

The Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes
January 13th, 2016
9:30 A.M. EST

An adjourned meeting of the Russell County Commission was called to order by Chair Peggy Martin.

The invocation was given by Father Tom Weise.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Corbett.

Chair Martin welcomed elected officials, department heads, media and guests. She also thanked Cable T.V. of East Alabama and the Citizen News for their coverage of the Commission meeting.

The Commission roll was called, members present were: Chair Peggy Martin, Vice Chair Larry Screws, Gentry Lee, Tillman Pugh, Ronnie Reed, and Chance Corbett. Cattie Epps was absent. Also present was Attorney Robert Lane and County Administrator LeAnn Horne, who kept the minutes.

A quorum was established.

Chair Martin requested a motion to approve the December 23rd, 2015 meeting minutes. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

EMA Director Bob Franklin and County Engineer Larry Kite gave an update concerning the December 23rd, 2015 storm and flood damages in the county. Mr. Franklin presented a power point of flooded and washed out roads and discussed emergency situations that volunteer fire departments and the county engineering department responded to.

Commissioner Epps joined the meeting.

Special Enforcement Officer Bill Friend gave an updated on the Ambulance / Sheriff's Substation Building Project. The Building Inspection Department preformed a final inspection and found 3 minor corrections to be made. Mr. Friend recommended cement barriers to protect the building. The parking lot may be paved in February after Engineering's Annual Materials Bid.

Administrator Horne thanked Bill Friend, Greg Smith, and the contractor Mr. Lancour for taking on the project and doing an outstanding job.

Bill Friend requested approval for 2 land abatements:

- 15 Carroll Drive, Phenix City owned by George B. Huguley; who no longer lives there and current location is unknown. The property is in foreclosure. Mr. Friend

has received several complaints from neighbors about trash and is requesting the Commission approve by resolution declaring a public nuisance exists at 15 Carroll Drive, Phenix City and schedule a public hearing cornering this February 10th prior to the regular Commission meeting. Commissioner Pugh motioned to approve the request and was seconded by Commissioner Screws. The vote was unanimous.

- 3790 Sandfort Road, Phenix City, owned by William J. Whatley. Due to unstable conditions the house is uninhabitable. Mr. Whatley has been contacted but is unable to talk; therefore, Mr. Friend tried to assist him in getting estimates to clean the property. Since, Mr. Whatley has asked if the county could forward with demolition of the house and removal of debris and he would pay the cost. Mr. Friend requests the Commission declare a public nuisance at 3790 Sandfort Road, Phenix City and a public hearing scheduled also for February 10th at 9:30 a.m. Commissioner Pugh motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Friend and Janita Cornelius from the Probate Judge Office discussed researching the business license laws for the county. Currently new businesses pay a base license of \$82.50 during the months of October to March and \$37.50 plus issue fee if opening during the months of April through September. Upon renewal of a license business license are based on the gross receipts that those businesses grossed in Russell County.

Mr. Friend and Mrs. Cornelius pointed out the county loses revenue each time a construction company comes into the area to build large projects such as Walmart, Dollar General, Family Dollar, etc. These out of town companies buy the initial county business license and when time comes to renew the license they do not renew and therefore never pay a license based on their gross receipts, finish their project and leave town. Local constructions companies have to renew their license every year and pay accordingly.

Mrs. Cornelius proposed that when a contractor business located outside of Russell County Jurisdiction are contracted to do a job inside the Russell County Jurisdiction; they buy license based on their total contract amount for that fiscal year. The license would have to be upgraded to reflect any additional jobs not initially reported. Their license purchase would be based on each job and that job location would be reflected on the license. Local contractors would not be affected by this proposal as they are required by current law to purchase license on a annual basis.

Commissioner Pugh motioned to allow the County Attorney to research the business license and bring back a resolution or an answer to the proper way to proceed looking at the taxes. Seconded by Commissioner Screws.

Commissioner Reed: I think the county should also go up on the town business license. I feel that the license should go up approximately \$100 to \$200. The county is losing thousands of dollars on this and needs to be done as soon as possible.

Commissioner Pugh: by making the motion I am not saying that I am voting for it, I am waiting to get information back. I want to know the economic impact that it will make on this Commission and I need to know about those gross receipts, because it maybe a little unfair. If the business coming in to do a job has 8 or 9 million dollars in gross receipts, then we will have to look at how that will affect that business. We may have contractors not wanting to come into the county to work on certain buildings. I am waiting on the process to determine whether or not it is good.

Commissioner Lee: I hope it can be researched and done in such a way that it will be only the gross receipts earned in Russell County and not their entire business. Because, I agree with you, that would be completely unfair.

Commissioner Screw: So, your motion is only for the research?

Commissioner Pugh: That is correct.

Chair Martin asked Administrator Horne to poll the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Corbett recognized Mrs. Cornelius, who was repairing tablets for kids in the community. She did this around the holidays for families who could not afford to have this done at no charge. Last time he had discussed what she was doing, she had repaired 45 tablets for Christmas.

Administrator Horne stated that due to the hazardous weather that the county just had and the torrential rainfall, the county is incurring expenditures for emergency natures. It is required by the State Examiners that the County Commission declares emergency conditions. She requested that a resolution be approved declaring the conditions so the county is covered during this time of repair. Commissioner Epps motioned to approve the resolution and was seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Attorney Robert Lane presented a letter to go into executive session concerning a personnel matter. Commissioner Corbett motioned to convene into executive session. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous. Administrator Horne announced there would be no action to be taken after the session this is just a report.

Announcements were made before the Commission moved into the executive session.

Chair Martin requested a motion to reconvene the Commission meeting. Commissioner Lee motioned to reconvene and was seconded by Commissioner Pugh. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Lee motioned to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.