

**Russell County Commission  
Meeting Minutes March 27, 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 Reverend Steve Pace with Summerville Baptist Church.

Commissioner Lee led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Alabama State Representative Anthony Daniels introduced himself to the Commission and spoke about him running for United States Congress.

Chair Costello thanked the County 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.

Interim County Administrator Tina Thomas 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 Interim County Administrator Tina Thomas, who kept the minutes.

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

Chair Costello stated that the agenda was approved at the work session Monday, March 25, 2024.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on March 13, 2024. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve 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.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

There were no discussion items.

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

Chairman Costello recognized Sheriff Heath Taylor who presented the ABC license request for Chuck's Place at 77 Screws Road. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Screws with a project money donation request for \$5,000 to the Uplift Foundation and \$1,000 to the Russell County Veteran's Treatment Court out of his project money. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Reed with a project money donation request to give \$1,500 to the Mayor's Ball and \$3,000 to Safe Landings Veterans. Commissioner Reed moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Epps with a project money donation request to give \$1,000 to the Meadowlane Elementary School in Phenix City, Alabama, and \$2,000 to Mt. Olive Elementary Intermediate School which totals \$3,000 from her appropriations. Commissioner Epps moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello requested to donate \$1,000 of his project money to Commissioner Reed and \$500 to the Safe Landings Veterans organization, totaling \$1,500 from his project money. Commissioner Costello moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson with a request to purchase a 2023 Genie scissor lift (GS232) quoted off of Sourcewell (#976-88) in the amount of \$37,570.56. This was a pre-budgeted item for maintenance this year and he stated that it comes about \$6,000 under the budgeted amount and requested for the chairman to sign the purchase contract. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello asked what the pleasure of the Commission was in reference to the County Administrator job position. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve a conditional job offer, upon the successful completion of a background check, and pre-employment testing, to Ms. Chandra Wright to be the next County Administrator for Russell County, and offer her a salary of \$105,000, and to charge the Commission Chairman and County Attorney with negotiating a contract for no longer than four years for Ms. Wright to begin as County Administrator. He stated that this should allow her the security and the time to obtain professional certifications for the County Administrator position. Commissioner Reed seconded the motion. Interim County Administrator Tina Thomas took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 2: Commissioner Chambers, abstained; District 1: Commissioner Lee, abstained; 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.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Chambers with the request of the Ladonia Park field rental proceeds to be deposited into the Ladonia Park account so maintenance and other things can be done with the funds. He stated this has been approved by Attorney Hicks and Interim County Administrator Tina Thomas. Commissioner Chambers moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

#### **COUNTY ENGINEER:**

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a budget transfer request for the Highway Department as follows: decrease Line Item 611 (Principal) by \$18,000 and increase Line Item 561 (construction equipment) by \$18,000 to purchase a bucket truck. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a request to purchase a 2016 International bucket truck international from ALDOT Surplus in the amount of \$70,000, and it was a budgeted item. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a request to purchase a 2014 Dodge Ram 3500 flatbed truck from ALDOT Surplus in the amount of \$35,000. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a budget transfer request for the Parks & Rec Department as follows: decrease fund balance by \$45,406.71 and increase Line Item 530 (improvement other than buildings) by \$45,406.71 due to having a restroom burning down in Ladonia last year, the check was received in May, but the work was not completed until this year's budget. Commissioner Screws moved to

approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a request to purchase a Ford F-250 truck from ALDOT Surplus in the amount of \$31,600 for Parks & Rec Department, and it was a budgeted item. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

**SANITATION:**

There was nothing presented in the Sanitation area.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

Economic Development Tourism Director Victor Cross presented an update on the Archery Shooters Association archery tournament at Uchee Creek in Russell County.

Commissioner Corbett spoke about upcoming radio advertising for Russell County. Mr. Cross spoke about sign banners to advertise Russell County events and the venues in the county.

**ADMINISTRATOR:**

There was nothing presented in this area by the administrator.

**CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:**

Commissioner Corbett presented the request to proceed with installation of a pavilion at the visitor's center in Ft. Mitchell by utilizing the money already budgeted for pavilions and restrooms. He requested spending \$15,000 with the vendor who won the bid in June 2023 for a 24 x 30 pavilion. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Lee. Interim County Administrator Tina Thomas took a roll call 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 stated that she will get with Chairman Costello to start working on a contract for Ms. Wright.

**COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:**

Chairman Screws spoke of including the Pittsview pavilion approval for the next meeting.

Commissioner Costello spoke about business casual dress for Wednesday meetings.

Commissioner Epps spoke about the upcoming St. John's AME Church community wide easter egg hunt.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Announcements were made.

There being no further business, Commissioner Lee moved to adjourn; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. The meeting was adjourned.