

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, April 22, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Michael Smith

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

INVOCATION

Commissioner Michael Smith

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Michael Smith

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of April 7, 2025 and the regular session of April 8, 2025. No revisions were requested. Vice Chairperson Evans made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Slaughter stated if there were no objections, staff would like to add an item to the agenda, Val Del Road and North Valdosta Road Intersection Improvement Bids. There being no objections, Chairman Slaughter asked that the item be added as agenda item 7B.

APPOINTMENTS

Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities (DBHDD)

County Manager. Paige Dukes, presented the appointments. Mrs. Dukes stated the term of Ms. Kelley Saxon expired March 8, 2025. Mrs. Saxon has reached the maximum amount of time that a member can serve on the board, which is two terms. Also, the term of Mr. Carlton Richard will expire May 28, 2025. At this time, Mr. Richard is not seeking reappointment. Ms. Juliana Powell has expressed an interest in serving on this board as well as Ms. Lawanna Barron; if the commission wishes to take action on both seats at this time. Commissioner Marshall nominated Ms. Lawana Barron for the expiring term of Ms. Kelley Saxon. There being no other nominations, Ms. Lawanna Barron was appointed by acclamation. Commissioner Orenstein nominated Ms. Juliana Powell for the expiring term of Mr. Carlton Richard. There being no other nominations, Ms. Juliana Powell was appointed by acclamation.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Acceptance of the VAWA Continuation Grant Award for 2025

Chairman Bill Slaughter presented the item. Chairman Slaughter stated the commission heard from the Solicitor General's Office Representative, Karen Hayes at the work session. No further discussion took place. Vice Chairperson Evans made a motion to accept the grant award and authorize the Chairman to sign the documents, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FY2026 Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant Application

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated this is the 12th year that Lowndes County has applied for the Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant. This grant funds the Functional Family Therapy, which is utilized by the Juvenile Court as a diversion program. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve and authorize Chairman Slaughter to sign the application documents, including a Memorandum of Understanding with Evidence-Based Associates, and for staff to submit the completed application to the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council, second by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Emergency Purchase - Naylor Tower Top Amp Replacement

911 Director, Tonya Davis, presented the item. Mrs. Davis stated on March 15, 2025, during a thunderstorm, the tower top amp at the Naylor Public Safety Radio System Tower Site was struck by lightning and damaged, causing interruptions in communications. The total amount for the equipment and installation is \$36,776.00. Commissioner Smith asked how quickly this could be repaired. Mrs. Davis responded that in previous years, it was less than two weeks. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the purchase in the amount of \$36,776.00, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BID

2025 Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Resurfacing Bids (Project #: ENG 2025-01)

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the 2025 Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) application was approved by the Commission on January 14, 2025. The grant was approved by the Georgia Department of Transportation, Lowndes County received the grant funds, and staff advertised the project for bids. Bids were opened on April 15, 2025, and staff received two bids. Reames and Son Construction in the amount of 1,478,673.94 and the Scruggs Company in the amount of \$1,645,355.87. The LMIG grant will pay for \$1,366,958.46 with the remainder being paid for by SPLOST VIII as part of the grant match. Commissioner Smith asked if this is the LMIG for the year, Mr. McLeod responded yes. County Manager, Paige Dukes added the LMIG match is a set percentage that the county can forecast. In SPLOST VIII, the county went ahead and forecast that for every year we would have to make a match, and you will see this again next year with another list of projects with the same funding source; it does come out of SPLOST. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve Reames and Son Construction as the low bidder in the amount of \$1,478,673.94, second by Vice Chairperson Evans and Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Val Del Road at North Valdosta Road Intersection Improvement Bids

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Val Del Road at North Valdosta Road Intersection Improvements include traveling south, one dedicated left turn lane, one dedicated left turn and straight lane, and one dedicated right turn all with a 500' stacking depth. When traveling north, two lanes for 500'. Included in this project is new drainage, site improvements, new guardrails, signal upgrades, new striping and relocation of utilities. Bids were opened yesterday, April 21st and staff received two bids. Reames and Son Construction in the amount of \$1,727,365.72 and the Scruggs Company in the amount of \$1,851,180.40. Mr. McLeod stated the 2024 LMIG Supplemental Grant will pay for \$1,500,000.00 and SPLOST VIII will pay for \$227,365.72. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if there was enough land, Mr. McLeod responded that no right of way was acquired, but there were a few construction easements and utility easements. Chairman Slaughter asked Mrs. Dukes to speak with additional comments related to this project. Mrs. Dukes stated Mrs. Barwick will take the social media pages and change the project name and that process will start tomorrow with detour information as well as updates on the project. Mrs. Dukes mentioned regarding the project timeline, this will start as soon as possible with school being out for the summer. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked where is the detour, Mr. McLeod answered a detour would be set up for commercial traffic, which will be Highway 122 to I-75. There will be no detour established for local traffic, only message boards on Val Del Road. Commissioner Smith asked who is responsible for the message boards and signage, Mr. McLeod answered we will use ours and if needed, the contractor will supplement. Chairman Slaughter mentioned he spoke to the Lowndes County Board of Education Superintendent, Sandra Wilcher, regarding bus routing and explained that our hopes are to have this done during the summer and impact bus travel the least amount as possible. Mr. McLeod responded in the bid documents it states that the road cannot be closed until May 27th. Mrs. Dukes asked if the Commissioners had any suggestions regarding this project, to please notify her. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the low bidder, Reames and Son Construction in the amount of \$1,727,365.72, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, reported the following:

- Mrs. Dukes asked Lowndes County Public Information Officer, Meghan Barwick, to speak about the county's role in the Bluesberry Festival and the Plein Air Art Competition, which was held on the lawn of the historic courthouse. Mrs. Barwick explained that the Plein Air Art competition allows artists to sign up and paint what they observe outdoors. There were twelve artists registered and ten completed their paintings. Mrs. Barwick thanked the sponsors - Miller Hardware, the Public Arts Advisory Committee and the Central Valdosta Development Authority, for donating prizes to the winners. The winners were: First place: Todd Wessel; Second place: Emme Shiver; and Third place: Daisy Taylor. Additionally, Mrs. Barwick mentioned that many blueberry pancakes were served and extended special thanks to the Quiet Pines staff.
- Mrs. Dukes asked Lowndes County Community Development Director, Rachel Thrasher to update the commission regarding the Quiet Pines Golf Course. Mrs. Thrasher reported that Quiet Pines has been open since the end of November. The original building was destroyed by Hurricane Helene, and the partnership with Moody Air Force Base (AFB) has been invaluable. Moody AFB has received an award from the federal government for disaster recovery funds. At the time, 400 facilities on base were damaged, and a priority list for repairs was created. Quiet Pines ranked among the top twenty facilities and ultimately made the top five on the list.

Mrs. Thrasher mentioned that operations have been conducted out of a 32-foot portable building since November, and golf activity has actually increased since the hurricane. Regarding the building timeline, the contractor is hopeful that construction will be completed by the end of the year.

- Mrs. Dukes then introduced Garry Dodard, Community Initiatives Officer for Moody Air Force Base. Mr. Dodard stated that he will be serving Moody Air Force Base and the local community by building partnerships and strengthening relationships within Lowndes County and Moody Air Force Base. Mrs. Dukes expressed gratitude to Mr. Dodard, stating we are very grateful for you and your service to Moody Air Force Base and our community.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD -

Kelley Saxon, 8 Baldwin Place, addressed the commission and stated April is 'Second Chance Month' and stated this is a nationwide effort to raise awareness about the barriers faced by individuals with criminal records and to support their successful reintegration into society. Ms. Saxon asked that consideration be given to Legacy clients to fulfill their treatment requirements through Legacy certified counselors and health professionals while providing successful and supportive care and reducing the likelihood of unnecessary incarceration.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Orenstein. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 6:01 p.m.