

Russell County Commission
Russell County Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes February 24, 2021
9:30 A.M. EST

The Russell County Commission was called to order by Chairman Corbett.

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

Commissioner Lee provided the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Mr. Wilbert Payne from the Fort Mitchell National Cemetery presented to the Russell County Commission a certificate of appreciation and support for the Wreaths Across America for 2020 and also shared with Sheriff Heath Taylor and his staff a flag. Mr. Payne shared the certificates and flags with photos taken. Chairman Corbett thanked Mr. Payne and stated that the Commission is proud to sponsor such a great program that honors our veterans.

Chairman Corbett thanked media partners Cable TV East Alabama and Citizen of East Alabama for broadcasting this meeting. He also mentioned the meetings are on Facebook Live for the people at home to watch the Commission meetings and he has a lot of comments appreciating it. Chairman Corbett welcomed elected officials, department heads, media, and guests.

Chairman Corbett stated the agenda had been approved at the work session.

Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert called roll of the Commission. Members present were Commissioner Rod Costello, Commissioner Cattie Epps, Commissioner Scott Chambers, Commissioner Larry Screws, Commissioner Ronnie Reed, Vice Chairman Gentry Lee, and Chairman Chance Corbett. Also, present was the Interim County Attorney Hope Hicks and Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert, who kept minutes.

A quorum was established by Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Corbett presented to approve the February 10, 2021 Commission meeting minutes. Motion to approve by Commissioner Screws with revision in first paragraph that he commented in the public comments, not Commissioner Reed. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The Commission approved the minutes unanimously.

PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

Chairman Corbett presented the Ad Valorem Tax Resolution by Revenue Commissioner Naomi Elliott. Ms. Elliott requested to pass the Ad Valorem Tax Resolution so she can collect the taxes. Moved by Commissioner Costello and seconded by Commissioner Reed. The Commission approved the minutes unanimously.

Chairman Corbett then presented the resolution regarding Levy of Sales and Use taxes for public school purposes. Alice Todd came from Birmingham with a presentation Monday night about the renewal. Since this was a renewal and she is driving from Birmingham, Commissioner Lee told her that she did not need to come back the today's meeting. Commissioner Lee stated the Commission has a copy of the resolution renewal in front of them. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioner Lee also stated it is 1% Sales Tax Levy for the use of Phenix City and Russell

County School Systems. Chairman Corbett stated it is not a new tax and is something already in place. The Commission unanimously approved the Levy of Sales and Use taxes for public school purposes.

Chairman Corbett presented the Proclamation for Rakeem Nunez-Rochez, a Central High School Graduate who appeared in the 2021 Superbowl National Champion, with the Tampa Bay Buccaneers. Commissioner Epps asked the Commission to approve a Proclamation for Mr. Nunez-Rochez, who is a graduate from Central High, recognized and received the Championship trophy for Tampa Bay this year, and because he is a local student from a local school, as Commissioners, she asks we recognize him. Commissioner Epps wants to have the Proclamation documentation approved and ready for the next work session. Chairman Corbett entertained a motion to approve the drafting of a resolution for Mr. Nunez-Rochez for his accomplishments. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the draft but would like to see and approve the draft before they pass it. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners favored unanimously for the drafting of a Proclamation Resolution for Mr. Nunez-Rochez .

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Chairman Corbett presented the County Administrator job position and job description search process. Paulette Colbert is doing a great job and they are working on a draft job description for the next meeting.

Chairman Corbett requested updates on the courthouse door replacement with Maintenance Director Leon Watson. Mr. Watson stated that automatic doorways is completed and the original scope for the panic hardware is also complete. Chairman Corbett thanked both Bob and Leon Watson for getting it done because it is a much better system. Commissioner Lee mentioned that there are still some things being worked on in the system.

Chairman Corbett presented Bob Franklin, EMA Director, for updates on COVID-19 Vaccination Program in Russell County. Mr. Franklin stated he likes to show where we were and where we are at now. The end of January we were over 500 cases in a 14-day period. The last Commission meeting we were at 286, and as of yesterday, we are down to 139 so our number of positive cases is going in the right direction. We still encourage people to social distance, wear masks, and continue to do the things we have been doing for quite some time. Also, we are doing a lot of vaccinations. Mr. Franklin then spoke of a call he received from someone that had a next week vaccination schedule that was moved out a month later because the Health Department will cut back on the number of vaccines they are physically going to do. It will be 200 a week which is 150 scheduled as primary first dose and 50 will be booster, which is the second dose. The reason is because there are more providers out in the community who can do a more proficient job of administering the vaccines. They will take the supply they are not using and give it to those other providers. Mr. Franklin stated that part of the problem, in his opinion, that the people that have been waiting and thought they would get vaccines next week have now been put off to another month or so and it really created some issues amongst the population. It is not only here in Russell County, but it is an issue across the state. It is the decision that Public Health made, and they did not have a lot of input from anybody else when they make those decisions. Mr. Franklin brought up that Jack Hughston Hospital is doing a tremendous job being that they can do in an hour and half or two hours what the public health office was doing in 8 hours so. There is some validity to what the public health office says that other people can do a more efficient job, and Jack Hughston Hospital has proven it. So, if we could get them more vaccines, we can get 800,000 people a day through that. He stated that they are counting on doing a large one, by appointment only, and that can bump up to 400 people in a 2-hour period, next Thursday. We will see how it works out, to get it staffed up and get the flow through. Those appointments are already filled because they just moved some people up that were further back so if people want to call, that should open some slots further down the road, so he suggests calling and get an appointment there. Also, we have the other folks like Walmart Pharmacy is back online now and, from his understanding is that both of those

locations only received 200 vaccines. Since those are Federal vaccines, it does not impact the vaccine quantity coming into the county, as a matter of fact, it would increase the quantity, so since it is a trial run once those 200 are out, we are not sure when they will get restocked. Walmart is working through a Federal program and those vaccines are available, but you have to go online at Walmart.com to register to get those. We still have Jackson Point of Light Family Medicine and Preferred Medical Group that are also doing vaccines in the county, but you have to schedule those appointments. Mr. Franklin feels the biggest issue that people are having, that there is not only one phone number, one calendar or website to register and since each one of these sites you have to contact individually, so some of these some people, when they are called back on the appointment list, have already received the vaccine somewhere else. That is an issue since everyone gets on all the lists and they do not cancel the other lists after they receive the vaccine, but he says they will work through those issues. He says we are still vaccinating the same group of people: 65 years and older, first responders, and all the people we have been doing the past couple of weeks and it probably will be another month or so before we get through them.

The reports he is getting shows the Johnson and Johnson vaccine should be coming in soon and the Madera has increased their production so we will be getting more of those vaccines. Pfizer is changing their temperature requirements, so it does not have to be at an ultra-low temperature, and it can be stored in a regular freezer for a 2-week period so that is going to help us some because we are limited in the state on the number that has that storage capacity. Once again, that is a 2-week period that you can take it out of the ultra-low temperature then you have got to use it. We are going to keep plugging along and make progress. Mr. Franklin says he knows that folks are frustrated out there but as this vaccine becomes more available, the frustrations should go away. Commissioner Lee complimented Mr. Franklin with working with Jack Hughston Hospital because Commissioner Lee had spoken with some of the ladies working in the line and they said to not worry because Bob will keep them doing it right. Commissioner Lee stated that Mr. Franklin has done a lot to try to get Russell County vaccinated the best he can.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Corbett presented Bill Friend with Enforcement about the ABATE Nuisance complaint at 58 Duke Drive in Fort Mitchell. This nuisance complaint was filed approximately 5 months ago. In an effort to contact the homeowner, when she is there, she does not answer the phone (it has now been disconnected), and she will not answer the door.

Mr. Friend has spoken to Commissioner Epps about the problem because she has received some complaints on it also. Mr. Friend has received an estimate from the Sanitation Department to clean it up and it will cost approximately \$600 for items to be removed outside, not removal from a dwelling. It is removal of all of trash outside to include trash, debris, appliances, etc. He would like to do the grass, but we do not have an ordinance to cover it, so at this time, it is to remove the trash and debris. At this time, Mr. Friend is asking the Commission by Resolution to declare this property a public nuisance under the ABATE of the Nuisance and requests a hearing to be set at the next Commission meeting on the 10th of March at 9:30 am. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve. Commissioner Epps seconded. Commissioner Costello asked if the outside yard trash removal includes the open carport? The Interim County Attorney Hope Hicks verified that once the abatement is ordered, it can be removed. Mr. Friend stated that he has sent a copy of the abatement packet and has discussed it with her. Chairman Corbett stated that this motion includes a public hearing at the next meeting, March 10, 2021. The Commission unanimously approved the abatement.

Chairman Corbett presented a request from Mr. Leroy Davis for the 30 people that have the meeting at ADECA with Mr. Boswell on March 17th to discuss funding assistance for public sewage and the bike trail in the Fort Mitchell area. Mr. Davis asked Monday night, for the Commission to sponsor at a meeting and to be able to provide funding for the meals for those in attendance for actual business. Commissioner Epps stated to let the Commissioners know that she wants to thank Ms. Paulette Colbert and Tina Thomas for doing research in verifying this is legal to do this. Commissioner Epps moved to accept this recommendation. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioner Lee discussed that he wished there was a budget setup for Economic Development because this would be absolutely right in line for Economic

Development, but we do not have a budget for Economic Development. Commissioner Reed asked if Victor Cross has some funds for the project. Chairman Corbett and Commissioner Lee said that he has Tourism funds but not money in Economic Development. The Commission unanimously approved the request.

Chairman Corbett presented that Commissioner Epps brought up Monday night the appointments of the members on the Wiregrass RC&D Board. He received a letter requesting that those appointments be made and communicated back to Wiregrass RC&D. Commissioner Epps recommended to reappoint Mr. Leroy Davis to the board. She also apologized to Max Herring and gave the corrected name to be Mr. Wesley Beasley. He has showed up today so everyone can meet him, and he requested to be on the board. He has experience working with the community and she thanked him for asking to be apart of the board because the Commissioners need all the community help they we can get and she thinks all of the community they can get involved the better the Commission will function. Commissioner Epps recommends reappointing Mr. Leroy Davis and also Mr. Wesley Beasley in a form of a motion. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Chairman Corbett asked Mr. Wesley Beasley if he is willing to serve in this capacity and Mr. Beasley stated that is what he does. Commissioner Lee verified for the record that Mr. Beasley is a resident of Russell County, and he is. Commissioner Epps also stated she thinks he is a resident of District 5 and he agreed. All Commissioners were all in favor by saying aye, so they both were appointed to the board. Commissioner Reed stated that Leroy Davis is a dedicated person, a hard worker, and we can not find a better person. He is a go-getter, and he wishes we had more people like Leroy Davis. Chairman Corbett joked that Mr. Davis grilled him on a tv show the other day, so he is doing a good job and we are happy. He said he did a good job on that because they had some partners here from Fort Benning and Columbus, as well, and it was a good presentation.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

No discussion from County Engineer Shawn Blakeney.

ADMINISTRATOR:

Interim County Administrator Paulette Colbert requested a budget amendment in the Commission Office to increase General Fund 5100, 304 contract services \$150,000.00 and to decrease General Fund 35500, Fund Balance \$150,000.00. Chairman Corbett stated the Commissioners discussed this Monday night. Moved by Commissioner Screws. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioner Lee stated the Attorney Hope Hicks had to leave for a minute, and he had to ask something about it before we voted on it. He knows the answer, but he needs to mention it. The Commission waited until the Attorney returned. While waiting, Chairman Corbett passed a sheet for the Commission to verify their name check it for the website. The Attorney returned and Commissioner Lee stated to her, to get her up speed, we are on the action to do a budget transfer of \$150,000 into contract services to decrease the fund balance and he wants to put on the record that this meets her approval. Interim Attorney Hope Hicks stated that she understands that the Department of Examiners has approved this. Commissioner Lee stated he just wanted to make sure it was on the record. The Commission unanimously approved the budget transfer.

ATTORNEY:

No discussion from Interim Attorney Hope Hicks.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Epps stated that they had a meeting to authorize the Chair to appoint a committee for the Sewer Economic Development committee and we do not want it to fall into the cracks. Since Mr. Boswell has come, and one of his purposes to come, is really to discuss the sewer in Fort Mitchell. She wants to add her name to present to the Commission for her recommendation.

Commissioner Epps also stated that she received, from the University of Alabama, that they need more information from Russell County on the drug information. Chairman Corbett stated that there was a presentation about drug abuse and a problem we have in the county. The Sheriff attended, along with the Police Chief and some of the Commissioners. He said that they asked for some input through a survey link so please take the time to participate in the survey to give them some assistance. If any of the Commissioners did not get an email, just let him know and he can send it to them.

Commissioner Costello mentioned from the Monday night's discussion was that they were trying to get quotes for this building to get handicap accessibility. Chairman Corbett stated that Leon Watson is working on it and he believes we have handicap accessibility in this building, but they wanted to add the handicap component to the door in the atrium so they can actively open it up by pushing a button.

Commissioner Reed stated that we need to start working on the building down by the Sheriff's Department, the property that we have purchased, we need to go ahead and move on that because we have some low interest rates and we had discussed that we have people we have put on the board. Chairman Corbett stated we have a committee to discuss it but we dropped it when Covid hit us pretty hard. 911 and EMA were supposed to make some site visits so we will bring that back forth and we were talking about that last week, so that is good timing. He will make sure it gets on a future agenda.

No announcements at this time.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Lee. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The Commission meeting was adjourned.