

**Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes June 26, 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 Epps led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Jennifer Davidson with the Russell County Extension office thanked the Commission for their donations and shared updates and a presentation about their 4-H program and summer camp.

Chairman Costello recognized Mr. Mal Waldrop and Ms. Denise Dubose, on behalf of The Citizen and BEAM, presented a framed article honoring County Administrator Chandra Wright.

Chairman Costello thanked our 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.

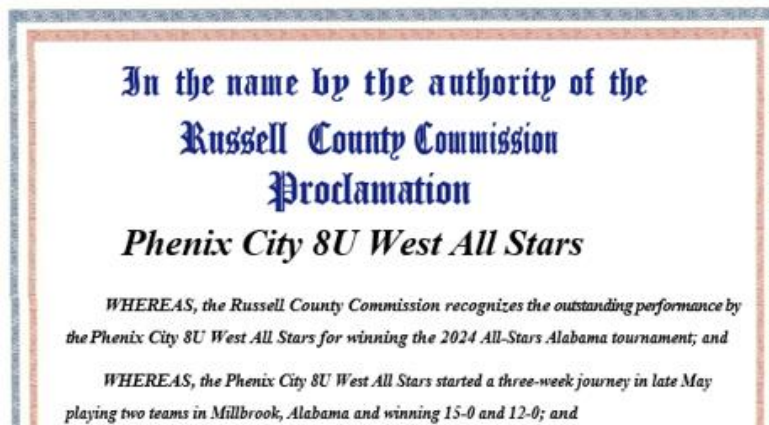
Chair Costello stated that the agenda was approved at the work session on Monday night, June 24th.

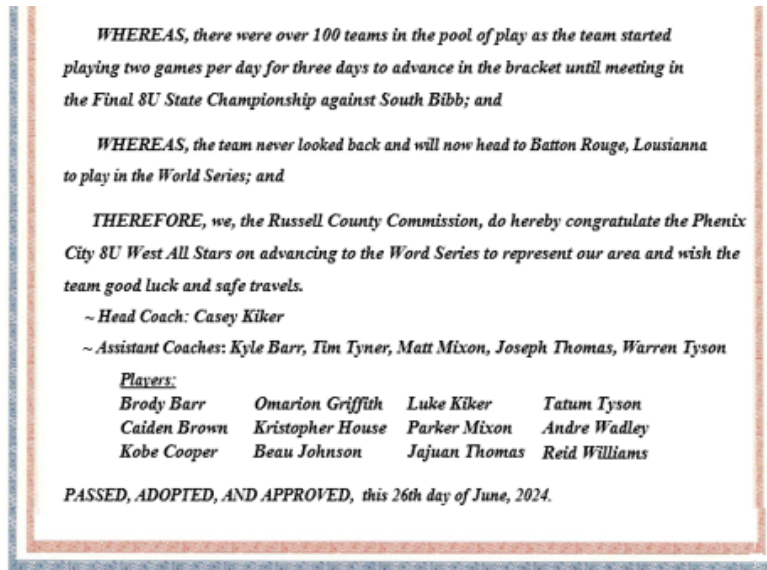
APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on June 12, 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:

Chairman Costello presented a proclamation to the Phenix City 8U West All Stars state champions going to the world series. County Administrator Chandra Wright read the following proclamation aloud:





Commissioner Corbett motioned to add under the agenda, under Business Items, for a Project Funds Allocation for the Phenix City Youth Baseball League, which he said will require a unanimous vote of the Commission. Commission Lee stated that it can be done without an objection. Commissioner Corbett requested to move this funds allocation request to this time since they are here with us. This donation is to the league that includes the 14U team as well. Commissioner Corbett moved to donate \$750 from his project funds; Commissioner Costello donated \$1,000 from his project funds; Commissioner Lee donated \$1,000 from his project funds; Commissioner Screws donated \$400 from his project funds; Commissioner Epps donated \$500 from her project funds; and Commissioner Chambers donated \$750 from his project funds which totals the donation to \$4,400 the league for both teams. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried for the proclamation approval and the project fund request.

Chairman Costello recognized Mr. Leroy Davis who presented an update of the Pittsview Project.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no discussion items presented.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Costello recognized Revenue Commissioner Natalie Kirland who presented the 2023/2024 final settlement and requested the signature of the Commission Chair for her submit them to the State of Alabama.

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 who requested to move the Human Resources Director back under the County Administrator, like it was set up years ago. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett with a tourism update regarding the regional Tourism magazine. He requested to continue an ad that features Russell County and increase it to a double page ad (full open page ad), which they previously discussed, in the cost of \$9,572 out of the Tourism funds. Commissioner Corbett moved to allow himself to sign the contract to get it moving (develop the layout) to be put in the book. He stated that he will bring back a draft copy to the Commission before it is published. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a request to award the following 2024 annual bids:

Bid Numbers:	Recommended Bid Awards:
• 002-24 LIQUID ASPHALT BID	Ergon Asphalt Emulsions, Inc.
• 004A-24 BITUMINOUS PAVING (PUBLIC WORKS BID)	East Alabama Paving
• 006-24 METAL PIPE AND HDPE PIPE BID	Split between Gulf Atlantic Culvert Company and J&G Culvert, Inc.
• 007-24 AGGREGATE BID	Columbus Quarry
• 008-24 CONCRETE PIPE BID	Alabama Pipe and Supply Company
• 010-24 MOTORGRADER BLADES BID	Thompson Cat

Mr. Blakeney also requested the 001-24 TRAFFIC STRIPING & MARKINGS BID to hold off on until the next meeting until he gets additional documentation before he awards the bid. Also, he stated that the 014-24 FENCING BID had no bids, so he requested to rebid it, advertise it on July 5th, July 12th, and July 19th, then open bids on July 22nd at 2:30 here at the courthouse, and award the bid at the July 24th Commission meeting. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a request to award the Brown Road bid (next CRAF project) which is resurfacing traffic strip from Padgett's Road to where they ended it to the new pavement, which is 1.103 miles, to East Alabama Paving in the amount of \$250,402.85 (the one bid received). He recommended the award and for the chair to sign the contract to East Alabama Paving for the project. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

SANITATION:

The Sanitation Director had nothing to present, but Chairman Costello notified the public of the revised garbage pickup schedule for the July 4th holiday.

ADMINISTRATOR:

The County Administrator had nothing to present in this area.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

Chairman Costello recognized County Administrator Chandra Wright presented a request for software upgrade proposals which included updates to the website to include moving our venue rental to an online portal for the public can pay by credit card, purchasing the software for the current accounting system to begin the implementation of the purchase cards (includes software only, not for the full implementation), also purchasing the software to use online timesheets instead of paper timesheets which would enable employees to clock in and out online, as well as submit vacation and sick time online (that would need to be approved by the managers). This also includes upgrades to our hardware, which includes switches and routers, and other server room hardware that needs to be updated. The last additional upgrade will be purchasing 10 additional licenses giving department heads access to the accounting system to look at their budget status in real lifetime and not waiting on monthly reports (read only and to not make any changes). The total cost for all of these upgrades is \$72,943. Ms. Tina Thomas stated that the current unobligated funds total is \$98,784.61, and after this purchase, the unobligated funds total would be \$25,841.61. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the purchases under the ARPA Funds as stated by the administrator; seconded by Commissioner Reed. 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 Hope Hicks presented an update about the Ladonia Sewage Project and asked Ms. Wright to update the Commissioners. Ms. Wright said the Assistant City Manager called and told her that the City Council will not pass a resolution, it's not their process and this is a public work matter. He also said all of the information is in their Public Works manual (which is assessable online), and he stressed the importance of understanding there could be some annexation and ordinance due to utility development. He also stated that getting another quote since the current quote is from 2019 and materials and public works projects has doubled since then. After further discussion, Ms. Hicks stated that if the city desires to keep looking at this project, she would like to go online to look at their public works policies. She would like to see if there is a Line Extension policy, and if there is a Capacity and Willingness Letter policy so that they would have to issue that to us before we go forward. Ms. Hicks stated that she would also like to see if there is anything giving the the Public Works Director or the City Manager the ability or authority to accept as a sub-recipient federal grant money. If there's not, then without a resolution then we are back to where we are. Ms. Hicks stated that if the Commission spends this federal money and this project doesn't get tied in and doesn't work, the Commission will be responsible for paying back that federal money because it's not actually going to a public works project. So, without her looking at their public works policies, she could not say "yes" or "no" but there are very specific things she would need to see in their public works policies. She will look at it and discuss it at the next meeting. She reiterated that without a resolution, unless there are those specific things, she doesn't think she it is a good project from liability standpoint. She would have to look at it to give the Commission a good answer. Commissioner Epps said that they should take the attorney's advice and table this, then bring this back at a later date. Chairman Costello said that since they were not voting on it today, they will get an update over the next weeks or two. Commissioner Screws asked Ms. Hicks how much time do they have? Ms. Hicks stated the funds have to be allocated and obligated by the end of this year, which gives 5 months to get the funds obligated.

Attorney Hicks spoke to the Commission about completing evaluation forms for the department heads and asked for them to be completed by the next work session.

Attorney Hicks spoke about new upcoming U.S. Dept. of Labor guidelines regarding salaries, who can be salaried, and who has to be an hourly employee. There will be new salary thresholds going into play on July 1, 2024, and another salary employee increase on January 1, 2024. She sees about 7 employees, this will affect the salary thresholds, 2 employees that she wants to check on their job duties, and she will work with Mr. Herring on the new guidelines for these employees. She stated that the current federal salary guideline is \$38,000 for a salary employee, effective July 1st it will go up to \$58,656.

After further discussion with the Commission evaluating department heads, Ms. Hicks stated to add Human Resources Director Max Herring to their list since these evaluations are for the past year and he was under their supervision during that time.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Epps showed appreciation for helping in the hiring of Attorney Hicks for the Commissioners and the work she has done for them. She spoke about her retirement later this year and how she has enjoyed the time she has worked together with the Commissioners, Russell County, and for District 5.

Commissioner Screws asked about their appropriations list and if the Mayors Ball was included. Ms. Wright and Ms. Thomas both stated that it was not on the Commissioner's appropriation list.

Commissioner Reed spoke about giving Commissioner Epps an appreciation party on October 25th for her retirement.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

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