

Russell County Commission
Russell County Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes December 22, 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 Don Abrams with Trinity United Methodist Church.

Commissioner Lee 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 stated that our meetings are on Facebook Live for our citizens unable to attend. 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 20, 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 who kept the minutes.

A quorum was established by County Administrator Paulette Colbert.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Corbett asked for approval of the minutes for December 8, 2021 Commission meeting. Commissioner Costello motioned to approve minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed.

PROCLAMATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS:

Commissioner Corbett presented the Freddie Long Memorial Highway Resolution. County Administrator Paulette Colbert read the resolution out loud as follows:

RUSSELL COUNTY COMMISSION
PHENIX CITY, ALABAMA

RESOLUTION

DESIGNATING OLD SEALE HIGHWAY IN THE SEALE COMMUNITY
OF RUSSELL COUNTY, ALABAMA
AS THE FREDDIE LONG MEMORIAL HIGHWAY

By Russell County Commission Chairman Chance Corbett, Vice Chairman Rod Costello, County Commissioners Gentry Lee, Scott Chambers, Ronnie Reed, Cattie Epps, and Larry Screws.

WHEREAS, with highest tribute and deepest appreciation, we memorialize the service of former Seale Fire Chief and outstanding community leader Freddie Long, who passed away on December 1, 2021 by naming a road in his memory; and

WHEREAS, a member of Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church, Freddie Long also served his community as a volunteer firefighter and even Fire Chief of the Seale Volunteer Fire Department for many years, responding to help anyone in need; and

WHEREAS, Freddie Long retired from the Russell County Board of Education as Director of Transportation with a unrivaled wealth of knowledge for the school system and our county; and

WHEREAS, Freddie served the Seale area as well as Russell County as a whole by giving of himself selflessly through projects such as the Russell County Fuel Authority, the first responder and school bus radio systems and even helped ensure that the students, teachers and school buses made it safely onto the very road for which we will name in his honor; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE RUSSELL COUNTY COMMISSISON on this 22nd day of December 2021, that in order to commemorate in an enduring manner Freddie Long's service to Russell County, Alabama, the road that runs through Seale, Alabama named Old Seale Highway is hereby designated the Freddie Long Memorial Highway. The County Engineer is requested to place and maintain signs as provided in this resolution.

Motion to approve the resolution by Commissioner Costello. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioner Screws asked if all Commissioners should sign the resolution. Chairman Corbett agreed and asked Mrs. Colbert to affix all the signature areas on the resolution to be signed. After further discussion, Chairman Corbett stated that the plan is to approve it today and present it at a later time and unveil the sign on site on Highway 431. Call for vote was done by County Administrator Paulette Colbert: District 4: Reed, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 3: Costello, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously. Commissioner Lee asked if this would change people's addresses on the road. Chairman Corbett stated that he was very careful in the resolution that it would just be dedicated, not actually changed.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

No discussion items were made.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Corbett recognized Probate Judge Alford Harden who presented approval for the Harper Family Cemetery. Judge Harden stated that the Commissioners had a request from the Harper family that's on Old Seale Highway, and it's in Commissioner Corbett's district, that contained all the guidelines they've met according to the law and it's his request that they approve this cemetery. Motion to approve by Chairman Corbett. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. In discussion, Chairman Corbett added that he received a letter from McGill McBride, who was contracted to draw up the plats, and to do the paperwork on it. He stated that there was a phone number for Mr. Michael Harper on the cover, which was a wrong contact number, so he couldn't contact him. He stated that Judge Harden stated Monday night there was not arguments or opposition to having this done so he goes with the recommendation. As him being the Commissioner for that district, he has had none as well. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett recognized Interim EMA Director David Martin with the COVID Response Trailer bid update. Mr. Martin stated that this COVID response trailer is purchased through CDBG grant funds, and ADECA had requested them to bid this, and there were no bids received. After he spoke to Tammy Perdue with ADECA and Ben McGarr with Lee-Russell Council of Governments, they have agreed that they can get a minimum of three quotes and take the lowest. Mr. Martin stated they have done this with Chattahoochee Trailer at \$9,100.00 being the lowest quote. Chairman Corbett stated that Chattahoochee Trailer is the most local company, located in Columbus. Mr. Martin agreed and added that they will not charge them a delivery or a pickup fee. Motion to approve by Commissioner Costello. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously. Chairman Corbett commented that the reason they are doing this is because it's dealing with COVID funds, and they want to add it to the record as well.

Chairman Corbett recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the awarding of the morgue cooler bid. Mr. Watson stated that they ran the cooler out for bid for the material for three weeks and received no bids, but he got three quotes from vendors with the cheapest bid from Johnstone Supply in the amount of \$32,778.30. He added that given the lead time is 25 to 27 weeks, they actually gave them two bids. The next being \$38,766.14 with a 17-week lead time. He requested to ask the coroner the necessity to spend the extra \$5,900 to get it faster. At this point, Mr. Watson asked the Commission to approve the purchase, with either of these prices, so they can move forward on this project. Chairman Corbett spoke to Coroner Sumbry (who was in the meeting) regarding the quotes Mr. Watson had provided. One that is significantly cheaper but would have longer lead time and asked him if there is any problem in waiting the extra time or is he in need to have it go faster and spend more money. Coroner Sumbry said the sooner the better because they needed it yesterday. Chairman Corbett said it helps them understand the necessity for it. Chairman Corbett asked Mr. Watson the amount of the one they can get faster. Mr. Watson stated that the cost is \$38,766.14, and they had budgeted for this project (for the record) with the same company that gave them a quote back in August, but this is now \$10,482.14 over what that quote was so that's actually going to put the budget over the \$35,000 that was budgeted for the project. So, Mr. Watson was hoping that they can use the ARP funds to pay for this but he's still asking the

Commission to proceed and buy the cooler and go ahead and get the project done. Chairman Corbett stated that he didn't understand that Monday night because he thought it was falling into the budgeted amount. He asked how much is it over the budgeted amount? Mr. Watson stated that the first quote for just the material is falling within the budget but for what it takes to put it in and the slab and all that, it's going to run about \$10,000 over budget. Chairman Corbett asked Attorney Hope Hicks if she has any progress on this since Monday night. Ms. Hicks stated that she sent an email to NACO just wanting to double check behind me on this and they take 10 days (2 weeks) when it's not Christmas holidays. So, she thinks it'll be 2 weeks from now before she can report back for sure with an answer. Chairman Corbett asked Mr. Watson if he thinks he can absorb it in his budget. Mr. Watson agreed he can with a budget modification. Motion to approve the request for the shorter time frame. Mr. Watson stated the price would be \$38,766.14. Motion to approve by Commissioner Screws. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioner Lee discussed this being the 2nd item in a row that we didn't receive a bid on. Since it's never happened before, is it ok to accept the lowest from whoever we want to? Attorney Hope Hicks stated that if you don't get a bid and you need it, she thinks since you've gotten the three quotes, she thinks this is the best you can do. Chairman Corbett stated that it was to his understanding of the bid law is if you have to go out to get the quotes and if you get no quotes, then, you can proceed on with a purchase from that point. Commissioner Lee asked why would this company give us a quote but not bid on it? He said it seems that would throw up a red flag because you are asking for stipulations in the bid that they might not want to meet. Attorney Hope Hicks stated that because this company is telling you 27 weeks and 17 weeks would pay and additional \$6,000, they're probably not wanting to submit bids right now because it sounds like they're having a hard time fulfilling orders, as it is, much less going after orders. So, she thinks, with the times we are in and shortfalls of supplies would explain why we're not getting bids right now. Commissioner Epps stated that she understood Monday evening, that this quote may be higher later on next year. Mr. Watson said that he projected them to be higher as of the first of the year. He has two vendors for HVAC equipment that's telling them that one has a 15 percent increase as of the first of the year and the other one has a 10 percent increase so he's going to say it is going to be more, but he really can't predict what the economy is going to do. He said it's all cost of the raw material, the increased labor cost, and increased cost of everything. Mr. Watson stated that this quote, for the record, is only good for 10-days. Chairman Corbett asked who were the bid invitations sent out to? Commissioner Costello was asking too. Mr. Watson stated that they advertised in the paper, and they also called Wood Engine Supply (and they placed a bid), along with Johnstone Supply and United Refrigeration, who are all out of Columbus. Mr. Watson agreed that they all were invited to bid on this project, and he has quotes from them. Commissioner Screws asked if they need to reflect the additional money will come out of his budget in the motion? Chairman Corbett said it was a good point, and to do it for the minutes, as well. He said that Mr. Watson stated that this is an additional \$10,000 increase, if it is not funded through the ARP funding, then you will absorb the additional \$10,000 out of your budget, at this point, with an additional budget transfer? Mr. Watson agreed. Commissioner Screws amended the motion to cover that the additional funds will come out of the maintenance budget. County Administrator Paulette Colbert called the vote: District 4: Reed, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 3: Costello,

yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the awarding of the landscaping bid that covers the Courthouse, the Judicial Center, and the Driver's License Building. Mr. Watson stated that after he had 3 contractors at the walk-through, we only received two bids for the landscaping and lawn care with only one qualified bidder, and she came in just under our budgeted amount at \$23,400.00 annually, so at this point he requested that the Commission award this bid to Chattahoochee Gardens Inc. in the amount of \$23,400.00 for the Judicial, the Courthouse, and the Driver's License yearly. Chairman Corbett clarified that the Driver's License building is the old health department located next to the Judicial Center, and it has more than just driver's license in it but that's what we call it. Motion to approve by Commission Costello. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented the purchase of lighting upgrade at the Ladonia Sports complex from SourceWell, in which the materials itself is an amount of \$420,000.00. He spoke to the county attorney, and they are still waiting on answers, so he is going to let her speak a little on this and can the ARP money be used for this. He said that they think it can, but they're not 100% sure so she is waiting on answers, so, he doesn't have the money in his Parks and Rec budget to absorb this kind of hit if it isn't covered. He said, like Commissioner Epps said earlier, if this isn't purchased or PO'd by the end of the year, there's possibility of at least a 6% or a 10% increase starting January 2022. County Attorney Hope Hicks stated that she is not sure on this one and she wishes she could give definitive answers, but when all of this is new law, trying to find the way and she doesn't want to tell something until she can find every single way to document it, and she does think it's okay, so we don't get hit by the examiners or we don't end up paying something back. She does not feel comfortable with it quite yet to tell us that it's okay. Commissioner Lee motioned to postpone this item. Commissioner Costello seconded. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Commissioner Screws then motioned to postpone the bid installation of lighting at the Ladonia Sports Complex. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

Chairman Corbett recognized County Engineer Shawn Blakeney with the financing of the Caterpillar motor grader. Mr. Blakeney requested to allow the Russell County Commission to authorize the Chair and the County Administrator to enter into a four-year leased purchase agreement with leasing to finance of a CAT 120 GC motor grader in the amount of \$273,238.46 from Thompson Cat that would be off the SourceWell purchasing program. Chairman Corbett restated that he is requesting to finance it and he will be able to make the payments within his budget. Mr. Blakeney agreed and to have it paid off next year. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve, seconded by Commissioner Epps. Commissioner Costello asked if he is making payments this upcoming year, and have it

paid off the following year with budget? Mr. Blakeney agreed and stated it's like they did the MotorMax this year where they financed it last year and they are paying it off this year. Commissioner Costello told Mrs. Colbert if they anticipate that there will be budgeted moneys in his account for the next year? Mrs. Colbert said he will need to set it aside. Mr. Blakeney said they will in anticipation of it. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. None opposed. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

ADMINISTRATOR:

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the request to pay the County Attorney fees from the Coronavirus Rescue Act fund. Mrs. Colbert requested to pay an invoice from Ball, Ball, Matthews, and Novak (and they have a copy of it) in the amount of \$1,685.00 from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund. Chairman Corbett asked the attorney if this is qualified funds that we can take out. Attorney Hope Hicks stated that this would fall under the 10% for administration. Ms. Hicks approved paying this from the ARP money. Motion by Commissioner Screws. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. Commissioner Lee asked that the documentation for these fees be retained for the auditors. Chairman Corbett stated from Monday night, Mrs. Colbert is now giving them a summary of fees which have been approved and spent from the ARP money. County Administrator Paulette Colbert called the roll: District 4: Reed, yes. District 7: Screws, yes. District 5: Epps, yes. District 3: Costello, yes. District 1: Lee, yes. District 2: Chambers, yes. District 6: Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion unanimously.

COUNTY ATTORNEY:

Interim County Attorney Hope Hicks had nothing to discuss.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Screws asked where we were with the insurance. Chairman Corbett asked Mrs. Colbert to explain because he thought they looked into it and found that it had previously fixed on the ten-year issue with the insurance. Mrs. Colbert agreed and stated that September 2011, the County Commission set a policy that county employees must be in our health insurance plan for ten years before they receive payment of their health insurance upon retirement.

Commissioner Screws asked about when Sonny Brasfield came down, he said that we should wait until we get a report from the treasury department before we start spending, so where does this stand? Attorney Hope Hicks stated that Mr. Brasfield said at that time there was the interim final rule, and he was sort of encouraging people to wait until there was a final rule. She said they have updated the interim final rule, but it's still an interim final rule, but she can tell us that monies are being spend in counties all over the state now. She thinks we're okay to pursue as long as we are following the rules as they are set at the time, we make the decision to spend, then, she thinks we are fine. Commissioner Screws asked about voting on every item. Chairman Corbett said that they have kind of made it a policy that they are voting on each of the ARP funding items for the record in the minutes, does she agree with it? Ms. Hicks agreed with it, and she thinks there are so many I's to dot and T's to cross with this, and having the documentation that the federal

government is requiring, that having it in the minutes and having resolutions from the Commission is the best way to do this money.

Commissioner Epps thanked all of the employees for the work they have done this year and are on a good path to success this year. Secondly, when she went to the Montgomery meeting, she was awarded from the Association of County Commissioner for serving on Self Insurance Fund as a Trustee for 8-years, from 2013 to 2021. She wanted to let everyone know that she thanks everyone for their support and helping her get this accomplishment as the longest Commissioner on one committee.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- *Sanitation will resume a normal pickup schedule during the Christmas & New Year holidays*
- The Russell County Courthouse will be closed for the following holidays:
 - *December 23^d and 24th for Christmas*
 - *December 31st for New Years*
- **The Fraternal Order of Police Pancake Breakfast:** *Tickets \$5, Saturday Jan, 22, 2022, 8:00 to 11:00 am EST*
 - Location: American Legion Post 135 on 511 13th Street Phenix City, AL 36867
 - *Chance to Win a 32" Big Screen TV- Tickets \$3 (need not to be present to win)*

Motion to adjourn by Commissioner Costello seconded by Commissioner Screws.

Meeting was adjourned.