

**Russell County Commission  
Meeting Minutes April 24, 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 Pastor Alice Hubbard with True Believers Ministry.

Commissioner Costello led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Mr. Keith Bennett with the Ft. Mitchell Volunteer Fire Department spoke about this year's 49<sup>th</sup> annual BBQ.

Mr. Leroy Davis, Jr. updated the Commission on the Pittsview project and spoke about the RC&D donation to the Mt. Olive Volunteer Fire Department for benches.

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 Ronnie Reed, and Chairman Rod Costello. Commissioner Cattie Epps was not present. 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 by email since there was not a work session this week due to the holiday closure. Commissioner Corbett requested to add to the agenda a BEAM project update under the discussion area.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on April 10, 2024. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the minutes as presented; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried to approve the minutes.

**PROCLAMATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

There was nothing presented in this area.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

Commissioner Epps and Ms. Sheila Goodrum both were not present to speak about a safety issue, which was listed on the agenda.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who updated the Commission of the Alabama Tourism Grants from our legislatures for this year.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who updated the Commission on the Crawford Fire Department mural which will be paid for by a donation and not by county funds, since it's not on county property.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who introduced two BEAM representatives with a presentation on the current progress of the high-speed fiber internet installation in the county, a project funded by ARPA funds.

**BUSINESS ITEMS:**

Chairman Costello recognized Judge Harden with a refund for overpayment request. Due to the Probate office's error, the company was put under the wrong renewal schedule, and the company overpaid by \$9,913.21. Just Harden stated that since this was the Probate office's mistake, he requested the money be written from the General Fund (since the money is in it) to the company, Daechang Seat Corporation, USA, in the amount of \$9,913.21. Commissioner Lee asked if this is only Russell County taxes. The judge agreed. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented the request for the chair to sign a radio spots agreement, which will be paid monthly out of the tourism fund for the cost of \$1,000 per month. He stated that since it is not a contract, we can get out of it anytime. It is for 3 commercials daily on the following 4 radio stations: Kissin' 99.3, The Beat 98.3, Boomer 102, and 107.3 for 360 commercials monthly. This includes live mentions, promotes any Russell County events, or will promote Russell County itself when no events are happening. Commissioner Corbett moved to allow the chair to sign the first month agreement, which will be continuous until we cancel it. 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 \$15,000 from the tourism funds to the Russell County Historical Commission for the purchase of a John Deere Gator UTV for their maintenance personnel to be able to keep maintaining the Ft. Mitchell Visitor Center property. Commissioner Corbett stated that he has verified with the auditors that the tourism funds can be used for this. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

**COUNTY ENGINEER:**

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented the request to award the CRAF project contract for resurfacing and traffic striping for Rabbit Road, from Prudence Road to Wende Road (3.23 miles), to East Alabama Paving in the amount of \$633,770.09, and to allow the chair to sign the contract. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

**SANITATION:**

Sanitation Director Ward Dudley presented the request to start the bid process to have a truck repaired that was in a single vehicle accident on the 10<sup>th</sup> of this month. He spoke with the attorney and verified that the amount of the repairs will exceed the threshold of \$40,000. Mr. Dudley thinks the repairs will definitely exceed that amount, so he requested to bid this out to stay within the bid law. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

**ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:**

There was nothing presented in this area.

**ADMINISTRATOR:**

There was nothing presented in this area by the administrator.

**CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:**

Commissioner Corbett recognized Interim County Administrator Tina Thomas who presented the monthly ARPA update report to the Commission and stated that the quarterly report has been filed with the US Treasury Department.

**ATTORNEY:**

Attorney Hope Hicks presented another opioid settlement that has been reached on behalf of the State of Alabama. She stated that settlement would be for 220 million dollars, with 88 million being allocated to the counties in the state. She recommended that the Commission approves the agreement and to authorize the chair to sign it. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. In the discussion, Ms. Hicks stated that it's not determined how much Russell County would get, since it is based upon the population and the opioid issues that have been present in the county. Commissioner Screws asked if there is a limit to how the money can be spent. Ms. Hicks agreed and stated that it cannot go into the General Fund. It has to be used for opioid prevention, and it can be used for drug courts, so the Sheriff's Office and DA's office will use a lot of these funds. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Attorney Hicks spoke about the employee handbook. She recommended that the May 6<sup>th</sup> work session meet an hour earlier, so there will be time to review the handbook. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request for the May 6<sup>th</sup> work session to start at 4 pm Eastern Time; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

**COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:**

Commissioner Corbett shared a notification from Mr. Roberts, in our Building Department, and they congratulated and recognized Mr. Brian Tice, who was appointed to the Board of International Chapter of Electrical Inspectors. He is representing Russell County, and this is the first time someone from Russell County has been on that board.

Commissioner Screws discussed getting cameras at the Ft. Mitchell Visitors Center.

Commissioner Reed spoke about property of interest on South Railroad Street.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Announcements were made.

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