

PUBLIC HEARING
Meeting Minutes December 13, 2023
For CDBG-CV Grant Close-out:
9:30 A.M. EST

A public hearing was called to order by Chair Rod Costello for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG-CV) close-out.

Chairman Costello recognized Lisa Sandt with the Lee-Russell Council of Governments who presented the CDBG-CV Grant Close-out and to update the residents of Russell County on the status of the CDBG-CV grant through the Alabama Department of Economic Community Affairs. She stated that Russell County Commission was awarded \$500,000.00 in 2021 to carry out activities to prevent & prepare for and respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and other infectious diseases.

Ms. Sandt stated that Russell County has expended 100% of these \$500,000.00 funds, and it has been monitored by ADECA, and has come back with a clean slate. They were also impressed with how the grant was managed and what was purchased and that these funds benefited all county residents, with 51% of the beneficiaries being low to modern income status for the equipment purchases, the health services, and the replacement of the septic tank, and 100% of the beneficiaries were low to moderate income status for the food assistance distribution.

There were no public comments.

Commissioner Corbett made a motion to close the public hearing; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. The public hearing was closed.

Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes December 13, 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 Reverend Brady Baird with Seale UMC.

Commissioner Chambers led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Reverend Brady Baird with Seale UMC expressed appreciation for the Old Seale Courthouse decorations and for all that helped decorate the area.

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.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert called roll of the Commission. Members present were Commissioner Scott Chambers, Commissioner Gentry Lee, Commissioner Chance Corbett, Commissioner Larry Screws, Commissioner Cattie Epps, Commissioner Ronnie Reed, and Chair 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.

Chair Costello stated that the agenda was approved at the work session Monday night, December 11, 2023.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on November 22, 2023. Commissioner Epps moved to accept the minutes; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried to approve the minutes.

PROCLAMATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Reed who presented a proclamation request for Mr. Nathaniel Hawthorne Menefee. Commissioner Reed moved to approve the proclamation; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried. County Administrator Paulette Colbert read the following proclamation aloud while it was presented to the family.

PROCLAMATION TO HONOR
Nathaniel Hawthorne Menefee

August 25th, 1922 - November 25th, 2023

WHEREAS, Mr. Nathaniel Hawthorne Menefee was born to Rev. Frank C. Menefee and Ethel Moore Menefee in 1922. He was a lifelong resident of Russell County, Alabama and spent his youth farming in the county alongside his family.

WHEREAS, after the United States entered WWII, he was drafted into the armed forces and enlisted in the United States Marine Corps on April 29th, 1943. Upon doing so, he became the first person of color from Russell County, Alabama to enlist in/serve in the United States Marine Corps. He trained at Montfort Point Camp, Camp Lejeune, NC and became a rifle marksman and had the special qualification as a member of the Military Police. During his deployment in WWII, he served in the Asia Pacific Theater as a Sergeant until his discharge on May 31st, 1946.

WHEREAS, after the war ended, he returned home to Russell County, Alabama where he resided for the rest of his life. He was a deacon at Bethlehem Baptist Church for over 74 years.

WHEREAS, regarding his local civic duty, after his retirement, he volunteered to work the election polls at the Ladonia Precinct in Russell County for many years. In 2011, he was awarded the Congressional Gold Medal (the nation's highest civilian honor) as a Montfort Point Marine.

THEREFORE, BE IT PROCLAIMED: The Russell County Commission do hereby honor Nathaniel Hawthorne Menefee with this proclamation to honor his life and the many lives he touched.

PASSED, ADOPTED, AND APPROVED, this 13th day of December, 2023.

Chairman Costello recognized EMA Director of Lee County, Rita Smith, who presented a certificate of appreciation and recognition to EMA Director David Martin and the EMA Department team for the work they have done to help them.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no discussion items presented.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Costello recognized Sheriff Taylor who reported that the sole bidder for bread for the jail, Bimbo Bakery has been unresponsive in their efforts to establish them as a vendor. He stated that they have tried unsuccessfully for the past three months. Sheriff Taylor stated that advice from our audit manager, county attorney, and county administrator is to request the Commission recognize that they are an unreliable bidder and continue to use Flowers Bakery until the next bid cycle. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the

request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried to approve the Sheriff's request.

Chairman Costello presented the request to advertise for the County Administrator position for the Russell County Commission due to the upcoming retirement of Mrs. Colbert using the job description of February 2021. Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the request and to give permission for the Chair to appoint a search committee for the position; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. After further discussion, Attorney Hicks recommended advertising through January 31, 2024 then begin the interview process. Commissioner Corbett amended his motion to agree with Ms. Hicks. Chair Costello stated that it will be immediately advertised through January 31, 2024. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello presented the request for the December 27, 2023, Commission meeting be cancelled due to the holiday closures of December 25th and 26th and the department heads not anticipating any agenda items. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented the loan document and resolution for the Kenworth dump truck purchase. Mr. Blakeney stated that they ordered 3 Kenworth dump trucks with two of them delivered earlier this year and the third one is to be here by the end of December. He requested the Commission to allow the Chair to sign any documentation they will need to get this truck purchased. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

SANITATION:

There was nothing presented in this area.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

There was nothing presented in this area.

ADMINISTRATOR:

There was nothing to present in this area.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

Chairman Costello recognized County Administrator Paulette Colbert with the Hecht Burdeshaw Architects, Inc. invoice request to pay in the amount of \$3,317.16, which is their final invoice for project 2022-006 RCSO Covid Supply building from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. County Administrator Paulette Colbert called vote of the Commission as follows: District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; District 1: Commissioner Lee, yes; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; District 5: Commissioner Epps, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried.

ATTORNEY:

Attorney Hope Hicks requested to go into Executive Session, and she did not anticipate any actions to be taken in Executive Session so the meeting would adjourn from there. She stated that she represents an attorney licensed to practice law in the State of Alabama. She stated that the reason for the executive session does meet the requirements under the Alabama Open Meetings Act, as it would be to discuss with the attorney, the legal ramifications of, and legal options for pending litigation, as well as to discuss the amounts or issues that the governmental body is willing to offer, accept considering the purchase, sale, exchange, lease, or market value of real property. Commissioner Corbett moved to accept her request to go into

executive session following the announcements and adjourn from there. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. None opposed. Motion carried.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Screws wished everyone a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year and shared his appreciation to the Engineering Department and all they have done with the Pittsview project, along with the attorney.

Sheriff Taylor reminded everyone of the holiday season and to be aware of their surroundings during this time of year.

Commissioner Epps spoke of Highway 165 accidents and asked everyone to please be very careful traveling on that highway. Sheriff Taylor added that he will have his deputies on Highway 165 writing tickets to help everyone slow down. Commissioner Reed added that he would like City of Phenix City to help.

Motor Vehicle License Commissioner Carrie Bowman discussed their department using a new state tag (software) system and asked everyone to please be patient during this transition.

Revenue Commissioner Naomi Elliott announced her retirement and it will be the end of December.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

The Commission went into Executive Session.