

The Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 13, 2019
9:30 A.M. EST

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

Sandra Jackson the Regional Director for U.S. Senator Jones wanted to let the Commissioners know there are grant's for specific projects. One of the things that was mentioned was the extension of the sewage lines. They do have a grant coordinator that work's out of the Mobile office and the Senate Office is there and is open to any assistance they can provide.

Chair Martin requested to adopt the Agenda as it is printed.

Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the Agenda. Seconded by Chair Martin. The vote was unanimous to adopt the Agenda as printed.

The invocation was given by Pastor Alice Hubbard, True Believers Ministry.

Commissioner Gentry Lee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

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 Ronnie Reed, and Commissioner Chance Corbett. Also, present was the County Attorney Eric Funderburk. Commissioner Carl Currington and Commissioner Larry Screws were absent. A quorum was established.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Martin requested approval of the October 23, 2019 minutes. Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Commissioner Lee seconded. The minutes were approved.

PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

Commissioner Epps stated: I am going to ask Mr. Leroy Davis along with Representative Blackshear to approach the Commission. Mr. Leroy Davis will do the presentation of this Proclamation.

Mr. Leroy Davis stated: As you know I am on the Wire Grass Committee representing Russell County and I thank you for that appointment. For those of you who don't know what the Wiregrass RC&D gives out grants to take care of our Communities. It consists of ten Counties which are Barbour County, Covington County, Calhoun County, Crenshaw County, Dale County, Geneva County, Henry County, Houston County, Pike County and of course Russell County. Today we are going to present Representative Blackshear with a plaque for the services he does. Representative Blackshear, Representative Gray, Billy Beasley and Barry

Forte who make sure we get the funding for Russell County. We just want to thank him. The other's mentioned have already received grants from people on the Board.

Representative Blackshear stated: Leroy, I really appreciate it. This is part of a team effort. This is a collective effort between elected officials and people with the State. All politics goes back to being local. The relationship you have back at the local level because that is where the rubber meets the road. The better our partnerships are the better we can help represent the citizens of our Counties in Phenix City and Russell County area. Thank you and it is a pleasure being here.

Commissioner Epps stated: Madam Chair, I would also like to thank Representative Blackshear for the work he does.

Chair Martin stated: We would like to recognize Farm City Week, the week of November 22-28, 2019.

Chair Martin stated: I want to recognize Mr. Wilkes concerning a continuation of Resolution for the Levy of Sales & Use Taxes for City and County Public School Purposes. I move that we approve the request to continue the one cent tax for another 19 years. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. County Administrator polled the Commission. The Proclamation was approved.

Mr. Wilkes stated: Thank you so much for all you do for the citizens of our County. We really appreciate what your doing especially for our schools. What we are requesting is the 1 cent sales tax is to expire in 2030 and we wish it to be extended to 2049. This is NOT a new tax. It is the same tax we have had a number of years in Russell County and we are simply asking for the same wording and proportion. We are asking that it be extending until 2049. The reason being is because Russell County has experienced a great deal of growth and we are in need of additional facilities. In order for us to secure a 30-year loan we need more than a 10-year remaining on that tax in order to do that. It seems like 2030 is several years away especially when we are trying to get a warrant to secure some additional facilities. Our numbers are up 260 as opposed to last year and that is a small school.

Attorney Eric Funderburk stated: The Resolution you have today probably needs to be tweaked a little bit. I think what we can do is amend the previous Resolution to extend that to 2049 and bring it back next week for approval.

Commissioner Epps stated: Don't we need to go ahead and approve with the necessary corrections?

Commissioner Corbett stated: That's what I think.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to extend the Levy of Sales & Use Taxes for Public School Purposes to 2049.

DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Corbett stated: I think the Commission supports all our veterans. I received a call from Ben Baker who was formally a County Commissioner. Mr. Baker asked the Commission to look at an initiative to honor the veterans.

Mr. Ben Baker stated: I am going to throw out a couple of figures, but you will have to look them up. There is over a 125,000 veteran's and troops stationed at Fort Benning Georgia that live in our area. That is a lot of people. I found a figure that said there was 40,000 employees at Fort Benning. It is the largest single employer in the area. In 1990 and 1991 our National Guard Troops were deployed to Saudi Arabia. My wife and I have been traveling the United States for the past 15 years. This past year we did a little over 9,000 miles out West. One of the things I saw once you cross the Mississippi River, in the little and mid-size towns, I don't care whether you are in Wyoming, Utah, Idaho anywhere you go down the main streets and hanging from the poles and street lights that says "We Support Our Troops". We live by one of the biggest military places in the world. I have come to just make a suggestion to the Commissioners, and I hope you all will think about it. It sure would be nice to have signs hanging around our County and City saying, "We Support Our Troops". Chair Martin asked Representative Blackshear to look into grants from the State for such military support banners or signs.

BUSINESS:

Commissioner Corbett stated: We sent out bids for a public works project for the installation of the gazebo project in Crawford. There were several aspects of that bid to include the erection of the gazebo and the roof structure. We had three different people ask for bid packets. Only one response came in. The response was not for the entire project it was for one piece of the project. It was for the erection of the gazebo. I did speak with auditor's by email, Jason their Attorney, told me because it was not for the entire project that bid would not be responsive. The option there is we can not accept those bids and just move forward with the project outside the bid requirements. I have that in writing by the Attorney. At this time, I make a motion to reject the bids as non-responsive and move forward with the project.

Commissioner Lee seconded.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to approve the Gazebo Project in Crawford outside the bid requirements.

Commissioner Corbett stated: I was asked to put the Old Post Office Contract Approval on the agenda. As you know we are working on a project of the Old Post Office. Scott Holmes has been working on the plans for that. Scott asked me the other day if he could proceed or we need approval from the Commission on one small aspect of that project. I believe we should be transparent and get approval from the Commission. That piece is trying to get that building on the State and National Register.

Scott Holmes stated: Why this is important is if you get State and Nationally registered it allows you to get tax credits to help you rebuild that building. It is up to 40 percent of the value that you can get. If you spend a \$1,000,000 you get 40 percent of tax credits back. There are some complications with that because we are not a tax paying entity. There are some ways around that. This has got to be step number one to get State registered and National registered. We have the State guys down here and this is a perfect building for it. This best way to do this is to hire a consultant and they gave us three names to look at. They do this all the time; it is not the County trying to do this on their own. They see those guy's name come across their desk all the time. They know when he sees it, they trust it. Same thing for National and State. That is what he does for a living is get creditations. We look at the three names for us and pick the one that is best fit for this project. We sent him the drawings we had and the photos, he was very excited about it. There is one of two ways to do it, to get the registration basically the proposal he got from his Company. He will take us through the project to get the application in for State

and National. It is not guaranteed that you make it. What he would do is look at the plan and modifications that we are planning to do to make sure we are doing will be in tune with the historic significance of the building. We have taken great pride in it and everything we have done is to keep it in that condition. If there are any modifications to our drawings, we will do that. He will make that application and we will feel comfortable putting that project out to bid knowing that everything we have done in keeping with what it would take to get it registered. Nationally only meets twice a year that would be put off, but I think we just get this behind us and get the applications in. He will handle all of this. They feel comfortable it is a classic building. That is what that application is for is that proposal. The County can hire him directly or he can run it through us either way. We can add it on as an addendum to our contract that we already have with the County. This process' needs to happen first to even have a chance for tax credits.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Madam Chair, I thank Scott for the hard work he is doing on this to have the ability to even apply for the tax credit is huge because that will help us save up to 40 percent of the project. We really appreciate the favor. At this time, I make a motion that we add this on to the addendum to your contract and report.

Commissioner Lee seconded.

Commissioner Reed asked: Do we have money for this project?

Commissioner Corbett stated: Yes, we do.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to add to the Old Post Office Contract an addendum to hire someone to help the County get Nationally and State registered for tax purposes.

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: We are in a little different spot this time. The State has inquired if the County will temporarily house some female inmates. The state is undergoing potential change(s) in the prison system and looking at adding beds in their facilities. They approached me and asked if I could house 60 females. We have rebunked our facility which allows us to house 450 inmates. We average about 300 inmates a day, so we are okay with capacity. After I reviewed the contract, I met with the County Administrator, LeAnn Horne. We reviewed the first draft which is what you have in front of you this morning. The proposed contract is for 60 female inmates. The State will pay the County \$15 a day plus reimburse the County on all medical expenses related to their inmates. The estimated contract value is \$350 and \$400,000 for housing those inmates which should cover any increased operating expenses which I feel will be minimal. The County's current meal cost is \$2.09 for each inmate per day. The State is reimbursing the County \$2.25. The County stands to gain (estimated) \$40,000 a year increase from the State for inmate feeding/meals. We were paying a significant amount more for feeding inmates in Russell County; however, I have reduced that over half per inmate. In addition, to the gain on the inmate food bill this contract should be another gain in revenues if we participate with the State on this contract. At the end of the day, we are in a position where we are not drained completely of the county's revenues. For once, I am not costing you all money but hopefully bringing you in a little additional revenue. I would ask that you approve this morning to sign for the Chair and Administrator along with myself to sign the contract with the State for housing inmates.

Commissioner Lee stated: Before I make a motion. Personnel wise... you can do it within your current staffing and personnel?

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: Yes.

Commissioner Lee stated: I motion the contract be approved. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett.

Chair Martin asked: So, the State will take of the medical?

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: They will take care of the medical for their inmates per inmate.

Chair Martin stated: That is wonderful.

Commissioner Epps asked: So now we won't be transferring inmates in and out.

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: No, we will still send inmates to the State. They are going to send us up to 60 inmates of theirs. We really aren't in a position to have a whole lot of male inmates; but we can house female inmates especially since we have the newer addition to the facility. Nothing will change from our employee status presently. Our bills should be close to the same. With \$15 a day per inmate it should cover the supplies such as toilet paper, sanitary products and cleaning products.

Chair Martin asked: So, you won't be requesting additional staffing?

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: I am not requesting anything additional staffing. You should actually see a profit from this.

County Administrator polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to approve the State Inmate Contract presented by the Sheriff.

County Administrator stated: I want to bring to the Commissions attention; I emailed the bond document, included in your packed today, regarding the Judge's opinion issued on the judicial bond issue 2010. The Commission authorized a possible bond refunding. During the review of the legal parameters of the existing and proposed bond issues, the legal opinion I provided to you reflects the expense items that the law allows for construction and/or renovation. I talked with the County's investment banker yesterday; Walter requested that I confirm you are aware of the opinion and to relay to you that he needs a decision made as soon as possible on the proposed capital projects. During the last meeting, Commissioner Reed indicated he wanted to construct the Emergency Services Building located on the old tower property along with the current capital project of the Old Bank Building / Library. Before the new refunding can be arranged; he needs this information to include and have approved by their bond attorney. In talking with Bob Franklin, he cannot move forward with any grant applications for the proposed Emergency Services Building until he has blueprints which requires the Commission's approval for the design / construction.

COMMISSIONERS DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Reed stated: Madam Chair, since we have the Engineer here, I would like for you to contact the state concerning Hwy.431 by the Waffle King, I would like the speed limit reduced from 65 to 55 miles per hour. When you pass intersection 165 the speed limit can go back up.

Commissioner Lee stated: We have requested that from the state twice and they have turned it down. I don't know why.

Commissioner Corbett stated: Last year as the Commission we sponsored Wreaths for Fort Mitchell and the Commission was a part of placing these wreaths on every military grave. That is supposed to be December 14th this year. I think we need to find out the deadline and we Commissioners recognizing our fallen heroes. I ask the Administrator to look into that and see what the deadline is for sponsorship and see what we did last year.

Announcements were made.

The meeting was adjourned.