

The Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes
November 16th, 2016
9:30 A.M. EST

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

Probate Judge Alford Harden Jr. performed the Oath of Office to the 2016-2020 Russell County Commissioners.

The invocation was given by Alan Griffin, Pastor of Emmanuel Baptist Church.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Screws.

A public comment was made by Citizen Cole Phillips, who discussed the recently passed fire fee. He owns two mobile home parks which increased the amount of his Ad Valorem greatly.

Chair Martin welcomed elected officials, department heads, media and guests. She also thanked the Citizen of East Alabama and the East Alabama Cable for covering the Commission Meeting for the public.

The Commission roll was called. Members present were: Gentry Lee, Carl Currington, Peggy Martin, Ronnie Reed, Cattie Epps, Chance Corbett and Larry Screws. Also present was the County Attorney Kenneth Funderburk and County Administrator LeAnn Horne, who kept the minutes.

A quorum was established.

Chair Martin requested a motion to approve today's agenda. Attorney Funderburk requested to add item to the agenda concerning insurance coverage legal cost for appeals of property tax. Commissioner Epps motioned to approve the agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Reed the vote was unanimous.

Chair Martin requested a motion to approve the minutes of October 26th, 2016 meeting minutes. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Epps. the vote was unanimous.

Chair Martin requested approval for the November 2nd Emergency Meeting minutes. Commissioner Epps motioned to approve the minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Six Commissioners voted to approve the minutes. Commissioner Corbett abstained since he was not present at the meeting.

Commissioner Epps presented Proclamations of Condolences to the Families of: Ms. Michelle Miles, Deacon George Jackson, Mary J. Wyatt, Desmond Maurice James, and Brother David Rutledge Jr.

Commissioner Epps introduced Mr. Alexander who has concerns about a cemetery located in District 5. He distributed pictures of the cemetery as he stated the cemetery is approximately 200 years old and is in need of repairs and improvements. The community surrounding the Alexander Community Cemetery is requesting help in making the repairs or information that will lead to help bring the grounds back up to standards. Mr. Alexander also stated they are trying to get some type of regulations to help maintain and are open to suggestion as to how to get this accomplished.

Commissioner Lee stated they would have to establish ownership of the cemetery before you go forward.

Mr. Alexander said that the grounds were donated to the community, years before his birth.

Commissioner Lee acknowledged there still would be a record of ownership.

Commissioner Corbett discussed the legalities of the Commission helping with private cemeteries. He suggested that Commissioner Epps help them locate ownership, research the lawfulness of the Commission and private property.

Attorney Funderburk stated that the community could not be the owner of a cemetery as described, because the community is not incorporated, it doesn't legally exist. He suggested to hire a lawyer and do research, otherwise they will get nowhere. Someone owns the cemetery which makes it a private cemetery.

Administrator Horne presented the 2017 Commission Meeting Schedule. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve; seconded by Commissioner Screws. The vote was unanimous.

Piper Jaffray Managing Director Walter D. Lewis distributed binders containing a Debt and Refunding Analysis Update for the Russell County Public Building Authority. He discussed changes since the election and how it affects stocks and interest rates.

Mr. Lewis requested that the Commission approve a perimeter resolution, which will give Piper Jaffray the flexibility to expedite this transaction in the Market Place without another meeting to authorize the transaction and will be done under the perimeter that are set today. The deal will not be completed if the interest rates are above the set perimeter or the savings are not above the perimeter. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve the resolution. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. District 1 (Lee) voted, yes; District 2 (Currington) abstained ; District 3 (Martin) voted, yes; District 4 (Reed) voted, yes; District 5 (Epps) voted, yes; District 6 (Corbett) voted, yes; District 7 (Screws) voted, yes. Six (6) yes votes and one (1) abstention, the motioned passed.

Coroner Sumbry requested approval of payment to Colonial Funeral Home not to exceed the amount of \$400 for the court ordered cremation of Robin Boggan. His office was unable to locate family members for this individual. Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve the cremation and was seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Chair Martin discussed the recent meeting at the Lee/Russell Council of Governments, who have requested an increase of 3% to cover the rising cost of food for the Senior Centers. The 3% would be an additional \$4,085 from each local government.

Copies of Lee / Russell's August 3, 2016 minutes were provided. There seemed to be a discrepancy in the minutes, which states that the 3% listed in their budget represented an increase in salaries for cost of living. Commissioner Corbett suggested if possible to in the future to hold items like this for work sessions so it could be discussed in detail before a decision is made.

Commissioner Epps explained she was contacted by Suzanne Burnette who stated the increase was not for salaries, but was an increase in food that is served at the Senior Centers. It was not to help finance anything else.

Commissioner Corbett said he was fine with that but, in their minutes it was indicated it was for salaries and cost of living.

Commissioner Lee stated he feels as Commissioner Corbett does, this needs to be looked at in more detail before the budget meetings next year.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to table the appropriation to Lee / Russell until the next Commission Meeting for clarification. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney has two items to present to the Commission. The first item is an approval for a resolution for the grade, drain and base 1.870 miles of Gammage Road. This road was damaged during the December 2015 flood. This is a Federal Aid Project, but will have to go through State procedures for plans, and contract letting dates. The State of Alabama has agreed funding 80% of the repairs to this road; the County will pay the remaining 20%. The resolution is to initiate this project, RCP 57-202-16. This is a Federal Aid road and will be available for Federal Aid funding. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the resolution. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Blakeney's second item is a funding agreement from ALDOT for the Huguley Road Project, RCP 57-005-16. The letting date for this project is December 2nd. Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve the agreement. This is a budgeted item. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. The vote was unanimous.

Election of the Commission Chair and Vice Chair were held.

Nominations for Chair were opened.

Commissioner Reed nominated Commissioner Larry Screws for Chair.

Commissioner Lee nominated Peggy Martin for Chair.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to close the nominations. Seconded by Commissioners Lee and Epps.

The vote took place in reverse order. There were 4 votes for Peggy Martin.

Commissioner Martin remains chair for 2017.

The floor was opened for Vice Chair nominations.

Commissioner Lee nominated Chance Corbett.

Commissioner Reed nominated Larry Screws.

Commissioner Currington motioned to close the nominations.

The vote took place in reverse order.

Commissioner Screws received 4 votes. Commissioner Screws remains Vice Chair for 2017.

Discussion took place about the procedure to elect Commission Chair and Vice Chair.

Commissioner Corbett left the meeting to attend another event.

County Attorney Funderburk presented a resolution for the Liability Self-Insurance Fund, Inc. He reminded the Commission that the law has been changed on the appeals on tax assessment of property, real and personal. Previously the District Attorney defended those. The law has been changed because the D.A.s did not want to defend those. Now the Tax Appraisal Office can hire a lawyer and the attorney's cost is paid by the Commission's insurance. The law does not say that you have to take action; you are covered if you do. The attorney bills the appraisal's office quarterly, which becomes part of the budget and the insurance company pays those cost. The letter form ACCA indicates that the Commission should take some action and the resolution shows that the Commission has opted in for that coverage. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. The vote was unanimous.

Announcements were made.

Commissioner Lee motioned to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.