

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, June 24, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans was not in attendance.

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. Commissioner Marshall arrived after the Invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Smith

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Smith

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of June 9, 2025 and the regular session of June 10, 2025. Commissioner Marshall requested prior to the meeting for a revision to the minutes to accurately reflect Dr. Clemons's title, changing it from Mr. to Dr. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENT

Lowndes County Library Board

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated the second term of Dr. J. Eleveta Miller will expire June 30, 2025, leaving a vacant seat. Mr. Malcolm Warren has been recommended and has shown an interest in serving as well as Dr. Samuel Clemons. Commissioner Marshall nominated Dr. Samuel Clemons. There being no other nominations, Dr. Samuel Clemons was appointed by acclamation.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Lowndes County Juvenile Accountability Court (LCJAC) FY26 Budget & Grant Award

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from Mr. Geoffrey Martin during the work session. No further discussion took place. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve

the cash match from Lowndes County in the amount of \$12,100.00, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

ACCG IRMA Property & Liability Insurance Renewal

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the item. Mr. Beals stated this request is the ACCG Interlocal Risk Management Agency Program renewal for 2026. The renewal provides comprehensive blanket coverage for property and liability insurance. The annual renewal amount is \$1,177,284.00; the renewal includes a safety credit discount of \$61,962.00. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the renewal in the amount of \$1,177,284.00, second by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Axon Renewal Contract for Animal Services

Assistant Animal Services Director, Mike Brown, presented the item stating this is a five-year renewal contract with Axon in the amount of \$37,141.49. Mr. Brown mentioned that the total amount includes a 17.21% increase, attributed to inflation and increased manufacturing costs. Mr. Brown highlighted the benefits of the body cameras to the department, emphasizing their value for training, supporting court cases, and ensuring officer accountability, particularly when complaints are filed. Commissioner Orenstein added that locking in the contract for five years is advantageous. Commissioner Orenstein inquired whether this was a stand-alone contract or if there was any additional benefit from the Sheriff's Office also utilizing the body cameras through Axon. Mrs. Dukes responded that there is no additional benefit. Commissioner Smith asked if the body cameras would be replaced if they were damaged, Mr. Brown confirmed that they would be, with repairs and upgrades/new cameras included over the five-year period. Commissioner Orenstein asked how many body cameras are covered under the contract, Mr. Brown responded a quantity of five. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the Axon Renewal Contract for Animal Services in the amount of \$37,141.49, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Lowndes County Accountability Court Grant Approval and Cash Match

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from Mr. Geoffrey Martin during the work session. No further discussion took place. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the grant with the cash match from Lowndes County in the amount of \$35,437.44, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Lowndes County DUI Court FY 26 Grant Award

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from State Court Judge Ellen Golden during the work session. No further discussion took place. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the cash match from Lowndes County in the amount of \$42,404.00, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Valdosta Housing Authority Request for Loan

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated as discussed yesterday, this is the same \$1,000,000.00 loan that the county has already committed to and this is a change in the terms of repayment that meets the current needs of the Valdosta Housing Authority. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the request as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, expressed concerns about the annual assessment notices, and she discussed potential solutions to address this matter. Mrs. Dukes noted that EMA Director, Ashley Tye will be traveling to Atlanta, to pick up two checks for reimbursements for Hurricanes Idalia and Helene. Mrs. Dukes spoke regarding long-term recovery and mentioned our Public Information Officer, Meghan Barwick will be hosting a local public information officers meeting on Friday. This meeting will include discussions related to the mental health concerns regarding our community as it relates to the upcoming hurricane season. Mrs. Dukes asked Mr. Tye to provide the Commission with an update on long-term recovery efforts. Mr. Tye explained that short-term recovery typically spans approximately six months and includes debris clean-up, roof tarping, and stabilization of essential items. Over the past two years, Lowndes County has experienced a series of severe weather events, including three hurricanes, two tornadoes, two floods, a straight-line wind event in the Gornito area and an ice storm. Following Hurricane Idalia, a COAD, Community Organizations Active in Disaster, was established. The purpose of a COAD is to unite agencies in and around Lowndes County to collaboratively address community needs before, during and after disasters. Frank Richards, with Second Harvest of South Georgia, has taken the lead in organizing the COAD and facilitating its meetings, and coordinating efforts with United Way. Lastly, Mr. Tye stated Second Harvest will host FEMA and GEMA on July 1-2, 2025, for training focused on sustaining and strengthening the COAD.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD - There were no citizens wishing to be heard.

ADJOURNMENT

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