

Russell County Commission
Russell County Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes January 13, 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 Steve Pace.

Commissioner Lee provided the Pledge of Allegiance.

County Administrator LeAnn Horne called roll of the Commission. Members present were Chairman Chance Corbett; Vice Chairman Gentry Lee; Commissioner Ronnie Reed; Commissioner Cattie Epp; Commissioner Rod Costello; Commissioner Scott Chambers and Commissioner Larry Screws. Also, present was the Interim County Attorney Hope Hicks and LeAnn Horne, County Administrator, who kept the minutes of the meeting.

Chairman Corbett noted the agenda had been approved at the work session; however, an item was added. The attorney recommended Executive Session.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Jennifer Davidson, Director with the Extension Service, reported on a Rolling Store that will be starting in Hurtsboro with fresh meats and vegetables for community. They are working with Beyond Harvest, a local grocery store. The rolling store begins on February 5th, 2020 and will be coming by once a month (1st week of the month). They need 20 people minimum to pre-order and that is 20 different orders. For anyone interested in ordering please contact Tina, located at the Town Hall office and the phone number are. 334-667-7771. Flyers are available too.

Chairman Chance Corbett thanked Cable TV East Alabama and Citizens of East Alabama for broadcasting this meeting. Also noted that the meetings can be viewed on Facebook Live and this is in an effort of trying to get county meetings out to citizens.

Chairman Chance Corbett welcomed elected officials, department heads and citizens including the media and guests.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Corbett noted there are two sets of meeting minutes on the agenda.

For the December 9, 2020 meeting minutes, I would like to make the following changes: on the 2nd page, paragraph (1); need to add that "the Administrator had requested transfer". Also, paragraph (6), "sponsorship was a one-time payment that takes care of (3) three years".

Chairman Corbett motioned to approve the December 9, 2021 Commission meeting minutes including the above changes. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

For the December 23, 2020, Chairman Corbett requested further clarification be added to page (3) in the 3rd paragraph; the motion was for "accepting the resignation of the County Attorney". Commissioner Reed motioned to approve the December 23, 2021 meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Rod Costello. The minutes were approved by unanimous vote.

PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

Charmain Corbett motioned for a Posthumous Proclamation to be drafted in honor of a previous County Commissioner, Nathaniel Gosha III. It will be presented, later, when it is convenient for the family. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve. Commissioner Reed seconded approval. Motion approved by unanimous vote.

Chairman Corbett presented the request for office space item by Hope Harbor and located available space in the Russell County Judicial Center. The office is located right outside the Grand Jury room. Commissioner Lee stated that this office space is designated for the Sheriff's use and he has ok'd it. Chairman Corbett verified it as well.

Chairman Corbett discussed the 2021 floating holiday approved for New Year's Eve. He noted that there were citizens who were concerned about making their tax or tag payments. Citizens can pay their taxes or for their tag the first day after the holiday without penalties. The Chairman stated no action is to be taken but information needs to be communicated to the public in the future years.

Chairman Corbett presented Bob Franklin, EMA Director, for COVID-19 Vaccination Report.

Mr. Franklin stated: Russell County is currently administrating the Moderna Vaccine. Due to a limited supply of the vaccine the County Health Department is currently doing one day a week. The process is that an individual is required to call and schedule an appointment. They must meet the criteria for the State of Alabama. Center Disease Control has changed their criteria to age 65 years old and over; however, Alabama has not followed that change due to the amount of vaccine the State has received.

We are in Phase 1A stage of the COVID-19 vaccinations. The Health Department will begin scheduling (5) five days a week as reported on Monday. Alabama residents can schedule for the COVID-19 Vaccine also by visiting the Alabama Public Health's website; or call toll free Hotline 855-566-5333, between the hours of 8:00AM and 5:00 PM (Central Time). That is (7) seven days a week.

Commissioner Epps stated some residents cannot get through on the hotline phone number after calling every 20 minutes. Mr. Franklin stated he will let the department know of the issue and get back to the Commissioner.

Chairman Corbett clarified we need to have messages lined up for better communications to Alabama residents about vaccinations. Mr. Franklin stated: there is some confusion in the regional area because people in Georgia are not able to come to Alabama and obtain the vaccination; unless it is a healthcare worker that works at a local healthcare facility. The reason being is funding is through each state and it is having restrictions on allocations.

Commissioner Lee heard that Georgia fixing to quickly release it to doctors but doctors do not have it yet. Chairman Corbett stated that if you are a resident, unless you are working in Georgia in those fields, or some cases the pharmacies may have it and some other entities are able apply and get it. That does make it a little confusing, therefore the messaging to the public must be so clear whether it is available to Alabama residents including both Lee and Russell County.

East Alabama Medical Center sent out an update to include a link for people to go and register now for the next vaccine levels. EAMC will call the resident to notify them when it is time for their vaccination. Our leadership locally with Jack Houghston Hospital is not on the same level and Bob Franklin said it is being worked on. Bob Franklin stated that people in Russell County can go to Lee County, Macon County, or Bullock County but we would prefer them to come here since the allocation is coming here. There is nothing preventing them from going to other counties in Alabama to get the vaccination. Commissioner Lee stated those counties are going by the same rules. Bob Franklin agreed.

Chairman Corbett stated that hopefully we will soon have mass sites to give bigger numbers. Mr. Bob Franklin, Emergency Director, stated for residents / citizens to call and put their name

on the stand-by list. Commissioner Costello asked if there is a charge for the vaccine? Mr. Bob Franklin stated there is no charge for the vaccine. However, if you have insurance, I am told they will file a claim against the insurance but not charge the citizen. The cost is to cover supplies such as band-aids to cover wound, alcohol prep, the needle to inject it, a little goes toward healthcare salaries and paperwork to process the vaccine information. Chairman Corbett stated we want to continue to follow up on this since it is a big and important topic for everybody.

COMMISSIONERS DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Commissioner Epps asked who is over the security of the Russell County Courthouse. There is an extra Deputy at the courthouse she stated. I am questioning why it is needed. Chairman Corbett stated he will check into this for clarification.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Commissioner Epps motioned to approved Mrs. Alice Daniel to serve on the Department of Human Resources board. Commissioner Reed seconded. Chairman Corbett discussed, as he does with every appointee, he has done his research and received good reports on Alice Daniel. He thinks she will do a great job in this position. Mrs. Alice Daniel was approved to serve on the Department of Human Resources Board unanimous vote of the Commission.

Chairman Corbett reported that Commissioner Epps mentioned, in a previous commission meeting, about putting together an Economic Development Advisory Committee and giving the Chairman the ability to appoint members to this committee for the purpose to review areas of the county for possible development and to look at potential things such as economic development and infrastructure.

Commissioner Epps stated: she met with the Sewer System Board looking at a sewer system coming to Ft. Mitchell. Leroy Davis reported he met with Mr. Boswell in Montgomery, Alabama, and he is on board to support the project.

Commissioner Epps stated that she also received a letter from Tallapoosa River, and they are on board and support the project (she will bring letter). She would like to ask the Chairman to consider appointing members to serve on the board to work along with Mr. Victor in Economic Development. Commissioner Epps had a few names she wants to suggest for the committee however Commissioner Lee suggested to hold-off until the next meeting. The motion to approve committee members was made by Commissioner Epps and second by Commissioner Reed.

Commissioner Lee suggested to hold off until next meeting so all Commissioners can submit names for the Chairman. Chairman Corbett stated: if it is good with the Commission then he will hold off on making any appointments until the next commission meeting. Commissioner Lee stated if anyone has any names, to please email them to Chairman Corbett. Commissioner Reed asked if they need to state the amount of the members there will be on the economic development committee?

Commissioner Lee stated: We discussed it before but did not officially state a number. It was mentioned no more (5) five, or (7) seven members.

Commissioner Epps stated: It was talked about to be at least (5) five and some of the names she had suggested at that time are Mr. Victor, Leroy Davis, Mr. Sheppard with the Sewer System, Mr. Burrell from the Health Department, and Mr. Shawn with the Engineer Department, along with herself, being the Commissioner of Ft. Mitchell because the sewer project is in Fort Mitchell.

Chairman Corbett stated that: the sewer project will much bigger than just the Ft. Mitchell area. It will be the entire county. Commissioner Epps stated: This is the project she is working on that is in her District. Chairman Corbett agreed that it is califs for her in her district and he suggests having 7 members on the sewer committee. Chairman Corbett suggested to amend Commissioner Epps motion to have (7) seven members on the committee.

Commissioner Reed suggested the members to be outside the system to get new feedback, but one will have to find funding, So, he stated he thinks the (7) seven people should come from outside the working system.

Chairman Corbett stated: It was suggested before to get representation from outside business owners and the public as well.

Commissioner Lee added that they can also be non-voting members, or they can be advisory members. Chairman Corbett stated: They can take all of it under advisement. Chairman Corbett will discuss it beforehand. The motion was approved by unanimous vote.

Chairman Corbett stated the next item is the 2020 Transportation Plan and will be presented by Shawn Blakeney. Shawn Blakeney stated: The new tax law requires that every January they are to report on how the money was spent for the past year on road projects. They collected \$610,304.75 last year from the Rebuild Alabama Funds. We received \$571,039.24 from the Federal Aid Exchange Funds. Of that, they used \$71,054.03 to pave Brooks Road, \$174,564.83 on Hughley Road Section (1) and used \$27,193.52 on Hill Street, used \$29,825.15 on Three Lakes Road. Also, they have bided-out and awarded for Lasso Loop at \$79,332.40. For Fort Davis and Tuskegee Highway was awarded for \$299,967.07. Both of those were awarded to East Alabama Paving and they are to start those (2) projects in the next (2) weeks. Of that money, they are rolling over \$307,667.22 in our craft money and \$571,039.24 of our Federal Aid and Lasso and the Tuskegee Highway of Ft Davis will come out of that because they have not paid that money yet. 579 miles has been paved with this money last year at \$302,637.53. They are carrying over the original plan Railroad Street, Owens Road section one and Owens Road section two, these will be the next (3) three projects for this year. Chairman Corbett congratulated Shawn Blakeney for a good report and very good work and stated we are seeing the benefits of that work from our citizens. He stated there is a sign that the engineer's started putting up last year on money that is being paid for with the Rebuild Alabama Money. The sign says Rebuild Alabama so citizens will know the road is fixing to be or already under construction for resurfacing and improvements.

Chairman Corbett presented the next item is the 2020 Financial Report.

Ms. LeAnn Horne, County Administrator, stated for the fiscal year ending December 2020, referring to the annual financial report in the commission packets, reported on the accounting as follows: General Fund, which is the operating fund for all but two of the county departments, \$16,488,634.58 was received in revenue; general fund expenses were \$13,973,073; expenses under revenue \$2.5 million. County reserves for general fund increased roughly \$1,272,605.00. The ending fund balance for General Fund is reported (unaudited) \$4,442,813.00. Total revenue received was \$25,971,563.00. Total actual expenses reported is \$20,927,846.00. As you can see by this accounting, expenses are well under Revenue received. This is an incredibly positive report for the County. The total ending fund balance for all funds is \$11,319,313.00. Also Mrs. Horne reported to the County Commission, Engineering Department has paid off (3) loans during this budget year and (2) more will be completed in this budget year. I appreciate the County Engineer making those a priority and soon will be debt free. The financial report indicates the county is in good financial position. Ms. Horne also thanked the Sheriff for bringing in extra revenue and expressed to all county department heads her appreciation for their efforts in reducing expenses where possible especially during this unexpected pandemic time which has changed the way we all do business.

Hope Hicks, interim County Attorney, stated that she is receipt of possible potential notice of litigation. She recommended the Commissioner's vote to go into an Executive Session. She

did not anticipate any action will be needed so they could vote to go into Executive Session and then adjourn from there, following the Commissioner’s discussion.

Mrs. Hicks made the oral declaration to refer to Alabama Code 36-25-A7, the purpose of the Executive Session is to discuss pending or threatening declaration of possible litigation to take place which they normally get it in writing? Hope Hicks, County informed the Commission that the declaration did take place of what the Commissioners receiving it in writing. Chairman Corbett requested to approve the executive session request from the County Attorney Mrs. Hicks. A motion was made by Commissioner Costello. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commission approved by unanimous vote to enter executive session.

Chairman made announcements.

Adjournment.

Attest: _____
County Administrator

Signed: _____
Chair