

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, October 28, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

Commissioner 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

Vice Chairman Scott Orenstein

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Vice Chairman Scott Orenstein

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work and regular session of October 14, 2025. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Vice Chairman Orenstein made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Beer & Wine License - Tara Kay Middleton of RaceTrac Inc, DBA RaceTrac #2666, 4541 North Valdosta Road, Valdosta, GA

Finance Assistant Director, Rachel Bowen, presented the item stating this request is for a beer and wine license for consumption off the premises. This is a new establishment located at 4541 North Valdosta Road, dba RaceTrac #2666 and all requirements have been met. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the alcohol license as presented, second by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Section 125 Plan Document Renewal for 2026

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the item. Mr. Beals stated approval of the plan will allow qualifying employee deductions to be withheld pretax and in accordance with the IRS guidelines. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Vice Chairman Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

GEFA Loan for Lift Station Bypass Pumps

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated Lowndes County has been preselected for a GEFA loan to install bypass pumps at our lift stations that are currently not equipped with backup capabilities. The loan amount is \$2,812,500.00, with a principal forgiveness of \$703,125.00. This will allow for back-up capabilities at all of our lift stations. Even though we have applied for FEMA mitigation money, this will allow us to lock in current pricing and potentially, have equipment in place before the next hurricane season. Commissioner Marshall asked to verify this is wastewater being referenced. Chairman Slaughter answered yes, this is the lift stations for wastewater. Commissioner Smith asked which fund this could be paid from, Mrs. Dukes answered the enterprise fund. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BIDS

Demolition for Lowndes County Fire Rescue Station 3

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Lowndes County advertised for bids to demo the former restaurant building (formerly Rascals) at 4875 U.S. Highway 41 South in Lake Park. In order for Lowndes County to begin the process for a new Fire Station #3, the demolition of this building is the next step. Six bids were received with two bids being disqualified due to incomplete paperwork. Standard Contractors submitted the low bid in the amount of \$85,174.00. Commissioner Marshall asked for clarification on what was meant by the term "discarded." Mr. McLeod answered that any hazardous materials would be disposed of in accordance with all local and state regulations. He explained that the disposal of any other items would be at the contractor's discretion, with the majority of materials being sent to the landfill. County Manager, Paige Dukes, added that staff had conducted a walk-through of the facility and determined that none of the items could be used by other departments. Vice Chairman Orenstein made a motion to approve Standard Contractors as the low bidder in the amount of \$85,174.00, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Bid for Bemiss Road Right of Way Mowing

Finance Assistant Director, Rachel Bowen stated bids were received for Right of Way Mowing on Bemiss Road. This mowing will include the initial clean up, full cuts and the median. Outdoor Living submitted the low bid in the amount of \$414,988.00 for a five-year contract. The Georgia Department of Transportation will be reimbursing Lowndes County for the entire cost of the mowing and the Lowndes County Public Works Department will be maintaining the contract. Vice Chairman Orenstein made a motion to award the bid to Outdoor Living in the amount of \$414,988.00, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

- County Manager, Paige Dukes, asked EMA Director, Ashley Tye, to provide the commission with an update on the reimbursement process related to Hurricanes Idalia and Helene. Mr. Tye reported that the majority of funding from Hurricane Idalia has been received, except for administrative costs associated with time spent by himself and department heads compiling and submitting documentation. Those remaining administrative reimbursements are estimated at approximately \$56,000.00. Hurricane Debby has already been fully closed out. Regarding Hurricane Helene, Mr. Tye stated that debris removal costs remain outstanding, with approximately \$9 million still owed to the County. He explained that the County had received \$13 million in expedited funding upfront to assist with immediate recovery expenses and

confirmed that all required documentation has been submitted on behalf of Lowndes County. Mrs. Dukes thanked Mr. Tye for his efforts in securing expedited funding, noting that this process provided significant advantages for both Idalia and Helene reimbursements. Mrs. Dukes added that not every local government in our region opted to take advantage of the expedited funding option.

- Mrs. Dukes asked Fire Chief, Billy Young, to speak regarding Fire Prevention Month. Chief Young announced that this year's fire prevention theme focuses on lithium-ion battery safety. Educational outreach has been provided to approximately 3,500 students in local schools. Chief Young also mentioned that Lowndes County Fire Rescue will participate in the Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation fundraising efforts. Chief Huffmaster has agreed to lead these efforts. A charity golf tournament will be held at Quiet Pines on Thursday, October 30th, beginning at 8:00 a.m., featuring nine teams. Donations have been received from S & L Sausage Company and other community partners for raffles and prizes. All proceeds will benefit the Georgia Firefighters Burn Foundation to support local hospitals and fire prevention programs. After the total donations are tallied, 10% will be returned to Lowndes County Fire Rescue to purchase fire prevention materials for the following year.
- Mrs. Dukes also thanked law enforcement officers in attendance in recognition of National First Responders Day.
- Additionally, Mrs. Dukes stated Lowndes County will participate next week in Operation Green Light, an initiative created in partnership with NACO (National Association of Counties) to encourage businesses, residents, and local governments to display green lights in support of veterans and the challenges they face. The Lowndes County Historic Courthouse will be illuminated green in observance of the initiative.

Commissioner Smith thanked staff for their efforts in organizing the Burgers and Bluegrass event held at Lowndes Park, mentioning the strong community support and overall success of the event. Chairman Slaughter stated that he had heard positive feedback about the event, although he was unable to attend. Commissioner Marshall reminded everyone to be mindful of the water table given the recent lack of rainfall and ongoing dry conditions. Chairman Slaughter added that forecasts predict a warmer and drier winter ahead.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

Steven Schrek, 2606 Thomas Street, addressed the commission and apologized for his attire at the previous meeting. He stated that prior to last month's meeting, he had made several phone calls regarding a large flag displayed in his neighborhood for the past two years, which contains derogatory language. Mr. Schrek mentioned that he has contacted multiple agencies, including the Valdosta Police Department, Lowndes County 911, and the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office, and has spoken to Officer Baxley and Captain Whitener regarding the matter. Mr. Schrek requested that the board consider adopting an ordinance prohibiting public obscenity.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Marshall. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 5:53 p.m.