

**Russell County Commission
Russell County Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes February 22, 2023
9:30 A.M. EST**

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

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

Commissioner Lee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

No public comments were made.

Chairman Costello 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 Gentry Lee, Commissioner Cattie Epps, Commissioner Chance Corbett, Commissioner Scott Chambers, Commissioner Ronnie Reed, Commissioner Larry Screws, and Chairman Rod Costello. Also present were County Attorney Hope Hicks, and County Administrator Paulette Colbert who kept the minutes.

A quorum was established by the County Administrator Paulette Colbert.

Chairman Costello presented approval of the agenda since there was not a work session on Monday, February 20th, 2023. Commissioner Corbett requested to add under Business, Wiregrass RC&D Council Grant signature request. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the agenda with the addition. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed for approval of the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Costello presented the approval of the minutes from Commission meeting on February 9, 2023. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the minutes. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

PROCLAMATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Chairman Costello presented a proclamation for Miss Dejaney Curtis. County Administrator Paulette Colbert read the following proclamation:

**Russell County Commission
PROCLAMATION
For
Miss Dejaney Curtis**

WHEREAS, *the Russell County Commission hereby recognizes Miss Dejaney Curtis for being selected as one of only 16 in the state to serve on the AHSAA Student Leadership Council. This is a two-year commitment with year one being on the committee and year two being mentor for the new 16 student selection, and*

WHEREAS, *Dejaney Curtis is the daughter of Jessica Roberts and step-daughter of Brandon Roberts and is in the Junior Class at Russell County High School with a grade point average of 3.54, and*

WHEREAS, *Dejaney was also recipient of the Russell County High School Grit Award presented on February 4, 2023 by the Chattahoochee Valley Hall of Fame. GRIT signifies "Growth" – improving athletic or academic performance, "Resilience" – overcoming hardship, "Initiative" – showing leadership to solve a problem, and "Teamwork" – cooperating to benefit others, and*

WHEREAS, *Dejaney has excelled in many other areas including ROTC Supply Commander, quarterback of the flag football team leading the team in passing and touchdowns, and shortstop for the softball team, and*

THEREFORE, *we, the elected members of the Russell County Commission, do hereby recognize and congratulate Miss Dejaney Curtis on this great accomplishment and wish her the best in all future endeavors.*

This Proclamation adopted and approved This 22nd day of February, 2023.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no discussion items.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Costello recognized Deputy Coroner James with a surplus vehicle request. Deputy James presented the surplus vehicle request for a 2008 Ford F-150 Triton 4-wheel drive truck due to major engine problems with normal wear and tear. VIN# 1FTRX14W68FB40960 with mileage of 192,483. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the surplus vehicle request. It was stated that Coroner Sumbry can come back to request the funds from the sale, if needed. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented a request for a time sensitive item that he received yesterday. He stated that an application was approved for a grant with the Wiregrass RC&D Council for the Crawford Senior/Community Center renovation in the amount of \$10,000.00. The grant notification email stated that it would require a signature for them to begin purchasing items. This is a reimbursement grant that does not have a match. Commissioner Corbett moved to allow the vice-chair to electronically sign the documents online for this grant due to him having the online access. He stated the funds would be spent from and reimbursed to the Capital Improvement Fund. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney requested to declare surplus a 2001 Caterpillar wheeled excavator that they converted to an arm cutter 8-9 years back with county asset ID # 30051, along with a Promax brush cutter attachment with asset ID # 35477. If approved, they will sell them at J/M. Wood Auction in March. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney requested to purchase (2) John Deere bushhogs. Due to ongoing issues with the 2 existing 12-foot bushhogs, John Deere will buy them back for \$22,000.00 (what we paid for them) and sell us 2 newer, heavy duty bush hogs for \$45,001.12, the difference to be paid is \$23,001.12. He asked to declare surplus the existing bushhogs, asset ID # 95939 and asset ID # 36027, so they can trade them in and buy the two new John Deere FC10R Flex Wing Rotary Cutters bushhogs in the amount of \$23,001.12. He stated that this is not a budgeted item, but he will not buy a couple of things so he can purchase these

because they need them. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

County Engineer Director Shawn Blakeney requested to purchase a John Deere Z930M ZTrak Zero Turn lawn mower in the amount of \$12,171.39 for parks and recreation. This is a budgeted item, and this along with the above bush hogs will be purchased from the Sourcewell contract. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

SANITATION:

Sanitation Director Ward Dudley had nothing to present in this area.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Victor Cross shared the upcoming Archery Shooting Association event coming in March at Uchee Creek.

ADMINISTRATOR:

County Administrator Paulette Colbert stated that she had been asked to place the Russell County Utility Board vacancy on today's agenda to fill the position previously held by Mr. James Sinkule. Commissioner Chambers moved to appoint Mr. David Ellis to fill this vacancy. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. After some discussion regarding a possible conflict, Commissioner Lee stated that the Fort Mitchell Water Authority has nothing to do with the Russell County Commission boards. County Administrator Paulette Colbert took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, abstained; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, abstained; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion passed.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert requested to open the Pistol Permit Revenue Loss Fund at Phenix Girard Bank to account for the grant funds and expenditures. She stated that these grant funds are to be used by the county for the same purposes to which pistol permits fees are authorized to be expended within the county. Russell County has local legislation which provides \$15 or 75% of the fee to be paid to the sheriff for training and discretionary, and \$5 or 25% of the fee to be deposited into the general fund. The new Pistol Permit revenue loss fund account will be a pass-through account to satisfy the requirements of the Department of Examiners. Commissioner Corbett 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 request for the 2023/2024 Alcohol Beverage Control license renewal with no changes from last year. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented an invoice from Hecht Burdeshaw Architects, Inc. for architectural services rendered through January 31st for project 2022-006 RCSO Covid Supply Storage Building in the amount of \$2,285.00 to be paid from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. County Administrator Paulette Colbert took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion passed.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented an invoice from Ball, Ball, Matthews & Novak, P.A. in the amount of \$810.00 for services rendered and expenses incurred to be paid from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. County Administrator Paulette Colbert took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 1: Commissioner

Lee, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion passed.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented an invoice from Hosey-Lancour Construction LLC for project RCSO-Covid Supply Storage Building in the amount of \$154,917.90 to be paid from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. County Administrator Paulette Colbert took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion passed.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert included in the Commissioner's packets the Monthly ARPA Report.

COUNTY ATTORNEY:

Attorney Hope Hicks updated the Commission on the revised lease terms with the Board of Education for the old Pittsview school property. The attorney for the Board of Education has sent a revised lease and instead of five 10-year terms, this is two 25-year terms with the same 50 years and could be renewed at the end of 50 years. She recommended the chair execute (sign) the new lease with the effective date being March 1st because the Board of Education will meet and vote on February 28th. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the recommendation. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

Attorney Hope Hicks updated the Commission on the opioid settlement and the settlement papers received from Beasley Allen Law Firm, who the State of Alabama hired to handle the opioid litigation. Since Russell County opted into the litigation, settlement agreements have been forwarded to us for the Commission to approve. She has reviewed the agreements and she recommended that the Commission vote to authorize the Chair to sign the agreements with Allergan, CVS, TEVA, Walgreens, and Walmart. She added that she also received from the attorneys with Beasley Allen a proposed resolution that would also approve all future settlements, and she does not recommend signing it because she does not believe that the Commission can agree to something that's not agreed upon with no amounts or designations. She recommends the Commission sign the five agreements for the settlement that has already been negotiated, but not the resolution. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the recommendation to allow the chair to sign the four agreements. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

Attorney Hope Hicks recommended to go into executive session. She certified, as an attorney and licensed in the state of Alabama, that the conversations to be held in executive session would be to discuss the legal ramifications and the legal options for pending litigation. She certified that this would be an appropriate conversation for an executive session and that they would need to take action when they reconvene after the executive session. Commissioner Epps moved to approve the recommendation to go into executive session. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Nothing was discussed in this area.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

Chairman Epps moved to reconvene from the executive session. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Motion passed to reconvene from executive session.

Attorney Hope Hicks spoke of the mediation that was held last Monday in the lawsuit between Russell County Alabama versus the City of Phenix City regarding funding of the jail for inmates and for maintenance

and capital improvements. At the mediation, a tentative agreement was reached with the City of Phenix City that has to be approved by the Commission. The agreement was that the City of Phenix City would pay a daily rate to the county for housing inmates in the jail in the amount of \$40.00 per inmate per day with a minimum of 20 inmates per day each month. This is to be reviewed annually. The second agreement was that the City of Phenix City would pay the Russell County Commission \$60,000.00 per year to be used for issues related to the jail, including maintenance and upkeep, and that amount would be renegotiated every five years with those payments starting in July 2023. Ms. Hicks recommended that the Commission approve the agreement that was reached at mediation and to authorize the chair to sign the agreement. Commissioner Epps moved to approve the recommendation by the attorney. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. County Administrator Paulette Colbert took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion passed.

Commissioner Screws moved to adjourn the meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor by saying aye. Meeting was adjourned.