

**Russell County Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes February 14, 2024**  
**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. Clementine Warren.

Commissioner Epps led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments.

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 citizens, elected officials, department heads, media, and guests.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert called roll of the Commission. Members present were Commissioner Scott Chambers, Commissioner Chance Corbett, Commissioner Larry Screws, Commissioner Cattie Epps, Commissioner Ronnie Reed, and Chair Rod Costello. Commissioner Gentry Lee was absent. 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, February 12, 2024.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on January 24, 2023. Commissioner Corbett moved to accept the minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. 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.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

There were no discussion items presented.

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented the gas tax allocation request. He requested the gas tax money being collected moving forward to be put into a separate area, administered by the administrator and the assistant administrator, and to amend the budget of the Engineering Department to reflect the same. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented a request to allocate \$2,500 to the Seale Volunteer Fire Department from his project funds for decorations for the holidays. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Epps who presented a request to pay \$1,000 to the Veterans Treatment Court Mentors Organization and \$2,000 to the Sammie Lee Vann Darty Scholarship foundation from her project money. Commissioner Epps moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented a request to allocate \$2,500.00 from the Contingent Fund for a CVCC Hall of Fame sponsorship. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. Commissioner Reed asked if there was enough money in the account. County Administrator Paulette Colbert agreed that there was enough money in the fund. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who requested to extend the existing landscaping contract by another 2-years, based on a clause in the original bid contract on line 15 stating that the contract may be extended by the Russell County Commission to the vendor for an additional 2-years with a price increase of 3% for the 1<sup>st</sup> year (2024 year) of extension and an additional 2% for the 2nd year, which is 5% from the original contract for the 2025 year. Mr. Watson recommended to award extending the contract for an additional 2 years to Chattahoochee Gardens. He stated that they have agreed to these terms. Mr. Watson stated that they do a great job, and they are recommended by the Extension Service. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. Commissioner Epps asked if the attorney has looked over the contract. Attorney Hicks stated that she has, and it was the original bid that the commission had done, and because the provision was in there and the amount is lower than the bid laws, she believes it is fine to approve it. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented a new policy for public access in county facilities. Our policy on policies requires a first reading followed by the next Commission meeting a second reading. Commissioner Corbett moved that this be the first reading and it to be placed on the February 28<sup>th</sup> Commission meeting as a second reading. Chairman Costello stated that this is regarding three county buildings to include: the courthouse, the inspection office, and the emergency management office. Commissioner Corbett agreed and stated that these buildings typically have a lot of public in them. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

#### **COUNTY ENGINEER:**

The County Engineer had nothing to present in this area.

#### **SANITATION:**

Sanitation Director Ward Dudley requested to purchase a 2017 Chevrolet pick-up from ALDOT surplus with mileage of 66,820 and the price of \$17,400, which is Sanitation board approved and budgeted. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Sanitation Director Ward Dudley announced a garbage pick-up change for the upcoming Monday holiday.

#### **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

There was nothing presented in this area.

#### **ADMINISTRATOR:**

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the Amendment 1 Resolution that the ACCA is requesting the Commission to pass. She stated that it's in support of Amendment 1, which will be on the March 5<sup>th</sup> ballot in regard to the interpretation of how many votes it takes to pass legislation regarding local laws. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commission Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Administrator Paulette Colbert presented the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board license county levies for 2024- 2025 for the Commission approval. She stated that there were no changes. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commission Epps. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

### **CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:**

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented the request for removal of the old gymnasium at Pittsview Park. He stated they will leave the concrete slab and build a pole barn that matches the others throughout the county in the amount of \$9,500 from Mr. Watson for removal, demolishing, and removing all the debris off the site. He requested to pay this from the Coronavirus Rescue Act Fund from the amount from the original million dollars which was set aside. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. Commissioner Corbett stated (for the minutes) that this is from the million dollars that was set aside that they purchased the lights and pavilions out of. County Administrator Paulette Colbert took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 2: Commissioner Chambers, 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. District 1: Commissioner Lee was not present to vote.

### **ATTORNEY:**

Attorney Hope Hicks had nothing to present.

### **COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:**

Commissioner Corbett spoke positively about the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual Farm Fest event at the Russell County Historic site from this past weekend.

Commissioner Corbett updated the Commission on the new senior center program in Crawford.

Commissioner Screws asked for Economic Development updates at future meetings.

Commissioner Reed spoke about issues with Highway 165 and concerns with future voting in that area. After further discussion, Commissioner Epps shared her point of view since it is her district.

Commissioner Epps asked about an update on getting iPads for future Commission meetings.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Announcements were made.

There being no further business, Commissioner Corbett moved to adjourn; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. The meeting was adjourned.