

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, January 12, 2026 - 8:30 AM

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

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

I Love Public Schools Day Joint Proclamation (Work Session)

Chairman Slaughter and Mayor Matheson read and presented the Lowndes County School Superintendent, Sandra Wilcher, and the City of Valdosta School Superintendent, Dr. Craig Lockhart, with a joint proclamation for "I Love Public Schools Day" being proclaimed January 12, 2026. Staff members of both schools were also present.

Acknowledgement of Lowndes County Probation's Annual Audit (Work Session)

Chairman Slaughter stated this item would be presented at the regular session commission meeting.

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of December 8, 2025, and the regular session of December 9, 2025. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

APPOINTMENT

Lowndes County Board of Health

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the appointment, stating the term of Dr. Frances Brown expired December 31, 2025. Dr. Brown has expressed a desire to continue to serve. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked how long she had served on the board. Mrs. Dukes asked Deputy County Clerk, Mrs. Sabrina Denson to respond, Mrs. Denson stated she believed this was Dr. Frances Brown's first term. Chairman Slaughter stated he believed that was correct and stated Dr. Brown is active and involved on this board. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if there was any information available as far as a resume or application that the Commission could review. Mrs. Dukes stated that would be made available at the regular session meeting.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Set Qualifying Fees

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the state statute requires the governing authority of any county or municipality to fix and publish a qualifying fee for each county or municipal office to be filed in the upcoming primary or election. The qualifying fee for County

Commissioner is based on the base salary. Mrs. Dukes stated the County Clerk will verify to see if any judges are in this selection cycle. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked when qualifying would begin. Chairman Slaughter stated he was unsure, and Commissioner Smith responded March 2-6, 2026.

Appointment of Felicia Williams to Board of Tax Assessors

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item stating at the Board's December 9, 2025 meeting, the Board voted to reappoint Felicia Williams to the Board of Tax Assessors. A proposed order that Ms. Williams has been and is appointed is attached. This order also specifies that Ms. Williams is appointed for a three year term beginning January 1, 2026, and ending December 31, 2028.

Acceptance of FY2026 Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Grant

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated staff submitted a request for continuation funding under the Delinquency Prevention Grant which funds the Strengthening Families Program (SSP) that has been implemented by Peaceway Counseling. This represents the fifth year of funding for the grant and will be the final year of funding under this grant cycle. Mr. Tye stated this request is to authorize the Chairman to sign all award documents, including the agreement with Peaceway Counseling for the provision of Strengthening Families Program services.

Approval of the Solicitor General's FY26 VOCA Grant Award AW-VOCA-25-071-012

Solicitor General's Office, Victim Services Director, Karen Hayes, presented the item. Ms. Hayes stated the Solicitor's Office has been the recipient of the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds since 2014 and this grant funds two full-time victim advocates. The FY2026 VOCA Award will be in the amount of \$75,020.00, which is the same amount as last year. Lowndes County would be required to provide a cash match of \$33,232.00, which is also the amount of last year. The performance period for this grant runs from October 1, 2025 - September 30, 2026. The Solicitor General's office is requesting the Board's approval of the FY2026 VOCA Grant Award AW-VOCA-25-071-012 and the federal award amount is \$75,020.00.

Approval of DA's FY 2026 VOCA Grant Application Renewal Sub-Grant Number: AW-VOCA-25-071-012 Federal Amount: \$137,368

District Attorney, Brad Shealy, presented the item. Mr. Shealy stated this is an annual request in which the District Attorney's office has received the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) grant funds since 1997, adding that it benefits all five counties in the Southern Judicial Circuit. Mr. Shealy stated the District Attorney's office is requesting the Board's approval of the FY2026 VOCA Grant Application Renewal Sub-Grant Number: AWVOCA-25-071-012 and the federal award amount is \$137,368.00.

Acceptance of Infrastructure for Knights Landing Phase IV Section I

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Knights Landing Phase IV, Section I is located off Bemiss Knights Academy Road at the end of Duchess Court and includes 39 residential lots. All construction and paperwork have been completed. Engineering and Utilities staff have conducted the final inspection of the construction. The developer has requested Lowndes County to accept the infrastructure, which includes the roads and right of ways, easements, stormwater infrastructure, and utilities infrastructure. Mr. McLeod stated there is one item to be completed and that is boring under the railroad track this morning, hopefully completed by tomorrow.

Acceptance of Infrastructure for Colbie Place Subdivision

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Colbie Place Subdivision is located off of River Road and includes 54 residential lots. All construction and paperwork have been completed. Engineering and Utilities staff have conducted the final inspection of the

construction. The developer has requested Lowndes County to accept the infrastructure, which includes the roads and right of ways, stormwater infrastructure, and utilities infrastructure.

FY 2026 Local Maintenance & Improvement Grant (LMIG) Application

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated as a part of the Georgia Department of Transportation LMIG Grant Program, Lowndes County has been allocated \$1,546,704.65 for FY 2026. As a part of this grant program, Lowndes County will be responsible for a minimum 10% match in local funding, which is allocated in SPLOST VIII. The grant money is being proposed to be used for drainage improvements on Lake Alapaha Boulevard and resurfacing/restriping the roads listed in the attachment in the board packet. Commissioner Marshall asked how far are the draining improvements, Mr. McLeod responded only a few thousand feet, but there is a lot of piping work, which is why the budget is so high. This will be tedious work due to the amount of utilities involved. Commissioner Smith asked if the drainage is water on the road or in the ditches, Mr. McLeod responded on the road. Commissioner Marshall asked if this would be concrete piping. Mr. McLeod responded piping and drainage boxes.

Transportation Investment Act (TIA) - Hickory Grove Road Widening and Skipper Bridge Road Widening

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Board approved submitting the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Local Government Application for project delivery at the December 9, 2025 commission meeting. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) approved the application and sent staff the Local Delivery Agreement to be approved. The Local Delivery Agreement is required to be executed prior to beginning work. Once the agreement has been executed, a written Notice to Proceed from GDOT is also required prior to beginning any project phase.

Transportation Investment Act (TIA) - Val Del Road Widening Local Agreement

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Board approved submitting the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Local Government Application for project delivery at the December 9, 2025 commission meeting. The Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) approved the application and sent staff the Local Delivery Agreement to be approved. The Local Delivery Agreement is required to be executed prior to beginning work. Once the agreement has been executed, a written Notice to Proceed from GDOT is also required prior to beginning any project phase.

PI 0016280, Just Compensation, Twin Lakes Road Right of Way Parcel 3

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated for purposes of the Twin Lakes TSPLLOST project, the County needs to acquire from the owners of Parcel 3 (i.e., tax parcel 0171 090) certain areas of fee simple ROW totaling 0.15 +/- acres in the aggregate, plus 0.07 +/- acres for a drainage easement. Parcel 3 is owned by Virginia G. Tyson, Charles F. Hobby, and Nancy G. Hobby. Staff has attempted to negotiate the purchase of the Right of Way and Drainage Easement from the owners, but no agreement has been reached. To avoid delays with the underlying project, staff has determined that acquisition by condemnation may be required. An initial step in the condemnation process is the determination of just compensation for the property being acquired. Kristen Johnson with Kunes Real Estate & Appraisals has prepared an appraisal that values the proposed taking at \$12,400.00, consisting of \$1,200.00 for the ROW areas, \$280.00 for the drainage easement, \$2,851.00 for the loss of existing fencing within the ROW areas, and \$8,040.00 for installation of new fencing. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked about the condemnation process and

Mr. McLeod explained the steps involved. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked when work on the road would begin. Mr. McLeod stated the plans are ready and scheduled to go out for bid in March, and staff is moving forward with a March timeframe. Vice Chairman Orenstein asked whether the underlying issue involves an unresponsive owner from out of town, Mr. McLeod responded no, there has been contact made, but a final agreement has not yet been reached with all parties involved.

Abandonment of Grice Road

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated this item had been on the previous agenda in December and that staff, along with the County Attorney, will continue to review and evaluate the request. Mr. McLeod stated that the item would be requested to be tabled. Discussion ensued among the Chairman, County Manager, County Attorney and the Director of Engineering Services.

BID

Lakes Blvd Water Meter Relocation

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated Lowndes County is expanding its water service area on Lakes Blvd in order to meet commercial development needs in the area. This will require the water meter between the City of Lake Park and Lowndes County to be relocated. Staff advertised the project and three bids were received by James Warren & Associates \$63,801.00, Killeen Construction Company \$66,737.00, and RPI, Inc. \$76,100.00. Staff recommends approval and to authorize the Chairman to sign the contract with James Warren & Associates in the amount of \$63,801.00. Commissioner Marshall asked how far will this be expanding. Mr. Stalvey responded he would verify and have that number tonight. Commissioner Smith asked if this was being paid out of SPLOST VIII or SPLOST IX. Mr. Stalvey responded SPLOST VIII.

REPORTS- County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, recognized the presence of Dr. Tenry Berry, a member of the Leadership Lowndes Class of 2026. Mrs. Dukes stated that Vice Chairman Orenstein, Commissioner Smith, Ms. Stephanie Black, Mrs. Jessica Ganas and herself spent the weekend with the Leadership Lowndes class facilitating their retreat. Mrs. Dukes stated that Dr. Berry is a tremendous leader and expressed her excitement about the insight he brings to the table regarding education.

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chairman Orenstein made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Wisenbaker. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 9:02 a.m.