

**Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes September 25, 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 Kennan West with 7th Day Adventist Church.

Commissioner Epps led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Earnsmond Upshaw spoke about road issues and concerns in her area.

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.

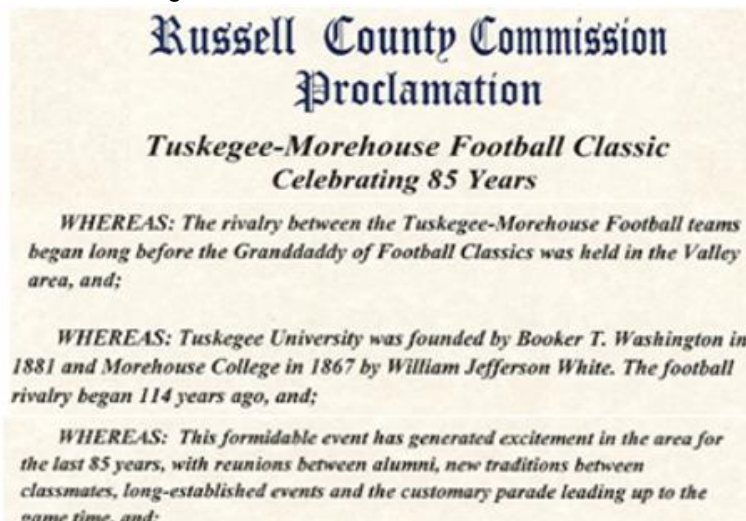
Chair Costello stated that the agenda was approved at the work session on Monday night, September 23rd.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on September 11, 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:

Commissioner Screws presented the following approved Tuskegee-Morehouse proclamation (*passed at the September 11th Commission meeting*) to Ms. Ligon, Tuskegee University Chairperson, which was read aloud by County Administrator Chandra Wright.



WHEREAS: The Tuskegee-Morehouse Game brings tremendous crowds to the Valley, stimulating the local economy as well as encouraging young men and women to obtain an education; not only with these prestigious institutions, but with other colleges and universities.

THEREFORE, LET IT BE KNOWN: The Russell County Commission would like to thank Tuskegee University and Morehouse College for sharing the last 85 years with the residents of Russell County, Alabama.

PASSED, ADOPTED, AND APPROVED, this 11th day of September, 2024.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

There were no discussion items presented.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

Chairman Costello recognized Enforcement Bill Friend with a property abatement nuisance for 7 Gauntt Road, Phenix City, Alabama for the removal of trash, household garbage, and scrap items. Mr. Friend declared the property to be a public nuisance and ordered the abatement resolution as follows:

STATE OF ALABAMA)	
)	<u>ABATE PUBLIC NUISANCE</u>
)	<u>RESOLUTION</u>
COUNTY OF RUSSELL)	

WHEREAS, Russell County has previously adopted the provisions of § 35-12(a)-1 code of Alabama, 1975; and

WHEREAS, Bill Friend has been duly appointed the Russell County Enforcement Officer; and

WHEREAS, The Russell County Enforcement Officer has determined that the property in question is unfit and unsafe for human habitation or occupancy; and

WHEREAS, The property is identified as property 7 Gauntt Road, Phenix City with dwelling and identified as account number N/A, Parcel number 57 05 03 05 4 003 004.000 and said deed is recorded in Deed Book 000434 Page 000878 in the Office of the Judge of Probate, Russell County, Alabama; and

WHEREAS, the record owner of the property is Hartwell Glendon R & Billy J; and

WHEREAS, The Commissioners have reviewed the record in this case and have determined that the property is a public nuisance.

BE IT THEREFORE RESOLVED AS FOLLOWS:

1. The County Commission has reviewed the proof of the nuisance and hereby declares that the above described property is in fact a public nuisance.
2. The address of the property is located on 7 Gauntt Road, Phenix City, Russell County, AL, the deed book owner is Hartwell Glendon R & Billy J, the account number is N/A.
3. This Resolution is to be conspicuously posted as a "NOTICE TO ABATE PUBLIC NUISANCE" in front of the property on which the nuisance exists.
4. The "NOTICE TO ABATE PUBLIC NUISANCE" is as follows:

"Notice is hereby given that on the 25th day of September, 2024 the County Commission passed resolution declaring that a public nuisance exists upon the real property on 7 Gauntt Road, Phenix City, Russell County more particularly described as account N/A, Parcel number 57 05 03 05 4 003 004.000 is otherwise identified as less than 0.00 acres with dwelling. The public nuisance must be abated by its removal by the owner or the County Commission, and if the County Commission abates the nuisance the cost of the removal shall be assessed upon the property from which the public nuisance is removed. The cost shall constitute lien upon the property until paid. A copy of the resolution of the county commission is attached.

Any owner of the real property having any objections to the proposed removal of the public nuisance are notified to attend a meeting of the County Commission to be held on the 9th day of October, 2024, at 9:30 am/EDT at Russell County Commission Chambers, 1000 Broad Street, Phenix City, Alabama 36867, when their objections will be heard and given due consideration.

Dated this 25th day of September, 2024.

Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried. Mr. Friend also requested a public hearing on the abatement be scheduled as follows:

5. The Public Hearing on the abatement of the nuisance shall be on 9th day of October, 2024, at 9:30 am, EDT, at Russell County Commission Chambers, 1000 Broad Street, Phenix City, Alabama, 36867.

Done this 25th day of September, 2024.

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

Chairman Costello recognized EMA Director David Martin with a signature request for 2023-2024 Safety Incentive Discount Program application. Commissioner Corbett 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 the Lee-Russell COG Recreation Economy for Rural Communities Grant application and requested the chair to sign the application. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized County Administrator Chandra Wright with the request of the Mardi Gras floating holiday be used for December 24th, which is Christmas Eve, and the courthouse will be closed also on December 25th, on Christmas Day. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized EMA Director David Martin with an Emergency Operations Center Project Study Committee request. Mr. Martin proposed the formation of an EMA EOC Building Project Committee as they discussed Monday night to consist of himself and his staff, Commissioner Corbett, County Engineer Shawn Blakeney, Dana Murphy and Dennis Green from E-911, Building Inspector Bubba Roberts and County Administrator Chandra Wright. He stated that this is the first step, and it costs nothing at this point. Commissioner Epps moved to accept the recommendation; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized County Administrator Chandra Wright who presented the animal shelter budget agreement recommendation. The recommendation was to have the county commission set aside half of the total budget of the animal shelter, which the total budget is \$234,135, and half that is \$117,067. \$80,000 has been approved in the fiscal year 24/25 budget and the remaining balance will be \$37,067. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the to amend the FY-25 budget as recommended; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized County Administrator Chandra Wright who recognized Commissioner Corbett who has someone to recommend for the Lee-Russell Council of Governments for Rural Planning appointment based on the conversation Monday night, this is one appointment from the county, and he felt like it should be for someone out in the county. Commissioner Corbett requested to appoint Tim Simpson, a county resident, to this board. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented the request from the National Rendezvous and Living History Foundation for a land-owner property usage agreement to utilize the property, that is county property, that is being utilized by (and controlled by) the Russell County Historical Commission, where the visitor center is. He stated that the Russell County Historical Commission has agreed for this to happen, but the group that is coming to have this event has asked that the landowner actually sign this agreement. He sent it to the county attorney, and she had one addition: in making sure that any additions, or

improvements, or repairs be first communicated with our maintenance department. Commissioner Corbett moved to allow the chair to sign this agreement; seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a budget transfer request:

- Decrease Line Item # 212 -*Fuel and Lubricant* by \$6,000
- Increase Line Item # 223 -*Copy Machine Rental* by \$3,000
- Increase Line Item # 304 -*Contract Services* by \$3,000

Commissioner Lee 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 in this area.

ADMINISTRATOR:

County Administrator Chandra Wright presented the Employee Appreciation Program, second reading as follows:

Russell County Employee Recognition and Appreciation Program

Pursuant to Amendment 909 of the Constitution of Alabama of 1901, the Russell County Commission ("RCC") does hereby establish the Russell County Employee Recognition and Appreciation Program ("ERAP") to express its appreciation to the dedicated employees of Russell County and to recognize those employees who have reached significant milestones in their years of service.

The scope of the ERAP is as follows:

1. An Employee Appreciation Day to be held once per year in the Spring/Summer.
2. The Appreciation Day will be held during the regular business hours of the RCC, at a premise or property owned or under the authority of the RCC.
3. An invitation to attend the Appreciation Day will be extended, via email and department heads, to all employees of the RCC.
4. The RCC Employee Appreciation Day will include a catered lunch, including a meal, beverages and dessert. The meal may be served either plated or buffet style.

5. Each quarter a department will nominate an employee to be recognized for following the safety policies established by the RCC or preventing an accident from happening on the RCC property.
6. Each department will nominate one employee to be recognized as Employee of the Month. That employee will be featured in the Citizen of East Alabama newspaper, given a certificate, attend a Commission meeting and receive an incentive approved by the Commissioners.
7. Employees of RCC who reach a five-year incremental employment anniversary after the preceding 12-month period will be given a service award, certificate and recognized at a Commission meeting.
8. Employees can also recognize each other for doing something "awesome". (Whether it be for another employee or for a customer.) The new slogan will be called "Bee Awesome". The employee being recognized will receive a small card that says, "Thank you for Bee-ing Awesome" and a "Bee" lapel pin to be worn.

The RCC shall cover all costs associated with the Employee Appreciation Day and all other recognition activities including meal catering or staff/elected official prepared, beverages, utensils, plaques, certificates, give-a-ways and other incidental costs. The County Administrator shall create a budget for the ERAP, and such budget must come before the RCC for approval prior to the expenditure of any funds related to the program. Further, the RCC shall maintain detailed records of all disbursements associated with the planning and execution of the ERAP, which will be subject to review by the Alabama Department of Examiners.

The RCC reserves the right to cancel or decrease the scope of the ERAP as outlined above; however, the RCC shall not make any additions or in any way expand the ERAP without first following the notice procedures as outlined in Amendment 909 of the Constitution of Alabama of 1901 regarding the adoption of such programs and policies.

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

County Administrator Chandra Wright presented the Employee Appreciation Program budget the funds coming from the Donation Fund 750. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the budget; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. In discussion, Commissioner Lee asked if this is coming from the Donation Fund and it is included in the total budget, will there be a fund balance charge? Ms. Wright agreed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Administrator Chandra Wright presented the Long-Term Juvenile Detention Subsidy Contract addendum. She stated that in the last meeting the Commission agreed to sign the contract that selects the Lee County Youth Detention Center of choice, but right after that meeting, she received an addendum that expands on the county's having the sole discretion to select, as well as expanding on the reimbursement procedures. She said it has been reviewed by the county attorney. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the signature request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Administrator Chandra Wright requested the chair to sign the NeoGov Human Resources software agreement to allow us to move our HR processes to an online platform. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

Commissioner Corbett presented the request for reallocation of the final ARPA funds as follows:

ARPA FUNDS RE-ALLOCATION

REALLOCATION OF FUNDS

Previously allocated for Ladonia Sewerage Project

- Reallocation budget: \$1,375,000.00
- Reallocation request: \$1,375,000.00
- Remaining balance: \$ 0

PARKS AND RECREATION

PICKLEBALL COURTS:

- \$598,000.00
 - \$392,017.95: Seale Sports Complex
 - ~ Four courts with fences and cover
 - \$205,752.67: Ladonia Sports Complex
 - ~ Two courts with fences and cover

PLAYGROUND EQUIPMENT:

- \$67,847.84
 - Replace the playground structure at Seale Sports Complex
 - Add swings and a zip-track to the Seale Sports Complex

HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT**EQUIPMENT:**

- \$110,000.00
 - New Skid-steer for the highway department
 - This piece of equipment was not in the FY25 budget due to trying to reduce the amt of the budget.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT EQUIPMENT**PORTABLE RESTROOMS:**

- \$80,000.00
 - ADA Portable restroom trailer
 - Can be used as all county events
 - Can be used during a disaster or large emergency

SHERIFF'S OFFICE**WEAPONS DETECTION SYSTEM:**

- \$234,000.00 /**EVOLV WEAPONS DETECTION SYSTEM**
 - Does not require citizens to empty their pockets
 - One for the Courthouse and one for the Judicial Center
 - Utilized at Piedmont, Mercedes Benz Stadium, and more

SANITATION DEPARTMENT**TRAILER AND BUILDING UPGRADES:**

- \$170,000.00
 - TRANSFER TRAILER
 - \$120,000.00
 - Trailer for hauling garbage to the dump
 - BUILDING UPGRADES
 - \$50,000.00
 - Upgrade a room for employees to have area to meet

COMMISSION OFFICE**COMMUNICATION WITH CITIZENS:**

- \$20,152.16
 - Newsletter created by administrator and department head
 - Distribute to all citizens on the sanitation service

BUILDING INSPECTIONS**RADIO AND COMPUTER EQUIPMENT:**

- \$75,000.00
 - Radios for the vehicles
 - Laptop computers and mounts for the vehicles

CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER**ESSENTIAL SERVICES:**

- \$20,000.00
 - Help with reductions during COVID
 - Also help with reductions in fundraising efforts

Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. 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 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried to approve the ARPA reallocation request.

ATTORNEY:

Attorney Hope Hicks presented the Enterprise Leasing Fleet Program agreement for the chair to sign entering into these six agreements. She stated that once these agreements are signed, Ms. Wright will then proceed with working with Enterprise about which vehicles to get and when to start this program. She thinks the Sheriff will be involved with it as well because many of the cars will be used in his department. Mr. Hicks stated that she has read these agreements and recommended the chair sign them. Commissioner Corbett moved to

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

COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:

Chairman Costello recognized Sheriff Taylor who presented an update on the Jail food bid. He stated that he took the food bid off and that they have a meeting with Merchants, their main food vendor who will be Tuesday at 2:00 pm to negotiate the new contract and at 1:00 pm they will meet with Flowers on the bread. So, those meeting are setup to be negotiated as Ms. Hicks stated.

Commissioner Corbett recognized EMA Director David Martin who presented a briefing on the tropical storm and potential hurricane that is entering the gulf that might have implications in our county area.

Commissioner Epps inquired about fall-out shelters in the Hurtsboro area from a concerned citizen.

Chairmen Costello thanked everyone for the thoughts, prayers, and well wishes for his road to recovery for health these past few weeks.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

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