

The Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes
October 9, 2019
9:30 A.M. EST

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

The invocation was given by Mark Waldrop with Epworth United Methodist Church.

Commissioner Cattie Epps led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Danny Phillips ask the Commissioner's requesting for an explanation of why he is not able to put a cemetery in his front yard.

Jennifer Davidson reported the Extension Office now has money management calendars for the Citizens are available and to remind the Citizens that every second Tuesday of the month, there is a lunch and learn at the Phenix City Library.

Chair Martin thanked Cable T.V. of East Alabama and the Citizen of East Alabama for their coverage of the Commission Meetings. She also welcomed Elected Officials, Department Heads, Media and Guests.

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Martin requested approval of the September 25, 2019 minutes. Commissioner Epps motioned to approve. Commissioner Currington seconded. Commissioner Corbett abstained due to being on a Chamber of Commerce Economic Development trip the week of September 25, 2019. The vote was approved.

DISCUSSION ITEM:

Chair Martin stated: We have a discussion item about a time capsule. Why can't Russell County have a time capsule? I understand Phenix City has one but who knows when they will bring it up or when it was interred. I would like for the County to have one as well and to work with me our and Revenue Commissioner Naomi Elliott. Commissioner Lee has suggested the Seale Courthouse would be a good place to interred. We are in a Bicentennial year, so I think it is significant for us to do that. I also request our Economic & Tourism Director Victor Cross to work on this also. I guess we should take a vote to see if you are all in favor for this proposal. Chair Martin motioned it to be approved. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett.

Commissioner Lee stated: He wished it would have been moved to business because if it fails it cannot come back up for six months for being under discussion.

County Administrator LeAnn Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to approve the time capsule.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Commissioner Corbett stated: I have a call from Mr. Davis about sponsoring the Chattahoochee Valley Veterans Organization event. He has requested the Commission would consider a \$100 ad in their program and sponsoring a table for this event. I think

it is a very good use of Russell County funds to sponsor this organization because it is for the veterans in our Community.

Commissioner Corbett made a motion for the Commission to approve a total of \$400 for the ad and the table sponsorship. Commissioner Currington seconded and requested the Administrator to use Contingent Fund. The vote was unanimous.

County Administrator LeAnn Horne stated: As we discussed Monday evening at the Work Session; our Courthouse is aging. We have been having trouble over the years with the HVAC and roof leaks. We have patched on it and patched on it; We have just about done all the patch work we can do. Leon Watson Director the Maintenance will come forward and answer any questions that you brought up on Monday night.

Maintenance Director, Leon Watson stated: As the Commissioner's requested to obtain the additional cost for the overtime to install the HVAC outside of business hours. The contractors reported as follows; T & D sent an option to install the HVAC units in two weekends, November 9th & 10th & November 16th & 17th. The additional cost is \$4,329.00. That includes the crane and T & D's labor. Honeywell provides the services programming controls and computers their cost is \$1,602 the County employees work is \$3,560 for overtime. I added a plus or minus 10% because the new 3% raises will be in place.

Commissioner Reed stated: Mr. Leon, if we go ahead and do it shutting the courthouse down for two days how much money will we be saving?

Maintenance Director, Leon Watson stated: The total additional cost, if we do it on two weekends is \$9,481. If we close the original requested days by the contractor, we will be closed Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Monday will be a holiday they will be complete. This cost would be additional to the bid because you all have asked to change the installation dates.

Commissioner Reed stated: If we go the original way, then comes Tuesday everything will be up and running. I don't know how the other Commissioners feel, but I think that would be the best way to go ahead and close the Courthouse down for several reasons.

Commissioner Lee stated: Madam Chair, I wish Mr. Screws was here because he lives the farthest distance away from the Courthouse. This is the main tax paying time for property taxes. You are not going to inform everyone in the County that the Courthouse is closed no matter how much it is advertised. But to me closing the Courthouse in the middle of tax season is off the table. It is just not an option. As we talked Monday at the Work Session, we can open the Courthouse and pay the \$10,000 and pay the overtime to our employees. I am not in favor to close the Courthouse during tax season.

Commissioner Corbett asked: Leon, were you planning on the original schedule to have our employees working on the weekend.

Maintenance Director, Leon Watson stated: Yes.

Commissioner Corbett asked: Was that included in your additional amount that you just gave us or was that taken out of that? So, they would have been working one day.

Maintenance Director Leon Watson stated: They would be working one day because closing they would be working Thursday and Friday and Saturday would be the day, they earned overtime.

Commissioner Corbett stated: The problem is the Commissioner will be sending every County Employee that works in the Courthouse home. But the Sheriff's Office will be working, the other employees would be working, and the Engineering Employees would be working. I am not really sure that is fair. I understand the HVAC System. I understand the issue behind the construction. I agree with Commissioner Lee's point about taxes. I actually spoke with Mrs. Elliott about that concern trying to do my

preparation on item. Is this the right time to do that? She has some concerns; I think about the tax season as well. I hate to ask the employees to work on the weekends but as long as we compensate them, I think it is fair. At this point, as a Commissioner I think to go ahead and incur the additional cost, and do this project is best on the weekend and holiday. That's my opinion, right now.

Commissioner Epps stated: I am back to where I was on Monday. There is always an option. If we are going to close the Courthouse two days that means we are going to have to pay the employees as well as for those two days. Is that correct?

Commissioner Lee stated: That is correct.

Commissioner Epps stated: Even though they are not working. My other option is they probably could do the work and the option would be we could close the front part of the Courthouse. We have a back entrance. We can put a sign on the front "Work is in Progress" to lead them to the back. The citizens can still come and take care of their business at the Courthouse and it would not be closed and you all can do what needs to be done for the air conditioners at the same time. When you have people driving from the end of 165 that connects to Eufaula and they get here, and the Courthouse is closed. I think common sense, for Cattie, would be I would rather park here and walk around to the back door. I think it is unfair for us to make the taxpayers be inconvenienced. As I always say, "there is more than one way to skin a cat".

Commissioner Corbett stated: To speak to Mrs. Epps point, Leon can we do it safely?

Maintenance Director, Leon Watson stated: I am going to say, no. Having citizens in the building while the overhead work is going on is or could be dangerous. No one would be able to park in the front at all. There will be a very large crane, a very large fifth wheel and a set-up truck that is going to bring in a 5-ton unit that is as big as a school bus. If anything went wrong the crane could come through the building. I don't think we want this and endanger the public.

Commissioner Corbett made a motion to approve this to the additional cost to do this on the weekends as Mr. Watson's proposal outlined and not close the Courthouse. Commissioner Lee seconded.

County Administrator LeAnn Horne stated: I agree with the Commissioners. I think the weekend is the best way to go for such a large-scale project. I also wanted to note, based on the information I received the cost would be \$5000 (difference) because we would have to had to pay salaries for the Courthouse employees for two days.

Maintenance Director, Leon Watson stated: We would have the entire first floor out two days; meaning no HVAC and power on and off.

County Administrator stated: I also have employees that require the HVAC and I did not want my employees to be uncomfortable working with no heat or air conditioner and some have health problems.

Commissioner Reed stated: Leon, you did say you would be completed on Tuesday?

Maintenance Director, Leon Watson stated: The quote is for two weekends.

Commissioner Lee asked: In the week in between the HVAC will be running?

Maintenance Director, Leon Watson stated: Yes sir. When I reached out to the Contractor, they said it would be better for them that way.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Just so we all understand if weather does cause a problem, they will reschedule for another weekend.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to approve the HVAC project added expenses and utilizing weekends for installation.

County Administrator Horne stated: The next item on the agenda is the Personnel Review Board Appointments. We realized this was not included in the normal book for Commission Boards. We have not, fortunately, had a reason to call a meeting of the Personnel Review Board in several years. Their terms have expired, and I do feel we need to bring them current just in case the need arises. I provided that information to you Monday evening at the Work Session.

Commissioner Martin stated: What is the Commissioner's pleasure at this time. I do have an appointment for my District 3 I appoint Gail Brantley.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Madam Chair, I would like to reappointment Ms. Marcia Johnson for District 6.

Commissioner Currington stated: Madam Chair, I appoint David Ellis for District 2.

Commissioner Reed stated: Madam Chair, I want to reappoint Kelfee Parker.

Commissioner Epps stated: I talked with Mr. Willie James McCoy and I appoint him for District 5.

Commissioner Lee stated: My appointment has not expired.

County Administrator Horne stated: Because these are District appointments by each Commissioner it doesn't require a vote. We will provide a letter to each member and update our records.

County Administrator Horne stated: The next item is the Payroll Schedule. In going through the process if transferring payroll to the CPA firm. It was brought to our attention, issues with two separate pay periods. Their recommendation is to have one pay period for the entire County. After reviewing the information recently, we feel that it would be the best interest of the County and the employees as well. This will eliminate a lot of room for errors for Department Heads and for employees that are paid in advance. For the tedious process of tracking employees time and attendance when they have already turned in their time sheet at times, they may have an incident where they are sick or have an emergency and then they miss a day during that advance (paid) pay period. The Department Heads have to maintain that attendance until the next pay period. Sometimes that information is reported and sometimes it is an oversight. I think it would be better use of the County's time and more productive for Department Heads plus a lot less stress. The record keeping would be actual time employees worked for the time, they are paid. Currently, we have the Sheriff's Department, the Jail, the Engineering Department and the Sanitation Department on this pay period cycle. My recommendation this morning is to move all the General Government employees to the same pay period as those departments I just mentioned. We would have one pay period effective November 1, 2019. This will allow us time to go through our records, work with the Consultants, and County's new CPA to make sure everything is correct.

Commissioner Epps stated: Question, have you talked with the Department Heads about the change in the Payroll? Do they agree?

County Administrator Horne stated: I did discuss it Monday evening in the Work Session. Some of the Department Heads I have talked to said that they would like that system better. It is very hard when you have a lot of employees trying to track their time and attendance after the fact and being paid.

Commissioner Reed stated: I would like to get a list of all the Department Heads. If they like it, I am fine with it. You might have some that do not like it.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Madam Chair, I appreciate the willingness to listen to the Department Heads, but at some time we have to decide what is best for the Administration as well and the Commission. The big thing for them and Department

Head's they are going to get paid. We are not going to once a month pay cycle like some of the other Government Offices. If this is going to keep the correct records and streamline the process, I am for it.

Commissioner Epps stated: When someone is working, and they are a Department Head, I think they should discuss it and not just throwing it on them. Give them time to get an understanding. I am not saying we can't do what we want to do with it. I think it would be fair.

Commissioner Corbett stated: We have four Department Heads here and Elected Officials, does anyone have a problem with this? Commissioner Corbett stated they indicated they do not. I make a motion to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Lee.

Commissioner Corbett stated: They indicated they do not.

Commissioner Lee stated: I want to make one comment. The list that was given to us of the different departments, six are under the control of the County Commission anyway. The only ones that are not are the Elected offices and they just indicated they are fine with it.

County Administrator Horne stated: The other pay system is basically being paid in advance. I think you will see a lot of savings on the benefit side of the house when we consolidate.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to combine pay periods effective November 1, 2019.

County Administrator Horne stated: I presented to you Monday evening at the Work Session, a floating holiday the Commission always sets. The reason this came up new is because the Governor issued a letter providing state holidays for Thanksgiving and Christmas time period that is included in your packet. The employees have been asking about this holiday. I am not sure whether the Commission has had enough time to consider where to set the Mardi Gras day. I was checking to see if the Commission was ready to make the move; or, wait until the next Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Reed stated: Madam Chair, I was concerned if we give them the day after Christmas some of them may not want to come back to work on that Friday.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Madam Chair, I would like to ask the Administrator have you gotten any feed back as far as from the Department Heads?

County Administrator Horne stated: I have and from other employees, as I mentioned Monday evening, they would prefer December 26th.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve the Mardi Gras holiday for December 26, 2019. Seconded by Commissioner Lee.

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

County Administrator Horne stated: The next item on the agenda is the approval to pay an invoice to the consultant for creating and reading Proclamations.

Commissioner Lee stated: Madam Chair, I am going to make a motion for that invoice to be approved but in the future, I think in the future we need to follow the policy that was established. These need to be approved in advance before the work has been done. I make a motion to pay the invoice.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Madam Chair, I second that motion, and I would like to go to discussion. Again, this is probably the fourth time I have brought this subject up. I would really like to see the Commission stick with a standard Proclamation that looks Official, with a seal on it and can be framed. Also, not to have the Proclamation include

a lot of pictures on it where you cannot hardly read the writing. I plan to bring that up in a future meeting but at this time I second the motion.

Commissioner Lee asked was it \$50.

Commissioner Corbett stated: It is \$30.

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

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Epps stated: Madam Chair, I just have something we have been tabling and tabling and I had brought it up some time back. Commissioner Currington also has mentioned it. The time clocks. When I talked about the time clock, it was not for them as a whole because I didn't get any concerns from any Department Heads. My asking for the time clock was for the Commission Office, only. I never got any complaints from any other departments but this one. That has been about two or three years back that I ask about the time clock. Commissioner Currington put it on the Agenda as well later on. We haven't heard anything about a time clock. In my opinion, since I worked on a time clock for many years, we never had any problems with a company as large I worked for. I think we need a better way to keep a time schedule for the employees. We have talked about finger printing and all that. A time clock and time keeping can be very simple. It is just for the Commission Office, only, not any other departments in the County, just Commissions. I never got any complaints or concerns from any other departments. All the concerns were from the Commission Office. That's why I brought the time clock up. I just want to say, where are we on the time clock?

County Administrator Horne replied: Madam Vice Chair, first you said that you didn't get any complaints from any of the Department Heads. I haven't complained to you either and I am a Department Head as well. I am not sure who complained to you about my office. I don't know of any and nobody has complained to me about there being a time issue in the Commission Office. However, I didn't understand it that way when you brought it up and we have talked about it many times. If you look back through the minutes, probably five or six times and as we went through the HR payroll and software conversion I reported about the clocks for the entire County. So, today it has changed. I guess now I need clarification. Do you want a time clock outside my office; specifically or, do you want one for the entire County so that we can address when you brought it up if there is any time issues the County as a whole or specially just my office? I haven't complained to anybody or made any report.

Commissioner Epps stated: You haven't complained.

County Administrator Horne stated: That is correct.

Commissioner Epps stated: As I have said a lot of times. I get complaints that I don't even try to bring before this Commission. A lot of times, I try to solve them as they come along because sometimes you can do it. No one probably complained to you because possibly they were afraid; they were going to be reprimanded or lose their job. This sort of thing. What I was saying, that was my purpose of talking about the time clock in the very beginning. You had said that you were looking into a time clock if you look back over the minutes. I just wanted to know where we stand now with the time clock.

County Administrator Horne requested the Chair to call on the attorney about Commissioner Epps remarks.

County Attorney Funderburk stated: It violates the rules of making adverse remarks about employees, here in the public which is improper.

County Administrator Horne stated: The reason I requested to question the attorney is if we are going to have a time clock for one department, we should have them for all departments. We should be fair to all the departments and employees. My employees

deserve the same treatment as other County employees and I feel that way too as a Department Head. I am not trying to be confrontational in any way; however, fair is fair. Again, if you are going to apply a policy, I feel it should be uniformly administered. That is LeAnn's opinion and I feel that is something the Commission can consider when they are making these type of policy decisions. My employees feel singled out, I don't want them to feel that way. I want them to feel that they are safe in their job place. They are not being threatened or harassed or treated different than other County employees.

Commissioner Lee stated: Madam Chair, first of all, I remember exactly when we talked about this. The discussion was for the entire County. This is the first time I heard this is just for the Commission Office. We have five employees in the Commission Office I don't know why you need a time clock. I hope people understand that your Department Heads, Administrator's, Assistant Administrator's don't punch a time clock. They work after hours and don't make over time, so they don't punch a time clock. You would have to have a time sheet forty feet long as much as some of the Department Heads and Administration has to be in and out of the office. I think we are doing all right just like it is.

Commissioner Epps stated: Madam Chair, can I say this in closing. Just disregard, what I have said and let's go on.

Announcements were made.

Commissioner Martin motioned to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Currington. The meeting was adjourned.

Attest: _____ Signed: _____
County Administrator Chair