

**Russell County Commission
Russell County Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes September 28, 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 Costello led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Tarsha Hall discussed Antioch Road.

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

County Administrator Paulette Colbert 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 County Administrator Paulette Colbert who kept the minutes.

A quorum was established by the County Administrator Paulette Colbert.

Chairman Corbett stated that the agenda was approved at the work session on Monday night, September 26, 2022.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Corbett asked for approval of the September 14, 2022 Commission meeting minutes. Commissioner Epps moved to approve the meeting minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Costello. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

PROCLAMATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Chairman Corbett presented the proclamation for Attendance Awareness for the month of September 2022. County Administrator Paulette Colbert read the following proclamation:

**Russell County Commission
PROCLAMATION
*September 2022 as Attendance Awareness Month***

WHEREAS, good attendance is essential to student achievement and graduation, and we, the Helping Families Initiative of the Russell County District Attorney's Office and the Russell County School District, are committed to dedicating our joint resources and attention to reducing chronic absenteeism rates with a focus starting as early as kindergarten; and

WHEREAS, Covid-19 and other crises have influenced positive conditions for learning and created an environment for absenteeism; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence also undermines efforts to improve struggling schools, since it is hard to measure improvement in classroom instruction if students are not in class to benefit from them; and

WHEREAS, promoting attendance requires noticing-as soon as possible- when students are starting to miss too much school in order to engage students and families, identify and offer needed support and early intervention resources; and

WHEREAS, chronic absence can be significantly reduced when schools, families, community based-organizations, civic/political leaders, criminal and judicial justice systems work together to monitor and promote good attendance and address barriers that keep children from getting to school.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Russell County Commission does hereby proclaim our County will stand with the nation in recognizing September as "Attendance Awareness Month". We hereby commit to focusing on reducing absenteeism and addressing the factors that cause students to miss school whether offered in-person, remotely or through blended approaches. We recognize that we must work together to engage students and families and send the message that learning can and must continue.

SPECIFICALLY, we will:

- Encourage broad community engagement and sustained civic action to help families get their children to school every school day.
- Raise public awareness and concern about the impact of chronic absences.
- Recognize Dr. Brenda Coley, Russell County School District Superintendent, as the winner of the District 4 Superintendent of the Year award. The Association of School Superintendents of Alabama recognizes superintendents from regions for their outstanding leadership performances and achievements.

Approved this 28th day of September 2022

Commissioner Lee moved to approve the proclamation. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye.

Chairman Corbett recognized Commissioner Epps who presented a proclamation for Fannie Louise Dixon Caldwell. County Administrator Paulette Colbert read the following proclamation:

Russell County Commission
PROCLAMATION
For
Fannie Louise Dixon Caldwell

"I shall wear a crown when the trumpet sound, I shall wear a crown"

WHEREAS, Saturday August 18, 2022, Fannie Louise Dixon Caldwell, received her crown when she heard the trumpet sound, and put on her long white robe to tell the story.

WHEREAS, Fannie was the daughter of the late Thomas and Mary Jackson Dixon, and she grew up in the community of Phenix City, Alabama.

WHEREAS, Fannie accepted Christ at an early age and became a member of the Greater Mount Zion Baptist Church in Phenix City, Alabama.

WHEREAS, Fannie was anointed as a musician. Her musical gifts included playing the piano, singing, and teaching songs that she shared not only in her church, but with the community spreading abroad her profession as a musician, artist, director, and teacher.

WHEREAS, Fannie, a 1974 graduate of Central High School where she was the glue that held her classmates together.

THEREFORE, be it resolved, that Fannie Louise Dixon Caldwell has fought a good fight. She has finished her course; she has kept the faith and now she has received her crown that is laid up for her. She is telling her story of how she made it over to her home, not made by man.

Be it further resolved, that the Russell County Seven seated Commissioners express condolences to the family, who will receive a copy of this proclamation; a copy will also be given to the Greater Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, and a copy will be included in the Russell County Records, on this 28th day of September, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and twenty-two.

Commissioner Epps moved to approve the proclamation. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye.

Chairman Corbett recognized Commissioner Epps who presented a resolution acknowledging Mrs. Carrie Louise King Stephens. County Administrator Paulette Colbert read the following resolution:

Russell County Commission
RESOLUTION
For
Acknowledging Mrs. Carrie Louise King Stephens

WHEREAS, Mrs. Carrie Louise King Stephens was born on July 9, 1925, in Phenix City, AL to the late Harman and Dorothy (Ezekiel) King, Sr, and attended public school in Phenix City, AL and Columbus, GA, graduating from Tuskegee High School, and furthering her education by studying at the Smith and Gaston Business College in Birmingham, AL, to be a secretary; and,

WHEREAS in 1948, she married the late Emmitt H. Stephens, Sr., becoming the proud parents of four sons, Emmitt Jr. (deceased), Richard, Bruce, and Reginald, and one daughter, Chandra, who speak lovingly and respectfully about their mother's friendliness, kindness, and helpful spirit; and,

WHEREAS in 1937, Carrie accepted Christ as her personal Savior and joined Wesley Chapel AME Church, the now Nichols Chapel AME Church in Phenix City, AL, under the leadership of Reverend H.W. Pouncy, devotedly participating in several ministries to include president of the Progressive Women's Ministry, member of Stewardess Board #2, the Maggie Jakes Missionary Society, Choir, the Young People Department, the Golden Years, and as Secretary and Teacher of the Church Sunday School: and

WHEREAS, Carrie was active in her community, and served as Secretary of the Sophisticated Ladies Social Saving Club that annually sponsored trips to Six Flags over Georgia and the shopping malls for the Phenix City citizens and others who looked forward to the outings for more than 50 years: and

WHEREAS, Carrie, a faithful homemaker and professional seamstress, designed and altered garments for more than four decades serving the many citizens of Phenix City, AL and Columbus, GA. She was well-known for her unique, custom, one-of-a-kind designs that pleased her customers.

THEREFORE, be it resolved that the Russell County Commissioners acknowledges Mrs. Carrie Louise King Stephens 97th birthday and express appreciation for the assistance provided to the citizens of Phenix City, AL and Columbus, GA.

THEREFORE, be it further resolved that the seven seated Russell County Commissioners presents a copy of this resolution to the family, and a copy placed in the records of the Russell County Commission on this twenty-eighth day of September in the year of our Lord, two thousand and twenty-two.

Commissioner Epps moved to approve the resolution. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Chairman Corbett recognized Commission Screws who discussed zoning in District 7 and requested Attorney Hope Hicks share with them on how to start the approach, but not necessarily doing it. Attorney Hope Hicks discussed that she has been working with David Ellis checking and doing background work to find out exactly the best steps to take, and that she would update the Commission every two weeks of her findings.

Chairman Corbett reminded the Commission of their appointment with the redistricting office in Montgomery on October 25th at 10:30 am ET.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Corbett recognized EMA Director David Martin who presented the purchase notification for LED Light Towers from CDBG Grant for over \$15,000 with a total purchase of \$28,700. Commissioner Costello moved to approve the purchase. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

Chairman Corbett recognized Economic Tourism Director Victor Cross with the request for approval for abatement of taxes for the project in Hatchechubbee. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the abatement request for Parallel Pines Industries, LTD, Inc. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Commissioner Lee verified it was for 10 years. Mr. Cross agreed and stated it will be in the information that the Chair will have to sign. Commissioner Chambers asked if there was a cap on it. Mr. Cross stated that once the 10 years is over, that particular part is over. County Administrator Paulette Colbert called vote of the Commission 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, no; and District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes. The Commission passed the motion 6 to 1.

Chairman Corbett recognized Sheriff Heath Taylor with rebidding the jail food bids. Sheriff Taylor stated that requests for bids were re-sent yesterday and requested the Commission allow them to open bids on October 7, 2022 at 3:00 pm ET in the chambers. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request. Commissioner Epps seconded the request. Chairman Corbett asked if the time met the bid requirements. Attorney Hicks stated that she's spoken with the general council for the examiners, and that the process which is being done is what was recommended. Sheriff Taylor confirmed that in the interim the existing vendor will continue to supply food. Attorney Hicks stated that if no bids are received, they can offer a contract to somebody. Ms. Hicks stated that after talking with the examiner's office, this is not a problem unique to Russell County. Because of the inflation in the country and people not wanting to tie in prices for a year we may or may not get a bid. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

Chairman Corbett recognized EMA Director David Martin who presented the Safety Incentive Program (SIDP) Discount application that he requested to be signed by the Chair of the Commission. Commissioner Costello moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

Nothing was presented by the County Engineer.

SANITATION:

Nothing was presented in the Sanitation area.

ADMINISTRATOR:

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the tax collections for the Alabama Department of Revenue and the request to use their service effective at the end of our contract with our current provider which is November 30, 2022. She stated that there is no contract with the state but if approved, there is a resolution for the Chair's signature. Chairman Corbett added that there is also a letter to our current provider letting them know that we are changing providers. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the Phenix City Animal Shelter budget. She stated that she was requested to hold the appropriation for the fiscal year 2023 until a copy of their budget was received. She stated that the budget had been received and a copy was in their binders. She stated per the work session she had requested a salary schedule, but it had not been received. She also requested to amend the Animal Shelter Agreement to reimburse 50% of the actual expenditures up to the budgeted amount. Mrs. Colbert stated that there currently isn't an amended agreement written, but she said Ms. Hicks has offered to write one. Commissioner Lee moved to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. After some discussion regarding not having the opportunity to participate in preparing this budget per the agreement, Commissioner Lee withdrew his motion. Commissioner Costello moved to level fund this at \$80,000.00 and pay the expenditures at 50% up to the \$80,000.00. Commissioner Screws seconded the motion. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

County Administrator Paulette Colbert requested payment for an invoice from Ball, Ball, Matthews & Novak for services rendered and expenses incurred in the amount of \$1,740.00 from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund. Commissioner Costello moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. County Administrator Paulette Colbert called vote of the Commission 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. The motion passed.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert requested payment for an invoice from Hecht Burdeshaw Architects, Inc. in the amount of \$59,163.18 for architectural services rendered through August 31, 2022 for design contract for the COVID Sheriff /EMA building to be paid from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund. Commissioner Chambers moved to accept the request. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. County Administrator Paulette Colbert called vote of the Commission 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. The motion passed.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert provided the Commissioners the monthly approved expenditures/amounts paid from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund update report in their binders.

Chairman Corbett recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson with the awarding of the LED signs. Mr. Watson stated after the competitive bid, Maintenance and the Department of Tourism is requesting to award the bid to lowest responsible bidder, which is Sunshine Banners out of Columbus, Georgia for the two LED signs in the amount of \$61,131.36 and would be paid from the ARP funds. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Chairman Corbett added that there is a 7-years parts warranty on the signs with this and verified with Mr. Watson that these were exactly the same signs between the venders. Mr. Watson agreed that they were along with the same specifications. Commissioner Lee asked Attorney Hicks (on record) if this is a legitimate expenditure. Ms. Hicks stated that she has no reason to believe that it's not an approved expenditure because the rules have not changed regarding this. County Administrator Paulette Colbert called vote of the Commission as follows: District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, no; 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. The motion passed 6 to 1.

COUNTY ATTORNEY:

Attorney Hope Hicks discussed the EMA/Sheriff COVID building regarding it meeting ARPA guidelines. She said based on the information she received from Scott Holmes with Hecht Burdeshaw regarding property values, building values, and availability of other buildings, and based on the information he provided to her, she can say that she believes that it is an approved use of the ARPA Funds and documentation has been signed accordingly.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Screws requested putting on the next agenda to use the money they received from extending the warrants for the old library building towards the new COVID building and using the amount that would have been spent from ARPA for non-profit organizations.

Chairman Corbett spoke about future approvals of proclamations to be done ahead of time, if possible.

Commissioner Epps recognized attendees in the audience.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

Commissioner Screws asked Attorney Hicks for an update on the lease. She stated they are trying to get details finalized and it should be ready two weeks from now.

Commissioner Costello moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. All were in favor by saying aye. The meeting was adjourned.