

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, January 26, 2026

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

Commissioner Joyce Evans and Demarcus Marshall were not present.

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

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work and regular session of January 12, 2026. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Spring Creek Water Treatment Plant Design Build Project

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the North Lowndes water system was issued a consent order from Georgia EPD several months ago due to continued disinfection by-product violations. After discussions with our engineering firm and negotiations with EPD, a decision was made to upgrade the Spring Creek site. Staff advertised an RFP to add a new deep well, upgrade existing well, install nanofiltration water treatment skids including chemical feed systems and an operations building, add an emergency back-up generator, and add a lift station. Three firms submitted questions, but only one proposal was received from Reynolds Construction, LLC. We believe the size and specialization of the project limited the number of proposals we received. Reynolds Construction submitted a preliminary phase price of \$214,412.00. Reynolds has now presented the attached agreement between Lowndes County and Reynolds Construction of Georgia, LLC. Vice Chairman Orenstein asked if they have done work for Lowndes County. Mr. Stalvey answered that since he's been with Lowndes County they have not, but they have for the City of Valdosta and references were reviewed and verified. Commissioner Smith asked the timeframe for phase one. Mr. Stalvey answered a two-year period.

Peterson Road Lift Station Pump Repair

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the pump one at the Peterson Road lift station began running high amps. After troubleshooting, the pump was sent to Xylem for further diagnostics. After examining the pump, Xylem determined the cost of repairs would be \$24,400.00. The cost of a new pump is \$76,440.25. Staff recommends approval for the pump to be repaired for \$24,400.00. Vice Chairman Orenstein stated we've done several repairs with Xylem and

asked have there been any issues with the rebuilt pumps. Mr. Stalvey answered that there have not been any issues, that the cost of a repaired pump is sometimes very close to the cost of a new pump, but not in this instance. Commissioner Smith asked regarding the warranty for a repaired pump versus new. Mr. Stalvey answered that the new pumps do have a longer warranty and the repaired pumps have a ninety-day warranty.

Resolution to Sell Surplus Water Meter Components

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated Lowndes County Utilities is replacing water meters that have reached the end of their useful life. The attached resolution will allow the Utilities Department to sell the brass components of the surplus meters under the best terms available at the time of the sale. Staff recommends approval and to authorize the Chairman to sign the attached resolution. County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated our team, along with Pedal Valve, will start replacing residential meters that have not been replaced in the next week. No billing cycles will be missed. More than a year ago, commercial and industrial meters were changed out, with no issues with accounts or billings. All of the new subdivisions that have been approved on the county's water system over the last year and a half have new meters being installed. Mrs. Dukes stated there would be no disruptions to service. Chairman Slaughter asked if these meters are at end of life and are being sold as scrap. Mr. Stalvey answered yes. Vice Chairman Orenstein asked about the new meters going into new subdivisions. If those have been tested with the new software, Mrs. Dukes responded that those are working with the current software and there should be no issues with the new software. Commissioner Smith asked when the water meter components are sold does the money go into the water/sewer enterprise fund. Mrs. Dukes answered yes.

Condemning Right of Way and Drainage Easement for Twin Lakes Road TSPLOST Paving Project; Parcel 3

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated as part of the Twin Lakes TSPLOST project, the County needs to acquire from the owners of the real property identified for purposes of the project as Parcel 3 (i.e., tax parcel 0171 090) (i) certain areas of fee simple ROW totaling 0.15 +/- acres in the aggregate and (ii) 0.07 +/- acres of said parcel for a drainage easement. Parcel 3 is owned by Virginia G. Tyson, Charles F. Hobby, and Nancy G. Hobby. Additional information regarding the ROW areas and the drainage easement can be found in the proposed Declaration of Taking attached hereto. Efforts to acquire the needed property and property rights by negotiation have not resulted in an agreement, and an offer of just compensation pursuant to O.C.G.A. § 22-1-9 sent on January 13, 2026, has not been accepted by the property owners. Staff has determined that acquisition by condemnation is now required in order to keep the subject project on schedule. Vice Chairman Orenstein asked if any dialogue had been with the property owners since our last vote. Mr. McLeod responded yes, since the last vote there had been contact made with the representative, who is the brother-in-law of Virginia Tyson.

Special Assessment Rate for 2026

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated the Commission is required to set the special assessment rate every year to address paving and utility assessments that are not paid within ninety days. Ms. Black further stated the rate is based on two percent above prime, with the current prime rate being 6.75%; therefore, the rate for special assessments should be set at 8.75%. The prime rate for last year was 7.5%.

Approval of the Solicitor General's FY26 VAWA Continuation Grant Application

Solicitor General's Office Representative, Karen Hayes, presented the item. Ms. Hayes stated the Solicitor General's Office has been a recipient of the VAWA (Violence Against Women Act) Grant since 2018. This grant funds a specialized prosecutor that handles Family Violence and Violence Against Women Crimes. This is a continuation grant application and the request for federal funding is in the amount of \$79,112.00 and the county will be responsible for the amount of \$26,371.00 in matching funds. Ms. Hayes stated the performance period of this grant runs from January 1, 2026 - December 31, 2026. The Solicitor General's Office is requesting the Board's approval to submit the VAWA Continuation Grant Application for FY2026.

REPORTS - County Manager

Extension Office Update by Joshua Dawson (Work Session)

County Manager, Paige Dukes, introduced Josh Dawson, Agriculture and Natural Resources Agent with the Lowndes County Extension Office. Mr. Dawson thanked the Commissioners for their support and presented a brief update for the 2025 year.

American Red Cross Update by Jacqueline Shoemaker

County Manager, Paige Dukes, introduced Jackie Shoemaker, the Executive Director of the South Central Georgia Chapter of the American Red Cross. Ms. Shoemaker stated she covers twenty-five counties in South Central Georgia, and she resides in Lowndes County. Ms. Shoemaker gave the Commission an update of the work the American Red Cross has done within Lowndes County and the surrounding areas for the year 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to adjourn the work session meeting, seconded by Commissioner Smith. Chairman Slaughter made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 a.m.