

Russell County Commission
Russell County Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes December 8, 2021
9:30 A.M. EST

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

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

Commissioner Epps led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments made.

Chairman Corbett thanked BEAM Cable TV and The Citizen of East Alabama for covering our meetings and that our meetings are on Facebook Live for our citizens unable to come to the meeting and want to view the meeting. He welcomed our elected officials, visitors, department heads, media, and guests.

Chairman Corbett stated that the agenda was approved at Monday night's work session on December 6, 2021.

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

A quorum was established by County Administrator Paulette Colbert.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Corbett asked for approval of the minutes for November 24, 2021 Commission meeting. He stated that corrections were made Monday night and the corrections were emailed out yesterday to the Commissioners. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed.

PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

No proclamations or resolutions were made.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

No discussion items were made.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Corbett recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented pressure washing the courthouse. Mr. Watson stated the cost for this is over \$7,500 and he received 3 estimates for the pressure washing. Best Commercial Cleaning had the best estimate that came in at \$8,200 so he would like to proceed. He stated that a question was brought up at Monday's work session asking when it would be done. Mr. Watson reached out to the contractor, and he stated that he figured doing it in two weekends. It will not be done during business hours but will be done Saturday and Sunday. The estimate to approve is for \$8,200 to Best Commercial Cleaning. Chairman Corbett stated that this is only notification of the Commission based on policy, and there is no action needed. Commissioner Epps asked if there was an extra cost for the additional weekend and Mr. Watson stated that it was included in the original estimate. He also stated that he will have one of his maintenance guys on site when they get the schedule, but it's not scheduled. He is to get back with him later next week since they are basing it on the weather.

Chairman Corbett recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented a request for permission to bid out the elevator modernization. Mr. Watson received a letter from the State that requires us to bring our elevator up to the ASME safety code, and we're required to do this by January 1, 2023. He stated this is a pre-budgeted item for this fiscal year, so he is requesting the Commission to vote, so he can go ahead and place this out for bid. If approved by the Commission today, he will start advertising on December 16th, have a mandatory walk through on December 27th, and then advertising will end January 6th. He stated that they will then open bids at 10 am on January 10th here in the Commission Chambers, then tentatively approved by the Commission somewhere around January 12th's meeting. Motion to approve by Commissioner Lee. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the iVision contract. Mr. Watson asked permission for the Commission to vote to allow the Chairman permission to sign the contract that's necessary to move forward with the replacement of our network switches and firewall protection for the already pre-approved phone system. He stated that the amount of the contract is \$13,693.70. Commissioner Lee had one question, for the record that was talked about Monday night, if it's ok to do this separate from the phone system? Mrs. Colbert agreed and stated that she reached out to our audit manager on it, and he said that this was for services that would not need to be bid. Motion for the Chair to sign the contract was made by Commissioner Lee. Seconded by Commissioner Costello. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented the bid award for Ladonia Pole Barn bid at the Ladonia Sports Complex. He stated that the bid was opened here in the Commission Chambers on 12/2/21 and at this time he recommended awarding the bid for 52 x 48 x 10 ft. high pole barn in the amount of \$34,373.48 to Brian Koon Construction Company. He stated that he had two bids on it, and this will be paid out of the American Rescue Plan

money. Commissioner Chambers motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney stated that for Christmas and New Year's, Sanitation will run as normal because with the holidays being on Saturday, they will have Friday off and do their normal routes Monday through Thursday. He said they are planning on placing dumpsters around the county, at the normal spots, and he'll have a list of the spots at the next meeting for extra trash. Chairman Corbett asked about the fourth Saturday at the transfer station? Mr. Blakeney said it will be cancelled but they will have the dumpster placed there for anybody to bring Christmas trash there.

ADMINISTRATOR:

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the request to pay the County Attorney fees from the Coronavirus Rescue Act fund. Ms. Colbert stated that there was a copy of the invoice received from Ball, Ball, Mathews & Novak Attorneys at Law for services rendered and expenses incurred in the amount of \$2,070.00, and she requested to pay this invoice from the Coronavirus Rescue Act fund. Chairman Corbett stated that this was talked about in Monday night's work session. Commissioner Costello motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Chairman Corbett stated, for the record, to the attorney who is monitoring the spending of this money, and he knows Mrs. Colbert has already spoken to her about it, but does the attorney agree that we can pay these funds with the ARP money? Interim County Attorney Hope Hicks agreed and stated what she's been trying to do is if she's doing work specifically geared to that, they've assigned a different file number to it so that you can spend up to 10% administratively and she believes this will be an administrative cost. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the County Commission meeting schedule for the 2022 year for the work sessions and Commission meetings. Motion to approve by Commissioner Lee and seconded by Commissioner Chambers. Commissioner Costello asked if it was checked to ensure that there wouldn't be a holiday represented in these? Mrs. Colbert stated that there possibly will be, but the governor has not issued the final holiday schedule for 2022. She was hoping to have it before this meeting but hopefully will have it at the next Commission meeting. She said that generally when there is a holiday on these meetings, it's addressed at the Commission meeting. Chairman Corbett agreed because then they would let the public know as well. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

HUMAN RESOURCES

- New Hires for November
- November Job Openings through Alabama Department of Labor
- Remaining Job Vacancies
- 2022 County Benefits Overview Information

HR Director Max Herring stated that County Administrator Paulette Colbert would like to address something spoken prior about in Monday night's work session. Mrs. Colbert stated that Monday night there was some discussion about how our policy is currently on paying health insurance premiums for our retirees. In September of 2011, the Commission approved that any Russell County employee must be in the health insurance plan for 10 years, before the county would pay their health insurance upon retirement. Chairman Corbett stated that there was a long discussion Monday night about retiree insurance and the subsequent drain that is put in our budget over the years, so he knew there was some desire by the Commission on what the policies were. He thanked Mrs. Colbert for pulling it up and finding it out for them. Commissioner Costello stated that under the 25-year service, it is not written as well as it should be because a question arose on it. He thinks they need to write it better so that future employees know what they are getting and what they're eligible for. Commissioner Lee stated that can be rewritten under the policy that was passed in 2011, they wouldn't have to vote to rewrite it. Chairman Corbett asked Max Herring, based on that, would he revise that and bring it back to the Commission? Mr. Herring agreed. Commissioner Epps asked that when we hire these employees, when they go through Human Resources, are they given a copy of this or is this explained to them in advance? Mr. Herring stated that the plan is to give this to a new employee and new hires. He said that this is actually why this was put together because they go over all the benefits with new hires, but it's a lot of information so that's why we put it in writing so it can be shared throughout the county. Commissioner Epps asked if it's gone through after you hire them or during the course while interviewing them for the job? Mr. Herring said both times. When interviewing someone, they go over county benefits, which is important, and then once they're hired and they do their new hire paperwork, they go over and reiterate those things again so they will just help us in that process. So, all of our new hires and we plan on distributing it to all the HR contacts out in the field, so all of the county is basically on the same page. Commissioner Epps mentioned that when she was on the search committee, this wasn't indicated to those persons that they were interviewing with at the time. Commissioner Costello stated that on future searches, we can put that into an application package, so they know it. Commissioner Costello stated that it was structured towards Tier 1, and are their Tier 2 employees now hired? Mr. Herring stated that everyone is now Tier 1. Chairman Corbett stated that it was adopted and made everybody Tier 1. He said they bought into that and did it as another incentive to come to work with Russell County.

COUNTY ATTORNEY:

Interim County Attorney Hope Hicks stated she has done additional research concerning using the ARP money to give employees additional funds. She went back and looked again and again, then talked again with people from the attorney general's office about the elected officials but because of the state law, if you're entitled to it, but during a term, it must be called an expense allowance during that current term. With federal money you can't give an expense allowance. So, she said under the federal money they can give it to you (elected officials), but under the state term, elected officials can't be given the raise or the incentive money. She stated that the resolution the Commission gave to give the employees and the contract employees, that would be okay, but we can't do it for an elected official. Commissioner Lee asked if they would have done it October 1st, it could've been done? Ms. Hicks agreed. Chairman Corbett told Ms. Hicks that he appreciated her reporting on it, but he doesn't think any of the Commissioners were inquiring about

themselves. Ms. Hicks agreed but she said the Commissioners aren't the only elected official employees, and she knows if the Commissioners could monetarily thank the other elected officials, she knows they would want to. Chairman Corbett said that he had one come to him and ask him about it and they didn't know the answer, so he appreciates her looking into that.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Screws stated that he would like to see a total of what they spend with the care money, and it could be a month behind, to be put in the Commission meeting packages (notebooks). So, what was spent in November can come in the December package to keep abreast of what we're spending. Chairman Corbett asked Mrs. Colbert if she could take care of it. Commissioner Lee clarified that it's the Rescue Plan Act money. Chairman Corbett stated that the Cares Act money was what was being used for CDBG, which was the money David Martin and Leon's groups are working with. The ARP money is what Commissioner Screws is talking about.

Chairman Corbett discussed that the old post office at the corner of 14th Street and 5th Avenue, across the street from our Judicial Building (the old courthouse), was officially placed on the National Historic Register on November 30th. This was a goal of the Commission to get done. They used a contract consultant to help, and that was officially done. This now opens up the ability for us to start on that building, making sure we stay within the guidelines of the historic register, and also may be looking at historic tax credits, as well, and making that project go. He's letting the Commission and public be aware since it's been asked a couple of times.

Chairman Corbett spoke about the great turn out in Crawford Square with the Crawford lighting with many vendors as well as the Fort Mitchell Visitor's Center had a big turnout for the tree lighting.

Commissioner Costello reminded the citizens of safety and security issues with vehicle break ins throughout the city and the county and to not leave anything out in your vehicle due to others that are robbing unlocked vehicles. Commissioner Lee added for people to be careful when leaving banks and atm machines due to 3 instances that have happened lately in the community.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

No announcements were made.

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Costello seconded by Commissioner Reed.

Meeting was adjourned.