

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, August 11, 2026

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Vice Chairman Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Joyce Evans
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Michael Smith

Chairman Bill Slaughter was not present.

Vice Chairman Wisenbaker called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and recognized Leadership Lowndes class members.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Scott Orenstein

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Scott Orenstein

LOWNDES COUNTY 811 DAY PROCLAMATION PRESENTATION

Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey to read the 811 Day Proclamation for the Lowndes County Safe Digging Month, declaring August 11, 2026.

MINUTES

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

PUBLIC HEARING

REZ-2026-15 Mardun Ventures, LLC, 6434 Lake Alapaha Blvd, ~10.7ac, R-21 to E-A, County Water & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on approximately 10.7 acres requesting the subject property from R-21 (medium density residential) zoning to E-A (Estate Agricultural) zoning in order to use the property to plant more pine trees. Mr. Dillard stated the subject property possesses road frontage on Lake Alapaha Blvd. a county-maintained road and is within the urban service and suburban character areas and does contain wetlands. TRC recommended R-A zoning would be more appropriate rather than E-A zoning because of the supplemental standards. The TRC recommended approval of R-A zoning with two conditions

(1.) Stables and Livestock, Chicken Coops, Kennels, and Cemeteries shall not be allowed. (2.) Compliance with any recorded Lake Alapaha/Hidden Cove HOA Covenants and Restrictions shall apply. The Planning Commission recommended approval of R-A zoning with the two stated conditions. Commissioner Marshall asked regarding the applicant being able to possibly claim conservation status on that property, does R-A zoning allow for that as well. Mr. Dillard responded yes, R-A and E-A zoning both typically allow for conservation use for tax purposes. No one spoke against this request. Michael Jones, 6365 Lake Alapaha Blvd. spoke in favor of this request as the property owner's representative and offered to answer any questions the commission might have. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve with R-A zoning with two conditions: 1. Stables and Livestock, Chicken Coops, Kennels, and Cemeteries shall not be allowed. 2. Compliance with any recorded Lake Alapaha/Hidden Cove HOA Covenants and Restrictions shall apply, seconded by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Jail Door Locking Control System Replacement

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated a request from the Sheriff's Office was received for the locking control system for one of the jail pods which is not functioning properly and needs replacing. Jail personnel received a quote from Valdosta Technical Systems in the amount of \$62,440.00. Ms. Black stated this would be funded from SPLOST IX. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve Valdosta Technical Systems in the amount of \$62,440.00, seconded by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Jail Skylight Replacement

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated a request from the Sheriff's Office was received for the skylights in two of the halls of the jail which are leaking and need to be replaced. Superior Metal Buildings submitted a quote in the amount of \$64,302.26. Commissioner Smith asked if these were multiple skylights. Ms. Black responded yes. Commissioner Orenstein asked if these were being paid from SPLOST. Commissioner Smith answered SPLOST IX. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve Superior Metal Buildings in the amount of \$64,302.26, seconded by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Acceptance of Infrastructure for Hunting Lodge Trail Subdivision

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Hunting Lodge Trail Subdivision is located off of Copeland Road across from Lowndes Middle School and is adjacent to Lester Road. The subdivision includes forty-two (42) residential lots and one (1) stormwater lot. 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 asked to verify this is being done before houses are built on the property. Mr. McLeod answered yes, that is correct. Commissioner Marshall asked regarding the school zone being adjusted. Mr. McLeod responded that has not been asked to be changed or reviewed. Commissioner Orenstein asked about the fencing condition. Mr. McLeod answered that the conditions for fencing and the size of lots were met. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the request as presented, seconded by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BID

2026 Local Maintenance and Improvements Grant (LMIG) Local Road Assistance (LRA) Resurfacing Bids

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the 2026 LMIG LRA Application was approved by the Commission on May 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 LRA Resurfacing bids presented are to include resurfacing the roads attached in the agenda packet. Bids were opened on July 30, 2026, and staff received two bids, from the Scruggs Company in the amount of \$1,808,850.75 and Reames and Son Construction in the amount of \$1,829,678.40. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the Scruggs Company as the low bidder in the amount of \$1,808,850.75, seconded by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, mentioned the items below:

- The Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) offering, by the Georgia Department of Community Affairs, that was submitted for the paving of Riverside Road continues to move forward.
- Mrs. Dukes commended Finance Director, Stephanie Black and her staff, stating the millage rate will be presented to the commission at the next meeting for adoption. The proposed rate is a rollback rate, resulting in no tax increase with no public hearings being required.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

George Fisher, 5278 Hall Road, addressed the commission in opposition to data centers in our community. Mr. Fisher mentioned papers on the Withlacoochee River, Karst topography and our drinking water. Mr. Fisher stated that he would like to submit a list of terminology unique to our area for clarification of the terms being used. Lastly, Mr. Fisher mentioned a hole on 4637 Rustic Ridge is growing and is in the garage on the property and has doubled in size.

Treva Gear, 41 Antler Lane, addressed the commission in opposition to data centers in our community. Dr. Gear stated she is speaking on behalf of Dogwood Alliance and the concerned citizens of Cook County. Dr. Gear mentioned these AI Data Centers use additional water, electricity, noise and heat islands; she asked the commission to consider a moratorium in order to create an ordinance.

Micheal Noll, 2305 Glynndale Drive, addressed the commission in opposition to data centers in our community. Dr. Noll stated he has concerns regarding property values, noise, sink hole areas, and accountability. Dr. Noll asked the commissioners to consider a six-month moratorium in order to create an ordinance. Additionally, Dr. Noll mentioned the possibility of creating a task force, with members of our local government and the community, to discuss an ordinance.

Kelly Saxon, 8 Baldwin Place, addressed the commission to give announcements for the community. Ms. Saxon invited the residents to attend the South Georgia Community Resource and Empowerment Fair on Saturday, August 29th, from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. This event will be held at the Valdosta-Lowndes County Parks and Recreation Building located at 1901 North Barack Obama Blvd. The purpose of this event is to make it easier for residents to connect directly with organizations and to get information that can help strengthen individuals, families and communities with resources available.

Lunch will be provided. Ms. Saxon mentioned the Jeanette Newbern Coody Building (the former Craig Center) which the City of Valdosta remodeled, and a ribbon cutting will be held on August 14th at 10:00 a.m.

Kristina Cheek, 104 East Mary Street, addressed the commission regarding Southern Georgia Black Chambers. Ms. Cheek stated the three pillars of influence and impact are community, business, and government. The aim is to assist members with access to capital, to grow, scale and to become employers to improve and diversify the economic ecosystem here in South Georgia. Their focus is black and minority owned business owners, but everyone is welcome. Ms. Cheek mentioned that she would like to strengthen the relationship with the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners. Below are events Ms. Cheek invited the commissioners and the public to attend: Sunset on the Patio Mixer being held August 27th at the Rainwater Conference Center, every first and third Monday there is a virtual roundtable, and the annual golf tournament being held at Kinderlou Forest Golf Club on September 24th.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Orenstein. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker adjourned the regular session meeting at 6:09 p.m.