

Russell County Commission  
Russell County Commission Chambers  
Meeting Minutes August 11, 2021  
9:30 A.M. EST

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

The invocation was given by Reverend Grant Parker with Epworth UMC.

Commissioner Epps led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Ms. Eddream Lawrence spoke about her personal property issue in Fort Mitchell with the destabilization of her house on Sunset Drive and the paving of Samuel Road.

Pastor Johnny Flakes came to represent Ms. Cherri Forrester, a dedicated and decorated veteran, who lives on 12 Snowshoe Court in Ft. Mitchell in the Maple Trace Subdivision who has experienced chronic PTSD issues. He read a letter from the Veterans Affairs from Central Alabama about her condition and that she is unable to concentrate and focus for long periods of time that is being exacerbated by her neighbors trespassing on her property and wants intervention from the proper authorities. Contact information about her condition at David Mieles, MD, psychiatrist at 727-0550 ext. 3451.

Mr. Leroy Davis spoke about updates from the Wiregrass Committee with awards and grants given out to the community.

Chairman Corbett thanked Cable TV of East Alabama, The Citizen of East Alabama for covering our meetings and we have Facebook live for people not able to attend. He welcomed our elected officials, department heads, media and guests.

Chairman Corbett stated that the agenda was approved unanimously Monday night at the work session on August 9, 2021.

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

A quorum was established by County Administrator Paulette Colbert.

## APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Corbett presented to approve for July 28, 2021. Commissioner Epps made a motion to approve minutes with a correction on page 4 where it states District 3 Commissioner Costello said yes, but he was not present at the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion to approve the minutes unanimously.

## PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

Chairman Corbett presented a proclamation for Dillie Elliott for her retirement from the Russell County School Board. He also recognized several members present from Russell School System that were present for the proclamation.

# Russell County Commission

## PROCLAMATION

TO HONOR RETIREMENT FROM  
RUSSELL COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD

### Dillie Elliott

**WHEREAS**, the Russell County Commission along with the families and community of Russell County wish to recognize Russell County citizen Dillie Elliott upon her retirement from the Russell County School Board on June 1, 2021 after over 30 years of faithful service to Russell County, and;

**WHEREAS**, Dillie has been a long-time resident of Russell County and along with her husband Fort, has raised three wonderful children who have all grown up to realize successful and rewarding careers, and;

**WHEREAS**, Dillie has served with seven different school superintendents while serving on the Russell County School Board for over 18 years having been elected by the people of Russell County for three terms, and;

**WHEREAS**, Dillie was distinctly instrumental in bringing the members of the Russell County School Board members together in working as a team for the progress and betterment of the Russell County School System, and;

**WHEREAS**, of the many projects that Dillie championed, two that stand out include working diligently in getting lunchrooms at each of the schools and the construction of new state of the art athletic fields, and;

**WHEREAS**, during her many years of employment and service, Dillie's integrity and expertise earned her the trust, respect and admiration of her co-workers as well as the school district teachers, superintendents and citizens of Russell County, and;

**THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED**; we the members of the Russell County Commission, do hereby extend to Dillie Elliott our sincere and grateful appreciation for her dedicated service to Russell County Alabama as well as our congratulations on her well-earned retirement, and our best wishes to her and her family for continued success and happiness for years to come.

This Proclamation adopted and approved This the 11<sup>th</sup> day of August, 2021

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

No discussion items.

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

Chairman Corbett presented Coach Dylan Griggs from Russell County High School who spoke about sponsorship and inquiring about additional funding needed for football jerseys, sport gear, student meals, equipment repairs or purchases, and a jumbotron sponsorship sign. Chairman Corbett stated before that Commissioner Lee spoke about using some of his district money to help the school. Commissioner Lee motioned to give \$2,500 of his project money for the sign. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. Chairman Corbett thanked the coach for his service and all that he does for the kids and Russell County. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. Commissioner Lee asked for a roll call vote. Call for vote was done by County Administrator Paulette Colbert: District 3: Costello, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 4: Reed, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously. Commissioner Screws asked the coach if he'll help the kids after football. Coach Griggs agreed and he said along with helping the ones that go into college football, they also help them with the job force including the military, going to college, technical school, vast opportunities and help enforce academics (example: summer school).

Chairman Corbett presented Interim EMA Director David Martin with a budget transfer request. Mr. Martin requested \$11,200 from Line Item 541, Equipment and Furniture to Line Item 239, Other Repairs /Maintenance (to cover cost of PM Labor of all 42 siren sites) and also \$5,900 from Line 214, Minor Equipment, to Line 239, Other Repairs /Maintenance (to cover siren move from Joyce Drive). Commissioner Costello motioned, Commissioner Epps seconded the motion. Call for vote was done by County Administrator Paulette Colbert: District 3: Costello, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 4: Reed, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett presented Sheriff Heath Taylor with the request for the Commission to submit jail food bids. Sheriff Taylor stated historically it was done from January-to-January time frame but he's wanting to change it to October to-October to better fit the budget. He asked the Commission to allow Ms. Colbert to send out the bid by August 13<sup>th</sup> and to have it back in the courthouse to be opened at 2 pm EST on Thursday, September 16, 2021. He stated they can then see if there are any adjustments needed for the actual bid for the budget they submitted for this coming year. Motion to approve by Commissioner Lee and seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett presented setting salaries for the County Administrator and Tag Commissioner positions in 2 different votes. The request for Ms. Carrie Bowman to the current Tag Commissioner salary Motioned by Commissioner Lee and seconded by Commissioner Reed. Call for vote was done by County Administrator Paulette Colbert: District 3: Costello, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 4: Reed, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously. Chairman Corbett presented the County Administrator position salary request. He requested keeping Ms. Paulette Colbert salary the same as she's currently making as the Interim Administrator. Motion to approve by Commissioner Lee. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioner Epps thanked Ms. Colbert for taking the position and said that a good thing Ms. Colbert stated to the search committee was that she didn't want a contract or a car. Commissioner Epps said that was a plus for the Commissioners, and that they are continuing to work together and be cautious of taxpayers' dollars. Commissioner Lee stated that experience pays off and that Ms. Colbert has served in all positions in the Commission office, and they can't find anybody more qualified. Call for vote was done by County Administrator Paulette Colbert: District 3: Costello, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 4: Reed, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett presented the Sanitation Director's position. He stated from Monday night's discussion that they entertained the motion to use the same search committee used for the Administrator's position which included Commissioner Chambers, Commissioner Epps, Chairman Corbett, along with the Administrator and the HR Director participating in the search. The search committee will report back to the Sanitation Board, for their consideration and recommendation, to the Russell County Commission to hire the position. Motion to move forward starting the search for the Sanitation Director by Commissioner Screws. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett presented the ACCA Legislative Committee Nominee. He stated that they were notified by the ACCA that they needed the Commission to name someone for the legislative committee with the ACCA. Commissioner Lee motioned to nominate Chairman Corbett to continue in the position. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

### **COUNTY ENGINEER:**

Chairman Corbett presented County Engineer Shawn Blakeney with the funding agreement for Bradley Road. Mr. Blakeney stated that Friday July 30<sup>th</sup> the bid came in for the MPO Project on Bradley Road and East Alabama Paving won the bid at \$642,323.34 and the state is in the process of doing the paperwork for the funding agreement for our match portion of that plus there will be administrative fees from the state on top of that. He said since there will be no Commission meeting the last of August, once they receive the funding agreement, they are allowed 7-10 days to get the funds in. Mr. Blakeney requested to allow the Chair to sign the funding agreement when it comes in. Motion to approve by Commissioner Epps and seconded by Commissioner Chambers. Commissioner Lee asked how much it will be, and Mr. Blakeney

answered that it's about \$137,000 and it was approved in the budget. Commissioner Lee stated he can sign it up to \$200,000. Chairman Corbett stated they will make sure the amount is budgeted. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. Commissioner Lee asked for a roll call vote. Call for vote was done by County Administrator Paulette Colbert: District 3: Costello, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 4: Reed, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett presented County Engineer Shawn Blakeney with the transportation plan. Mr. Blakeney stated that part of the new gas tax law it is required by County by August 31<sup>st</sup> to initiate a 2022 County Transportation plan for the new CRAF money and the FAEF money. He stated they are planning to pave the following roads with this money: Wills Valley Road that's 1.53 miles, Upshaw Flats Road that's 3.22 miles, Zion Hill Road which will be the federal aid exchange fund money that's 6.6 miles, Wende Road that's 2.87 miles, Padgetts Road that's 3.45 miles, and that's a total of 17.67 miles for \$2,223,060.00. Request to approve the Transportation Plan by the County Engineer was motioned to approve by Commissioner Screws. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

#### **ADMINISTRATOR:**

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the request from Judge Collins to redirect an appropriation. Ms. Colbert stated that appropriated funds for Second Chance Works Program were approved in the budget this year. Copy of letter was included from Judge Collins to request permission to redirect the remaining balance of those funds for at-risk intervention services in the amount of \$7,700.00. Motion to approve by Commissioner Screws and seconded by Commissioner Epps. Discussion included Commissioner Costello speaking to abstain from this vote due to him not being involved with the original funding vote that was before his elected office term. County Administrator Paulette Colbert called the vote: District 3: Costello, abstained. District 5: Epps, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 4: Reed, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the request for the Budget work session meeting for August 19, 2021 at 9:00 a.m. Motioned to approve by Commissioner Lee and seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously. Commissioner Lee stated it needs to be announced to the public. County Administrator Paulette Colbert agreed.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the Diversified Computer Services proposal for product and services to aid in submitting the reports required for the American Rescue Act funds. Mrs. Colbert stated that DCS is submitting this to the ACCA, and they are offering it to the counties who did not choose to participate in the ACCA program. DCS has provided services to our engineering department for many years and comes highly recommended by our County Engineer. The first report is due by August 31<sup>st</sup> 2021 with other reports due each quarter in the year. The cost for the services is as follows:

- The initial revenue loss calculation report is \$4,000 and due August 31<sup>st</sup> 2021.
- Subsequent analysis and calculation reports are \$1,500 with the next due January 31, 2022.
- The annual license fee is \$12,000 and a data processing fee of \$1,600.
- They will allow us to use their system for free for the months of August and September 2021.
- They will not bill for any system use until October 1<sup>st</sup>, which is the \$12,000 annual license fee.

Ms. Colbert requested approval to accept this proposal and to sign the agreements provided by Diversified Computer Services to be spent from the American Rescue Act funds. She said this is a tool to aid to file required reports since there is a huge amount of record keeping involved with this and she recommends hiring a project manager, at some point. She clarified that there is not a monthly fee but a \$12,000 annual fee. Chairman Corbett redirected to the County Attorney Hope Hicks and asked if there is a requirement to bid this project for professional services? Ms. Hicks stated that that it did not need to be bid out and it was exempt as professional services or a contract for physical or financial aid. Chairman Corbett then asked if they could use the AARP funding to purchase or pay for this product? Ms. Hicks said yes and said that we could use it as part of the 10% that we can use towards administrating that money. Motion to approve by Commissioner Screws and seconded by Commissioner Epps. County Administrator Paulette Colbert called the vote: District 3: Costello, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 4: Reed, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Commissioner Screws asked Ms. Colbert if they have an idea on when to bring someone on board to handle this program? Ms. Colbert said that as soon as the Commission designates a project to be paid out of the funds, they will need someone to handle those projects. Chairman Corbett stated that he thinks this position could be resolved at the budget meeting. After further general discussion, they agreed to have someone come on board before a project comes up, to be paid from the American Rescue Plan. Motion by Commissioner Reed to allow the Administrator to begin a job description for a Project Manager position. Seconded by Commissioner Costello. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

## **COUNTY ATTORNEY:**

Interim County Attorney Hope Hicks requested to have an executive session to discuss an issue under the exemptions for an Open Meeting Act to "have an issue to discuss with an attorney the legal ramifications of and legal options for pending litigations, controversies not yet being litigated, but eminently likely to be litigated if the governmental body proposes course of action" and the discussion would meet that exemption. She requested to go into an executive session and no action will be taken when they come out. If someone makes a motion and seconds it, she will make an oral declaration that it meets this and then they can go into executive session at the end of the agenda so everyone can leave and not wait on them to come out. Chairman Corbett clarified that they would then adjourn from executive session. Ms. Hicks agreed. Motion was made by Commissioner Costello and seconded by Commissioner Reed. Ms. Hicks stated that as an attorney licensed to practice in the State of Alabama, she made the oral declaration that the matter is appropriate for executive session. All

Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

### **COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:**

Commissioner Reed stated that he wanted to use some of his discretionary funds to help the Russell County High School football team.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

- Reminder: No Work Session on August 23<sup>rd</sup> and No Commission Meeting on August 25, 2021
- Crawford Market Days: 8/21 from 8 am to 2 pm ET
- No Work Session on September 6<sup>th</sup> due to Labor Day Holiday Closure.

Sheriff Heath Taylor responded to Pastor Johnny Flakes who spoke in the public comments on behalf of Ms. Cherri Forrester. He has the upmost respect for the Pastor and has known him for a long time, but Sheriff Taylor disagreed on the notion that the Commission has not done what they can for Ms. Forrester. He said the letter written from the doctor speaks volumes on what is going on. He brought Officer Kline to the meeting that has delt with Ms. Forrester the most and they have numerous reports on what she's claimed over the last several years. From the pictures that were shared, 2 were wild coyotes that she called the game warden about and she wasn't happy with the game warden's response that they were coyotes. From the cameras she has on her house, there was a guy jogging in a cul-de-sac, in the road and not on her property, and she went off on him asking him what the issues were. He stated they are very familiar with it and handling every scenario that they can. She has had the opportunity to sign multiple warrants on people in the neighborhood, she has done it and they have been prosecuted so he does not like allegations that they are not handling something the proper way and he just wanted to respond to it.

Commissioner Lee stated that Pastor Johnny Flakes read the letter to be put in the record because otherwise, they could not read it due to the privacy act because it was dealing with medical conditions. Chairman Corbett stated that the letter was shared with the Commissioners.

Chairman Corbett discussed the Russell County High School football field holding their first 2 home football games on August 27<sup>th</sup> and September 3<sup>rd</sup> at Ladonia Sports Complex due to artificial turf being installed at the school's field.

Commissioner Epps spoke more about Ms. Cherri Forrester's Ft. Mitchell home issues, and she doesn't think this is something the Commission has control of, and to continue letting the Sheriff Department continue to handle it accordingly within the law.

Commissioner Screws discussed and suggested to revisit setting up a multi-use field in Seale that was scheduled to be setup before.

Meeting went into closed Executive Session.  
The meeting was adjourned in the Executive Session.