

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, July 28, 2026

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Vice Chairman Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Joyce Evans
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
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 meeting and the regular session meeting of July 14, 2026. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS

Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the term of Mrs. Suzan Garnett has expired. Mrs. Garnett is interested in continuing to serve. Mrs. Dukes further stated the term of Mr. Timothy McCoppin, who was appointed by the City of Valdosta to this rotating seat, has also expired. It is the County's turn to appoint a member to the rotating seat. Mrs. Dukes stated Mr. Brent Moore, Mr. Herb Reinhard, Mr. Timothy McCoppin, and Mr. Broc McDowell are all interested in serving. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker nominated Mrs. Garnett for reappointment. There were no other nominations. Mrs. Garnett was appointed by acclamation. Commissioner Smith nominated Mr. Herb Reinhard for appointment to the rotating seat. Commissioner Marshall nominated Mr. Broc McDowell. Commissioner Smith voted for Mr. Reinhard and Vice Chairman Wisenbaker and Commissioners Marshall, Orenstein, and Evans voted for Mr. McDowell. Mr. Broc McDowell was appointed to the rotating seat with a vote of 4-1.

Lowndes County Library System Board of Trustees

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated at the July 14, 2026, commission meeting, Mr. William Booth was appointed to serve a one-year term. However, Mr. Booth does not reside in Lowndes County and the recently updated Lowndes County Library Board Constitution states, "If a member of the Board moves his residence outside Lowndes County, he or she shall be replaced on the Board." This leaves a vacant seat for the one-year term beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027. Mrs. Dukes further stated Dr. Debra Carruth has expressed a desire to be reappointed to the board. Ms. Sarah FitzGerald, Mr. Dave DiSalvo, and Ms. Kimberly Cliett have also expressed a desire to be appointed to the board. Commissioner Smith nominated Ms. Kimberly Cliett for the one-year term beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027. There were no other nominations. Ms. Kimberly Cliett was appointed by acclamation.

PUBLIC HEARING

2026 Comprehensive Plan Transmittal

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated the purpose of this hearing is to notify the community that a draft of the 2026 Comprehensive Plan will be transmitted to the Southern Georgia Regional Commission and the Department of Community Affairs for review. Staff from the Regional Commission, Hahira, Valdosta, and Lowndes County have worked on this plan in addition to hosting public meetings with input from local elected officials, stakeholders, and community partners. A substantial update to the Comprehensive Plan has been prepared and is ready for state review. Mr. Dillard further stated staff recommends the Chairman sign the transmittal letter authorizing the Southern Georgia Regional Commission to review the plan and submit it to the Department of Community Affairs for their review. During this time, residents may also make suggestions, additions, or revisions by submitting written comments to appropriate staff. Mr. Dillard stated a copy of the plan is available on Lowndes County's website as well as the Southern Georgia Regional Commission's website. Commissioner Smith asked if there will still be time for local cities and elected leaders to review and edit based on their needs and municipalities. Mr. Dillard responded, that is correct. John Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Quarterman complimented the County Planner for putting the draft Comprehensive Plan on the Lowndes County website. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the item as presented, Commissioner Smith seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Resurfacing Batch 1 P.I. # 0020532 — Local Project Delivery Application Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Resurfacing Batch 1 is on the TIA II approved list. Mr. McLeod further stated the Local Delivery Application starts the process by allowing Lowndes County to manage the project at the local government level. The project will include resurfacing 36 county roads at 52 miles. The project is estimated at \$13,134,000.00. Mr. McLeod stated staff will let the project in three (3) phases between 2026 and 2029. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked if the three sections are bands or if that is something different. Mr. McLeod stated that is something different. This is band one and there will be three phases in band one. There is still a band two and a band three to come. Commissioner Smith asked if this is completely paid for by TSPLOST. Mr. McLeod responded yes. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the item. Seconded by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BID

Hickory Grove Road Widening P.I. 0020527 and Skipper Bridge Road Widening P.I. 0020528 - Transportation Investment Act (TIA) Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Hickory Grove Road widening and Skipper Bridge Road widening are TIA 2 approved projects. The project mainly consists of adding 2' of pavement widening to each side of the existing road width, overlaying with OGI, resurfacing the entire new width with 12.5 MM super paving, rebuilding the shoulders, and temporary & permanent striping. Mr. McLeod stated Hickory Grove Road begins at State Route 7 (US 41) and ends at the Echols County line, which is 7.8 miles. Skipper Bridge Road begins at the end of the curb and gutter section north of the bridge at the Valdosta City Limits line and ends at the Cook County line, which is 8.8 miles. Mr. McLeod further stated the contract time is 180 calendar days. Bids were opened on June 25, 2026, and two (2) bids were received. The Scruggs Company submitted the low bid of \$5,039,798.50, and Reames and Son Construction submitted a bid of \$5,248,172.38. Commissioner Orenstein stated this does not include a rumble shoulder and asked if this is only flat pavement widening two feet. Mr. McLeod responded that is correct with restriping and rebuilding the shoulders. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve The Scruggs Company as the low bidder. Seconded by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes recognized 911 Director Tonya Davis and stated that almost 30 years ago, Lowndes County was the second local government in this area and one of the first in the nation to be CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies) certified as a 911 center. Mrs. Dukes further stated Mrs. Davis and her team recently returned from receiving that accreditation and Mrs. Davis will speak at a later meeting about what it means from a customer service standpoint. Mrs. Dukes congratulated Mrs. Davis and her team on receiving the accreditation.

Mrs. Dukes stated the 100 Black Men Organization is hosting their annual barbecue on the historic courthouse square this weekend. It begins on Friday and extends through Saturday. Mrs. Dukes encouraged everyone to attend and enjoy some barbecue. Mrs. Dukes went on to say this organization does a phenomenal job with philanthropy and some of the organizations they support in our community. She further stated if you do not want barbecue, you can give a donation. Your money will go a long way in our community. She thanked the 100 Black Men Organization for what they do.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

Chairman Slaughter stated he is going to make a few changes to the Citizens Wishing To Be Heard portion of the meeting. Chairman Slaughter further stated after the meeting is adjourned tonight they will have a discussion session that will involve a presentation by Mrs. Dukes and after the presentation the Board of Commissioners will make themselves available for questions that citizens may have. Chairman Slaughter stated they will address a few questions on the subject, and if there are opportunities in the future and this works out well, we will continue to have these sessions on this subject. There were three citizens who submitted forms to speak on data centers and Chairman Slaughter stated he thinks they can be covered during the discussion session, if there are no objections. He proceeded with the Citizens Wishing to Be Heard section of the meeting.

Charles Dennis, 4759 Otter Creek Road, addressed the commission on behalf of the citizens who live on Howell Road regarding the annexation of Howell Road. Mr. Dennis stated there are many places

in Miller Park where they can do the annexation. He stated they do not need to bring what is in the City back into the County. Mr. Dennis also stated there are many places in the City that have land that can be used to do what they are trying to do. Mr. Dennis stated he thinks it is dangerous to have it at the intersection where the bridge is, and he believes it will cause more problems.

John Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, addressed the commission recommending the board packets be placed on lowndescounty.com.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Evans. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the regular session meeting at 5:49 p.m.

Information Sharing Session to Address Data Center Ordinance Considerations

The information sharing session began immediately following the adjournment of the regular session meeting.

County Manager, Paige Dukes stated the purpose of tonight's session is to share information, share the county's concerns, as well as hear more about citizens' concerns. Mrs. Dukes and the commission passed out cards that citizens could use to write their questions. Mrs. Dukes stated they would not be able to address every question tonight, but they will follow-up with all the questions. Mrs. Dukes stated Dr. Noll will be the screener/spokesperson for the priority tonight. Mrs. Dukes then stated that she wanted to make it clear that this conversation is not meant to make a case for or against a data center. This is meant to encapsulate the conversation of data centers, acknowledge everyone's concerns, and how we can possibly put that into an ordinance that as many people as possible are comfortable with. Mrs. Dukes further stated it is also from a policy standpoint, something the commission feels is positive for our community.

Mrs. Dukes gave a presentation on data center considerations. At the end of the presentation, some of the commissioners offered comments regarding information presented. Dr. Noll read questions submitted by citizens regarding data centers. Some of the questions asked were what if a data center application comes in before the ordinance is done, and would the ordinance specifically disallow the use of PFAS chemicals? Mrs. Dukes and Chairman Slaughter responded to the questions. Chairman Slaughter stated the Commission is putting the necessary ordinances and regulations in place so that, if a data center does come to Lowndes County, the County will be prepared.

Mrs. Dukes stated if anyone has studies, research, or information they want to provide on data centers, they are welcome to submit it to them.

The information session ended at 7:09 p.m.