

**Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes June 12, 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 Reverend Karen Seifert with Summerville Methodist Church.

Commissioner Reed led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Commissioner Corbett presented a presentation to the Commission on the Crawford Community and Legacies Senior Center project. He shared the news of receiving an award from the National Association of Counties for the project. He recognized and congratulated the Russell County Maintenance Department on all they have done to make this possible.

Ms. Beverly Dawson with the Columbus Visitor Center inquired if the Commission was interested in renewing the Russell County advertisement in their upcoming 2025 Columbus Visitor's guide.

Ms. Tarsha Hall spoke about issues on Antioch Road and stated that she received updated information from Commissioner Screws and Mr. Blakeney about a plan of action.

Chairman Costello thanked Keith with Russell County IT Department for Facebook Live, The Citizen of East Alabama for covering the meetings. He welcomed our elected officials, department heads, media, and guests.

County Administrator Chandra Wright 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 Chairman Rod Costello. Also, present were County Attorney Hope Hicks, and County Administrator Chandra Wright, who kept the minutes.

A quorum was established by the County Administrator Chandra Wright.

Chair Costello stated that the agenda was approved at the work session on Monday night, June 10th.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on May 22, 2024. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve 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 was nothing presented in this area.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no discussion items presented.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Costello recognized EMA Director David Martin who presented two budget transfer requests as follows:

- Decrease Line Item # 550 (Motor Vehicles) \$5,570
- Increase Line Item # 219 (Other Miscellaneous Supplies) \$5,570
- Decrease Line Item # 541 (Equipment & Furniture) \$10,000
- Increase Line Item 214 (Minor Equipment) \$10,000

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

Chairman Costello recognized Sheriff Taylor who presented an ABC License request for Crawford Eat. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett with a request the approval of July 5, 2024 as a holiday, due to the July 4th falling on a Thursday this year. 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 Corbett who presented a request to use Tourism Funds for two statues in Russell County. One at Dillingham Street for Mr. Horace King, an engineer and the bridge builder who built the Dillingham Street bridge over the Chattahoochee River. Commissioner Corbett stated that he will get a quote and present it the Commission at a later time. He added that hopefully it will be in partnership with, if not funding wise, at least in, location wise with the city or with the property owner for the best location. The second statue he presented would be for Mr. Dudley at the Crawford walking trail by Big Statues. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve funding this statue out of Tourism Funds for \$65,000 and he will update the Commission updated with the proposals and the proofs as it goes along before actually ordering it, to get feedback. He also stated that he had spoken with the auditors about it being a good use of the funds, and that a statue does fall under a public works project. He received the approval from auditor, David (Lane). Commissioner Lee seconded to approve the request.

After further discussion and concerns on property and removal of any statues, Commissioner Lee stated that if a statue is put on private property, the contract would need to state that we own the statue. Chairman Costello agreed and said to make sure our contracts or agreements stipulate this in the future. Commissioner Corbett stated that the Crawford location, one of the agreements in the lease was that any public works or construction would first be approved by the owner, he has done so on this, so has been approved. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

The County Engineer had nothing to present in this area.

SANITATION:

The Sanitation Director had nothing to present in this area.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

There was nothing presented in this area.

ADMINISTRATOR:

The County Administrator had nothing to present in this area.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

Chairman Costello recognized Attorney Hope Hicks who updated the Commission of the approval of 2 pavilions and 2 restrooms for the Pittsview area project. Chairman Costello stated that this has previously been presented, voted on and approved and this is a rendering of an opinion by our attorney. Attorney Hicks stated that she has done the research, and she believes that the two pavilions and two restrooms would be appropriate expenses with the ARPA Funds. Chairman Costello stated that their previous vote and approval was pending the opinion of our attorney.

Chairman Costello recognized Attorney Hope Hicks wanted to present the Ladonia sewage project update, but after many delays from the City of Phenix City, there was no update at this time. After further discussion, Commissioner Corbett stated that since these are using ARPA Funds, there is a deadline where money has to be obligated, it doesn't mean just a vote, it means we need to be taking action on it, and they have no indication they are going to take the project over or not. Since this is in Commissioner Chambers district, Commissioner Chambers stated that he will be willing in two weeks for a different alternative (if they do not hear anything). Attorney Hicks stated, for clarity sake, she knows two weeks is the next time they an vote on anything but she stated that the Commission cannot wait two weeks from today to get the letter. If the

Commission doesn't have the letter by the work session two weeks from this past Monday, to be able to have some considerations and get this put on the agenda. She doesn't want there to be any confusion and because it's a public meeting in the City of Phenix City and they say that they can do it from two weeks from today. She said that will not work.

Chairman Costello recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the awarding of the Ladonia lighting project. He stated that this was the only bid received, and he requested to award it to SEC Electrical Contractors out of Phenix City, the same one that did the lighting upgrade in Ladonia, in the amount of \$161,460.00 and to move forward with the project. Commissioner Lee stated that there is a law that allows us to negotiate that since we received only one bid. Mr. Watson stated he doesn't think they will negotiate, but he could ask them. Commissioner Chambers moved approval and go ahead and let SEC do the lighting in the amount of \$161,460; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. In discussion, Commissioner Corbett said that now they are awarded the bid, we can now negotiate with the winning bidder, so we can negotiate price with them. County Administrator Chandra Wright 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 Hicks had nothing to present in this area.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Corbett thanked and recognized Jennifer Davidson with the Extension Office and Auburn University with the pecan trees in the Crawford Walking Trail.

Commissioner Screws spoke of the Pittsview Park plans that were shared during the discussion and said that the plans will be explained at the next meeting.

Commissioner Epps spoke about new chairs that are on order at the Ft. Mitchell Senior Center, and she also thanked the Commissioners and the administrative office for their new commission chamber chairs.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

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