

Russell County Commission  
 Russell County Commission Chambers  
 Meeting Minutes January 27, 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 Richie Ashburn.

Commissioner Costello provided the Pledge of Allegiance.

Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas called roll of the Commission. Members present were Chairman Chance Corbett; Vice Chairman Gentry Lee; Commissioner Ronnie Reed; Commissioner Rod Costello; Commissioner Scott Chambers and Commissioner Larry Screws. Also, present was Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas and the Interim County Attorney, Hope Hicks. Not present were Commissioner Cattie Epps and LeAnn Horne, County Administrator.

Chairman Corbett noted the agenda had been approved at the work session; however, an item was added. The Interim County Attorney, Hope Hicks, recommended Executive Session.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

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 presented to approve the January 13, 2021 Commission meeting minutes. Motion to approve by Commissioner Lee. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

Chairman Corbett added a discussion that a couple of areas of prior minutes on who made the motions, and him being the Chairman, he mostly will not make motions and note it for future minutes.

**PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:**

Chairman Corbett presented Bob Franklin, EMA Director. Mr. Franklin requested a resolution to sign a motion to approve the sales tax holiday be for Severe Weather Preparedness. Approved by Commissioner Lee. Commissioner Lee verified that Chairman Corbett has copy of the resolution and he agreed he does. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

Chairman Corbett restated, due to Mr. Franklin mic having issues, the sales tax holiday for Severe Weather Preparedness begins 12:01 am on Feb 26<sup>th</sup> and ends 12:00 midnight Sunday, Feb 28, 2021. There is a large list of items one can purchase under \$60 per item with a maximum of \$1,000 for generators only. Contact Emergency Management (or go online) for any questions. Chairman Corbett asked Tina Thomas, Assistant County Administrator, to notify the Department of Revenue 60 days prior.

Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas called to vote for the Severe Weather Preparedness (Tax Holiday). District 3, Costello voted yes; District 2, Chambers voted yes; District 7, Screws voted yes; District 4, Reed voted yes; District 1, Lee voted yes; and District 6, Corbett voted yes. The Commission approved the Tax Holiday.

**COMMISSIONERS DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

Chairman Corbett stated East Alabama Chamber of Congress annual report was received Monday night and anticipated Dennis Beson to there today, but he was not able to attend so Chairman Corbett encourages anyone that wants to know what the Chamber is doing, to reach out to Mr. Beson for the updates and he can share it with you. The Commission received that report Monday night.

Chairman Corbett stated the update on the Covid Vaccination Program and asks the EMA Director, Bob Franklin, to bring updates each meeting because it is a hot topic in the community and across the state and in the country.

EMA Director, Bob Franklin, states the biggest thing is how it is being monitored and what concerns them from the last 14 days. It does not matter that we have had 3,000 since the start, but the past 14 days when people are infectious our numbers have steadily been increasing. Mr. Franklin stated that just a month or so ago, we were less than 100 over a 14-day period, and as of yesterday, we were at 542. Since there is no drop, he encourages people to use social distancing, wear their masks, wash hands, and do the things talked about. Next, the vaccine's biggest issue in the State of Alabama (plus across the county) is the availability of vaccines. Since there is only a certain amount that can be produced at a time so we can only get a set amount to get in the state. Currently, the states receive around 50,000 to 60,000 doses a week and Mr. Franklin heard this morning that they will get 70,000 this week but that trickles out to all 67 counties across the state of Alabama. We are not getting what we need but we are getting some samples out there and getting more places online to get the vaccine. The State of Alabama is still following CDC guidelines in areas where they have not reached the saturation point on the people they want to vaccinate, currently that is 75 years of age and over population, as well as, firsthand responders including Sheriff, police, firefighters, EMTs, and healthcare workers. Per Mr. Franklin's yesterday's conference call, several counties brought up places vaccinating teachers and we would like to get teachers online quickly as we can. They brought it to the State's attention that they feel like they need to move to the next step as-soon-as possible and the State assured, they are working on it. Places we can currently call to make appointments to get the vaccinations is: Russell County Health Department 855-566-5333, Jack Hughston Hospital 334-732-3131 (leave message to schedule for appointment), Regional Rehabilitation Hospital 334-732-2200, Jackson's Point of Light Family Medicine 334-291-5255, and the Preferred Medical Group in Fort Mitchell 334-664-0463. Mr. Franklin stated that as they will get more places open from the allocations received in the counties spread out to get more people in since you can only get so many in at the Health Department or the Hospitals.

Chairman Corbett asked for questions and stated that one of the neighboring counties opened vaccines to the teachers that border our counties closely and it has caused some concern and disruption. Chairman Corbett has spoken with Mayor Loeb, Senator Whatley and Representative Blackshear trying to resolve the issue. Since the schools have their own pods and once vaccines are available to the schools, they can do their own vaccinations. Chairman Corbett assured both school superintendents that any help the Commission or the legislation can give to push it along, they will do. Only 1,000 doses are needed for teachers and school bus drivers and we cannot currently get it.

Bob Franklin, the EMA Director, stated that he spoke to the Autauga County EMA Director and of their two school systems, only one of their two schools in Autauga County were able to get their vaccinations while the other was denied (within the same county). Mr. Franklin said they are trying to work with public health officials to get it resolved. Chairman Corbett asked Mr. Franklin to tell Johnny Burrell with the Russell County Health Department that the schools are ready to handle distribution and vaccinations through the hospital and to make sure it noted when ordering.

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

County Engineer, Shawn Blakeney, presented the Annual Bid List for 2021 Fiscal Year Russell County Highway Department to send out Wednesday, January 27, 2021. Open bids will start in the Commission meeting Thursday, February 18, 2021 at 2:30 pm EST and award the bids at the Commission meeting Wednesday, February 24, 2021. See the following bid list:

Bid Number 001-21	Striping and Marking
Bid Number 002-21	Liquid Asphalt
Bid Number 005-21	Grassing
Bid Number 006-21	Corrugate Steel and HDPE Pipe
Bid Number 007-21	Aggregate
Bid Number 008-21	Concrete Pipe
Bid Number 009-21	Truck Hauling
Bid Number 010-21	Motor Grader Blades
Bid Number 011-21	Maltene Based Emulsified Asphalt
Bid Number 012-21	Crushed Concrete
Bid Number 013-21	Fencing

Commissioner Lee motioned to approve 2021 Annual Highway Department Bid List. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. No further discussion. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas called to vote. District 3, Costello voted yes; District 2, Chambers voted yes; District 7, Screws voted yes; District 4, Reed voted yes; District 1, Lee voted yes; and District 6, Corbett voted yes. The Commission approved the 2021 Annual Highway Department Bid List.

County Engineer, Shawn Blakeney, presented to purchase a security camera and door lock system at the Hurtsboro Senior Center through the Parks and Recreation budget. He presented an estimate from Evaluated Securities for \$7,851 for installation. Motion to approved by Commissioner Screws. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. No further discussion. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas called to vote. District 3, Costello voted yes; District 2, Chambers voted yes; District 7, Screws voted yes; District 4, Reed voted yes; District 1, Lee voted yes; and District 6, Corbett voted yes. The Commission approved the Hurtsboro Senior Center security camera and door lock system. Commissioner Lee presented that the County Engineer is normally not listed separately and should be listed under business. Chairman Corbett agreed.

**ADMINISTRATOR:**

Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas said no there are no items to discuss.

**ATTORNEY:**

Hope Hicks, Interim County Attorney, requested that the Commission have Executive Session on the potential litigation likely to be litigated Under Section 36-25A7 of Alabama Code that this is appropriate for Executive Session and this oral declaration is appropriate. Chairman Corbett requested to approve the executive session request from the County Attorney Mrs. Hicks. A motion was made by Commissioner reed. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas called to vote for the Executive Session. District 3, Costello voted yes; District 2, Chambers voted yes; District 7, Screws voted yes; District 4, Reed voted yes; District 1, Lee voted yes; and District 6, Corbett voted yes. Hope Hicks then stated the meeting would take about 30 minutes and the Commission would then come back into session before adjourning. Chairman Corbett stated they would go to Executive Session for about 30 minutes following the announcements and then they will reconvene to either take action or adjourn.

## COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION

Chairman Corbett discussed to have a list of rules written down for entry into the courthouse, especially during the Covid times. He stated a raving complaint from a citizen that her child was not allowed to come into the courthouse before the courthouse shut down this past week. She stated that her kid had to stay at the door with the deputy. If no rules are currently written, we need to write a list and get it approved by the Commission since we do not want department heads making their own rules for our Courthouse. Commissioner Reed stated that if the kid is with their parent, there is no reason they cannot go in the Courthouse with them. Commissioner Lee agreed that the child does not need to stay outside. Chairman Corbett asked Bob Franklin to help get a list together of what rules might be now, please get it together to present to the Commission. Commissioner Lee stated that when Covid first started, to use common sense and leaving a child outside is not common sense.

Chairman made announcements.

Commission went into Executive Session.

Commission readjourned from the Executive Session. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas called roll and reestablished a quorum. Chairman Corbett asked if anyone would like to entertain a motion as a result of the Executive Session. Motion by Commissioner Reed that the County Administrator, LeeAnn Horne, be terminated effective February 5, 2021 and be on Administrative Leave until February 5, 2021. Seconded by Chambers. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas called to vote. District 3, Costello voted yes; District 2, Chambers voted yes; District 7, Screws voted yes; District 4, Reed voted yes; District 1, Lee abstained; and District 6, Corbett voted yes.

Commissioner Costello requested that the Interim County Attorney Hope Hicks to negotiate a settlement on any and all claims that "she" has against the Russell County Commission and to report back to the Commission on the work session of February 8, 2021. Chairman Corbett verified that "she" was LeAnn Horne and Commissioner Costello agreed. Commissioner Reed seconded the motion. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas called to vote. District 3, Costello voted yes; District 2, Chambers voted yes; District 7, Screws voted yes; District 4, Reed voted yes; District 1, Lee voted yes; and District 6, Corbett voted yes.

Adjournment.