

The Russell County Commission
Russell County Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes November 12, 2020
9:30 A.M. EDT

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

Chairman stated for the record there are no public comments.

The invocation was given by Dr. Johnny Ellison, Golden Acres Baptist Church.

Chairman Gentry Lee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Chairman Lee welcomed everyone for their attendance.

The Honorable Judge Walter Gray provided the Oath of Office swearing the board of commissioners in for their new term which are: Chairman Gentry Lee, District 1; Commissioner Scott Chambers, District 2; Commissioner Rod Costello, District 3; Commissioner Ronnie Reed, District 4; Commissioner Cattie Epps, District 5; Commissioner Chance Corbett, District 6; and Commissioner Larry Screws, District 7.

County Administrator LeAnn Horne called roll. Members present were Chairman Gentry Lee, Commissioner Scott Chambers, Commissioner Rod Costello, Commissioner Ronnie Reed, Commissioner Cattie Epps, Commissioner Chance Corbett, and Commissioner Larry Screws. Also, present was the County Attorney Kenneth Funderburk. A quorum was established by the County Administrator.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Costello. County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to approve the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Lee stated: Do we have a motion to approve the October 28, 2020 Commission Meeting Minutes. Commissioner Corbett stated: Motion to postpone the approval of the minutes until the next Commission Meeting because there are a couple of quotes and things that were not actually said. Chairman Lee stated: We will postpone until the next meeting.

Commissioner Epps stated: Since we are talking about the minutes, I would also like to point out at the last meeting for the October 28, 2020 meeting there should have been a correction of my 20 years and that was not put in them. Chairman Lee stated: That was in the last minutes and I hope that correction was made.

PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

Chairman Lee stated: The next thing in your packets is the Farm City 2020 Proclamation.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The Farm City Proclamation was approved by unanimous vote.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Emergency Manager Director Bob Franklin stated: Every five(5) years we have to update our Hazard Mitigation Plan for the County. The Hazard Mitigation Plan allows us to purchase generators, storm shelters and get grants for those types of things to mitigate future disasters. Chairman Lee stated: Is there any reason we need to do that today. Bob Franklin, EMA Director stated: No sir. Chairman Lee stated: I would rather wait rather than take a chance of it not passing. We will do it at the next meeting.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Commissioner Corbett stated: Something that has been brought up in the meetings in the past and I thought as we enter a new term maybe the time to address that. The voting order of the

Commission. I would like to modify that in a form of a motion, that moving forward that the Commissioner will randomly draw numbers 1-6 to determine the voting order of the Commission for that year with the Chair always having the last vote of a tie breaker. That is in form of a motion. Chairman Lee stated: I will second that motion. Chairman Lee stated: We used to do it this way when I first got on the Commission (*100 years ago*). Every year we would draw a number to see who voted where so it wouldn't be the same each time.

Commissioner Corbett stated: The reason I brought this up today is because it is a policy change, it will take effect at the next meeting. Commissioner Screws stated: This will be a one-time change for the year? Chairman Lee stated: Yes, one-time for the year. County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: I would like to postpone the countywide phone system. I have had some additional information come in that I would like to research. Chairman Lee made a motion to postpone until the next meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Currently, deputies are having to stand there with hand thermometers and check people's temperatures entering the building. These thermometers will give us the social distancing we need and make the process smoother. I would like to purchase ten (10) of those. Estimated cost is roughly \$2,200 a piece and put one in each of our County facilities. This would be coming under the Cares Act Funding money.

Commissioner Epps motioned to approve. Commissioner Corbett seconded.

Chairman Lee stated: Is this something that needs to be bid? County Administrator Horne stated: It will not be required if the project is under the \$50K threshold since it is for a public building.

Commissioner Corbett stated: County Attorney do you agree with that? This item does not need to be bid? It is a total of \$28,150. County Administrator Horne stated: County building improvements would fall under the Public Works Law; the threshold is \$50(k). County Attorney Funderburk agreed.

Commissioner Costello stated: Bob, you are wanting to buy 10 of them. Are the grants already approved or could you buy 11 for one spare? EMA Director Bob Franklin stated: We are not pre-approved for an amount. This falls within the guidelines of the Cares Act Funding too.

Commissioner Epps amended her motion to purchase 11 thermo cameras for the courthouse. Commissioner Corbett seconded the amendment. County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: As all of our previous Commissioners are aware most of all our audio, video equipment is approaching 20 years old. When we tried to do the live feeds out of here, we had a lot of feedback issues, audio issues and camera issues. This does not mix well with the current technology. It is going to be a 100% change-out of all the equipment that is in the back to a new technology that will get us through hopefully the next 20 years.

Chairman Lee stated: What is the estimated cost?

EMA Director Bob Franklin stated: It is just under \$15,000 for the new equipment. This upgrade in audio visual electronics will be covered under the COVID-19 money because this is a way to get people access to our meetings without physically coming in the meeting room.

Commissioner Reed stated: Do you think we need to check around and see if we can get anything cheaper?

Chairman Lee stated: That is my next question. I have been involved in this with the Church. If you are going to get any other competition, you will have to go out of town.

EMA Director Bob Franklin stated: The other companies that I am aware of will be out of Atlanta and Birmingham.

Commissioner Corbett stated: There is one in Auburn. I make a motion to postpone until the next meeting. I would like to see 3 quotes if we can get them.

Chairman Lee stated: Motion to postpone takes precedence. Commissioner Reed seconded. Unanimous approval by the Commission to postpone until the next meeting.

Chairman Lee stated: I want Mr. Funderburk to double check before the next meeting and make certain these upgrades cannot be considered as one project, if purchased together and purchased under the Public Buildings Bid Law. They are all related and going into the same building. I need a ruling from our Attorney that these are separate items and will not be added together to go over the bid law limit but remain separate.

Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: The Courthouse Exterior Access Doors (Contact Tracing Upgrades) is going to be \$43,500.

Chairman Lee stated: We need a ruling before we vote on any of these.

Commissioner Corbett stated: I feel very good about the doors being a Public Works item.

Chairman Lee stated: If you add the 3 together it is going to be a lot. Do they count together or separate?

Commissioner Corbett stated: It would be my understanding because they are different types of projects, they would be separate.

County Attorney Funderburk stated: You have that right to take 3 bids.

Chairman Lee stated: When you take the bids, it is more complicated under Public Works because you have to do a different type of advertisement. Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: We are under a tight timeline.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Mr. Franklin, talk to us about the process you got to this point with the next project.

Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: As a security feature we have mag locks on our exterior doors. We have card readers that allow employees access into the facility. What happens currently, if we lose power those mag locks release. That is okay during the day when people are here. The issue we have is in the evenings, nights, weekends, and holidays when there is nobody here and the power goes out for an extended period of time leaves a facility wide open. In order to prevent that from happening, the security guard goes at the end of the day and key locks each door. That creates a safety hazard.

Once those doors are physically locked, you cannot get out of this building. We do not want to delay anyone from exiting this building if they need to get out. This system will replace the current mag locks with an electronic strike. Instead of releasing a magnet, it has the power to pull the pin all the time. It is going to default lock all the time. If you go out in a panic which that is what these are panic bars, they will still open if the power is on or off. They are locked 24-7. We can control that now, we can unlock now. If the power is not to them, they stay locked. It is opposite, they still work if you have power or not. This is a budgeted item as well. This is something we need to do and I would like to get it completed.

Commissioner Corbett stated: How did the process get to here as far as quoting? Did we talk to more than one company? Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: We did get a firm out of Birmingham to come. We also contacted Automated Doors in Columbus to get them to price it. This is another one of those items, there is not a lot of companies out there that do this type of work.

Commissioner Epps stated: I am sure everything has changed, and I am sure everything needs to be upgrade. With the Sheriff being responsible for the safety of the Courthouse do you agree with what the EMA Director is bringing forward to us at this time?

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: Yes ma'am, it is the deputies that have to stay and lock the doors physically especially when we have bad weather. Lightning is what knocks the electricity out. I was just talking to Bob and I wanted to make sure the Judicial Building is also in the scope

because they have a couple that are up there, and we have this same problem. There are more doors here and only a few at the Judicial Building but when we fix them, we need to fix them all.

Chairman Lee stated: My only question is the bid law allowing this many changes to one building. Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: From my perspective, it is different jobs to the same building and they are all different projects.

Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: I am prepared to bid it. I have the specifications.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Mr. Chairman, let's bid it. Do we have a date that you can open it?

Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: I am going to open it the Monday before the next Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Can you get the bid out that quick? It is less than two weeks that will be pretty quick.

Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: The issue is we have to have it in by December 30, 2020. We have to have this money spent by December 30, 2020. I can get the bid out quickly, but the work has to be completed as well.

Commissioner Corbett stated: I think it gives you a month if we award it at the next meeting. I make a motion that we allow the Administrator with the EMA Director to bid out this project to replace the door strikes on the doors for safety issues and they open the bids on Monday November 23 at 4:00 P.M., E.T. Commissioner Reed seconded the motion.

Emergency Management Director Bob Franklin stated: This is budgeted so if it doesn't make COVID-19 money we can still do the work. The CARES extension is possible, but it will probably not happen until February once everyone is sworn in.

Chairman Lee stated: The motion is to send out the bid request and open them on November 23, 2020 at 4:00 P.M., E.T. and we will go from there. County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: We have an ambulance contract we sent out to bid. We received 2 bids. A couple of notes about it. The County pays no subsidy or money to the company. We will provide and continue to provide the shelters that we give them currently, the office space, and the station. They will reimburse the County Fire Departments and volunteers for the equipment they spend and any narcotics that any of the volunteers may be allowed to push. We do have some volunteers that are licensed to push some narcotics. Any amount would be reimbursed in the contract. I will ask this morning that the Commission allow the Chairman to sign the contract and make it finalized.

Chairman Lee stated: There is no charge for transportation of County employees during workdays if they are injured.

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: There is no charge for County employees or inmates. There is no charge from the ambulance company for volunteer firemen that get hurt or any County worker or inmate that is transported from the jail.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

Commissioner Corbett stated: I want to thank the Sheriff, the Administrator and also the County Ambulance Board for your work on this. This is an important contract, and it is important that we have professional service.

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

County Administrator Horne stated: I brought this item to you a couple of meetings back for your consideration. In your packets is a general outline as a suggestion for a temporary committee to review the county benefits the Commission provides County employees. I mentioned to you, I would look at the largest departments and recommend those officials if they are willing to be on the committee as well as myself and Max to attend with the information.

Chairman Lee stated: I cannot tell if you and Max are just non-voting members.

County Administrator Horne stated: We are just there to provide information and guidance for the committee members who will make any recommendations.

Chairman Lee stated: It is the Sheriff, Engineer, Tag Commissioner, Mapping and Appraiser and Probate Judge.

Commissioner Corbett stated: I would like to make a motion that we create this committee based on the names or positions you just named. The Sheriff, Engineer, Tag Commissioner, Mapping and Appraisal and Probate Judge. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Today we have shown, and I appreciate Mr. Franklin's work towards the work for the equipment. It still shows the need for this Commission to consider an IT person for this County.

I wanted to remind the Commissioners and the staff too, the deadline to submit items for the agenda is Wednesday at 12:00 noon prior to the week of the Commission meeting. I would like to see the agenda packet emailed to the Commissioners by close of business on Thursday. This has all been approved. Each item has a description even if it is as simple as "this is what I want". Commissioners obviously choose not to submit the description, but I do think it is important that we not come to this meeting on Monday night or in this case Wednesday morning not knowing what is in this packet. When we live in an electronic world, we can all pull our emails up. I would like to see that enforced from the Administrators office that we get our packets with information and minutes by close of business the Thursday before the week of the Commission meeting.

County Administrator Horne stated: In the current policy it states the agenda will be sent out by Thursday and the packets would be ready by Friday, if possible.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Perfect, I am not getting them at all right now Friday is perfect. I am just asking that we try to stick with that. Administrator Horne: I sent the minutes and contract out yesterday ahead of this meeting to commissioners.

Chairman Lee stated this portion of the agenda is for Commissioners to make comments only. No responses are required.

Announcements were made.

The meeting was adjourned.

Attest: _____
County Administrator

Signed: _____
Chair