

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, August 11, 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.

Lowndes County 811 Day Proclamation (Work Session)

Chairman Slaughter presented the Lowndes County 811 Day Proclamation.

Emergency Management Awareness Month Proclamation (Work Session)

Chairman Slaughter presented the Emergency Awareness Month Proclamation.

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of July 21, 2025, the regular session of July 22, 2025, and the special called meeting of August 4, 2025. County Attorney, Walter Elliott, requested in writing that the minutes be revised to reflect changes regarding the appointment beginning and ending dates for the Public Facilities Authority.

PUBLIC HEARING

REZ-2025-12 Adair Estate, 4146 HWY 122, ~1.5ac, E-A to R-1, Well & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated the request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from E-A (Estate Agricultural) to R-1 (Low Density Residential) zoning, in order to bring the lot and its allowable uses into conformity. Mr. Dillard further stated if you look at the land use pattern, you will notice that many of the lots surrounding this are more appropriate for R-1; however, they have remained E-A. The Future Land Use map depicts the area as agricultural. There are no particular utilities in this section, thus the need for well and septic. Mr. Dillard stated there is a small portion of wetlands at the rear of the property, but the main portion can still be used appropriately for well and septic if it is zoned R-1. Mr. Dillard referenced a photo of the property, stating that the property is in disrepair from the previous hurricanes, and he further mentioned that on the eastern property line, the accessory building, which may or may not remain, if zoned R-1. TRC recommended R-1, and the Planning Commission also voted unanimously (9-0) to recommend the property be rezoned to R-1. Commissioner Marshall asked if this property is near Hahira, to which Mr. Dillard responded, yes, it is about a mile east of Hahira. Commissioner Marshall asked what makes

the lot non-conforming, Mr. Dillard responded, the current zoning is E-A which requires a minimum of five acres and the lot is only one and a half acres. In order to move forward we feel it is better to be served by R-1 for the allowed uses. Commissioner Marshall stated that he does not like spot zoning, and in essence, this is what the commissioners are being asked to do. Mr. Dillard responded in the sense that E-A is the predominant zoning pattern, we look at the lot sizes and I would argue that many of them should be zoned R-1 as well, which would not necessarily make it spot zoning. Commissioner Marshall asked what makes the parcel non-conforming, and Chairman Slaughter stated it is non-conforming because it is less than five acres. Commissioner Marshall asked when the parcel became non-conforming, Mr. Dillard responded, a majority of the lots have been zoned E-A since at least 2006. So, any time there is an opportunity to change, we like to bring it into conformity, that is why there is a recommendation for R-1. Commissioner Marshall asked if this was the status when the last Comprehensive Plan was completed? Mr. Dillard responded yes, in 2006, when the entire county was rezoned, it went from Agricultural Use (A-U) to E-A. Mr. Dillard stated he is unsure of why it was not done at that time. Commissioner Marshall asked if there was somewhere to grandfather them in verses spot zoning if it is an issue, or continue to have them as they are currently zoned. Chairman Slaughter stated he doesn't think there is another choice if it is going to be brought into conformity with the size of it, and it is already a platted lot. Commissioner Marshall stated that he is concerned that it opens the door for neighbors to start doing R-1. Chairman Slaughter asked Commissioner Marshall if he thinks the current zoning should remain in place instead of what it should be, Commissioner Marshall responded yes. County Manager, Paige Dukes mentioned that a lot of the zoning categories were assigned in 2006 when the ULDC was created.

REZ-2025-13 ENCC, LLC, 9353 GA HWY 135 & October Ln, ~1ac, E-A to C-C, Well & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from E-A (Estate Agricultural) zoning to C-C (Crossroads Commercial) zoning, in order to bring the property into compliance for commercial use. This property was formerly combined with the immediate parcel to the north, totaling approximately two acres. He stated it was subdivided by deed in approximately 2016 or 2017, so there was no plat at that time for the County to review and approve. This would not have matched the zoning at that time anyway. Mr. Dillard mentioned that Riley Church Pew Repair had been on the property for 30 plus years. It was an allowed accessory use in A-U and E-A, however, when the property was subdivided, it changed hands a few times. Mr. Dillard went on to say that the property is now being used commercially for ENCC, Eric Newsome Custom Cabinetry. The Comprehensive Plan does not recommend much commercial in those areas. However, C-C is the only recommended commercial zoning that would allow the use to continue moving forward. The property has an approximately 6,000 square foot building. There are no wetlands. There is a low density pattern to the east, which was a precursor to family ties which allowed the R-1 zoning on this property. One of the conditions that staff has recommended is the potential paving of October Lane (a private drive) if they are proposing any access, which the applicant is not at this time. Mr. Dillard stated that based on the uses that C-C zoning allows, staff has recommended that alcohol package stores, cemeteries, funeral homes, mini storages, kennels with outdoor runs, and vehicle sales shall not be allowed if C-C zoning is approved. Any vehicular ingress and egress off of October Lane shall require the property owner/developer to pave the street from that ingress/egress to the nearest paved street. The property owner/developer will be responsible for design, acquisition of the right of way, relocation of utilities, and construction costs for the paving. The TRC wanted to make the Board aware of C-C zoning, including buffering, as well as the allowed uses. The Planning Commission recommended approval (9-0) with the two conditions. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if it is supposed to stay a cabinet manufacturing shop, Mr. Dillard responded that is the current use of the property. County Manager, Paige Dukes stated this property was Mr. J.C.

Riley's Church Pew business. This is the second time that he has sold the property. When the current owner came in to take care of their occupational tax and other business, we realized that the property had never been subdivided from Mr. Riley's home to the business use. This rezoning clears everything up legally.

2026 Comprehensive Plan Kickoff

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated as required by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs (DCA), this is the five-year annual update of the Comprehensive Plan. Tomorrow will be the first official public hearing for this process. Mr. Dillard stated that at that time, Mr. James Horton with the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, who the Board of Commissioners approved to assist the County with the process, will give a presentation. Then five or six other work dates will be scheduled throughout the next 15 months as we develop the Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Dillard further stated the Future Land Use Map is probably the most predominant aspect of the plan that comes before you, but there are other aspects regarding paving, utility projects, and how we want to see the County grow over the next five years. Mr. Dillard stated he wanted to give a heads up that the official presentation and kickoff by Mr. Horton will be tomorrow, August 12, 2025. Mr. Dillard mentioned that those work dates will be provided for the Board of Commissioners to attend and give guidance as we look at the County for the next five years.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) permanent easement at 503 W. Main St. Hahira, GA 31632

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item stating the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has a project in Hahira that is labeled SR 7/SR 122 from SR 7 to CS 38/Union Road in Hahira Sidewalks Lowndes. Mr. McLeod stated GDOT is requesting a permanent easement from Lowndes County for sidewalk construction and to maintain slopes on a parcel that Lowndes County owns, which is the Parrott Health Clinic at 503 W. Main Street, Hahira, GA 31632. The easement consists of 733.73 square feet. Mr. McLeod further stated GDOT has had the easement appraised and has offered Lowndes County \$2,600.00 for the easement. Staff has reviewed the easement drawing and visited the site, and does not see any negative impact.

FY2026 Joint Funding Agreement with USGS

Emergency Management Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated this agreement is brought before the Commission each year to continue operating and maintaining two stream gauges in Lowndes County. Mr. Tye stated the first one is the stream gauge on the Little River at the Hwy 122 bridge west of Hahira, which the County has maintained since 2009. He further stated Lowndes County also shares the expense of the gauge on Skipper Bridge over the Withlacoochee River, which was previously maintained by the City of Valdosta several years back, but they indicated they would not be able to continue funding it, so Lowndes County worked with USGS to share the cost with the Suwannee Water Management District. These gauges are very instrumental in the National Weather Service being able to provide flood forecasts anytime we have significant rain or river flooding events. Mr. Tye stated the only change to the agreement is the cost increase to reflect the cost of staff coming out doing maintenance and the general upkeep. This agreement is \$1,900.00 more than it was last year, but due to the importance of these gauges, we recommend that the County continue to fund them. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if there was any negotiation with the cost if the County decided not to pay it, Mr. Tye responded, they would be cut off. Commissioner Smith asked if they should be looking at gauges on any other rivers, Mr. Tye responded that it is always worthy of

discussion, but so far, the hydrologist who works for the National Weather Service feels comfortable with the gauges that we have.

Moody AFB Emergency Water Connection Easement Supplemental Agreement

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated an easement was granted to Lowndes County by the Air Force in 2023 for the emergency backup water connection from Lowndes County to Moody AFB. He stated that due to unforeseen conflicts after construction began, it was agreed upon by all parties to slightly shift the path of the waterline to avoid conflicts with the railroad and electric duct bank. This easement is located on Moody Air Force Base just south of Florida Road near the water plant. Mr. Stalvey stated the United States Air Force has provided Supplemental Agreement No.1 for acceptance and signature, adjusting the easement to include the final location of the water main. Staff recommends approval and authorize the Chairman to sign Supplemental Agreement No.1. Commissioner Smith asked if this is still a work in progress, Mr. Stalvey stated it is completed. Commissioner Smith asked if it is now being moved, Mr. Stalvey stated, just the easement, not the pipes.

Shiloh Road Resurfacing and Bridge Replacement, P.I. 0016272 Supplemental Agreement No. 1

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated, the original agreement dated 03/10/2021 with the Georgia Department of Transportation has a "not to exceed amount" of \$5,600,000.00, for the Shiloh Road Resurfacing and Bridge Replacement. He further stated staff asked the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) office for an additional funding request to cover the difference between the actual cost of the project and the agreement amount, of which is \$1,600,000.00. Mr. McLeod stated that after reviewing the initial TIA budget, bid amount, and projected tax collections for TIA, the TIA office has agreed to provide additional funds of \$1,600,000.00, to cover the total cost of the project.

BID

Shiloh Road Resurfacing and Bridge Replacement, P.I. 0016272 Bids

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Shiloh Road Resurfacing and Bridge Replacement is a TSPLOST 1 approved project. The project consists of a detour bridge, removal of the existing bridge, construction of the new bridge, relocation of the existing pump station, grading, and resurfacing of 0.53 miles. Mr. McLeod stated the new bridge will be constructed at an elevation 11.6 feet higher than the existing bridge. Bids were opened on July 31, 2025 and two (2) bids were received. The Scruggs Company submitted the low bid in the amount of \$6,400,444.98, and Reames and Son Construction submitted a bid in the amount of \$6,494,433.42. Mr. McLeod stated the TIA office has given Lowndes County a Construction Notice to Proceed based on their review of the bids. The original estimate for this project was \$5,600,000.00, which included engineering, surveying, environmental, right-of-way, and construction. With this bid, the total project cost will be \$7,200,000.00. TIA has approved to provide the additional funds to cover the difference. Commissioner Marshall asked about the turnaround time, Mr. McLeod responded eighteen months. Mr. McLeod further stated this project does have a detour bridge. Commissioner Smith asked if this bridge had flooded in the past. Mr. McLeod responded, yes, and they based the elevation off of the 2009 floods, and they are above that elevation mark. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked the location of the bridge. Mr. McLeod responded, about three quarters of a mile from the interstate just past Val Tech Road.

Lowndes County Civic Center-Hurricane Helene Repairs Bid

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Lowndes County Civic Center sustained substantial damage during Hurricane Helene. Staff worked with Crews Engineering to inspect damage, review structural analysis, and complete and develop a plan and bid package. He stated the bid includes removing the existing roof panels that remain, removing the wood purlins and installing metal purlins, installing a new metal roof, removing the drop ceiling that remains, installing insulation beneath the new roof, and repairing the damaged lights. The project was advertised for bids, a pre-bid was conducted on June 15, 2025, and bids were opened July 30, 2025. Staff received three (3) bids. Kellerman Construction submitted the low bid in the amount of \$318,030.00, 3D Construction Services submitted a bid in the amount of \$381,565.00, and Standard Contractors submitted a bid in the amount of \$440,481.00. Mr. McLeod stated this is covered under insurance coverage from the hurricane. Commissioner Smith asked if this metal roof will be able to withstand higher winds than the last roof. Mr. McLeod responded yes.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, asked to get photos of the commissioners with the 811 and EMA proclamations. Mrs. Dukes then requested an executive session for attorney-client privilege regarding potential or pending litigation settlement or claims. At 9:02 a.m. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to enter into executive session for the purpose of potential or pending litigation settlement or claims, second by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:32 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.