

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, July 21, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans was not in attendance.

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

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of July 7, 2025 and the regular session of July 8, 2025. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

APPOINTMENTS

Lowndes County Development Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the terms of Mr. Brooks Akins, Mr. Jerome Tucker, Mr. Gary Cannon, Mr. Barry Broome, and Mr. Clay Griner have expired. Mr. Akins, Mr. Tucker, Mr. Cannon and Mr. Broome have all expressed an interest in being reappointed. Mr. Griner is not interested in being reappointed at this time. There are now three vacant seats on the board previously held by Mr. Gary Moser, Mr. Crawford Powell and Mr. Clay Griner. Mr. Robert Green has also expressed an interest in being appointed to the board. Mrs. Dukes stated this board stands as a financing mechanism option, if needed. Commissioner Orenstein asked if this was created by the legislature. County Attorney, Walter Elliott, answered he believes it was created by the legislature and activated by the Board of Commissioners. Commissioner Smith asked if a commissioner needs to be on this board, Mr. Elliott responded, it allows for a commissioner up to a certain number. Chairman Slaughter stated a commissioner could serve. Commissioner Smith mentioned that Mr. Joe Brownlee has expressed an interest in serving.

Lowndes County Public Facilities Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the terms of Mr. J.D. Rice, Mr. Michael Walker, and Mr. Clay Griner have expired. Mr. Rice and Mr. Walker have expressed an interest in being reappointed, but Mr. Griner is not interested in being reappointed at this time. This leaves two vacant seats on the board previously held by Mr. Clay Griner and Mr. Crawford Powell. Mr. Robert Green has also expressed a desire to serve. Mrs. Dukes stated that this board is used as a financing mechanism as the previous board. County Attorney, Walter Elliott, stated that one commissioner may serve on this board. Mrs. Dukes stated these boards do not meet regularly.

FOR CONSIDERATION

2026 Comprehensive Plan Technical Assistance Contract

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this is an agreement for technical assistance services between the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners and the Southern Georgia Regional Commission. A scheduled kick-off meeting will be held August 12, 2025. Mr. Dillard stated this is a fourteen-month process to update the comprehensive plan. Chairman Slaughter asked if the Service Delivery Strategies (SDS) agreement coincides with the comprehensive plan. County Attorney, Walter Elliott, responded that the comprehensive plan is updated every five years. Additionally, Mr. Elliott stated there is a link between this comprehensive plan update and the SDS agreement.

FY 2026 Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Grant Application

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated this is a continuation of a grant that Lowndes County has received for the fifth year. Mr. Tye stated this is continuation funding of \$50,000.00 to continue the Strengthening Families Program (SFP) which is group family therapy designed for lower category offenses. Mr. Tye stated each cohort is graduating approximately ten families in September. Commissioner Marshall asked what is considered family classification, single parent versus parents (mother and father), Mr. Tye answered that classification does not matter as far as eligibility; the eligibility is determined by the youth that commits the offense. Commissioner Marshall asked what percentage of participants are coming from a single family home, Mr. Tye answered that is not tracked. Commissioner Orenstein voiced his concerns regarding grants being negatively impacted.

Acceptance of FY2026 Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant Award

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated in April of this year a grant application was submitted to continue the Juvenile Justice Incentive Grant which provides Functional Family Therapy (FFT) services. Mr. Tye stated that with FFT the therapist goes into the home and there is one-on-one counseling with the family. This grant has been implemented since 2014. Lowndes County has been awarded \$325,000.00 for FY2026 and this will support 50 youth and their families. Commissioner Smith asked if this grant requires a match, Mr. Tye answered there is no match, it is administered on a reimbursement basis. Commissioner Orenstein asked if every county in Georgia has this opportunity, Mr. Tye answered yes.

Blue Lake Lift Station Pump Repair

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the Blue Lake lift station is a duplex lift station on our main trunk line. This station is currently running on one pump. A quote was received from Xylem, Inc. with a cost of \$44,661.00 to repair and \$62,714.00 to purchase a new pump. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if this would be an 'in house' installation or was this included in the cost, Mr. Stalvey responded this was included in the cost. Commissioner Smith asked where Blue Lake is located. Mr. Stalvey answered exit 13.

Blue Lake Lift Station Control Panel

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the control panel at Blue Lake lift station was damaged beyond repair due to Hurricane Helene. Mr. Stalvey stated quotes were received by three vendors to replace the control panel. Cowart Electric, Applied Industrial Controls and Xylem, Inc. Staff recommends the low bidder, Cowart Electric in the amount of \$43,615.00.

Commissioner Smith asked since this damage occurred from the hurricane, would insurance cover this cost, Mrs. Dukes answered yes.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, asked Jeff Lovell with Lovell Engineering Associates to update the commission regarding water quality issues in the north end of the county. Mr. Lovell stated there are water quality issues with the north Lowndes water system, particularly the Stone Creek area. Lowndes County drilled the offsite well deeper, due to capacity issues. It seems that a sulfur vein was encountered that has caused issues with the smell and color of this well. We are currently checking with vendors about aeration as this is the best way to strip sulfur from the water. The long-term solution for this problem will most likely be a new well field in the north end of the county.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Marshall. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 9:14 a.m.