

**Russell County Commission  
Russell County Commission Chambers  
Meeting Minutes May 10, 2023  
9:30 A.M. EST**

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

The invocation was given by Reverend Grant Parker with Epworth Methodist Church.

Commissioner Corbett led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Mr. James Tidwell spoke about Alford Road.

Mr. David Martin with the Ladonia Volunteer Fire Department presented a plaque to the Russell County Commission for their appreciation of donated funds to their fire department and shared what they were able to purchase with the funds in the 2023 year.

Ms. Jennifer Davidson with the Russell County Extension office spoke about upcoming events they have coming in the Russell County area.

Chair 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.

Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas 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 Chair Rod Costello. Also present were County Attorney Hope Hicks, and Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas who kept the minutes. County Administrator Paulette Colbert was not in attendance because she was in a conference.

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

**AGENDA APPROVED AT WORK SESSION:**

Commissioner Corbett presented the agenda that was approved in the Monday work session on May 8, 2023.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from Commission meeting on April 26, 2023. Commissioner Corbett moved; Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners in favor said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

**PROCLAMATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

Commissioner Epps presented a proclamation for Florence Williams that was presented to the Williams family. The following proclamation was read by Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas.

**Russell County Commission**  
**PROCLAMATION**  
*For*  
**Florence Williams**

*“Earth has no sorrow that heaven cannot heal.”*

**WHEREAS**, *Friday, April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2023 earth released Mrs. Florence Williams to enter into her heavenly home.*

**WHEREAS**, *Mrs. Florence accepted Christ at the age of eleven and joined the Mount Olive Baptist Church where she served faithfully.*

**WHEREAS**, *during her tenure at Mount Olive she served as pianist, Sunday school teacher, member of the adult Sunday school class, senior choir, matron, deacon wives, and the Church Missionary Society.*

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

**WHEREAS**, *Mrs. Florence served as a member of the Alabama Democratic Conference (ADC) and was a lifelong voter in Russell County, Alabama.*

**WHEREAS**, *when she was given the right to vote, she became a registered voter including voting for the first black President.*

**THEREFORE**, *be it resolved, that Mrs. Florence Stephens Williams lived a good life sharing her knowledge and talents with others. She called on the Lord and got an answer because she had joy and shared her joy with others.*

*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 Mount Olive Baptist Church and a copy will be included in the Russell County Records, on this 10th day of May, in the year of our Lord, two thousand and twenty-three.*

#### **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

#### **BUSINESS ITEMS:**

Chair Costello recognized Commissioner Lee who presented Mr. Brent Comer who requested the Commission to correct the spelling of Glennville. Commissioner Lee moved to allow the Chairman to sign the appropriate documentation for the Glennville name correction. Commissioner Corbett seconded the request. All Commissioners in favor said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the request to solicit bids for the exterior painting of the Courthouse with running the ads for three consecutive weeks, with bid opening to be held on June 16, 2023 at 10:00 am ET in the Commission Chambers. This is a pre-budgeted maintenance item for this year. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; Seconded by Commissioner Chambers to approve the Maintenance director's request. All Commissioners in favor said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Chief Building Director Bubba Roberts who presented the possible adoption and the advertisement for the 2021 ICC Code for 4 consecutive weeks, along with a public hearing request. The advertisement will include the 2023 NEC Codes. The advertisement will run May 25<sup>th</sup>, June 1<sup>st</sup>, June 8<sup>th</sup>, and June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2023. He also requested to hold a public hearing on June 28<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 am EST before the Commission meeting starts. Commissioner Epps moved; Seconded by Commissioner Reed to approve the request. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas 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 unanimously.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Screws who requested and moved to give the Uplift Foundation \$5,000 of his project money. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners in favor said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Sheriff Taylor who presented the request to install a metal detector and purchase a scanner for the Courthouse along with funding an additional full-time employee to the Sheriff's budget to run it in the Courthouse. Commissioner Epps moved to accept the Sheriff's recommendation; seconded by Commissioner Reed to approve the request. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 1: Commissioner Lee, abstained; 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, abstained. Motion carried.

#### **COUNTY ENGINEER:**

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented the request to purchase (3) three 2023 Kenworth dump trucks off of the ACCA County joint bid that will not be available until September and they're not a budgeted item. They will come out of next year's budget. Commissioner Lee moved to accept the request; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners in favor said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented the following Highway Department salary adjustments request:

- Eliminate the Equipment Operator E01) position at \$14.73/hour
- Adjust Equipment Operator 2 from \$15.17/hour to \$16.50/hour
- Adjust Equipment Operator 1 from \$15.16/hour to \$16.50/hour
- Adjust Equipment Operator 1 from \$15.16/hour to \$16.50/hour
- Mechanic 1 from \$15.17/hour to \$16.50/hour
- Mechanic 2 from \$16.61/hour to \$17.57/hour

He stated that this will save the county \$17,534.40/ year in salaries (doesn't include benefit savings). This is eliminating a vacant position. Commissioner Reed moved to accept the request; seconded by Commissioner Lee. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, abstained; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, no. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a Highway Department budget amendment request as follows:

- Decrease Line-Item No. 212 Fuel & Lubricant by \$5,000.00
- Increase Line-Item No. 265 Registration & Training by \$5,000.00

Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners in favor said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a budget amendment for Parks & Recreation Department.

- Decrease Line-Item No. 212 Fuel & Lubricant by \$4,000.00
- Decrease Line-Item No. 214 Minor Equipment by \$1,000.00
- Decrease Line-Item No. 219 Other Misc. Supplies by \$5,000.00
- Increase Line-Item No. 550 Motor Vehicles by \$10,000.00

Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the request; seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners in favor said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a request for Parks & Recreation Department to purchase a 2006 F250 Ford pickup from the EMA Department. The truck mileage is 164,416 for amount of \$10,000.

Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the request; seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners in favor said aye. Commissioner Chambers opposed. Motion carried.

#### **SANITATION:**

The Sanitation Director had nothing to present.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

The Economic Development Director had nothing to present.

**ADMINISTRATOR:**

The Assistant County Administrator had nothing to present.

**CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:**

There were no items to present.

**ATTORNEY:**

Attorney Hope Hicks presented the solar farm abatement agreement. She stated that the Commission previously approved an abatement for solar farm project and now the paperwork has been drafted for that abatement agreement and their application that goes to the state will require the Chairman's signature. She has reviewed the documents and the abatement, and she made sure they were legal and in line with the abatement that the Commission voted to approve. She requested the Commission to vote to allow the Chairman to sign the documentation to finalize it. Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the request; seconded by Commissioner Reed. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 1: Commissioner Lee, no; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 2: Commissioner Chambers, no; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried.

**COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:**

Commissioner Corbett spoke about the Relay for Life in Crawford along with the Veteran's Memorial in Seale.

Commissioner Corbett mentioned about doing a proclamation for Phenix City Centennial this year and to bring it back to the Commission at a later date with August 9<sup>th</sup> being the actual centennial.

Commissioner Corbett proposed installing microphones stands in the chambers for the public and audience to use.

Commissioner Lee discussed the upcoming budget.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Announcements were made.

There being no further business, Commissioner Costello; Commissioner Lee seconded to adjourn the meeting.