

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, April 14, 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

Vice Chairman Orenstein

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Vice Chairman Orenstein

PURPLE UP FOR MILITARY CHILDREN PROCLAMATION (Please Wear Purple)

County Manager, Paige Dukes, introduced Colonel Roberts of Moody Air Force Base, who in turn introduced members of his team and spoke about the significance of Purple Up for Military Kids. Colonel Roberts mentioned the sacrifices made by military children, particularly the challenges they face when their families are stationed overseas for extended periods of time. Chairman Slaughter read and presented Colonel Roberts with a proclamation in support of Purple Up for Military Child Month.

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of March 23, 2026 and the regular session of March 24, 2026. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Vice Chairman Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENT

South Regional Joint Development Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated that the terms of Ms. Andrea Schruijer and Mr. Clay Griner have expired on the South Regional Joint Development Authority. Neither has expressed an interest in being reappointed. Ms. Kathryn "Niki" Ogletree and Mr. Joseph Brownlee are interested in being appointed. Mr. Joe Brownlee was nominated by Commissioner Evans. Ms. Kathryn "Niki" Ogletree was nominated by Commissioner Smith. There being no other nominations, both were appointed by acclamation.

PUBLIC HEARING

REZ-2026-08 Cedar Subdivision, White Water Rd, Cedar Rd, & Madison Hwy, ~184ac, R-1, C-G, & C-H to R-10 & C-H, County Utilities

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the rezoning request. Mr. Dillard stated this item represents a change in zoning on the subject properties from R-1 (Low Density Residential), C-G (General Commercial), and C-H

(Highway Commercial) zoning to R-10 (Suburban Density Residential), and C-H zonings. The general motivation in this case is for the applicant to develop approximately 265 single-family homes, and future commercial acreage. Mr. Dillard stated this is approximately 184 acres with R-1 property as well as Commercial General and the southeastern corner is Commercial Highway zoning with wetlands on the property. The properties are within the Community Activity Center and Suburban Character Area and the Valdosta Airport Overlay. Both of these future land uses do recommend R-10 and Commercial Highway zoning being appropriate. The wetlands on the property have been delineated and some is still to be determined. Mr. Dillard presented the conceptual layouts which haven't been approved yet. Mr. Dillard stated the TRC recommended approval with one condition: Any vehicular ingress/egress off of Cedar Rd. shall require the property owner/developer to pave the street from that ingress/egress to the nearest paved street. The property owner/developer will also be responsible for the design, any acquisition of necessary right-of-way, relocation of utilities, and construction costs for the paving of the section mentioned above. The Planning Commission also recommended approval with this condition. No one spoke against this request. Bill Nijem, 1007 North Patterson Street, spoke in favor of this request, representing the applicant. Mr. Nijem stated the applicant is agreeable with the condition. Mr. Nijem stated he was available to answer any questions from the commission. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the request with the one condition: Any vehicular ingress/egress off of Cedar Road shall require the property owner/developer to pave the street from that ingress/egress to the nearest paved street. The property owner/developer will also be responsible for the design, any acquisition of necessary right-of-way, relocation of utilities, and construction costs for the paving of the section mentioned above, seconded by Vice Chairman Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2026-09 Cameron Place, 4554 Bemiss Rd, ~10.2ac, E-A to P-D & C-G, County Utilities

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the rezoning request representing a change in zoning on the subject properties from E-A (Estate Agricultural) zoning to P-D (Planned Development) and C-G (General Commercial) zonings. Mr. Dillard stated the applicant is requesting P-D zoning and proposing to develop ninety-one (91) townhomes and amenities on 7.5 acres and 2.5 acres along Bemiss Road requesting to go to C-G (Commercial General). This property is within the Urban Service Area and Neighborhood Activity Center Character Area which recommends both P-D and C-G zonings. It is also in the Bemiss Corridor Overlay which comes with its own supplemental standards regarding access and interconnectivity. This property is unaffected by any wetlands. Therefore, county utilities will adequately serve this without any environmental impacts. Mr. Dillard presented a conceptual site plan. The TRC and the Planning Commission recommended approval of the request for P-D and C-G zonings as depicted on the proposed site plan. Commissioner Smith asked if there was a minimum acreage for Planned Development. Mr. Dillard answered three acres. Vice Chairman Orenstein asked Mr. Dillard to see the exit onto Hamilton Green on the proposed site plan. No one spoke against this request. Matthew Inman, 2704 North Oak Street, spoke in favor of the request as the engineer for the project. Mr. Inman stated this is ninety-one (91) lots and this is an extension of the existing townhomes. Mr. Inman mentioned county utilities will be used and there are thirty-five (35) trees on the southwestern property line, with eight (8) being removed and filled in with Green Giants (large Evergreen) trees. Commissioner Marshall asked to verify this will be an extension of the existing townhomes. Mr. Inman responded yes and the same house plans will be used. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the rezoning request as presented, seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, asked Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, to give the commission an update regarding the new meter installation project. Mr. Stalvey reported that the mass meter installation project is progressing well, with billing remaining on schedule. As of the end of the day yesterday, 4,512 meters had been installed with approximately 3,500 remaining. All of Cycle One will be completed this week, with the exception of Stone Creek. Work will continue next week with Cycle Two in Lake Park, followed by Kinderlou during the week of April 27th. Cycle Four is expected to be completed the week of May 4th, and crews will be returning to Stone Creek the week of May 11th to complete Cycle One. The final two weeks of May will be dedicated to completing any remaining installations and project cleanup.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

Beverly Sharpe, 3104 Falling Leaf Lane, addressed the commission regarding the pay for Board of Elections poll workers and the possibility of a pay increase. Ms. Sharpe mentioned that the current hourly pay is \$7.25.

Kathleen Hodges, 302 Simpson Place, addressed the commission regarding the pay for Board of Elections poll workers and the possibility of a pay increase.

Susan Wehling, 2410 Georgia Avenue, addressed the commission in opposition to data centers in our community. Ms. Wehling expressed concerns regarding increased water usage, impacts on climate change, and potential health effects, including respiratory disease. Additionally, Ms. Wehling mentioned that a Town Hall meeting on this topic is scheduled to be held on Friday, April 17th.

Mary Francis Roe, 4515 Jones Lane, addressed the commission regarding the paving of Green Road. Ms. Roe stated she is not concerned with building up the road, but having Green Road paved.

Chase West, 4712 Radar Site Road, addressed the commission regarding proposed animal control ordinance changes related to the maximum number of domestic animals allowed per acre. Mr. West expressed concern that the proposed limits would have an impact on farmers and others who maintain multiple animals.

Cara Lea West, 4712 Radar Site Road, addressed the commission regarding proposed animal control ordinance changes requiring mandatory microchipping of pets by twelve weeks of age as a measure to help prevent pet loss. Mrs. West stated that she was recently advised to wait until at least six months of age to microchip, typically at the same time as spaying and neutering. Additionally, Mrs. West mentioned the proposed limitation of fewer than twelve animals per acre, mentioning that this could negatively impact farmers and individuals involved in animal rescue. While she voiced concerns about microchipping and the animal limit, Mrs. West clarified that she does not oppose microchipping itself.

William Whitesell, 2123 Pinewood Drive, addressed the commission regarding proposed animal control ordinance changes. Mr. Whitesell discussed the possible implementation of an annual pet licensing fee that would be waived for pet owners whose dogs or cats are spayed or neutered. Mr. Whitesell mentioned for a cost of \$35.00, residents in Lowndes County can have their dogs spayed or neutered, vaccinated for rabies and microchipped, while the same services are available for cats at a cost of \$25.00. Mr. Whitesell added that similar programs are currently being implemented successfully in many other counties and cities.

Crista Marie Wells, 907 Wilson Avenue, addressed the commission regarding the proposed animal control ordinance changes. Ms. Wells expressed support for the \$35.00 spay and neuter program. She stated that requiring microchipping at twelve weeks of age is too early and suggested that microchipping be done in conjunction with mandatory spaying and neutering.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Smith. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the regular session meeting at 6:17 p.m.