

**Russell County Commission**  
**Russell County Commission Chambers**  
**Meeting Minutes May 11, 2022**  
**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 Reverend Brady Baird with Seale United Methodist Church.

Commissioner Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Ms. Tracey Johnson spoke about her dirt road paving request for Northfork Road in Hurtsboro, Alabama.

Mr. John Rudd spoke of the Fort Mitchell sewage project and that he has high elevation acreage property he would like the Commission to do a site evaluation for the project.

Chairman Corbett thanked BEAM Cable TV for broadcasting our meeting live for the public on Facebook, and The Citizen of East Alabama for covering the meetings. He welcomed our elected officials, department heads, media, and guests.

Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas called roll of the Commission. Members 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 County Attorney Hope Hicks, and Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas who kept the minutes.

A quorum was established by the Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas.

Chairman Corbett stated that the agenda was approved at the work session Monday night on May 9, 2022.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Chairman Corbett asked for approval of the minutes of April 27, 2022, Commission meeting. Commissioner Costello moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

**PROCLAMATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

There were no proclamations, resolutions, or presentations to be made.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

There were no discussion items to be made.

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

Chairman Corbett presented the MOU between the Metropolitan Planning Organization and Russell County, Alabama, and requested the Chair authorization to sign the agreement. Commissioner Lee moved for the Chair to sign the agreement. Commissioner Costello seconded the motion. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

Chairman Corbett presented the County Attorney Engagement Agreement with Ball, Ball, Mathews, and Novak for Attorney Hope Hicks until December 31, 2024. Commissioner Costello moved to approve the agreement. Commissioner Screws seconded the motion. It was discussed and Ms. Hicks stated that the contract is specifically for her as a member of her firm, and if she changed law firms there is a 30 days' notice to cancel the contract and she assumed they would go with her, and not the firm. Roll call vote was taken by Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas as follows: District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes;

District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 3: Commissioner Costello, yes; District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; and District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Corbett recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the awarding of the Russell County Courthouse re-seal project. Mr. Watson stated he ran bids from March 9<sup>th</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup> for the reseal project of the courthouse and had opened bids here in the Commission chambers on April 11, 2022. He presented his recommendation to award the bid to Harrington Paint Company in Phenix City, Alabama, in the amount of \$87,000. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the bid award. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

#### **COUNTY ENGINEER:**

Ben Elliott with the County Engineering Department presented the survey equipment award. Mr. Elliott asked the Commission for approval for the survey equipment to EGPS Solutions, Inc. for \$21,220, and it was a budgeted item. Commissioner Lee moved to accept the award. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

#### **SANITATION:**

The Sanitation Department had nothing to report.

#### **ADMINISTRATOR:**

Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas had nothing to report.

#### **CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:**

Chairman Corbett recognized Mr. Scott Holmes with Hecht Burdeshaw Architects, Inc. who presented an update and recommendation for the Russell County Sheriff's Office covid supply storage building site. Mr. Holmes requested approval for a proposal from Geotechnical & Environmental Consultants, Inc. for \$6,500 for a geotechnical study of the site. Commissioner Costello moved to approve to pay for the study. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. Ms. Hicks was asked if the building will be covered by the ARPA funds. Ms. Hicks stated that she cannot answer that until she knows all the uses and the potential cost. She thinks the \$6,500 could be used from the ARPA funds since it's determining the best location for this building. Mr. Holmes stated that he will have the information for the whole property. He verified that the \$6,500 will cover the whole site. He will change the locations in the proposal. Roll call vote was taken by Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas as follows: District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 3: Commissioner Costello, yes; District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; and District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes. Motion passed unanimously.

Chairman Corbett recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the request for the morgue cooler payment. Mr. Wilson requested the approval of the new morgue cooler to Johnstone Supply in the amount of \$38,766.14 out of the ARPA funds. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. Roll call vote was taken by Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas as follows: District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 3: Commissioner Costello, yes; District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; and District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes. Motion passed unanimously.

**HUMAN RESOURCES:** *Information in Commissioner's Packets*

**COUNTY ATTORNEY:**

Attorney Hope Hicks discussed CDBG-CV Project Funds Distribution/Administrative fees. She stated she had reported to the Commission in the prior meeting that United Way was unable to process \$86,000 of the CDBG-CV grant for rental assistance. She stated that the United Way tasked three different agencies to spend this rental assistance money and the requirements through ADECA was that they were supposed to be forms signed by the renters and the landlords but apparently the forms were not signed by one or more parties due to miscommunication and they cannot get this part of it done so the United Way will be returning \$86,000 back to the Commission. United Way asked if they need to return the \$86,000 less the 5% administration fee or return the full \$86,000. Ms. Hicks stated that after her looking into it and that the three other agencies didn't get it done, she believes that the Commission should ask that the entire \$86,000 be returned to the Commission. She stated that action today would be if the Commission would require the entire \$86,000 to come back. If so, Ben McGarr with Lee County-Russell Government has done a great job on looking at other uses for the \$86,000 and to change the use of that, she said they would need to schedule a public hearing to allow citizens to comment on the change, it has to be advertised as would be done with any public hearing, sign a resolution authorizing a change, and then a letter will need to go to Director Boswell at ADECA telling them of the change. Ms. Hicks stated that Mr. McGarr has done some research and has actually worked with EMA Director David Martin about the possible uses of this money. Since several ARPA funds couldn't be used with this ADECA grant, she stated there is a good bit of EMA things that could be. So, this could save us some ARPA funds by using this CDBG grant to pay for those things. She stated they don't have to take action on this today but maybe at the next work session schedule a public meeting and talk about what is wanted to do with these funds and then 4-weeks from today (2 meetings from now), schedule the public hearing to change the use of the funds. Commissioner Lee moved to require the full \$86,000 be returned from United Way. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Roll call vote was taken by Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas as follows: District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 3: Commissioner Costello, yes; District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; and District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes. Motion passed unanimously.

Attorney Hope Hicks requested the Commission to vote to go into an executive session with two topics, and since she thinks action would be required, they would recess and then come back, and the meeting will be adjourned from here. If there is a motion, then, after the motion, she requested to do the declaration before the vote. Before the motion, she stated that under the executive session and open meetings law, she believes that this topic is appropriate for executive session to discuss with your attorney the legal ramifications of, and legal options for pending litigation, controversies not yet being litigated, but eminently likely to be litigated, if the government body pursues a course of action. The other is to discuss preliminary proposed course of action. The other is to discuss preliminary negotiations involving real estate and real estate transactions. She stated both of these are appropriate for executive session. Commissioner Epps moved to go into executive session. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. Ms. Hicks stated to comply with the law, she, as an attorney licensed to practice law in the state of Alabama, the topics to be discussed in executive session are appropriate under the laws. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

#### **COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:**

There were no discussion items to be made by the commissioners.

#### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Announcements were made.

The meeting was recessed into executive session.

Chairman Chance Corbett announced the return from the recessed executive session.

Motion was made by Commissioner Lee to allow the chairman to designate a commissioner to negotiate with the landowner of a property off Prentiss Drive. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

Commissioner Lee moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.