

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Tuesday, May 27, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Michael Smith

Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans was not present.

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of April 21, 2025 and the regular session of April 22, 2025. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

APPOINTMENTS

Valdosta-Lowndes County Airport Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated Jeff Sikes' term expires May 21, 2025 and he has expressed a desire to be reappointed. Mr. Ben Hogan would also like to be considered for this appointment. Chairman Slaughter stated Mr. Sikes does a fantastic job for reappointment.

Southern Georgia Area Agency on Aging

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated the term of Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans expires June 30, 2025 and she's expressed a desire to continue to serve.

South Georgia Community Service Board

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated that due to Chairman Slaughter being appointed to the State Board of Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities, he can no longer serve. Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans has expressed a desire to serve on this board. Chairman Slaughter mentioned this position is specifically for elected officials and Vice Chairperson Evans is very qualified.

FOR CONSIDERATION

2025 Local Road Assistance (LRA) Administration Funds Application

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Georgia Department of Transportation announced that the Governor and the Legislature included the Local Road Assistance (LRA) in the amended fiscal year 2025 budget. The LRA funds will be distributed using the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Application System and will require no matching funds. The fiscal year 2025 LRA amount for Lowndes County is \$1,677,028.92. If approved, the funds will be used for the resurfacing of Newsome Road, Radar Site Road, Coffee Road, Hemby Lane and Webb Road North. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if this is a complete resurfacing of the entire road on Newsome Road. Mr.

McLeod responded he would verify. Commissioner Marshall asked if bike lanes would be included in this project. Mr. McLeod responded this covers only resurfacing, not sidewalks or bike lanes.

Updated Debris Removal Contract Pricing with Ashbritt

EMA Director, Ashley Tye presented the item. Mr. Tye stated that last June, Lowndes County entered into an agreement with Ashbritt Environmental as the County's primary disaster-related debris removal contractor. As part of their contract renewal, vendors are allowed to request updated pricing based on the Consumer Pricing Index. Ashbritt has submitted a request with a 1.9% increase over the original contract. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if any work was currently going on with Ashbritt, related to Hurricane Helene. Mr. Tye responded no sir, all debris removal has been completed. Chairman Slaughter mentioned when Lowndes County approved Ashbritt initially, there were two additional vendors in the past; Mr. Tye stated the other vendors have not asked for an increase. Chairman Slaughter stated based on the other bids, from a primary contractor's standpoint, does the 1.9% increase change Ashbritt's position. Mr. Tye responded he would verify the numbers. Commissioner Smith asked when will the contract be in place and active, Mr. Tye answered June 25, 2025. Commissioner Orenstein stated he does not believe people understand what 1.9% would be as it relates to dollar amounts. Mr. Tye answered that if this 1.9% increase had been in effect with Hurricane Idalia it would equate to approximately \$125,000.00; if it had been in effect with Hurricane Helene, it would equate to approximately \$500,000.00.

BID

Bid for Mini Excavator for Public Works

Purchasing Agent, Amy Woods, presented the item. Mrs. Woods stated Lowndes County has solicited bids for a new mini excavator for the Public Works Department. Mrs. Woods stated one bid was received from Yancey Bros. in the amount of \$171,453.00. Mrs. Woods mentioned this equipment is being used to clean easements that are too small to reach with a larger excavator. Mrs. Dukes asked Public Works Director, Robin Cumbus to give the commission a response regarding this purchase. Mrs. Cumbus stated that after Hurricane Helene, this type of excavator was leased from Yancey and it helped greatly with removing tree debris in easements that larger excavators could not access. Mrs. Cumbus also mentioned it has attachments which could be used for multipurpose uses. Mrs. Cumbus asked Fleet Maintenance Supervisor, Troy Terry, to speak on the size of the excavator, Mr. Terry responded that this size is close to a mid-size excavator.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes asked Public Information Officer, Meghan Barwick and Historic Courthouse Facility & Marketing Coordinator, Jessica Ganas to come up and speak regarding Lowndes County's designation as a stop on the 2025 Blue Star Museum event. Mrs. Barwick stated that the Blue Star Museum is a partnership between the National Endowment for the Arts and Blue Star Families, in collaboration with the Department of Defense and museums across America, offering free admission to the nation's active-duty military personnel and their families. The Lowndes County Historic Courthouse along with the Turner Center for the Arts and the Lowndes County Historical Society and Museum have been added to this program. This program runs now through Labor Day weekend. Mrs. Dukes asked Mrs. Ganas to update the commission regarding the Fall Ramble. Mrs. Ganas stated the Fall Ramble will be held October 10-12, 2025; the Georgia Trust for Historic Preservation will bring their statewide historic tour, which is called the Ramble, which has not happened here since 1989. Mrs. Ganas stated five hundred members of the Georgia Trust will be here in our area to tour forty historic locations. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if there is a date set for the bicentennial celebration, Mrs. Ganas answered December 23, 2025. Mrs. Dukes responded a schedule of events will be sent out soon

County Manager, Paige Dukes, requested an executive session for attorney-client privilege regarding the proposed disposition of real estate. At 8:46 a.m. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to enter into executive session for the purpose of proposed disposition of real estate, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

At 8:58 a.m. Chairman Slaughter reconvened the work session with no additional information being discussed. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adjourn the work session meeting, second by Commissioner Orenstein. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting.