

***PUBLIC HEARING FOR  
Abatement for 7 Gauntt Road, Phenix City, Alabama  
Wednesday, October 9, 2024***

A public hearing was called to order by Russell County Chairman Rod Costello.

**BUSINESS:**

Enforcement Bill Friend presented the abatement for 7 Gauntt Road, Phenix City, Alabama.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

There were no public comments made.

Commissioner Corbett moved to close the public hearing; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried to adjourn the public hearing.

**Russell County Commission  
Meeting Minutes October 9, 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 Don Abrams with Trinity UMC.

Commissioner Corbett led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:**

Ms. Raniyah Beene with NORESCO reintroduced her company to the Commission from earlier in the year.

Mr. Harry Williams came to speak about the upcoming Crawford Health Resource Fair.

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 Chance Corbett, Commissioner Larry Screws, Commissioner Cattie Epps, Commissioner Ronnie Reed, and Chairman Rod Costello. Commissioner Gentry Lee was not present. 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, October 7th.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on September 25, 2024. Commissioner Chambers moved to approve the minutes; seconded by Commissioner Reed. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried to approve the minutes.

**PROCLAMATIONS, RESOLUTIONS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

Chairman Costello recognized Human Resources Director Max Herring who presented, from our new Employee Appreciation Program, two October Employees of the Month that fall under County Engineer Shawn Blakeney. He recognized Mr. Ben Fuller from the Parks and Recreation Department and Mr. Frank Johnson from the Highway Department.

Chairman Costello recognized Human Resources Director Max Herring who presented a resolution for the ACCA Workers' Compensation Self-Insurers Fund (WCSIF) from the Board of Trustees. The trustees have approved a one-time 2027 Longevity Bonus program that provides eligible county fund members with the ability to receive an additional refund equal to 10% of their fiscal year 2024's estimated premium contribution. Mr. Herring presented a resolution to be signed by the chairman and it has been reviewed and approved by County Attorney Hope Hicks. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

#### **DISCUSSION ITEMS:**

There were no discussion items presented.

#### **BUSINESS ITEMS:**

Chairman Costello recognized Enforcement Bill Friend with the public hearing for the property abatement nuisance for 7 Gauntt Road, Phenix City, Alabama. Mr. Friend declared the property to be a public nuisance and ordered the abatement of this nuisance for the removal of trash, garbage, and debris of all types. He received two estimates: one for \$7,230 and the other for \$6,500. Mr. Friend requested the abatement be approved at this time. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Reed who presented the request to donate \$7,000 of his project funds to Safe Landing for Veterans & Branches Homes for Veterans. Commissioner Reed moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Maintenance Director Leon Watson request to purchase a skid steer. Mr. Watson requested approval to move forward with a pre-budgeted compact tract loader from Thompson Cat quoted through Sourcewell for the price of \$88,404.13, and also requested for the chairman to sign the contract for purchase. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. Chair Costello restated that this is a pre-budgeted item. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who recognized County Administrator Chandra Wright that read the 1<sup>st</sup> reading for a Policy for Assigning Voting Actions as follows:

### **COUNTY COMMISSION RESOLUTION NUMBERING SYSTEM**

To allow for the effective and efficient indexing and searching of all Russell County Commission actions, the Commission votes will be designated as resolutions. The resolutions will be designated by the year made, month, date, department, and the chronological number of the action. The minutes of each Russell County Commission meeting will list the resolution number and detail the action taken by the Russell County Commission.

For example, if a motion is made regarding a general County Commission matter in 2024, it will be designated as 2024.10.23 (CM)-1 then the detail of the matter will be listed. If a motion is made regarding a Highway Department matter in 2024, it will be designated as 2024.10.23 (HW)-1 and then the detail of the matter will be listed. A letter will be designated for each County department. See below department designation listing.

This policy will be effective beginning at the first meeting in November 2024.

Adopted this 23<sup>rd</sup> day of October 2024.

<u>Department</u>	<u>Designation</u>	<u>Department</u>	<u>Designation</u>
Commission Office	CM	Jail	JL
Judicial Center	JU	EMA Department	EM
Probate Office	PR	Coroner Office	CO
Revenue Department	RV	Building Inspections	BU
Tag Office	TG	Enforcement Office	EN
Board of Registrars	BR	Highway Department	HW
Maintenance Dept.	MN	Sanitation Department	SD
Mapping /Appraisal	MA	Parks & Rec. Dept.	PR
Sheriff Office/Dept.	SH		

No voting was required since this is just a first reading.

Chairman Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who presented the EPA Brownfield Grant. Chair Costello stated that this grant is not a matching grant, but it's through Lee-Russell Council Government. This Brownfield Grant is a partnership grant between Opelika, Phenix City, and Russell County to identify and come up with a plan for possibly litigating anything that is considered a brown field (old gas tanks in the ground, old lumber yards, or old buildings with lead or asbestos in it) and give it to them to see what needs to be done with it. He reiterated that there is no money involved with the county. Commissioner Corbett moved to allow the chair to sign the application with Lee-Russell Council Governments since they are the consultants for this Brownfield Grant. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. In discussion, Chair Costello stated that their consultant is a company called PPM, who will go to the sites and remediate the plans. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

#### **COUNTY ENGINEER:**

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented an updated resolution for the chair to sign for Lato and Tarver Road, which will be their next MPO project. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Epps. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a request to bid pickleball courts in Seale and Ladonia (four sets in Seale and two sets in Ladonia). He requested to advertise on 10/17, 10/24, 10/31, and 11/7, open bids here in the courthouse on 11/12 at 2:30 pm, and award bids at the 11/13 Commission meeting. Commissioner Screws moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried. Commissioner Corbett stated that since they are not spending money, but are using ARPA funds, he requested a roll call vote. County Administrator Chandra Wright took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; District 5 Epps, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney presented a request to bid for covers for pickleball courts in Seale and Ladonia (four sets in Seale and two sets in Ladonia). He requested to advertise on 10/17, 10/24, 10/31, and 11/7, open bids here in the courthouse on 11/12 at 2:30 pm, and award bids at the 11/13 Commission meeting. Commissioner Screws 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 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; District 5 Epps, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried.

#### **SANITATION:**

The Sanitation Director had nothing to present in this area.

#### **ADMINISTRATOR:**

County Administrator Chandra Wright presented the 2024 Byrne Justice Assistance Grant. She requested permission to sign the MOU for this between the Phenix City Police Department, as well as Russell County Sheriff's office. The city applies and maintains the grant each year and it rotates who gets the funds, and this year the funds go to the city. Commissioner Corbett; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners present were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

**HUMAN RESOURCES:**

Chairman Costello recognized Human Resources Director Max Herring who presented the commission review of the Personnel Review Board recommendation regarding a hearing held on September 30<sup>th</sup>. Attorney Hicks stated that this is from a complaint that was brought by an employee to Mr. Herring in the Human Resources Department alleging that there was harassing behavior related to the employee's military status as a veteran, his disability related to his military service, and his pay. After the complaint was brought, there was an investigation open. Mr. Herring conducted interviews of the witnesses that the employee said were available. After that, he related this back to Mr. Blakeney. Mr. Blakeney and Mr. Herring then spoke with the four employees that were complained about. Mr. Blakeney made the recommendation to terminate three of those employees and suspend the fourth one. The one who was suspended did serve his suspension, and did not ask for any appeal rights. The three employees recommended for termination requested their pre-disciplinary hearing that was in front of the County Administrator, Ms. Wright. She upheld the recommendation to uphold their termination. Those three employees asked for their hearing before the Personnel Review Board, that was held on September 30<sup>th</sup>. The following information was in the Commissioner's packets: the Personnel Review Board recommendation to uphold the terminations along with the original complaint, and the Personnel Review board hearing. The employees spoke on their behalf to the Commissioners. Ms. Hicks stated that the issue here today is whether or not they should be terminated regarding the complaint of harassment that was made and the finding that they did harass the other employee. Commissioner Chambers moved to go with the recommendation by the Personnel Board; seconded by Commissioner Reed. County Administrator Chandra Wright took a roll call vote of the Commission as follows: District 2: Commissioner Chambers, yes; District 6: Commissioner Corbett, yes; District 7: Commissioner Screws, yes; District 5 Epps, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried.

**CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:**

Nothing was presented in this area.

**ATTORNEY:**

Attorney Hope Hicks had nothing to present.

**COMMISSIONER DISCUSSION:**

Commissioner Corbett shared appreciation for a recent resident water issue that was resolved by the Russell County Water Authority.

**ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Announcements were made.

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