

The Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes
June 22nd, 2016
9:30 A.M. EDT

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

The invocation was given by Jean Keel, Pastor of Tender Love & Care Home.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Epps.

Public comments were made by:

Stephen Robinson, President of the Local NAACP, who came to introduce himself and discuss how the NAACP is here for advancement of all people and everyone, should work together. They plan to work to make this community better for all. He also announced the Freedom Fund Banquet will be held August 12th at the Central Activity Center.

David Ellis gave an update of the Planning Commission who has recently approved updated By-Laws for the Board and their continue reviews of Subdivision Rules and Regulations. He also discussed updating the County-wide Master Plan and requested permission for Planning Commission member, Bill Friend, to contact County Department Heads for information needed for the revision. Commissioner Pugh stated that the County Administrator has the authority to give that permission.

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

The Commission roll was called, members present were: Gentry Lee, Tillman Pugh, Chair Peggy Martin, Ronnie Reed, Cattie Epps and Larry Screws. Chance Corbett was absent. 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 June 8th, 2016 meeting minutes. Commissioner Pugh motioned to approve the minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioners Lee, Pugh, Reed, Martin voted to approve the minutes. Commissioners Epps and Screws abstained due to their absence at that meeting. The meeting minutes were approved.

County Engineer Larry Kite stated that his department is still working on flood damage from December 2015. He presented agreements from the Alabama DOT for Federal Emergency Relief Funds for the following seven (7) projects that are eligible for these funds:

Project	Description	Federal E.R. Funds	County Funds	Total Cost
RCP 57-016-16P	Preliminary Engineering repairs of slope failure and guardrail damage on Cottonton Road	\$41,312	\$0.00	\$41,312
RCP 57-016-16	Emergency repairs of slope failure and guardrail damage on Cottonton Road	\$413,120	\$0.00	\$413,120
RCP 57-017-16P	Preliminary Engineering for the for repairs of failed shoulder and undermined roadway on Firetower Road	\$15,041.76	\$0.00	\$15,041.76
RCP 57-017-16	Emergency Repairs of failed shoulder and undermined roadway on Firetower Road	\$150,417.58	\$0.00	\$150,417.58
RCP 57-018-16	Permanent restoration of a slope failure on Nuckols Road	\$30,800.00	\$7,700.	\$38,500.00
RCP 57-019-16	Permanent restoration of slope failure on Crosswinds Road	\$22,000.00	\$5,500.	\$27, 500.00
RCP 57-020-16	Preliminary Engineering for the permanent restoration of cross drain, ditch and washout failures on Gammage Road	\$28,000.00	\$7,000	\$35,000.00
Total		\$700,691.34	\$20,200	\$720,891.34

Commissioner Screws motioned to approve the agreements. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Kite requested approval to participate in the Southeast Region Joint Bid Program which will allow Russell County to purchase items included in the program. There is no cost to Russell County other than participation in the bid process. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve the agreement; seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Kite also thanked the Commission for the opportunity to work and serve the county and the citizens. He also thanked all of the department heads. He requested approval to retire beginning August 1, 2016. Chair Martin, Commissioner Epps and Administrator Horne thanked Mr. Kite for his leadership and service to Russell County. Commissioner Pugh motioned to accept Mr. Kite's retirement. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Screws introduced options that the Commission has for replacing the open positions such as the County Engineer. There can be an open search, which will allow candidates from outside the county to apply for the position, or a closed search that allows county employees to apply for the open position. Commission Screws

motioned to have a closed search for the County Engineer's position mainly for those with the engineering department to apply. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

Commissioner Pugh stated that he is not opposed to a closed search nor is he opposed to consider the person who has been the assistant engineer; he has been a very good assistant. County policy has always been to allow the people who work within the department to advance. He did have reservations about making a motion today and to fill this position and would prefer to have a recommendation from the current engineer and the Administrator and to make this person an interim for 6 months or a year to allow him to go through the budget process. This would make sure that he and the Commission are comfortable with the decision. Also give him a 10% boost in pay during this time.

Commissioner Lee indicated that normally he would go with an open search, but he has had conversations with the current assistant engineer and expressed to him, that when Mr. Kite retires he hoped that he would apply for his vacated position.

Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous for a closed search.

Commissioner Screws made a motion, based on the Assistant Engineer Shawn Blakeney acceptance, to hire him as the next County Engineer and for the County Administrator and Human Resource Director meet with Mr. Blakeney to negotiate the salary and to bring back the salary to the Commission for approval or disapproval. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

Commissioner Pugh said that he was not against Mr. Blakeney, but he did not remember hiring a department head without looking at the portfolio and getting a recommendation from their immediate supervisor and the County Administrator. This goes against that. If it came to a vote he was going to support him, but would rather look at his portfolio to see what his performance is, just like any other employee that comes before the Commission, instead of voting without knowing what his record is. This information did not flow properly before making a decision.

Commissioner Lee agreed with Commissioner Pugh. There are 6 weeks before the Commission has to make this hire. He would like more information about whether this position would be an interim or temporary and what the salary will be before actually hiring the person. Although, he supports Mr. Blakeney 100%, it is not the right to hire someone without knowing any particulars and without having a recommendation.

Commissioner Epps discussed Mr. Blakeney's eight (8) years working with the County. She indicated his job performance has been good and he has worked with all of us.

Commissioner Lee replied that his main concern was salary, terms, contract, things that need discussing before hiring him.

Commissioner Pugh addressed Commissioner Epps discussion by stating that job performance is some of his concern. He has worked with Mr. Blakeney and has his full

support. But, there are a lot of county employees that he has worked with and if he looked at their portfolio he would not make that choice. Mr. Kite keeps portfolio on his employees and they are evaluated each year. That has not been offered to the Commission for review, nor has a recommendation been made by Mr. Kite or the Administrator. They should at least make a recommendation if I'm to feel comfortable going forward with this hiring. If they will to do that then I'm willing to accept that.

Mr. Kite stated that Shawn Blakeney has been with engineering a long time. He received his P.E. License while working in the Engineering Department and could have moved on, but he expressed a desire to stay and work for Russell County for the rest of his career. It was Mr. Blakeney's and Mr. Kite's understanding that Mr. Blakeney would take over as County Engineer. Mr. Kite recommended him for the position.

Commissioner Lee acknowledged his and Commissioner Pugh's support, but commented that if the Commission had followed through with the right procedure it would have produced the same results.

The County Administrator was asked to poll the Commission. The vote was unanimous.

County Attorney Kenneth Funderburk recommended going into an executive session to discuss two matters. Commissioner Epps motioned to go into executive session, seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Announcements were made before going into the session.

The Commission returned to the Commission Chamber. Commissioner Lee motioned to reconvene the Commission Meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. The vote was unanimous.

Attorney Funderburk stated that there was a request from a former employee to go in front of the Personnel Review Board. After looking at the employee's file, he recommended that request be denied based on the fact that the information contained in the file does not show there were any violations of state or federal law. Mr. Funderburk also recommended Administrator Horne to notify the former employee that his request is denied. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the recommendation. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Attorney Funderburk recommended approving an offer for an economic development property. Commissioner Pugh motioned to accept the offer. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned.