be for planning, repaving, and striping the county courthouse parking lot. He said they will send out bids the 24<sup>th</sup> and open bids on the 21<sup>st</sup> of July, and award bids on the Commission meeting on 7/28. Motion moved by Commissioner Costello and seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioner Costello asked that with building costs and everything else that's going on over the last 6 months, they have the estimated cost but asked if Mr. Blakeney has seen an uptick in materials or cost of paving? Mr. Blakeney said it's gone up a little, but as far as their annual bid and stuff like that, they are locked in for the year. It's gone up a little but the thing that drives asphalt prices is fuel price, so they do have cost adjustments for fuel index and it's not going up dramatically. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett presented County Engineer Shawn Blakeney to send out notice to proceed for annual resurfacing. Mr. Blakeney stated that they are going to send out a notice to proceed for their annual resurfacing and this is the last round to get everything off of their budget, that they have budgeted to pay this year. It is Hood Road .73 miles, Copeland Drive .23 miles, and Shady Grove Road which is the next mile of it. Motioned by Commissioner Screws and seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

**ADMINISTRATOR:**

Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented for the Act 2006-360 extension for the Probate Judge \$5.00 recording fee that must be approved for a period of 2 years by vote of the County Commission. She said it was last approved December 12, 2018 and she is asking for the Commission's approval of continuing collection of this fee for a period of 2 years retroactive to December 2020. Motion to approve by Commissioner Lee and seconded by Commissioner Reed. Discussion included Commissioner Lee asking if this is just a renewal of something they have been doing for a while? Chairman Corbett agreed and wanted to recognize the Probate Judge, who is sitting in the audience, if anyone has any question or comments. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

**COUNTY ATTORNEY:**

County Attorney Hope Hicks stated that she does not have anything today.

**COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:**

Commissioner Epps stated that the take home vehicles have been taken care of, for those who have been concerned about those vehicles, she wanted to let them know that it is taken care of, and she wants to let the public know it.

Chairman Corbett thanked Mrs. Colbert and Leon for getting the microphones because he thinks it's going to help them with the audience and those at home that are trying to watch this. He said they had several comments on the Facebook Live feeds in the past that they couldn't hear people due to the microphones. He said they will work to make sure to setup 2 microphones up, to make sure the wireless ones are working and maybe put them on the side or something so people can get to them fairly easily. He wanted to make sure people understand what they are doing and that they are very transparent in how they are doing our county business.

Chairman Corbett also wanted to mention to Shawn Blakeney about the way Parks and Rec is going right now and the way the fields, playgrounds, and things are going. He has been getting positive comments about the way things look, the grass being cut, and he just wanted to say it to him one more time, and publicly. They really appreciate the work his folks have been doing on it. The appearances of all of them look great, including the one in Fort Mitchell, Crawford and the Sports Complex. He knows there are a lot more than that and he just wanted to make those comments.

Announcements were made.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Lee. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

The meeting was adjourned.