

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, May 12, 2026

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Commissioner Joyce Evans
Commissioner Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Michael Smith

Vice Chairman Scott Orenstein and Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker were not in attendance.

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Marshall

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Marshall

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of April 27, 2026, and the regular session of April 28, 2026. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING

REZ-2026-04 Jay Ma Khodiyar, ~1ac, 5507 Central St. (Clyattville), R-10 to C-G, County Water & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item stating the case has been withdrawn by the applicant. Commissioner Smith asked if the applicant could reapply. Mr. Dillard responded yes, the applicant would have to go through the process again.

REZ-2026-11 Blackwater Development LLC & Webb Fish Farm, 4130 Old Bemiss Rd., ~4.8ac, R-1 & R10 to C-G, County Utilities

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on the subject properties from R-1 (Low Density Residential) and R-10 (Suburban Density Residential) zoning to C-G (General Commercial) zoning. The general motivation in this case is for the applicant to repurpose the old Webb Fish Farm buildings and allow for new commercial opportunities on approximately 4.8 acres. Mr. Dillard stated there are no wetlands on the property in question, but there are to the east. Mr. Dillard presented a conceptual layout and reviewed it with the Commission. The TRC analyzed the request, the standards governing the exercise of zoning power set forth in 10.01.05 of the ULDC, and factors most relevant to this application, including the neighboring land uses, lot sizes, and zoning patterns, the availability of County Utilities, the current

and proposed access, and therefore recommends approval of the request for C-G zoning with the following conditions:

1. No Alcohol Package Stores, Cemeteries, Clubs, Lodges, Meeting or Event Facilities, Car Washes, Gas Stations, Hotels, Motels, or Vehicle Sales Lots, shall be allowed; and
2. Any vehicular ingress/egress off of Old Bemiss 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, railroad crossing improvements, and construction costs for the paving of the section mentioned above.

At the Planning Commission meeting, the applicant's attorney spoke in favor of the request and offered an amendment to Condition #2: Prior to operation of a business on parcel 0145B 094A, the owner/developer shall provide paved access to a paved public street. In the event a developer/owner is required to use Old Bemiss Road as its primary point of ingress/egress, the road shall be paved by the owner/developer to the nearest paved street, and the property owner/developer will also be responsible for the design, any acquisition of necessary right-of-way, relocation of utilities, railroad crossing improvements, and construction costs for the paving of the section mentioned above. In the event paved ingress/egress runs through parcel 0145B 094B to provide access directly onto Bemiss Knights Academy Road as contemplated, the owner/developer shall have no obligation to improve Old Bemiss Road. It may be used as a construction entrance while the access road to the south is being paved and after business operations commence, ingress/egress may continue over Old Bemiss Road as a secondary access point.

No one spoke against this request. Jack Langdale, 701 North Patterson Street, spoke in favor of the request on behalf of Southern Forest Holdings, a company located in Florida that has taken an interest in the area over the last few years. Mr. Langdale stated the company purchases and remodels multi-family and commercial properties for rental purposes and has completed projects in Lowndes County, Cook County, and Albany. Mr. Langdale stated this request involves rezoning two properties, one owned by T.L. Webb Family Properties and Blackwater Development. In viewing the layout of the proposed fish pond, you can see the empty warehouses which are to be renovated for office storage use. An ideal tenant might be a lawn care company that might need office space and have storage for equipment. Mr. Langdale stated he has spoken to Mr. James Warren, the owner of Blackwater Development, which is the property on the south side, regarding access across that tract going to Bemiss Knights Academy Road. That conversation led to the rezoning of three parcels on the west side of the road, leaving the fish farm property. Mr. Langdale stated that on behalf of both landowners they are requesting the rezoning on both facilities and request approval with the revised condition #2. Scott Alderman, 5273 Bethany Drive, spoke in favor of the request representing Mike Davis and his wife, who are the administrators of the T.L. Webb Properties; Mr. Alderman is their broker. Mr. Alderman stated that everyone is coming together to make an abandoned property better and more productive. He expressed his appreciation for the board's consideration and believes this project would be a positive development and an example of everyone working together. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve condition #1 and to approve the amendment to condition #2, seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2026-12 McBurrough, 4909 Bemiss Rd., ~2.4ac, R-21 & R-1 to C-G, County Utilities

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on the subject properties from R-21 (Medium Density Residential) and R-1 (Low Density

Residential) zoning to C-G (General Commercial) zoning to develop a child care learning facility. Mr. Dillard stated the adjoining properties are currently owned and operated as religious facilities, parsonages, or single-family homes, while new developments just beyond are zoned for higher density residential and commercial. Mr. Dillard stated there are no wetlands on the property. Mr. Dillard presented a proposed layout for the child care learning center to the Commission. The TRC recommends approval of the request for C-G zoning with the following condition:

1. No Alcohol Package Stores, Clubs, Lodges, Meeting or Event Facilities shall be allowed.

The Planning Commission recommended approval with the one condition. No one spoke against the request. Bill Kent, 2214 North Patterson Street, spoke in favor of this request as the Project Engineer for this development. Mr. Kent stated this property has adequate water and sewer, road access and drainage. Commissioner Marshall asked about the projected opening date. Mr. Kent answered as quickly as possible, but noted coordination with the Georgia Department of Transportation is still underway and the design and development process is in the beginning stages. He estimated the development could open in approximately one year. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve this rezoning request with condition #1 as presented, seconded by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

2026 Local Road Assistance (LRA) Administration Funds Application

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. The Georgia Department of Transportation announced that the Governor and the Legislature included the Local Road Assistance (LRA) in the amended fiscal year 2026 budget. The LRA funds will be distributed using the Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Application System and will require no matching funds. The fiscal year 2026 LRA formula amount for Lowndes County is \$1,668,145.32. If approved, the LRA funds will be used for resurfacing. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the item as presented, seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Acceptance of Infrastructure for Cypress Lakes Subdivision Phase V Section II

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Cypress Lakes Subdivision Phase V Section II is located at the end of Clove Drive in Cypress Lakes Subdivision. This section includes the remainder of Clove Drive and a portion of Eucalyptus Drive. 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. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the item as presented, seconded by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Local Delivery Application for Old US 41 North Widening Phase 4

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Old US 41 North Widening Phase 4 is on the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) II list for letting in March 2030. The Local Delivery Application starts the process by allowing Lowndes County to manage the project at the local government level. If approved, the Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) will send an approval letter and agreement to be approved by the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners. The project will begin at Union Road and end at the Hahira City limits. Commissioner Smith made a

motion to approve the item as presented, seconded by Commissioners Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Beer and Wine License - Vikrambhai Patel of Hari Om Narayan Inc., DBA Eagle Food Mart, 4952 Bemiss Road, Valdosta, GA 31605

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated this is a beer and wine license for consumption off-premise due to a change in ownership. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the license as presented, seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Replacement of Three Servers

ITS Senior Systems Administrator, Clay VanArsdale, presented the item. Mr. VanArsdale stated the purchase of three new servers is requested to replace the current aging server environment. The existing hardware has reached end of support and can no longer be upgraded, making replacement necessary. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the item as presented, seconded by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Industrial Authority Series 2026 Bonds

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from County Attorney, Walter Elliott, during the work session. No further discussion took place. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the item as presented, seconded by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BIDS

2026 Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Resurfacing Bids (ENG 2026-01)

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the 2026 Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Application was approved by the Commission on January 12, 2026. The grant was approved by the Georgia Department of Transportation, Lowndes County received the grant funds, and staff advertised the project for bids. The 2026 LMIG Resurfacing bids presented are to include resurfacing and/or restriping the roads attached in the agenda packet. Bids were opened on April 21, 2026, and staff received two bids: The Scruggs Company in the amount of \$629,677.25 and Reames and Son Construction in the amount of \$635,191.84. Commissioner Marshall asked the anticipated completion date. Mr. McLeod responded a notice to proceed in June and be complete by November 28, 2026. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the low bidder, The Scruggs Company, in the amount of \$629,677.25, seconded by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Bid for a Debris Hauler for Public Works

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated the Lowndes County Public Works Department needs a new debris truck with a dual trailer and grapple to maintain operational efficiency and safety when used to pick up large amounts of debris throughout the county. One bid was received from Four Star Freightliner in the amount of \$375,814.00 and is being paid by SPLOST. Commissioner Marshall asked to verify this has a claw attached. Public Works Director, Robin Cumbus, answered yes, stating this is similar to the debris haulers used after the hurricanes here in our community. Mrs. Cumbus added that because the hauler has a larger capacity, trees will no longer need to be cut into smaller four-foot sections, as has been required over the past couple of years.

Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve Four Star Freightliner in the amount of \$375,814.00, seconded by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

Chairman Slaughter stated that County Manager, Paige Dukes, is out of town. Additionally, Chairman Slaughter stated that although the Governor has released all counties from the statewide burn ban, Lowndes County will continue to maintain a local burn ban due to ongoing drought conditions.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

Michael Noll, 2305 Glynnedale Drive, addressed the commission in opposition to data centers in our community. Dr. Noll thanked the County Manager, Paige Dukes and Commissioner Scott Orenstein for meeting with him on May 6th. Dr. Noll asked if a data center ordinance was going to be created. Lastly, Dr. Noll stated there is a billboard on North Valdosta Road with information regarding data centers.

George Fisher, 5278 Hall Road, addressed the commission in opposition to data centers in our community. Mr. Fisher mentioned the increased water usage and a goal for our future children is to have clean water.

Amie Burman, 5207 Abbott Circle, addressed the commission regarding animal welfare as it relates to feral cat colonies. Ms. Burnam gave the commission a handout and stated she has been rescuing homeless cats for over nine years. She asked the commission to help create a community that shows compassion, responsibility and humanity.

Tara Parker, 4911 Timberwood Drive, addressed the commission regarding the animal control ordinance. Mrs. Parker stated she loves our community and asked that there would be additional help from the county's budget to allow for assistance to animal rescuers. Mrs. Parker stated that if the focus could be on overpopulation and shift the responsibility to irresponsible pet owners. Mrs. Parker gave the commission a handout to review from other counties in Georgia related to their animal control ordinance.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Evans made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Marshall. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the regular session meeting at 6:15 p.m.