

The Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes
February 22nd, 2017
9:30 A.M. EST

An adjourned meeting of the Russell County Commission was called to order, by Chair Peggy Martin.

The Russell County High School Chorus sang before the meeting began in commemoration of Black History Month. Afterward Commissioner Reed gave each student a certificate of recognition for their participation.

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

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Corbett.

Public Comments:

Ben Baker Sr. gave an update concerning appropriations the Commission gave to the Phenix City School System. 2 fences were added and the fields have been re-sodded. Bleachers have been installed. He thanked the Commissioners for their contribution.

Mary Ring discussed problems that they have in Red Oak Subdivision. This subdivision is located in District 6. Commissioner Corbett addressed Mrs. Ring's concerns.

Chair Martin thanked the Cable T.V. of East Alabama and the Citizen of East Alabama for their coverage of the Commission meeting. She also welcomed elected officials, department heads, media and guests.

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 the meeting agenda. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve the meeting agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Currington presented members of the Ladonia Volunteer Fire Department with a letter of thanks and a Certificate of Appreciation for their quick response to the truck fire, which saved the rest of the fleet at the Sanitation Office.

EMA Director Bob Franklin was unable to attend today's meeting and asked Commissioner Corbett to present a grant award from the Alabama Law Enforcement

Agency in the amount of \$18,932.00. The grant is for the purchase and installation of security cameras in the Russell County Courthouse if accepted by the Commission. The grant start date is March 1, 2017 and end date is March 31, 2018. Commissioner Corbett motioned to accept the grant, and grant requirements as well as the Chair to sign the grant agreements. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. The vote was unanimous.

Administrator Horne stated that every year in February the Commission approves the resolution to allow the Revenue Commissioner to collect the taxes according to Section 40-7-42 for the Code of Alabama 1975. There have been no changes to the Ad Valorem rates. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Currington. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Screws requested in the form of a motion to make an appropriation of \$1,000 to the Blue Knights/FOP to help with their bike ride to Washington D.C. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioner Corbett explained that these members go to Washington and represent Russell County for the fallen law enforcement officers. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Screws discussed the Commission buying laptop computers to store information from the Commission meetings. Commissioner Screws motioned to have the County Administrator look into purchasing laptops or a similar device for each member of the Commission. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Corbett reminded the Commission that at the last meeting he requested for Administrator Horne to draft an invitation for architects to bring a presentation to the Commission for the section of County owned buildings located at the 500 Block of 14th Street. The draft was included in the meeting packets along with a questionnaire. Commissioner Corbett motioned to proceed to send out the invitation to the architects to bring presentations for the Commission's review. This is not making any commitments to any architects, only looking at options for improvements of that area. Commissioner Lee requested to move the acceptance date of the presentations to April 14th, by 3:00 p.m. Commissioner Corbett agreed to move the date and Commissioner Lee seconded the motion.

Administrator Horne polled the Commission: District 1(Lee) voted, yes; District 2 (Currington) voted, yes; District 3 (Martin) voted, yes; District 4 (Reed) voted, no; District 5 (Epps) voted, yes; District 6 (Corbett) voted, yes. District 7 (Screws) voted, yes. 6 yes votes and 1 no vote; the motion was approved.

Commissioner Currington motioned moving forward with his Request for Proposal for hiring consultant firm / person to fill Economic Development position for the purpose of promoting Russell County. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Discussion took place.

Commissioner Lee stated he did not see included in the proposal and would like to include a score or past results of the firm / persons.

Administrator Horne explained to the public that the County did fund a position through the Chamber of Commerce for economic development for the county. This past year that person retired. That position was not funded through the Chamber of Commerce. However this is just a request for proposal from parties or firms possibly interested in assisting the county with future economic development in the county. The proposal is very general because there were no perimeters set.

Administrator Horne read the first paragraph for the proposal: "Russell County Commission, Russell County Alabama, seeks proposals and cost estimates for economic development consulting services ("Consulting Services" on a contractual basis including, but not limited to: technical advice, planning, recruitment of commercial and industrial activities and other services determined by Russell County Commission."

As a response to a Commissioner Lee's request, the RFP does state that whoever the Commission selects to represent the economic interest in the County. That is a contractual interest of the contract and she agreed that some type of measure should be placed in the RFP and she will make certain that it does along with the Attorney. It is worded that they would have to meet and the contract would have to come back to the Commission for approval.

Administrator Horne restated Commissioner Currington's motion as follows: To send out the Request for Proposal for an Economic Development Consultant with those proposals being in by Noon, on March 30th, 2017 so the Commission will have time to review the proposals before the April meeting. She proceeded to poll the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Currington discussed his request to have a letter sent for the Attorney General's opinion concerning the City's annexation was mailed after the last meeting.

Attorney Funderburk stated that the letter will have to be re-mailed along with a Resolution approved by the Commission requesting the opinion. The Attorney General will not answer the Commission's questions without the Resolution.

Commissioner Currington motioned to approve the resolution and was seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Economic Development Representative Jennifer Lowman presented the Project Guardian, known to the Commission as Energiya USA. She provided a Tax Abatement Agreement and a Resolution. This is a 10 year abatement of \$62,914,000 which \$629,140 will be paid to the School System.

Administrator Horne stated that the County Attorney has reviewed the documents. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve the Tax Abatement. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Lee motioned to begin the process to see what would be involved in moving the EMA into the basement of the Old Post Office on 14th Street as long as the EMA Director Bob Franklin approves. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

Commissioners Corbett and Screws stated they would like to wait until Bob Franklin has returned and present at the next Commission meeting to move forward with the plan of relocating the EMA office.

Commissioners Epps and Currington agreed this should wait.

Commissioner Currington motioned to table this item. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. The vote was unanimous.

Probate Judge Alford Harden Jr presented a requested from The Game to refund a business license penalty they were charged. Last year this business was purchased by a new organization. At the time of their purchase the Game closed their post office box, which is where the renewal notice was sent. They found their error where the business license had not been purchased, and contacted the Probate Office and immediately paid the full license as well as the \$3, 414 penalties. The Game explained to Judge Harden how the error occurred and asked if they could get a refund for the penalty, since they were the ones that discovered the error. Judge Harden informed the Game that only the Commission could approve a refund. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Attorney Funderburk presented the Ladonia Sports Contract Proposal. The concession stand has been left in bad shape by the League. This proposal has removed the concession stand from the 501C that is operating the concession stand for limited purposes and place the concession stand out for bid. It is easier to work with someone who works with concessions and actually makes money doing that, than to work with different groups who are not making money. The Health Department inspected the concession stand and were about to close its use. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve the proposal. Seconded by Commissioner Currington. The vote was unanimous.

Attorney Funderburk gave an update for the Closing Documents for the Public Building Authority Bond Issue (refunding). All documents are in order and after approving and signing today's documents, money will be wired to the county. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve the documents. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Attorney Funderburk presented a proposed lease draft for 4 parcels of land located on Hwy 80 in Crawford across from the Crawford Park. He met with the owner, who had created a proposal and is asking for the parcels to be used as a public park. The proposal is not asking the county to spend any funds at all, but just operate this for public use. This would be a lease and the county will have possession of the land and is to use it as a park for the public. So in the end, there is nothing anticipated to be done that would be a permanent improvement that would go to the benefit of the owner of the land. The benefit would have to be to the public and in control of the County. There are no requirements that the County do any specific other than make a park, which means walking trails, parking if needed. It would be a detriment to the owner and a benefit to the public.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to ask the County Attorney to draw up a the lease for the property and bring back to the Commission for approval. Seconded by Commissioner Lee.

Commissioner Screws asked if the Attorney had discussed purchasing the land.

Attorney Funderburk stated he has not and thought that in the end they may give you the land. There will be a \$500 yearly fee that they will return to the county.

Commissioner Corbett thanked the Attorney for his work on this project. He commented about Attorney Funderburk's statement of the owners giving back the annual fee and informed the public that is the Crawford Park was also a \$500 dollar a year lease and the owners of the land requested for the county not to pay the fee back and put it back into Crawford Park. The Crawford Park Committee is ready to get this project going. This property is a gate way to Russell County and a progressive move for the County.

Commissioner Reed stated that the County is not in the business of leasing property. This property is no asset for Russell County. If you go to the bank you cannot borrow one dollar on that property. The only property we can borrow on is property that the County owns. Ask Mr. Funderburk.

Attorney Funderburk said they we couldn't and the owners couldn't. Part of that is true but the other part is the land owner can't count it as an asset. They can't sell it and the County would be in charge of it not the land owner.

Commissioner Corbett sated that this would give families in this area another place to go and kids to play and compliment what has already been done in this area. We have had this same conversation 3 years ago and look at what the County has now.

More discussion took place. Administrator Horne polled the Commission: District 1(Lee) voted, yes; District 2 (Currington) voted, yes; District 3 (Martin) voted, yes; District 4

(Reed) voted, no; District 5 (Epps) voted, no; District 6 (Corbett) voted, yes; District 7(Screws) voted, no. 4 yes votes and 3 no votes, the motioned passed.

Attorney Funderburk discussed the property in Hurtsboro that the County is purchasing for the Sheriff's Department. The title had to be cleared up for the piece of property that the Water Authority is buying before the County could purchase the other piece. That has been taken care of now and he will move forward with the purchase.

Announcements were made.

Commissioner Screws motioned to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.