

The Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes
April 22, 2015
9:30 A.M. EST

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

The invocation was given by Marvin Minton, Pastor of Crawford Road Baptist Church.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Epps.

Public Comments:

Jimmy Adams from the Board of Registrars discussed advertising legislation for the addition of 10 days to the Board of Registrars work schedule.

Several residents of 80 West Subdivision requested help solving harassment and property damage being caused by juveniles and teenagers who reside in that area. A petition signed by inhabitants of the subdivision was presented. This subdivision falls within the City's Police Jurisdiction, and they have been notified of incidents. The Police Department cannot help if they do not witness the youth's actions. Sheriff Taylor stated for residents to call and request that their calls to be sent to the Sheriff's Department or call directly to the Sheriff's office, his deputies will respond.

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

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

A quorum was established

Chair Martin requested a motion to approve the April 8th, 2015 meeting minutes. Commissioner Pugh motioned to approve the minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Leroy Davis accepted a proclamation for the Cold War Victory Day.

The Power of Purple Proclamation for the Relay For Life was received by Dimple Davis, Dillie Elliott, Paulette Colbert and Naomi Elliott.

Commissioner Epps motioned to approve both proclamations presented today. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Planning Commission Chair David Ellis invited the Commission along with the Russell County Sewer Authority to attend the next Planning Meeting which will be held April 28th at 4:30 p.m. in the Commission Chambers to discuss solutions to failing septic tank owned by a business in the Fort Mitchell area.

EMA Director Bob Franklin gave a presentation concerning the storm damage that took place Sunday April 19th in the Ft. Mitchel area. Mr. Franklin thanked the local volunteer fire departments, Sheriff's Department and residents who helped after the storm. Commissioner Epps also thanked other departments who helped.

Russell County Utility Director Carl Currington requested to change the name of his department from Russell County Utilities to Russell County Sanitation. The name change indicates his department only handles garbage and not sewer, water or lights. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve the name change and was seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Currington made an request to increase the monthly sanitation fee for the purchase of garbage cans to be issued to each customer. The 96 gallon garbage cans will be numbered and have Russell County Sanitation imprinted on the side. Mr. Currington states the cans will make it easy to recognize residents who are using the service but are not paying. At the Work Session Mr. Currington had requested with the Sanitation Board's recommendation to raise the fee \$2.50 making the service \$20 per month.

Mr. Currington discussed the contract with Bancorp South for the purchase of garbage cans. Price of the containers was \$69.00 each, but dropped to \$52.50 due to the amount that will be purchased; this is a \$16.50 savings per can. The interest rate from Bancorp South is 2.34% with 60 payments of \$10,491.42. The county will save \$150,000 by utilizing this financing option through Bancorp South. This is a special service and supplier that is not offered in our area. We have other financing through Bancorp such as garbage trucks and engineering equipment.

Commissioner Lee asked if grass clipping would be allowed inside the cans. Mr. Currington stated that they will only be allowed in bags and set beside the cans.

Commissioner Pugh motioned to allow \$1.50 rate increase for the purchase of the trash cans. Seconded by Commissioner Screws but stated he thought it should be left at the requested \$2.50 increase.

Commissioner Corbett stated that this is a plus for the county, but asked what the customer could do if they should have an overflow of trash. Mr. Currington said customers will be allowed to use another regular 20 or 30 gallon can in addition to the supplied 96 gallon can. Customers who want to have two of the 96 gallon garbage cans, they can do so by paying \$35.00 monthly instead of \$19.00.

Commissioner Epps agreed with Commissioner Screws concerning the \$2.50 increase. The extra will help offset upkeep of the trucks and cost of replacing damaged or worn

out cans will fall on the county. This county is growing and more services are essential for county residents.

Commissioner Pugh reminded the Commission that at Monday night's work session the requested amount was reviewed and it was decided that the \$1.50 would be enough for the garbage can purchase since this amount will not be removed.

Mr. Currington agreed that he could work with that amount. This is the first increase for the garbage service in 8 years and will go into effect July 1st, 2015. The \$2.50 would cover the equipment to refit trucks and garbage cans. We can begin with the \$1.50; however at budget time I will bring back a report on revenue-expenses.

Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote to approve the \$1.50 garbage fee increase was unanimous.

Commissioner Corbett presented the same job description for the Parks and Recreation Director that he distributed at the April 8th Commission Meeting. He explained he wanted to change the description because the present form doesn't allow county employees who have years of experience the opportunity to place an application for this position, if a degree is required. Commissioner Corbett does not believe that the County should require a degree in one department and not of other department heads that in certain cases have more responsibilities, financially and other. So, at this time he would like for the proposed description to be the description that applications will be received. He stated he will make that into a form of a motion. Commissioner Pugh seconded.

Commissioner Reed requested to table this until it could be reviewed.

Commissioner Lee: I will vote against this and any proposed change. There has been a lot of time for the Commission to think about this. There was actually 3 months before there was a vacancy, so if there was a need for a new job description it could have been developed. This should have been changed prior to the vacancy and prior to appointing the committee so there would not be any confusion to the committee. It could have been changed before but wasn't. Therefore, I am not in favor of changing the current description.

Commissioner Corbett: Now is the time to make changes and not to get stuck in a rut for 30 years. It needs to be changed before the next person is hired. Why leave something in the description that the Commission knows is not right and is not positive for this County, just because that is the way it was. So, when do we make the changes?

Commissioner Lee: Make changes before the committee has been charged to come back with recommendations.

Commissioner Corbett: They are standing by, they are the ones who brought back changes to the Commission.

Commissioner Lee: That was not the charge of the Committee. They did not have that opportunity to disagree.

Commissioner Corbett: They are our citizens and we should listen to them.

Commissioner Screws: We have the right to look at each job description and if we feel that job description requires an additional degree or not, then we make that decision here. I don't think we can do a blanket statement and say if this passes that all jobs should be one way or the other. I agree with Commissioner Lee and the description should be left as it is.

Commissioner Pugh: At the work session we spoke of this and certainly, if someone applies that has higher credentials they would probably move to the top of the list. I think like Commissioner Corbett; be fair to everyone and let everyone who wants to apply. Then, let the Committee bring back the top three candidates. We could have someone that has had on the job training for several years and would make a good fit for this County, but we could exclude them if we do not give them an opportunity. Still the criteria that they are wanting to rest on in the end with degrees, if a person with that caliber applies then we are ok. What happens if we post the description as is and we have no one to apply?

Commissioner Corbett: This Commission has placed people in jobs with degrees and place people without degrees in jobs making more money and having more responsibilities. We have to change this. I would like someone to explain why this job requires a degree and other department heads do not. They are overseeing grass cutting and maintaining fields. I am absolutely pro-degree and if anyone applies for this job and has a degree they will probably rise to the top. I just can't understand why you think this position of all in the county is the one that you tell employees work as hard as you want to, but if you don't have a four (4) year degree you can't apply for this job position.

Commissioner Lee: I don't care if they have one or not. That is not why I'm opposing it. I said if we are going to make a change in the description then make it before a Committee was charged to review applications.

Commissioner Corbett: Then change the charge.

Commissioner Epps: We can continue to discuss this, but the job description that we have anyone can apply. Someone without a degree may apply, but has so much experience that they will get the job. I don't feel the current description is based on degrees only. Anyone can apply. The By-laws of our current personnel manual state: if we have someone in the County that has the experience and can do the job state that we hire within. So, if someone already works for the county who can do the job, then we hire within. We have done that more than once.

Commissioner Corbett: The minimum two (2) year associates degree will prevent any employee or anyone else from even applying. If they place an application, it will be disqualified as soon as it is taken. Isn't that correct Mr. Funderburk?

Attorney Funderburk: Yes, unless the Committee chooses to ignore your instruction.

Commissioner Lee: We are unfairly treating a committee that we appointed to come back with a recommendation. The Commission would be placing undue responsibilities that they didn't agree to take on.

Commissioner Screws: We are changing the job description from Director to Manager?

Commissioner Corbett: Yes, my motion is to approve the job description that is in your packets today, that was also read at the last meeting and tabled, which will allow people without degrees to apply for the job.

Commissioner Epps: If we have someone already working for the County and if the Commission is going to fill that position, we did not need a committee. Doesn't the Commission have the authority to place a person in that job now?

Commission Pugh: Yes, we have the authority and can take it away from the Committee today. You cannot take our county policy and insert that over what we are about to vote on. If you leave the description as is, anyone who works for the County that does not have at least a two (2) year degree is not in the "hunt".

Attorney Funderburk: That is legally correct.

Commission Lee: The reason for the Committee is due to the law changes. Before three (3) Commissioners could meet that was all right, now they cannot. If we did that as a Commission, all the discussion would have to take place at a Commission Meeting.

Chair Martin: As a Commission Body, can't we take the original one and where it states a minimum of two (2) year Associate's Degree and insert preferably?

Commissioner Pugh: This group of Commissioners with a majority vote can change that anyway they want.

Commissioner Corbett: That is what the description I presented today states. You can apply for this job without a degree. If you have one you are going to get preference over someone that possibly doesn't have a degree. Say someone applies that has a two (2) year degree in Liberal Arts, does that qualify them for Parks and Recreation Director? We are telling our employees work as hard as you want to, but if you don't have a two (2) year degree you can't lead this department. I'm not trying to be unfair to those who have a degree. I absolutely think that has a lot of worth and we should reward employees who try to better themselves by enrolling to get more education, especially in their fields. I don't want to tell any employee in this county you cannot even apply for

this job, because you don't have a degree. If you stick to the old description, that is what you are saying.

Commissioner Lee: As stated at Monday night's Work Session this has been in effect for more than 5 years. Any employee who had an interest in that position knew it required a degree and could have gotten a two (2) year Associate's Degree.

Commissioner Corbett: That doesn't make it right, because it has been that way forever.

Chair Martin asked Administrator Horne to poll the Commission. District 1(Lee) voted, no; District 2 (Pugh) voted, yes; District 3 (Martin) voted, no; District 4 (Reed) voted, no; District 5 (Epps) voted, no; District 6(Corbett) voted, yes; District 7(Screws) voted, no. 5 no votes and 2 yes votes the motion failed.

Commissioner Epps motioned to amend the original job description to read: Two (2) year Associates degree preferred. Seconded by Commissioner Pugh. District 1(Lee) voted, no; District 2 (Pugh) voted, yes; District 3 (Martin) voted, yes; District 4 (Reed) voted, yes; District 5 (Epps) voted, yes; District 6(Corbett) voted, yes; District 7(Screws) voted, no. 5 yes votes and 2 no votes the motion passed.

Commissioner Lee motioned to allow the portrait of Judge George Green to be unveiled in the Judicial Building and the presiding Judge, Judge Bellamy, be in charge of securing the portrait and securing the location. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Corbett presented legislation for the Volunteer Fire Departments in Russell County, which an additional \$50 will be added to yearly land taxes to benefit local Volunteer Fire Departments. Fire Association President Tim Jenkins and EMA Director Bob Franklin discussed changes to the legislation. Commissioner Corbett motioned to begin advertising for the RFD: Local Legislation seconded by Commissioner Pugh, who added that this legislation will be voted on by the public at the next primary, general or special election. The vote was unanimous.

County Administrator Horne presented the results of the Landscaping Services Bid held April 9th. One bid was received which was more than had been budget. Administrator Horne recommended rejecting the bid and to go forward with negotiating with other landscaping services in the area to obtain something within budget. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve Administrator Horne's recommendation to reject the bid. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Chair Martin made announcements:

- The Courthouse will be closed Monday, April 27 for State Holiday
- The Statement of Economic Interest is due Thursday, April 30, 2015.
- The Russell County Commission Annual Health Screening will be held Thursday May 14th, 2015 from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. in the Atrium and from 5:00 to 7:30 p.m. at the Russell County Sheriff's Department. We are asking all Elected Officials and

Department Heads to participate and mandate your employees to participate. If we reach our goal of 80% we will receive a \$10.00 discount for each employee for the Fiscal year 2015/2016 and this discount will amount to \$31,000.00

Commissioner Corbett announced a ribbon cutting at the Tuckabatchee Masonic Lodge on May 16th at 10:00 a.m.

Commissioner Pugh motioned to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.