

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, July 11, 2023

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Vice Chairman Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Joyce Evans
Commissioner Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Clay Griner

Commissioner Scott Orenstein was not present.

Chairman Bill Slaughter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

INVOCATION

Vice Chairman Wisenbaker

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Vice Chairman Wisenbaker

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of June 26, 2023, the executive session meeting of June 26, 2023 and the regular session meeting of June 27, 2023. The minutes for the executive session of June 26, 2023 were added to the agenda for approval. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS

South Georgia Regional Library Board

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the seats of Mr. Dwayne Johnson, Dr. Beverley Richardson-Blake, Mr. Thomas Lovett and Dr. George Gaumond have expired. All have expressed a desire to serve another three-year term. Additionally, Mrs. Dukes stated Mr. Gary Wisenbaker has served two terms and is leaving a vacant seat with Ms. Catherine Ammons and Ms. Sarah Fitzgerald expressing a desire to be appointed to this board. Ms. Catherin Ammons also serves as an Assistant City Manager for the City of Valdosta. Commissioner Marshall nominated Ms. Catherine Ammons for the vacant seat held by Mr. Gary Wisenbaker. There being no other nominations, Ms. Cathering Ammons was appointed by acclamation. Commissioner Griner nominated Mr. Dwayne Johnson, Dr. Beverley Richardson-Blake, Mr. Thomas Lovett and Dr. George Gaumond for reappointment. There being no other nominations, Mr. Dwayne Johnson, Dr. Beverley Richardson-Blake, Mr. Thomas Lovett and Dr. George Gaumond were reappointed by acclamation.

PUBLIC HEARING

TXT-2023-01 ULDC Text Amendments

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated the ULDC Text Amendments have been prepared by staff, a consultant, County Leadership and the County Attorney's Office. Mr. Dillard gave an overview of the text amendments for consideration:

1. Variances
2. Code Lists
3. Chickens
4. Time Measurement
5. Solar and Enforcement
6. OCGA ZBOA (Zoning Board of Appeals)
7. Day Cares

Commissioner Marshall asked for clarification regarding chickens not being allowed in conservation? Mr. Dillard stated conservation zoning is typically held for most of our water resource protection flood plains areas with very limited use allowed in those zoning districts, and the use of chickens would be excluded from that area. Chairman Slaughter stated he thought Mr. Dillard was answering conservation from a land use versus conservation under tax laws, which Commissioner Marshall was inquiring. Chairman Slaughter and Mr. Dillard agreed chickens are allowed in conservation under tax laws. Gretchen Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, spoke against this request. Mrs. Quarterman stated she is not in objection to the amendments, but in the process. Mrs. Quarterman stated this meeting being held tonight is the first meeting where an overview of the amendments has been given. Mrs. Quarterman mentioned the amendment that concerns her, is regarding chickens. She stated people living in neighborhoods may want the opportunity to speak against. Mrs. Quarterman stated her objection is when making changes, she would like the public to have the opportunity to have input. No one spoke in favor of the request. Chairman Slaughter asked if anyone had rebuttal comments to make? No one spoke. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the amendments as presented, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2023-09 – South GA Boat and RV Storage, ~22 acres, 6153 Inner Perimeter, from I-S to C-H, Well & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request is to rezone approximately twenty-two (22) acres from its current I-S (Intensive Services) zoning district to C-H (Highway Commercial) for semi-speculative commercial purposes. Mr. Dillard stated in 2009, the property was rezoned from E-A to I-S for a business fuel plant for a forty (40) megawatt biomass electric generating plant. Since that has not come to fruition, the applicant is now requesting to rezone to C-H (Highway Commercial) and the first phase, at least five acres will be used to construct an RV and boat storage facility, with the additional property being developed at a later date. Mr. Dillard stated it is within transportation and communication overlay which allows for Commercial Highway zoning. Mr. Dillard stated the Planning Commission recommended approval and the TRC had no objectionable comments. No one spoke for or against the request. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker made a motion to approve approximately twenty-two (22) acres from its current I-S (Intensive Services) zoning classification to C-H (Highway Commercial), Commissioner Griner second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Alapaha Plantation Cerafiltec Pilot Study Proposal

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated Cerafiltec proposes to provide a ceramic flat membrane pilot unit at the Alapaha Plantation Water Treatment Plant for ninety (90) days, with an optional thirty (30) day extension. Mr. Stalvey stated the purpose of the pilot study is to determine the feasibility of removing organics and lowering the disinfection by-products to acceptable EPD levels. Mr. Stalvey stated the cost for the pilot study is \$10,000.00 for ninety (90) days and an additional \$3,500.00, if the extra thirty (30) days is added. Mr. Stalvey stated that staff recommends approval. Commissioner Marshall asked how is the water currently? Mr. Stalvey responded there are still issues with the trihalomethanes, but this treatment process should remove those organics. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the item as presented, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Purchase of 412-416 North Lee Street Property

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated staff has asked that this item be removed from the agenda. Chairman Slaughter stated there have been a few difficulties with the title search.

ACCG IRMA Property & Liability Insurance Program Renewal

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the item. Mr. Beals stated within the last few years, we have experienced the impact that the pandemic, as well as inflation, has had on the economy, as well as the insurance industry. Mr. Beals stated in the last two months the Association County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) has prepared the county for increases during the renewal process with the ACCG IRMA Board voting to pause the dividend disbursement process. Mr. Beals stated ACCG has provided information about different options for benefits.

Proposal #1 - Continue with the existing deductible: \$2,500.00 deductible with \$5,000.00 deductible on POL and LEL, Premium: \$1,212,786.00

Proposal #2 - Optional Proposal: \$15,000.00 deductible, Premium: \$1,066,238.00

Proposal #3 - Optional Proposal: \$25,000.00 deductible, Premium: \$996,417.00

Mr. Beals stated the recommendation is to proceed with the \$15,000.00 deductible, with no need to cover older vehicles (years 2014 and older) with physical damage, just liability only.

Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the renewal of Property and Liability Insurance Coverage with ACCG at the \$15,000.00 deductible level per occurrence on all lines. (Includes Law Enforcement Liability (LEL) and Public Officials Liability (POL), Vice Chairman Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BID

2023 Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Resurfacing Bids

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the 2023 resurfacing bids presented include resurfacing 1.00 mile of Good Hope Circle (east), 0.76 mile of Good Hope Circle (west), 1.50 miles of New Bethel Road and 3.30 miles of McMillan Road. Mr. McLeod stated two bids were received, with the low bidder being The Scruggs Company \$1,534,014.68. Mr. McLeod stated the bids were lower than estimated and staff renegotiated with the

low bidder to include 2' widening on McMillian Road, the amount for the widening is \$255,453.49, making the total amount \$1,789,468.17. Commissioner Marshall asked when would the resurfacing begin for McMillian Road? Mr. McLeod answered, once the notice to proceed is given, they have 180 days to complete the project. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the low bidder, The Scruggs Company, in the amount of \$1,789,468.17, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORT - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated that Lowndes County is featured in the ACCG Summer 2023 Georgia County Government Magazine with an article featuring our agreements with Moody Air Force Base and the Quiet Pines Golf Course, and the awards won at the Annual ACCG Conference. The Board of Assessors will be holding a special called meeting on Thursday at 9:00 a.m. Mrs. Dukes stated after meeting with Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, the software and meter projects are moving forward very well. Over the last two weeks, Lowndes County has in-processed twenty (20) new employees. Additionally, Mrs. Dukes stated we are helping to sponsor the Freedom to Grow Conference being organized by Mr. Derrick Dawson (the Father of Joshua Dawson, our Extension Agent here locally) held at the Lowndes County Civic Center, July 20-21, 2023 and this was initiated by Commissioner Marshall. Mrs. Dukes asked the Director of Permitting, Inspections and Code Enforcement, Mindy Bates, to give the Commission an update. Mrs. Bates stated the total applications submitted as of 4:30 p.m. this afternoon is 44 applications, submitted and processed. Related to those 44 applications, 26 permits have been issued, with seven having been completely through the process and closed out, with one commercial permit and 26 residential permits. On the first day, two applications were submitted and processed as well as two inspections. There have been 70 contractors' licenses and occupational tax registrations registered and verified. There has been assessed approximately \$10,000.00 in fees, with \$2,500.00 being collected to date. Additionally, Mrs. Bates stated an application for commercial was received late this afternoon for a \$750,000.00 warehouse coming to town. Mrs. Dukes stated she is proud of Mrs. Bates and her staff for their hard work. Lastly, Mrs. Dukes stated there has been a leadership change with the Lowndes County Fire Rescue Department and Billy Young will be the Fire Chief. Chief Green has moved into a Senior Fire Marshal position. Chairman Slaughter stated he looks forward to working with Chief Young while continuing to work and build what Chief Green has done with Lowndes County Fire Rescue. Chairman Slaughter and the Commissioners congratulated Chief Young.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD -

Catherine Reese, 3908 Forrest Street Extension, addressed the Commission regarding a Lowndes County Code Enforcement matter at 3910 and 3912 Forrest Street Extension. Ms. Reese stated she began speaking to the Code Enforcement Office regarding this matter on July 21, 2020, and is asking that the properties be cleaned up.

Diane Cox, 1009 Cherry Creek Drive, addressed the Commission stating that she sent an email to all of the Commissioners and the County Attorney, regarding using paper ballots for municipal elections. Ms. Cox is requesting to use paper ballots and to stop using the Dominion voting machines.

Cheri Whitney, 4513 Water Oak Trail, addressed the Commission to ask that the Commissioners review the Halderman Report and to quit using the Dominion voting machines and start using paper ballots.

Mary Gebbia, 3916 Weatherby Lane, addressed the Commission to ask for support from the local legislature in removing the Dominion voting machines and to use paper ballots instead.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Griner made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Marshall second. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the regular session meeting at 6:11 p.m.