

**PUBLIC HEARING FOR
ABATE CLEAN-UP: 58 Old Crawford Road, Phenix City, Alabama
September 13, 2023**

A Russell County Commission public hearing was called to order by Chair Rod Costello for a property abatement located at 58 Old Crawford Road, Phenix City, Alabama presented by Enforcement Bill Friend for clean-up only.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

There were no public comments made.

Motion to close the public hearing by Commissioner Corbett; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried to adjourn the public hearing.

**Russell County Commission
Russell County Commission Chambers
Meeting Minutes September 13, 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 Pastor Don Abrams with Trinity UMC.

Commissioner Costello led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Carmen Evans, along with Ms. Karen Connally, spoke about the Tri-City Prayer Initiative scheduled for Saturday, October 21st, 2023 and a walk that will take place from Phenix City into Columbus, Georgia. She requested use of the Russell County Courthouse parking lot at 1000 Broad Street for the morning of the event. Chairman Costello requested this item be moved to the Business Items to be voted on.

Chair Costello thanked the Commission's IT department for broadcasting the meeting Facebook live for the public, and The Citizen of East Alabama for covering the meeting. 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, and Chair Rod Costello. Commissioner Larry Screws was not present. 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.

Chair Costello stated the agenda was approved in the work session on Monday, September 11, 2023.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from Commission meeting on August 9, 2023. Commissioner Epps moved; Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from Commission budget meeting on August 16, 2023. Commissioner Lee moved; Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

PROCLAMATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Commissioner Reed presented a proclamation for Mr. James Sellers. County Administrator Paulette Colbert read the following proclamation aloud:



DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no discussion items.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Costello recognized Special Enforcement Officer Bill Friend who requested an abatement for clean-up at 58 Old Crawford Road from the public hearing that was presented this morning. Commissioner Chambers moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commission Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Special Enforcement Officer Bill Friend who requested an abatement for partial dwelling at 804 Gunsmoke Trail, Phenix City, AL, and for the Commission to declare the property a public nuisance. Mr. Friend stated this case was opened June 14th with a letter sent to the property owner the same day and has been 4 extensions on this property, along with a list of people that do demo work per his request, but nothing has been done. This is a removal of a partial mobile home and overgrowth. Mr. Friend asked the Commission, by resolution, to declare this a public nuisance in order to abate and requested a public hearing be scheduled at the next Commission meeting. No one is living in the mobile home on the property. Commissioner Chambers moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commission Reed. Commissioner Chambers moved to amend the motion to include the public hearing be held at the next Commission meeting on September 27, 2023 at 9:30 am. Commissioner Reed amended his second to include the public hearing date. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Special Enforcement Officer Bill Friend who requested an abatement nuisance complaint at 42 Davis Circle (Road) Phenix City, AL. Mr. Friend stated that this was opened April 10th and served the same day, and for the Commission to declare the property a public nuisance. Mr. Friend stated that no one is living in the mobile home and requested a public hearing to be scheduled at the next Commission meeting on September 27, 2023 at 9:30 am. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. Commissioner Corbett wanted to verify that this area was not bought out by FEMA funds and supposed to have been turned into a green space. Mr. Friend stated that annual property taxes are being paid on

it, so it is not owned by FEMA. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Special Enforcement Officer Bill Friend who requested the Commission send a letter to the City of Phenix City requesting them to send a copy of their business licenses monthly or quarterly to him, like it was done before the pandemic. Per Chairman Costello's request, Mr. Friend has made two verbal requests, with no avail so he is asking for assistance on this. Chairman Costello requested that he and County Administrator Paulette Colbert to do a formal request letter to the City of Phenix City. Mr. Friend stated that he thought it would fall under the Freedom of Information Act. Attorney Hicks stated that she and Mr. Friend have already been working on a draft letter for this and she requested if she could continue working on the letter to the City of Phenix City. Chairman Costello agreed and moved to have Attorney Hicks continue working on the letter to the City of Phenix City requesting copies of business licenses in Phenix City. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Sheriff Taylor who presented an ABC license application for a retail lounge liquor license for Larry's Bar and Grill at 70 Frog Pond Road in Hurtsboro, Alabama. He stated that they have completed their investigation and at this time there are no issues preventing the license from being approved. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request. Commissioner Reed seconded the request. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Sheriff Taylor who presented a request to mail out annual jail food bids for the 2023 /2024 year. Sheriff Taylor requested two bids be sent out this year. One bid will be the menu, as normally sent out, and requested a separate bid for the bread due to two of their merchants stating their bread cost is above what could be purchased at other locations. He requested County Administrator Paulette Colbert send out the food bids on September 15th and return the bids by September 26th, for the opening in the Commission Chambers. Commissioner Lee moved to accept the request. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the request to upgrade the NVR/DVR security equipment and computers at the Judicial Center for the Sheriff's Office in the amount of \$9,223.00 from Elevated Security. This is a non-budgeted item that will come out of the 2022 /2023 budget. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized EMA Director David Martin who requested approval for the Commission Chair to sign the Safety Incentive Discount Program application from County Risk services to receive our insurance discount. Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Epps who presented and moved to contribute \$500 of her appropriation money to the Boy Scouts of America project. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented two different Wiregrass grant allocation reimbursements, both in the amount of \$5,000 each. First is \$5,000 for the Veterans Memorial that will be dedicated on November 11th in Seale for landscaping and other work. The other \$5,000 grant is to assist with the pavilion and community garden in Crawford at the community center. He asked for both to run through Tourism funds and asked Mrs. Colbert to monitor it. Commissioner Corbett moved for both grants to run through the Tourism funds, and they are reimbursement grants. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented the request and moved to allow the county engineer to draft a letter to the ALDOT district engineer, allowing the chair to sign, requesting a study at 431 South and 165 South intersection with emphasis on the turning lane going south onto 165 to help with the traffic congestion and to increase safety in that intersection. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented the request and moved the county engineer to draft a letter and work with the city engineer, allowing the chair to sign, requesting a study at the intersection of

431 South and 5th Street. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the Judicial Center 2023 modification request which consists of moving the district attorney's office from the second floor to the third floor for an estimated cost of \$100,818.00, with maintenance doing the work. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented the limited self-governance ballot proposal. He stated that if this is approved, it would allow the Commission to regulate more things that become nuisances for the citizens in the county. Attorney Hicks stated that she has done some research on the law that would give the commission the ability to enact this. This would be excluded from city voters. She stated the way to get this on the ballot is either have a petition by 10% of registered voters, or the majority of the commission can simply vote to have this put on the next ballot. Either the March primary election or the November general election, you can't have a special election just for this. The only advertising needed is to make sure the citizens understand what it is, and it's up to the commission on how fast to get it on the ballot. The probate judge needs 74 days notification. She said we would want to get it out to local media and put it on our social media with what this would allow the commission to do. Commissioner Corbett added that this action passed in 2014, but due to a clerical mistake it was placed on the city's ballot, and it was decided at the time by the commission to abandon it and do it at a later time. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request to add this to the ballot for the general election in 2024. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Attorney Hicks suggested a roll call vote for this. Administrator Paulette Colbert called 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; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. The motion passed. Attorney Hicks stated that she would draft the language to send to the probate judge, and she will bring it to the next commission meeting for approval.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Chambers who presented the request for approval to sign an Alabama Tourism grant application. Commissioner Chambers stated that he received it, in his name, and asked the Commission permission to sign the grant application to receive the check. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve to allow Commissioner Chambers to sign the document. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello presented a request to approve the Tri-City Prayer Initiative to use the courthouse parking lot, being conscientious of the work on the courthouse building; and with the building remaining locked, on the date they requested, October 21st from 9:00 am to 11:00 am ET. Chairman Costello moved to accept the request. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

Chair Costello recognized County Engineer Shawn Blakeney who requested to award the bid and the Chair to sign the Padgett's Road Craft Fund Project to East Alabama Paving in the amount of \$637,262.26. Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chair Costello recognized County Engineer Shawn Blakeney who requested a resolution be signed as part of the financing documentation required for the Kenworth dump trucks that was approved last May. Commissioner Epps moved to accept the request. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chair Costello recognized County Engineer Shawn Blakeney who requested to surplus two 2017 Mack trucks and send them to auction once they receive the Kenworth trucks. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

SANITATION:

Chair Costello recognized Sanitation Director Ward Dudley who requested the following budget transfer request:

- \$60,000.00 from Line Item 212, Fuel & Lubricants to Line Item 172, Landfill Dumping Charge
- \$3,000.00 from Line Item 214, Minor Equipment to Line Item 215, Tires & Tubes

Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chair Costello recognized Sanitation Director Ward Dudley who requested a residential rate increase from \$20.00 per month per cart to \$22.00 per month per cart that we supply to residences to be effective beginning January 1, 2024. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Administrator Paulette Colbert called 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; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. The motion passed.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

The Economic Development Director had nothing to present.

ADMINISTRATOR:

The County Administrator had nothing to present.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the request to pay an invoice to S. Electrical Contractors for the value of materials and labor installed through September 6th, in the amount of \$30,000.00 from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund. Motion to approve by Commissioner Corbett; Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Administrator Paulette Colbert called 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; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. The motion passed.

ATTORNEY:

Attorney Hope Hicks presented an electronic meetings policy that was discussed at the first meeting in August. The draft information she provided to the commissioners would allow commissioners to attend the commission meeting electronically, rather than in person only if they are sick. If the commissioner is sick and unable to come to the meeting, this will allow them to attend and vote; but there will still have to be a quorum present in person to be able to do this. It would only count as to voting and not as to making a quorum. After further discussion, the commission decided to read the draft information the attorney provided, and it will be addressed in the next work session. Commissioner Lee moved to add this to Business under the next work session. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Reed shared information about constructing a statue for Mr. Harvey Glance.

Commissioner Corbett spoke about the success of the Labor Day fair at the old Seale courthouse.

Commissioner Corbett spoke about an updated diagram given by County Engineer Shawn Blakeney from ALDOT with their possible good solution for the County Road 39 and Hwy 165 intersection.

Commissioner Corbett shared concerns about speeding in the Crawford area on Highway 80 and that he asked the sheriff to increase enforcement to slow people down.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

There being no further business, Commissioner Lee moved to adjourn the meeting; Commissioner Corbett seconded. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. The meeting was adjourned.