

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, March 24, 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 Smith

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Smith

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of March 9, 2026, and the regular session of March 10, 2026. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS

Valdosta-Lowndes County Zoning Board of Appeals

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the terms of Mr. John McCall and Mr. John Hogan have expired. Both are interested in being reappointed. Mr. Travis Cox has also expressed an interest in serving on the Valdosta-Lowndes County Zoning Board of Appeals. Commissioner Evans nominated Mr. Travis Cox. Commissioner Wisenbaker nominated Mr. John Hogan. Vice Chairman Orenstein nominated Mr. John McCall. Commissioner Evans, Vice Chairman Orenstein and Commissioner Smith voted for Mr. Travis Cox. Commissioners Wisenbaker and Marshall voted for Mr. John Hogan. Vice Chairman Orenstein and Commissioners Wisenbaker and Smith voted for Mr. John McCall. Mr. Travis Cox was appointed and Mr. John McCall was reappointed.

Lowndes County Development Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated Mr. Robert Green was appointed in July 2025 to fill an unexpired term. That term expired January 9, 2026. Mr. Green would like to be reappointed and Dr. Beverly Richardson-Blake is also interested in serving. Vice Chairman Orenstein nominated Dr. Beverly Richardson-Blake for appointment. There being no other nominations, Dr. Beverly Richardson-Blake was appointed by acclamation.

Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated that James Miller's term expired January 31, 2026, and Mr. Miller would like to be reappointed. Mr. Jack Oliver's term in the at-large position also expired January 31, 2026. The Land Bank Authority would like to recommend Mr. Ken Overman for the at-large position. The at-large position needs the approval of both the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners and the City of Valdosta. Commissioner Evans nominated Mr. James Miller for reappointment. Commissioner Smith nominated Mr. Ken Overman for the at-large position. There being no other nominations, both were appointed by acclamation.

South Georgia Community Service Board

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Cindy Vickery's term expired March 10, 2026. Mrs. Vickery does not wish to be reappointed. Ms. Casey Horne and Ms. Chanel Randolph have both expressed an interest in being appointed. Commissioner Smith nominated Ms. Casey Horne. Commissioner Marshall nominated Ms. Chanel Randolph. Vice Chairman Orenstein and Commissioners Evans and Smith voted for Ms. Casey Horne. Ms. Casey Horne was appointed.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Beer and Wine License - Alexander Clay Tyson of JayBoys LLC, DBA JayBoys #1, 3661 Madison Highway, Valdosta, GA 31601

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated this request is for JayBoys, LLC, located at 3661 Madison Highway in Valdosta. This request is for a license for the sale of beer and wine for consumption off the premises. This is a new location. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the license as presented, seconded by Vice Chairman Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

JayBoys Easement Exchange Tax Parcel 0134 051 Whitewater Road & Madison Hwy

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr Stalvey stated Cobrod 1, LLC owns real property (tax parcel 0134 051) at the intersection of Whitewater Road and Madison Highway that is being developed into JayBoys gas station/travel center. Lowndes County has an existing utility easement affecting Cobrod 1, LLC's property, which was granted in 2000 and is 0.211 acres in size. Cobrod 1, LLC has asked that Lowndes County release a portion of the easement area that is not currently being used by Lowndes County, as it would like to erect certain improvements in that area as part of the development of the property. In exchange for a release of the requested portion from Lowndes County's easement, Cobrod 1, LLC has offered to grant an additional easement area to Lowndes County, with the net result being Lowndes County will possess a larger easement than before. The total easement area, if approved, will be 0.49 acres. Staff recommends approval of the easement exchange and authorizes the Chairman to sign the documents. Vice Chairman Orenstein made a motion to approve the request as presented, seconded by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Advanced Disposal Services Residential Solid Waste Franchise Renewal

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the item. Mr. Beals stated this is the annual renewal process for non-exclusive residential solid waste collection services in the unincorporated areas of Lowndes County. The current term ends March 31, 2026, with the new term beginning April 1, 2026. Advanced Disposal has submitted its application to continue providing service. Mr. Beals stated Advanced Disposal currently serves 8,410 households at a monthly rate of \$21.62. Commissioner Smith asked regarding an increase in the monthly amount. Mr. Beals responded that

in 2023, the board adopted "a not to exceed" amount of \$25.00 per month, currently the rate is set at \$21.62. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the item as presented, seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Deep South Sanitation, LLC, Residential Solid Waste Franchise Renewal

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the item. Mr. Beals stated this is the annual renewal process for non-exclusive residential solid waste collection services in the unincorporated areas of Lowndes County. The current term ends March 31, 2026, with the new term beginning April 1, 2026. Deep South Sanitation, LLC has submitted their application to continue providing service. Deep South Sanitation, LLC currently serves 8,637 households at a monthly rate of \$22.00. Mr. Beals mentioned a question from the work session meeting, regarding a second container, with the additional fee of \$5.00. There are 8,637 households served and there are over 10,000 trash containers in the field for people requesting additional containers. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the item as presented, seconded by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated that as of March 2026, the entire state of Georgia is subject to the Water Stewardship Act, which prohibits landscape irrigation between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. Mrs. Dukes asked EMA Director, Ashley Tye, to provide an update on the drought outlook based on information from the National Weather Service. Mr. Tye stated that while current drought conditions persist, the National Weather Service issues a weekly drought information statement. As of last Thursday, drought conditions in the area are the most severe since 2012, with no short-term relief anticipated. He further stated that a significant change in the most recent update is that most of Lowndes County is now classified as D4 (Exceptional Drought), an increase from the prior D3 (Extreme Drought) classification. Mr. Tye mentioned that, based on historical averages, Lowndes County is experiencing below-normal rainfall. He added that while increased rainfall is typically expected in the spring, it may not be until late May or June before any improvement in drought conditions occur. Over the past 90 days, the area has received approximately six (6) inches of rainfall, which is about half of the normal amount for this region. Mrs. Dukes asked Fire Rescue Chief, Billy Young, to address the Commission regarding wildfire response efforts and the prioritization of brush trucks. Chief Young reported that there have been 54 wildfire response calls during the current month, with a total of 206 calls year-to-date. He stated that many of these fires have been caused by residents burning yard debris and losing control of the fires. Chief Young added that brush trucks are heavily utilized during this period and are being maintained accordingly. Commissioner Wisenbaker inquired about the number of structure fires to date. Chief Young responded he did not have that information available at this time. Mrs. Dukes concluded by thanking the Commissioners for attending the ribbon cutting held yesterday at the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office for the new mental health wing at the jail.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

Chairman Slaughter recognized the presence of Leadership Lowndes class members.

Mary Roe, 4515 Jones Lane, addressed the commission regarding the paving of Green Road. Ms. Roe asked that the road be paved instead of being repaired.

Michael Noll, 2305 Glynndale Drive, addressed the commission regarding his opposition to data centers in our community. Mr. Noll mentioned a town hall meeting scheduled for April 17th and invited the commissioners to attend.

Tetiana Babcock, 3561 Skeet Range Road, addressed the commission regarding her opposition to data centers in our community. Ms. Babcock mentioned her concern about a protective condition outlined as part of the rezoning approval last year. Condition #4 states a two-hundred foot undisturbed buffer will be required along the northern and southern property lines abutting current residential zoning boundaries. She stated this has already been violated since the property owner has already cleared trees up to and over her property line, destroying a section of her fence up to the property line and leaving the debris from the fence, damaged trees and track marks from the heavy equipment. Ms. Babcock also mentioned the light and noise pollution which a data center will bring.

Kelly Saxon, 8 Baldwin Place, addressed the commission regarding the Georgia Department of Transportation is accepting applications for local road assistance administration funding. This will include funds that were set aside by the Governor and General Assembly. This is an opportunity that the funding can be used for road repairs and improvements. Ms. Saxon stated there is no local match required and the application deadline is June 15, 2026. Ms. Saxon stated over the past two years she's been working with the City of Valdosta to take back local ownership of the Craig Center. The City of Valdosta has secured the property and is currently rehabbing the facility to be used for an inclement weather shelter for Lowndes County. Ms. Saxon requested that Lowndes County contribute \$50,000.00, to assist with the remaining renovations and repairs to ensure this building is fully functional and ready to serve the community.

Amanda Hall, 2102 North Sherwood Drive, addressed the commission regarding animal control. Dr. Hall stated an ordinance needs to be passed expanding state law changing it from two or more litters to one single litter.

Kristina Cheek McBride, 104 East Mary Street, addressed the commission and stated that she is the founding executive director of Cisco Birth Initiative and the regional site coordinator of the Georgia Black Doula Network. These groups aim to address the maternal and infant health disparities in South Georgia. Resources are available with peer-to-peer support. According to the March of Dimes report, Georgia has one of the highest maternal and infant mortality rates, ranking 45th in the nation and 11.8% of babies born in Georgia are born premature or low birth weight. Ms. McBride mentioned these are worse in rural areas. This Saturday there will be a community baby shower for all moms, distributing food, games, diapers, wipes and car seats and much more. Ms. McBride mentioned a joint proclamation between the city and county to recognize Black Maternal Health Week to bring awareness and focus on solutions together. As a candidate for State Representative House District 177, improving maternal and infant health remains one of her top priorities and a strong focus on ensuring healthy outcomes for both mothers and babies.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the regular session meeting, seconded by Vice Chairman Orenstein. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 6:25 p.m.