

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, February 10, 2026

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 5:30 p.m.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of January 26, 2026, and the regular session minutes of January 27, 2026. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Slaughter stated if there were no objections, staff would like to add an item to the agenda, A Temporary Burn Ordinance. There being no objections, Chairman Slaughter asked that the item be added as agenda item 6B. Commissioner Evans made a motion to add the Temporary Burn Ordinance to the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

REZ-2026-01 Williams Howard Property, 5905 Staten Rd., ~6ac, E-A to R-A, 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) to R-A (Residential Agricultural) in order for the property to be subdivided through Family Ties standards. This property is within the Rural Service Area and Agricultural Character Areas. There is an existing residence and accessory structure centrally located on the property, and no wetlands or groundwater recharge areas that may impact well and septic viability. The Planning Commission and TRC recommended approval. No one spoke for or against this request. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the request, seconded by Vice Chairman Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2026-02 Bullard Property, 7270 Old Valdosta Rd., 1ac, E-A to R-1, Well & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this rezoning 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. The subject property possesses road frontage on Old Valdosta Road, a county-maintained local road and is within the Rural Service Area and Agricultural Forestry Character Area. Mr. Dillard stated the applicants have hired a surveyor to properly locate the parcel boundaries around the existing house, and the TRC recommended approval for R-1 zoning to be able to apply the ULDC to its current uses and future land uses. The Planning Commission also recommended approval of the request for R-1. No one spoke for or against this request. Vice Chairman Orenstein made a motion to approve this request, seconded by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2026-03 Villanueva Property, 6201 Union Rd., 6ac, E-A to C-G, Well & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this case represents a change in zoning on a 6.0 acre property from Estate-Agricultural (E-A) zoning to General Commercial (C-G) zoning. The main motivation for the request is to allow for a proposed office and storage facility on the subject property for an existing business. Mr. Dillard further stated the subject property is largely open, with a large pond centrally located on the property, over top of a natural gas pipeline and a County Sewer Forcemain. The subject property possesses road frontage on Union Road, a County Maintained Major Collector, with typical traffic flow capacity between 3,000 and 6,000 traffic count on Union Road per day, and ~460' of visibility from I-75 with a typical traffic flow in excess of 57,600 per day. Mr. Dillard stated TRC staff recommended approval of the request for C-G zoning with the following conditions: 1.) A minimum 10' buffer shall be required along the eastern edge of the property along Union Rd. Breaks in the buffer to allow for ingress/egress along Union Rd are allowed. The construction of the buffer is allowed to be done concurrent with development of the property. All other buffer standards shall be governed by the Landscaping, Buffers, and Tree Protection Sections of the ULDC (4.07.00) e.g. types and amount of landscaping, the ability to utilize existing vegetation, maintenance, etc. and 2.) No clubs, lodges, meeting or event facilities, alcohol package stores, or gasoline stations (with or without a convenience store) are allowed on the subject property. Mr. Dillard stated the Planning Commission recommended the addition to condition one, that states the existing fence along the western property line abutting I-75, shall be consistent with the color, materials, and design of buildings in the surrounding area. The condition was modified and recommended for approval 8-0, as well as condition two, that states, no clubs, lodges, meeting or event facilities, alcohol package stores, or gasoline stations (with or without a convenience store) are allowed on the subject property. No one spoke for or against this request. Vice Chairman Orenstein asked if the 10 foot buffer only pertains to the Union Road side. Mr. Dillard responded correct, that is staff's recommendation. Mr. Dillard went on to say that Commercial Zoning next to Residential or Agricultural Zoning has natural buffers built in, so this is in addition. Lowndes County does not typically buffer common roadways, but given Franks Creek Storage and Union Springs both have landscape buffers along Union Road, staff believes it is appropriate to require a 10 foot buffer along Union road as well. Vice Chairman Orenstein asked if the applicant installed any of the fencing on the property. Mr. Dillard stated he believed the front portion of the fencing was installed by the applicant. Vice Chairman Orenstein asked if there is a corridor overlay on I-75. Mr. Dillard responded no. Commissioner Marshall asked Chairman Slaughter to elaborate on his concern about the color of the fencing and how it might possibly be addressed in the motion. Chairman Slaughter stated he would say that the issue with the colors of the fencing should be stricken. Vice Chairman Orenstein stated he understands and appreciates the concerns of the Planning Commission and he also agrees that we do not need to get into design standards or one parcel at a time. Vice Chairman Orenstein stated these things should be

put in their notes when updating the ULDC and try to create a consistent plan for I-75 at the entry point. Chairman Slaughter stated that would be something to contact GDOT about to see what authority the County has on their right of way. Commissioner Smith asked if the applicant applied for C-G Zoning or if C-G was recommended. Mr. Dillard replied, C-G was recommended. Vice Chairman Orenstein made a motion to approve the item with the two conditions (that does not include the color of fencing) recommended by staff, seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Loch Laurel Road Termination of Unused Utility Easement

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the County has been asked to release and terminate a utility easement located adjacent to Loch Laurel Road that the County is no longer using and that it does not have a known need to use in the future. There was formerly a booster station at the site, but it was removed in 2019. Mr. Stalvey further stated the present owner of the property encumbered by the utility easement is Tim Blanton, and the affected property is designed as tax parcel 0168 006 by the Lowndes County Tax Assessor. Staff recommends approving the termination of the unused utility easement. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the item as presented, seconded by Vice Chairman Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Temporary Burn Ordinance *Agenda Item Added*

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated after conversation and a meeting with Georgia Forestry requesting some assistance in policy relating to the drought and numerous wild fires fought in Lowndes County and surrounding counties as well, we have received a Temporary Burn Ordinance draft from Georgia Forestry. Mrs. Dukes further stated local governments in Georgia are not allowed to, individually and on their own, implement a burn ban, but we have received the language before the Commission from Georgia Forestry regarding a temporary burn restriction. Mrs. Dukes stated an ALERT Lowndes call went out to citizens regarding the burn restriction, and it was sent to the media. Mrs. Dukes went on to say that this is not in an effort to create an environment where Code Enforcement and Fire Rescue are writing citations to citizens, this is to give them the authority that they need to let people know that they cannot set fires and if they find them, they need to be put out. There have been many acres burned over the last two weeks. Lowndes County has received questions related to recreational fires, but there have been recreational fires that have done damage. As dry as it is and with the wind, the best policy right now is to not burn at all. This does not impact any fires that are agricultural or land clearing that are routinely managed by forestry, but at the moment that burning is not being allowed either. Commissioner Marshall mentioned having a conversation with local haulers, Deep South Sanitation and Waste Management, regarding relaxing some of their limitations on picking up yard debris during this time. Chairman Slaughter stated we can have those conversations. Chairman Slaughter stated that since January 1st of this year, there have been 109 grass fires in Lowndes County. This has been an ongoing problem that Lowndes County Fire Rescue has been dealing with. Chairman Slaughter also stated there have also been calls from mutual aid to our neighboring counties. Commissioner Smith asked if this is only for the unincorporated areas of Lowndes County and the cities do not allow burning anyway. Chairman Slaughter stated to his knowledge, that is correct, unless there is a smaller city allowing it that he is not aware of. Commissioner Marshall asked if the ban includes controlled burning inside of a barrel as well. Chairman Slaughter responded, yes. County Manager, Paige Dukes stated any open flame. Mrs. Dukes stated if the Commission approves this ordinance this evening, staff will be on standby

tomorrow to share this with surrounding counties because with the rate of mutual aid calls, we want to be there for them. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adopt the ordinance as presented, seconded by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BIDS

PI #0016273, Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Orr Road Bids

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Orr Road is a TIA 1 approved project that is 1.65 miles long. The project begins at Staten Road and ends at Skipper Bridge Road. The project consists of resurfacing, striping, raised pavement markers, eight (8) concrete headwalls, new signage, and grassing. The contract time is 60 calendar days after notice to proceed. Bids were opened on January 22, 2026, and two (2) bids were received, with Reames & Son Construction submitting the low bid in the amount of \$477,896.15. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the low bidder, Reames & Son Construction, in the amount of \$477,896.15, seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Consideration of Bids for Installation of Emergency Backup Generators at Pruitt Health Facilities

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated bids were requested as part of the hazard mitigation grant, which we applied for in 2019. Lowndes County received notice of the award in January of 2025. This grant allows Lowndes County to provide Emergency backup generators at five Pruitt Health Facilities in Lowndes County. Lowndes County solicited bids for generators as well as wiring and all electrical work required to fully generate the entire building. Lowndes County received five bids, two of which were deemed to be nonresponsive because they did not meet all the technical specifications. Current Edge Solutions (Savannah, GA) submitted two bids, one for \$1,420,148.00 (Winco Generators), with the generators taking about 12 weeks to arrive, and the transfer switches 18 weeks to arrive, and another bid for \$1,470,216.00 (CAT Generators), with the generators arriving in 30 weeks and the transfer switches arriving in 35 weeks. Cowart Electric (Valdosta, GA) submitted a bid for \$1,845,280.00 (Cummins Generators). After reviewing the bids, Pruitt Health's and staff's recommendation was to select the CAT Generators with Current Edge Solutions for \$1,470,216.00. Mr. Tye stated, although it was not the lower bid, it was preferable because of the brand liability, the five year warranty, and they can provide better service in our area. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve Current Edge Solutions for CAT Generators in the amount of \$1,470,216.00, seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the items below:

- Friday, February 6th, Quiet Pines Golf Course and Grill will reopen to the public.
- The Lowndes County Bird Supper will be held in Atlanta tomorrow, Wednesday, February 11th at the Georgia Freight Depot.
- Saturday, Mardi-Gras Community Day, 10:00 am - 6:00pm, at Lowndes County Park will be held and this is a family-friendly event. This event was started by Denise Peters with hopes of having it as an annual event.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

Gretchen Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, addressed the commission regarding the possibility of recycling in Lowndes County again. Mrs. Quarterman also mentioned the idea of having a bin at Public Works for glass and cardboard.

Mary Roe, 4515 Jones Lane, addressed the commission regarding the paving of Green Road.

Joel Dion, 4107 Quail Hollow Circle, addressed the commission regarding data centers. Mr. Dion stated data centers create noise, light and air pollution. Mr. Dion requested a moratorium on data centers.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the regular session meeting, seconded by Vice Chairman Orenstein. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 6:11 p.m.