

Russell County Commission
Meeting Minutes November 27, 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 Reverend Karen Seifert with Summerville Methodist.

Commissioner Chambers led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Ms. Lynn Hammock, Director of the Russell County CAC (Child Advocacy Center), spoke and thanked the Commission for their support and contribution to their organization.

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 Cedric Darty, 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.

The agenda was approved at the Monday night work session on November 25, 2024.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

2024.11.27 (CM)-1: Chair Costello requested approval of the minutes from the Commission meeting on November 13, 2024. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the minutes presented in their book; 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 was nothing presented in this area.

BUSINESS ITEMS:

2024.11.27 (CM)-2: Chair Costello presented the election of the chair and vice-chair that will start in December. Commissioner Costello nominated Commissioner Corbett as the chair; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. There were no other nominations, and Commissioner Lee moved to close the nominations. Seconded by Commissioner Chambers to close the nominations. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried to close the nominations. 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: Darty, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried for Commissioner Corbett to become the chair starting in December. Commissioner Lee moved to nominate Commissioner Costello as the vice-chair; seconded by Commissioner Darty. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

2024.11.27 (CM)-3: Chair Costello presented the request for administrating voting order for the upcoming year, and everyone pulled a number based on their current voting order. The following voting order was established:

- Voting order #1: Commissioner Costello
- Voting order #2: Commissioner Reed
- Voting order #3: Commissioner Lee
- Voting order #4: Commissioner Chambers
- Voting order #5: Commissioner Darty
- Voting order #6: Commissioner Screws
- Voting order #7: Commissioner Corbett

2024.11.27 (CM)-4: Chair Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett with a project funds donation request to the Russell County Schools Education Foundation for the total amount of \$2,500. The breakdown is as follows from each Commissioner's project fund account: Commissioner Lee for \$500, Commissioner Chambers for \$500, Commissioner Darty for \$250, Commissioner Costello for \$500, and Commissioner Corbett for \$750. Commissioner Corbett requested \$2,500 to the Russell County Board of Education in leu of the Russell County Foundation. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

2024.11.27 (CM)-5: Chair Costello recognized Commissioner Darty with a project fund donation request to the Mount Olive Intermediate School Beta Club. Commissioner Darty moved to donate \$250 from his project funds; seconded by Commissioner Corbett. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried. Staying in the project funds area, Chair Costello requested to donate \$500 to Wreaths Across America from his project fund, and Commissioner Corbett donated \$500 totaling \$1,000 to the project. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

2024.11.27 (CM)-6: Chair Costello recognized County Administrator Chandra Wright who presented the grant opportunity from the Office of Local Defense Community Cooperation (Patricia Gray spoke to the Commissioner Monday night) that will allow us to complete a Comprehensive Plan /Master Plan. Ms. Wright stated that no vote is needed at this time since there are no funds will be spent at this time.

2024.11.27 (CM)-7: Chair Costello recognized County Administrator Chandra Wright regarding the economic development consultants from Valor, who spoke with the Commission Monday night. Ms. Wright requested to enter into a six-month contract with this economic development consulting firm to assist in upcoming projects and other opportunities that might arise. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve \$20,000 to pay to Valor; seconded by Commissioner Screws. Commissioner Chambers restated that this is for 6 months. Commissioner Corbett agreed and stated that this amount has been negotiated down from their original request. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

2024.11.27 (CM)-8: Chair Costello recognized Commissioner Corbett who spoke about chambers usage in the Commission's chambers, and that that a policy needs to be put in place since it's a part of the courthouse. Commissioner Corbett moved to allow government meetings or functions to be approved by the administrator and to be communicated to the Commission, and anything that is not government needs to be approved by the Commission at the table. Seconded by Commissioner Lee, with the stipulation that it might need to be modified after seeing how this works. Attorney Hicks stated that if this will be a policy, it needs to be discussed two times. So, this is the first reading or discussion of the policy that will be brought back at the next meeting for a vote to approve. Commissioner Screws questioned after hours meetings and felt that it needs to be spelled out. Commissioner Costello stated that only after hour meetings and only government functions can be after hours. Chair Costello stated that this is to be added to the next agenda.

2024.11.27 (CM)-9: Chair Costello recognized County Administrator Chandra Wright and due to the Christmas holidays, requested approval to cancel the work session on December 23rd and the Commission meeting on December 25th. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

2024.11.27 (CM)-10: Chair Costello recognized County Administrator Chandra Wright who presented the opening on the DHR, Department of Human Resources, board appointment that needs to be filled by December 12, 2024. Commissioner Lee moved to nominate Mr. Howard Walker, as discussed Monday, for this position. Commissioner Corbett seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

COUNTY ENGINEER:

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney had nothing to present at this time.

SANITATION:

2024.11.27 (SD)-1: Sanitation Director Ward Dudley asked permission for the county to enter into an agreement with the City of Phenix City for the removal of scrap tires. Under this agreement, we will provide them with one roll off dumpster, where they will fill them with tires, and we will arrange for the logistics of having it hauled away. Mr. Dudley also asked permission for the attorney to craft the letter for the chairman to sign and sent to Phenix City. Commissioner Corbett moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Reed. In discussion, Commissioner Corbett stated that the county attorney is going to work on any documents needed for this. All Commissioners were in favor and said aye. Motion carried.

ADMINISTRATOR:

County Administrator Chandra Wright had nothing to present in this area.

CORONAVIRUS RESCUE ACT FUND:

2024.11.27 (EM)-1: Chair Costello recognized EMA Director David Martin who requested permission to purchase an ADA restroom trailer out of ARPA funds, and that it's a contract purchase off of SourceWell for \$62,135.00. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Screws. 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: Darty, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried.

2024.11.27 (HW)-1: Chair Costello recognized Assistant County Engineer Ray Martin who requested to award the pickleball courts from their November 12th open bids to Wayne Gentry, Inc. in the amount of \$172,113.05. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. In discussion, Mr. Martin stated that it's to cover six pickleball courts, four in Seale and two in Ladonia. 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: Darty, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried.

2024.11.27 (HW)-2: Chair Costello recognized Assistant County Engineer Ray Martin who requested to award bid for pickleball court covers, from opened bids on November 12th, to We Can Shade it in the amount of \$372,000. Commissioner Lee moved to approve the request; seconded by Commissioner Chambers. In discussion, Mr. Martin stated that this is for covering all 6 courts, in both locations. Commissioner Screws asked the start date for this project. Mr. Martin stated that it should be in about a month (as an estimate), once he receives the bonds and contracts back, and gets the chair to sign it. 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: Darty, yes; District 4: Commissioner Reed, yes; and District 3: Chairman Costello, yes. Motion carried.

2024.11.27 (CM)-11: Chair Costello presented the remaining \$80,575.23 ARPA Funds left in the account. Commissioner Lee moved to appropriate these funds in the following areas: \$20,000 to the Art Council of Phenix City, \$20,000 to the Friends of the Library, \$20,000 to CAC, and \$20,000 to Mother Mary's Women's

Veterans Program. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. There was no further discussion. 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: Darty, 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 the Highway Department for the quick response for the speed limit reduction paperwork for his area.

Commissioner Corbett updated the Commission about the archery tournament and utilizing Tourism Funds.

Alabama Representative Christopher Blackshear was recognized in the audience and appreciation was given to him for the funding that he was able to get for Russell County through the state for the juvenile program. Also, in attendance was both Public Safety Director Ray Smith, along with Judge Collins.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

Announcements were made.

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