

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, October 14, 2025 - 5:30 PM

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 5:30 p.m. and recognized the presence of Leadership Lowndes Class Members.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Michael Smith

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Michael Smith

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of September 22, 2025, and the regular session of September 23, 2025. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, second by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING

TWR-2025-01 New 260' Telecommunications Tower

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this case represents a request by the applicant to construct a new approximately 260' telecommunications tower on a 10,000 square foot leased area on Rocky Ford Road near Watkins Road. The subject property is currently zoned Estate Agricultural (EA) and is allowed to be used for the construction of a new telecommunications tower with the Greater Lowndes Planning Commission and the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners' approval. The subject property is in the Rural Service Area and depicted as Rural Residential on the Future Land Use Map. There are no wetlands on the property. Surrounding properties include a County Fire Station, Watkins Family Property and Camp Rock. Mr. Dillard stated the closest tower is 3.7 miles away to the southeast, located at Wild Adventures. The primary motivation for a new tower on the subject property is to fill a gap in the existing coverage area. Mr. Dillard stated this is to improve 5G coverage, provided by T-Mobile, and other providers such as Verizon and AT&T could rent space on the proposed tower. The TRC recommended approval of this request, noting the standards set forth in 5.05.00 and 10.02.00 of the ULDC, and factors most relevant

to this application, including the proposed location's ability to enhance telecommunication service, minimize adverse impacts on the community, and encourage the location of towers in non-residential areas. The Planning Commission also recommended approval.

Kim Watkins Lindsey, 4364 Rocky Ford Road, spoke against this request. Ms. Lindsey suggested alternative locations, including the Wild Adventures property or the Camp Rock location. She also mentioned the possibility of using fiber installation as an alternative solution to improve connectivity in the area. Michael Potochnak, 4364 Rocky Ford Road, spoke against this request and mentioned he is the spouse of Kim Watkins Lindsey. Mr. Potochnak expressed concern about negative impacts on property values and urged the commission to reject the proposed location and to consider alternative sites in non-residential areas. Mr. Potochnak further requested that the County uphold the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) guidelines for responsible tower placement in Lowndes County. Emily Esler, 5413 Worthington Street, Lake Park, spoke in opposition to this request. Ms. Esler noted that her partner's parents live on Rocky Ford Road and expressed concern about the tower's close proximity to residential areas. Ms. Esler cited potential health, ethical, and community-related concerns, emphasizing that such an installation could negatively affect the well-being and integrity of the neighborhood. Nathan Brantley, 701 North Patterson Street, spoke in favor of this request on behalf of the applicant, RBW Service Group, LLC, which is a site acquisition consultant for the lessee for the tower location, and property owners Jay and Sandra Watkins. Mr. Brantley stated multiple documents have been submitted to the county addressing concerns raised by the opposition. Mr. Brantley emphasized that tower locations are subject to strict criteria, including coverage needs, land availability, environmental and wetland requirements, and that this location meets those standards. He stated that the tower location and coverage area maps that were presented demonstrate that the subject area currently experiences poor coverage. Further, Mr. Brantley stated that the proposed tower is intended for colocation use and is in compliance with the ULDC. Jay Watkins, 4391 Rocky Ford Road, spoke in favor of this request. Mr. Watkins stated that he operates Camp Rock and that the farm has been in his family for many years. He noted that during a large event held the previous weekend, he was unable to use his cell phone due to the poor coverage. He also mentioned that following the recent hurricane, while helping to feed the community, he had to travel to specific locations in order to make phone calls. Mr. Watkins emphasized the need for improved service and expressed support for the proposed tower. James McMullen, III, 4416 Rocky Ford Road, spoke in favor of this request. Mr. McMullen stated that he is the director at Camp Rock and that there are many times when staff and participants are out in the fields or woods. In the event of an emergency, he noted, a landline would not help them communicate or get back to camp. Dale McDonald, 5869 Cothron Lane, spoke in favor of this request. Mr. McDonald stated that his family farms in the area and that cell service is lost before reaching Cothron Lane, Ousley Road, and Nankin Road. He emphasized that reliable cell service is needed throughout the area. Timothy Rosier, 4434 Rocky Road, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Rosier stated he is a college student and relies on cell service to complete his schoolwork. He added that there have been ongoing issues with calls being dropped or disconnected due to poor reception.

Opposition - Rebuttal:

Kim Watkins Lindsey, 4364 Rocky Ford Road, addressed the commission and stated that improved cell service is needed in the area but asked the commission to consider an alternative location for the proposed tower.

Michael Pochanuk, 4364 Rocky Ford Road, addressed the commission and stated he disagrees with Mr. Brantley's assessment that the requirements outlined in the ULDC had been met.

Support - Rebuttal: No one spoke.

Commissioner Smith asked Mr. Dillard to display the tower location map. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the request as presented, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2025-15 Stewart Circle ~13.6ac, 3923, 4025 & 4051 Stewart Circle, C-C & R-1 to C-H, County Utilities

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from C-C (Crossroads Commercial) & R-1 (Low Density Residential) to C-H (Highway Commercial) zoning, in order to unify the zoning for the property to be developed with a mixture of commercial uses. The subject property is within the Urban Service Area and U.S. 41 Corridor Overlay, and Community Activity Center and Institutional Activity Center Character Areas, which recommend C-H zoning. Primary access is off of Stewart Circle and there are existing drives and proposed easements connecting to the Val North Commercial complex. There is a large, approximately 5.6 acres of wetlands, which will have to be further delineated before any development occurs. Mr. Dillard stated there were trees removed from Hurricane Helene as well as junk vehicles and housing issues that Code Enforcement has been dealing with and those have been mitigated, and the current property owner is fully aware and in compliance. The TRC and Planning Commission recommended approval. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the request as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Lowndes County Responsible Dog Ownership Ordinance

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented an ordinance modifying the process for determining whether a dog is classified as "dangerous" or "vicious" following a bite or attack. Previously, such cases were reviewed by a citizen review board appointed by the Commission. Under the new ordinance, that board is dissolved, and the authority to hear appeals of "dangerous" or "vicious" dog determinations is transferred to the Probate Court. Pet owners still retain the right to challenge these determinations. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to adopt the ordinance as presented, second by Commissioners Wisenbaker and Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Purchase of Wetland Credits for Twin Lakes Road Paving Project

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented a proposal from Williams Investments, LLC, in the amount of \$54,400.00 for the purchase of wetland credits required for the Twin Lakes Road Paving Project. Mr. McLeod stated the wetland credits are \$20,000.00 per credit, and Lowndes County will need 2.72 wetland credits to finalize the permit. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the purchase as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Agreement for PI No. 0015614 CR 136/Old Quitman Road @ CSX #637487Y

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) is proposing to replace the CR136/Old Quitman Bridge over the tracks of CSX Transportation. Lowndes County is part of the agreement since Old Quitman Road is a county local road. Mr. McLeod stated that GDOT will be responsible for all funding related to this project. Additionally, Mr. McLeod stated the project is on schedule to have a let date of November 21, 2025. Commissioner Marshall inquired about the estimated project duration. Mr. McLeod answered that no firm timeline has been established, but a project of this nature could take approximately eighteen (18) months to complete. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the

agreement as presented, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Acceptance of Infrastructure for The Landings Phase IV

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated that the Landings Phase IV is located off of Val Del Road and includes fifty-two (52) residential lots. The developer has requested Lowndes County to accept infrastructure, which includes the roads and right of ways, stormwater infrastructure and utilities infrastructure. Commissioner Orenstein asked who was the site contractor, Mr. McLeod responded Reames and Son. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adopt the resolution accepting infrastructure for the Landings Phase IV, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Reports - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the below information:

- The Senate Study Committee on Tourism will be holding a meeting tomorrow at 9:00 a.m. at the Rainwater Conference Center.
- Burgers & Bluegrass will be held Friday, October 17th at 5:30 p.m. at Lowndes Park.
- The Special Olympics Georgia 2025 State Fall Games will be held at Quiet Pines on Friday, October 17th at noon and Saturday morning, October 18th.
- Lowndes County will be hosting the Rotary for lunch on October 22nd at the Lowndes County Historic Courthouse as a part of the Bicentennial Celebration.
- Nominations for the large and small farmer of the year awards, to be presented at the Annual Farmers Appreciation Breakfast, are being accepted through the end of October. Nomination forms are available on our website at www.lowndescounty.com. Georgia Commissioner of Agriculture, Tyler Harper, will be our keynote speaker.

Mrs. Dukes recognized County Planner, J.D. Dillard and wished him a happy 40th birthday.

Commissioner Orenstein thanked Mrs. Dukes and counsel for the efforts related to animal control, noting that their hard work has not gone unnoticed.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

John Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, addressed the commission regarding the Cat Creek Nine Element Plan. He noted the County's participation, specifically mentioning attendance at approximately four meetings.

Kelley Saxon, 8 Baldwin Place, addressed the commission to inquire about the absence of Commissioner Joyce Evans. She expressed concern that District 1 is currently without representation and sought clarification on the matter.

Wanda Thompkins, 503 West Hill Street, Quitman, addressed the commission concerning her brother, who is currently incarcerated and experiencing mental health issues. She expressed serious concern for his wellbeing, stating that he is in need of medical attention and is unable to care for himself.

William Carey, 4038 Liska Circle, addressed the commission with concerns regarding Kinetic by Windstream. He stated this company has been installing fiber in neighborhoods without utilizing the

Georgia 811 "Call Before You Dig" system. Mr. Carey emphasized the importance of following proper utility location protocols to prevent potential damage and ensure public safety.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Marshall encouraged everyone to participate in Valdosta State University's Homecoming next week. Chairman Slaughter also mentioned that early voting started today. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 6:22 p.m.