

**Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes November 22, 2023
Russell County Commission Chambers
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 Dr. James Platt with Allen Temple AME with AME Church.

Commissioner Lee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

There were no public comments made.

Chair Costello thanked the Commission's IT department for broadcasting the meeting on 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.

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.

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

Chair Costello stated that the agenda was approved at the work session Monday night, November 20, 2023.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on November 8, 2023. Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the minutes; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried to approve the minutes.

PROCLAMATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:

There were no proclamations, resolutions, or presentations presented.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no discussion items presented.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented the Policy on Policies which sets the way the Commission sets policies moving forward, which has been approved by both the County Administrator Paulette Colbert and the County Attorney Hope Hicks. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the Policy on Policies. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried. Commissioner Epps verified that the Commission can amend any policy at any time. Chairman Costello agreed and stated that it would be a majority vote of the Commission. Commissioner Lee asked the attorney if it would be two weeks before it would take effect. She agreed.

Chairman Costello presented the election of the Chair. Commissioner Lee requested Commissioner Costello's name for the Chair. Commissioner Corbett moved to close the nominations. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. 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. The motion passed.

Chairman Costello presented the election of the Vice-Chair. Commissioner Lee requested Commissioner Corbett to serve another year as Vice-Chair. Seconded by Commission Chambers. Commissioner Lee moved to close the nominations. 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. The motion passed.

Chairman Costello presented the request for the Commission voting order. EMA Director David Martin passed the box around as the Commissioner's pulled slips for the voting order. The new voting order will be as follows: #1: District 2: Commissioner Chambers, #2: District 1: Commissioner Lee, #3: District 6: Commissioner Corbett, #4: District 7: Commissioner Screws, #5: District 5: Commissioner Epps, #6: District 4: Commissioner Reed, and #7: District 3: Chairman Costello.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Reed with an appropriation request for United to Save Ourselves. Assistant County Administrator Tina Thomas stated that she has received the paperwork. Commissioner Reed moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. Commissioner Corbett stated that this has already been budgeted and they were just waiting for the paperwork, and that this is not a new appropriation. Commissioner Lee clarified the appropriation amount to be \$7,000. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Epps who presented to review (Ft. Mitchell) senior citizen building venue rental contract and requested (after speaking to the director) to change the building closing time to 11:00 pm ET, instead of 12:00 AM. Times would be from 8:00 am to 11:00 pm ET. Commissioner Epps moved to approve the request; seconded by Commission Corbett. Commissioner Corbet discussed more about the agreement (suggested changing "will not refund" to "may not refund", depending on the situation). Besides the change in time, Attorney Hope Hicks requested to look over the document for any further changes, while it is being amended, to tighten up the contract, if that is what is needed to do. Commissioner Epps and Commissioner Corbett agreed. Chairman Costello stated that the original time change request motion will be made along with the attorney to review the document and can come back at the next meeting to change some wording, at that time. After further discussion, Commissioner Epps amended her motion to make the new closure time be effective December 1, 2023. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Screws with a project funding request for the Seale Volunteer Fire Department in the amount of \$300 to be paid from his project money. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Screws with a project funding request for the Judge Collins Juvenile Youth Christmas in the amount of \$300 from his project money. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Screws who presented request to allow the chair to sign the Healing Zone Memorandum of Understanding for the Pittsview project. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

There was nothing presented in this area.

SANITATION:

Sanitation Director Ward Dudley announced the garbage pickup schedule for the Thanksgiving holiday week, along with the transfer station closure this Saturday, due to the holiday.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

Economic Development Tourism Director Victor Cross presented the request to submit a DCIP Grant proposal application for the 2024 year. Commissioner Epp moved to accept the request; seconded by Commissioner Reed. Chairman Costello stated that this is a pre-step to the application. 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. The motion passed.

ADMINISTRATOR:

There was nothing to present in this area.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

Chairman Costello recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented a permission request to proceed with the Ft. Mitchell and Ladonia bathroom builds for a cost of \$73,647.99 per bathroom, with a total cost of \$147,295.98. It includes sewer and water. The Maintenance Department will do that part. Motion to build the bathrooms with the Coronavirus Rescue Act funds by Commissioner Lee; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. 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. The motion passed. Chairman Costello stated that this is a cost savings of about \$150,000 or more with the Maintenance Department doing some of the work.

Chairman Costello recognized County Engineer Shawn Blakeney who presented a Water Authority ARPA Funds list addition. Mr. Blakeney stated that after he discussed it with Mr. Sheppard Dearing, he requested to add Island Creek Road (half mile road off of Padgetts Road) to the ARPA Water Authority list with an estimated cost of \$97,400. He requested to use the ARPA money to put a main down and to get the lines out from under Island Creek Road. Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the request to add Island Creek Road to the list; seconded by Commission Chambers. Attorney Hope Hicks stated that this project money was already designated for the Water and Sewer Authority, so it is theirs to use, and the Commission does not have to approve what they use this project on. Mr. Sheppard Dearing stated that he just wanted to update the Commission on how the funds were being used. Commissioner Corbett rescinded his motion.

ATTORNEY:

Attorney Hope Hicks requested to go into Executive Session and the matter to be discussed would be pending litigation, which is an appropriate time for Executive Session as an attorney licensed to practice law in the State of Alabama. She stated that the discussion will meet those requirements and there will not need to be any action taken by the Commission. She stated that they could go into Executive Session and adjourn from there after finishing the announcements from here so everyone can leave. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the recommendation of the attorney that they go into Executive Session after the announcements and adjourn from the session. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Corbett updated the Commission about the grant received from Alabama Tourism and shared how it has gone a long way in the Crawford community.

Chairman Costello gave appreciation to Commission Corbett on the Veterans' Memorial in Seale. Commissioner Corbett gave an update on the project and the ceremony. Commissioner Screws spoke about the memorial.

Commissioner Epps shared thanks to the attorney for her service over the past year.

Commissioner Reed spoke of Mother Mary Mission thanking the Commission for their donation along with recognizing Attorney Hope Hicks in appreciating the job she has done.

Chairman Costello shared appreciation to department heads and everyone in the work they all do.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

The Commission went into Executive Session.