

**Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes July 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 Reverend Grant Parker with Epworth Church.

Commissioner Screws led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Merry Mahone, Director of the Helping Families Initiative with RCDA office, thanked the Commissioner's for their support and spoke about their upcoming events.

Chairman Costello reminded everyone to silence their phones during the meeting.

Chairman Costello thanked our Keith Lee with the Russell County Commission 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, July 22nd.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented a correction on the June 26, 2024, minutes that were passed, which includes a paragraph that was left out (after the proclamation presentation) by mistake dealing with the 14U and 8U baseball teams and where the Commissioner's used their project funds to donate \$4,400. Commissioner Corbett moved to add the below paragraph in to the minutes that were approved and have an approval for the June 26, 2024 minutes.

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. Commissioner 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.

Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried to approve the addition to the June 26, 2024 minutes.

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on July 10, 2024. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Commissioner Epps. 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 presented.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no discussion items presented.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Costello recognized Judge Harden who presented the following three budget transfer requests for the purpose of funding a \$17,000 computer equipment purchase. He will pay \$10,000 out of his Indexing Fund, and change the following Line Items to take it out of this year's budget:

- \$5,000.00 from Line Item 211 (Office Supplies) to Line Item 499 (Other)
- \$1,000.00 from Line Item 216 (Minor Equipment) to Line Item 499 (Other)
- \$1,000.00 from Line Item 233 (Office Equipment Repairs & Maintenance) to Line Item 499 (Other)

This total transfer amount is \$7,000.00. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello presented the project money donation for the Russell County Lady Warriors basketball team. Coach Ricky Jones spoke to the Commission about receiving a donation request to help their program build and grow. Commission Costello made a motion to donate \$750 from his project funds; Commissioner Lee donated \$250; Commissioner Chambers donated \$250; and Commissioner Epps donated \$250 from her project money totaling the donation amount to \$1,500. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized GIS Mapper Matt Ruof who presented approval for the Digital Information Cooperative Agreement with ALDOT (Alabama Department of Transportation). He stated that with this agreement they will be able to receive \$12,000 to help offset their aerial photography cost. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request and to allow the chair to sign the agreement; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson who presented the award the contract to paint the historical site. Mr. Watson stated that after advertising they had one bid for the replacement of the rotten wood, recaulking and paint from Stamey Painting Contracting Services in the amount of \$44,500. Mr. Watson recommended to accept this bid and proceed on, and if so approved, he asked for Attorney Hicks to draw up a contract for the Chairman to sign. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. During the Commissioner's discussion, Commissioner Lee brought up us providing the materials and if we needed to bid it or was it already in a contract. Mr. Watson stated that all the wood, paint and stain stated that the Commission had already approved the funds for the renovation for this building, and he just had to take bids for the labor paint part of the painting. Commissioner Lee discussed a concern about having bids on many projects and materials, and under the bid laws we should have bid it all at once. Mr. Watson said we can reach out to the County Attorney. Chairman Costello stated he thought it was under Public Works. Commissioner Corbett asked the administrator to check and make sure that we are doing the right thing with this purchase, but he believed we are. Commissioner Lee stated that it would be for any project that we do (not just this project) because if it's building materials, he thinks the auditors count that as one project even though it's one project. Chairman Costello stated he understood that it's a cumulative of all materials. Mr. Watson said that when Ms. Colbert was here, he verified it with her and so each project is considered a separate project. For example, if you have grass at 1000 Broad Street, it is a separate project from 501 14th Street at Judicial. Chairman Costello said that we will verify this and make sure. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett with the Russell County High School Football Program update. Coach Dylan Griggs spoke about the football program and about their yearly sponsorship and donations. Commissioner Lee requested to donate \$750 from his project funds to the football team. Commissioner Corbett stated that the signage and the commercial on the jumbotron is promoting the county, which is a good use of tourism funds. Commissioner Corbett made a motion to

spend \$2,500, that has been agreed to do in the past, out of the Tourism Funds. Commissioner Lee withdrew his motion request. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. Commissioner Corbett restated that this motion is for the advertising on the signs and the commercial on the jumbotron. Coach Griggs added that advertising also includes a banner, which is a frame on the sidelines, and also a permanent sign on the field, along with social media. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a request to bid and advertise the Saint Luke and Battle Road CRAF Project. He stated that Battle Road is 1.74 miles and Saint Luke Road is 1.7 miles. He asked to advertise on 7/31, 8/7, and 8/14/2024, and open bids here in the courthouse on 8/21/2024 at 2:30 pm EST, and award bids at the Commission meeting on 8/28/2024. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

SANITATION:

The Sanitation Director had nothing to present in this area.

ADMINISTRATOR:

County Administrator Chandra Wright presented an E911 Board reappointment request for District 3 whose term expires on August 12, 2024. Chairman Costello moved to reappoint Mr. Bill Friend to the E911 Board. Seconded by Commission Chambers. Commissioner Corbett stated that he doesn't think they typically make motions when reappointing, but they can go ahead and vote. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye, while Commissioner Corbett abstained from the vote. Motion carried.

County Administrator Chandra Wright presented a budget transfer request from the Tourism budget that is in the General Fund budget to the Commission's office budget. Ms. Wright stated that she checked with the auditors, and as long as the funds are not restricted, and they are not because it is General Funds, that there is no problem with the transfer. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. Commissioner Lee inquired about the amount and Ms. Wright stated it is \$70,000. Commissioner Corbett reiterated, for the record, that these are funds out of the General Fund and not out of Tourism. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Administrator Chandra Wright presented the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 meeting requested to have the budget meeting on August 28th, right after the scheduled Commission meeting. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

From the Coronavirus Rescue Act funds, County Administrator Chandra Wright requested funds to replace the computers in the Commission office as well as to purchase a separate server to hold the new software that we are purchasing for the total cost of \$16,762.86. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. 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 stated that the Revenue Commission has adopted a progressive disciplinary policy that will be substituted in for the employees of the Revenue Commission office, and the rest of the new handbook (that you passed) will be followed by the Revenue Commissioner's office.

Attorney Hicks said that after Monday night's discussion with the district attorney about opioid funds, she has contacted the attorneys that are handling these matters for the state. She asked them, if they could,

please give us the information on how much money Russell County will receive and over what time frame to know what the Commission can commit. She stated there's a special Master assigned to these cases, and the special Master has received some new documentation, so they are hoping to have at least preliminary figures in the next month or so and she will report it back to the Commission so they can decide what could be used, how much could be used, and over what period of time. Chairman Costello asked if this is from the most recent settlement? She stated that the most recent with Kroger and the special Master doesn't have any of those funds and allocations yet. This is for the initial ones that were from Walgreens, CVS, and Allergan and those are the ones the special Master probably has closest to having the numbers on and to say this is how much each person is getting. It will be a continued process. It's the state, counties, and cities, for each entity. She should have some preliminary numbers, and those are the larger of the settlements. She said the terms could be different with each defendant that has been sued.

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Commissioner Corbett discussed and shared a PowerPoint of the mural at the Crawford Voluntary Fire Department and other renovations made to it for the community.

Commissioner Epps thanked the county and Commissioners for the opportunity to attend the 2024 NACo (National Association of Counties) conference. She shared updates and information on some of the classes she attended and the importance of the conference.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

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