

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, December 10, 2024

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Vice Chairman Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Joyce Evans
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Clay Griner

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

INVOCATION

Commissioner Griner

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Griner

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session and regular session of November 12, 2024. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS

Valdosta Lowndes County Conference Center and Tourism Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the seat held by Rick Williams expires December 31, 2024 and he would like to be reappointed. Mrs. Dukes stated there is also a vacancy due to the election of the commission district 5, Commissioner-Elect Michael Smith currently serves on this board and will resign his position. Mrs. Dukes stated Amanda Peacock has expressed an interest in serving and works at Valdosta State University and has extensive experience with tourism at the state level. Commissioner Wisenbaker nominated Mr. Rick Williams for reappointment. There being no other nominations, Mr. Rick Williams was reappointed by acclamation. Commissioner Griner nominated Ms. Amanda Peacock for appointment. There being no other nominations, Ms. Amanda Peacock was appointed by acclamation.

PUBLIC HEARING

REZ-2024-18 LSO Invest, 3910 Old US 41 N, ~0.93ac, R-21 to C-C, County Utilities

Commissioner Orenstein requested to be recused. Chairman Slaughter accepted Commissioner Orenstein's request. 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) zoning to C-C (Crossroads Commercial) zoning. The general motivation for the rezoning is to allow

the property to be used at its highest and best potential. The subject property possesses road frontage on Old US 41 North and Barker Road, both County maintained arterial and local roads. It is within the Urban Service Area, Old US 41 North Corridor Overlay and on the border of Neighborhood Activity Center and Suburban Character Areas. The TRC analyzed the request and recommends approval. A petition was received from the neighbors yesterday morning and a letter from Mr. Heard the adjoining property owner against this request. The Planning Commission recommended denial.

Robert Barber, 3908 Barker Road, spoke against this request. Mr. Barber stated when you leave his neighborhood there are already three businesses in this area and starting from the Smokin' Pig and counting across the street within a quarter of a mile, there are twenty businesses in Mineola. Mr. Barber is against the increased traffic as well as the Barco Village and Shamrock Hills residents are against this request too.

Virginia Castellanos, 4322 Swan Drive, spoke against this request. Ms. Castellanos stated the value of their property will decrease and the safety of their children is a concern.

Gaylon Graham, 3904 Barker Road, spoke against this request. Mr. Graham stated this property is in front of his house and he does not know what will be built. Mr. Graham stated he is retired and this is a quiet neighborhood and he asked what provisions would be made to protect the neighborhood. There are parking issues, traffic concerns and he asked for denial of this request.

No name or address was given, but she spoke against this request. She stated she lives in the neighborhood and is a professor at Valdosta State University that studies water quality effects on organisms. She stated this is where their drinking water comes from and by bringing in a business with high traffic the area water supply will be disrupted. This is a concern from the community as to how the water supply will be maintained and monitored.

Kathy Burks, 4351 Swan Drive, spoke against this request. Ms. Burks stated the seniors living in this area and increased traffic is a concern for her family.

Kimberly Tart, Steven Heard's daughter, spoke against this request. Ms. Tart stated this area has wetlands and her father is not building a house, due to the water supply. Ms. Tart stated she has received approximately sixty (60) people in opposition and that have signed a petition.

Burt Lancaster, 4302 Swan Drive, spoke against this request. Mr. Lancaster stated everyone walks and there are concerns with traffic.

Lynn Orenstein, 3885 Old US Hwy 41 North, with LSO Investments, spoke in favor of the request as the applicant. Mrs. Orenstein stated she was available to answer any questions.

Vice Chairman Marshall asked since the residents in the subdivision are sensitive to development, do you think having a buffer area would be a problem? Mrs. Orenstein responded the intention is to have traffic coming in to 3910 Old US 41 North, not Barker Road. The awkward spacing and size of the property limits the number of parking spaces and Mrs. Orenstein mentioned there is not an issue having a privacy fence on the back of Barker Road.

Opposition - Rebuttal:

Gaylon Graham, 3904 Barker Road, asked what is going to be built and will noise be a factor?

In Favor Rebuttal: Mrs. Lynn Orenstein, stated the intent is to have an office space and the other side is to have a limited retail space. There are no intentions to have restaurants, nightclubs, drive-thru, etc. nothing to be open after five or six o'clock in the afternoon. Mrs. Orenstein stated some information seems misdirected looking at abutting properties and what is currently zoned C-C or C-H with this rezoning being the least of their concern.

Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve with the condition of a buffer of a privacy fence and no entrance or exit to Barker Road, second by Commissioner Griner. Vice Chairman Marshall, Commissioners Evans, Wisenbaker and Griner voted in favor. Commissioner Orenstein recused himself from the vote. Motion carried.

REZ-2024-19 U-Haul, Inner Perimeter, 3871 Inner Perimeter Rd, ~5.0ac, R-10 to C-G, City Utilities

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on a portion of the subject property from R-10 (Suburban Density Residential) zoning to C-G (General Commercial) zoning. The general motivation for the rezoning is to allow the properties to be combined and used for a self storage center. This property contains approximately five (5) acres, possesses road frontage on Inner Perimeter Road, a state maintained highway, is within the Urban Service Area and Neighborhood Activity Center Character Area, which recommend C-G zoning is appropriate. Mr. Dillard stated the TRC recommended approval with the following conditions:

1. Any structure over thirty-five (35) feet in height shall be void of windows and/or reflective surfaces along its northern elevations.
2. All lighting shall be directed on-site and away from residentially zoned properties.
3. There shall be no reduction in the minimum buffer area requirements of Section 4.07.06.

The Planning Commission recommended approval with the conditions as stated above.

No one spoke against this request. Roger Bishop, market company president for the U-Haul Company of Southern Georgia, spoke in favor of this request. Mr. Bishop stated a team would be hired locally and they look forward to working with the county and city. Mr. Bishop stated he was available to answer any questions. Scott Alderman, 5273 Bethany Drive, First Commercial Real Estate Broker for the proposed sell with U-Haul, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Alderman represents the sellers Diane White and Edna Lewis who are the co-administrators of the estate. Mr. Alderman read a letter from Ms. White and Ms. Lewis supporting this rezoning request. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve this rezoning request with the recommended conditions as stated (1) Any structure over thirty-five (35) feet in height shall be void of windows and/or reflective surfaces along its northern elevations, (2) All lighting shall be directed on-site and away from residentially zoned properties and (3) There shall be no reduction in the minimum buffer area requirements of Section 4.07.06, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2024-20 Wilson Estate, 5917 Thunder Bowl Rd., ~1.7ac, E-A to R-1, Well & Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the request, stating it was withdrawn by the applicant.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Acceptance of Infrastructure for Val Del Estates Phase 5

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item stating Val Del Estates Subdivision Phase 5 is located on Val Del Road and includes twenty-six (26) lots. All construction and paperwork have been completed and staff has made the final inspection. Commissioner Evans made

a motion to adopt the resolution as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Georgia Services Administration Public Buildings Service, Lease Amendment #5 for the Georgia County USDA Service Center

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the current lease agreement between Lowndes County Board of Commissioners and the United States of America for the Georgia County USDA Service Center located at 2108 East Hill Avenue expired December 31, 2023. This proposed lease agreement will extend the current lease until December 31, 2028. The lease price of annual rent is \$72,000.00 payable at the rate of \$6,000.00, per month. The annual rent is an increase of \$32,000.00 annually, which is in accordance with the market rate. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the lease agreement as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

2025 Public Defender Contracts

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from Mr. Wade Krueger during the work session meeting and the contract hasn't changed. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the contracts as presented, second by Vice Chairman Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Tower Replacement and Repair

IT Senior Systems Manager, Robin Wright, presented the item. Mr Wright stated this agenda item is for tower replacement and repair due to Hurricane Helene. These towers, originally rated for 75 mph winds, are quoted with stronger, taller structures that can withstand winds of 110 mph or more. Mr. Wright stated this work was currently in progress. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Fiber Install to Elections

IT Senior Systems Manager, Robin Wright presented the item. Mr. Wright stated this request is for installation of new fiber for the new location of the Board of Elections Office at 901 North Patterson Street. Mr. Wright stated the total cost to install the fiber optic network is \$82,744.00. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Acceptance of FY 2025 Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Grant

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated the Commission approved the submission of the application for the continuing funding for the Strengthening Families Program (SFP) for the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Grant. Lowndes County was notified that we have been awarded funding in the amount of \$50,000.00. Mr. Tye stated it is the intent to continue using Peaceway Counseling, who has been providing the service for three years. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the grant as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

2025 Holiday Schedule

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the item. Mr. Beals stated Lowndes County observes ten (10) holidays spanning twelve (12) working days and the 2025 Holiday Schedule is being presented for the Commission's consideration. Commissioner Orenstein asked if there were any

changes, Mr. Beals answered no. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the holiday schedule as presented, second by Vice Chairman Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Section 125 Plan Document Renewal for 2025

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the item. Mr. Beals stated approval of the plan will allow qualifying employee deductions to be withheld pretax and in compliance with the IRS guidelines. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the renewal as presented, second by Commissioner Evans. Commissioners Evans, Orenstein, Griner and Vice Chairman Marshall voted in favor. Commissioner Wisenbaker stepped out momentarily and did not vote. Motion carried.

2025 ACCG Workers' Compensation Insurance Renewal

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the item. Mr. Beals presented the renewal in the amount of \$278,170.00 to include discounts and safety credits that reduce the annual premium to \$256,945.00. Mr. Beals stated due to the County's safety/loss control program there was a 7.5% reduction added as well. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the renewal as presented, second by Commissioner Griner. Commissioners Evans, Orenstein, Griner and Vice Chairman Marshall voted in favor. Commissioner Wisenbaker stepped out momentarily and did not vote. Motion carried.

2025 Stop Loss Insurance Coverage Renewal

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the annual Stop Loss coverage related to Lowndes County's self-insured employee insurance plan, in the amount of \$1,621,890.00. Mr. Beals stated that EPIC Brokers & Consultants represents Lowndes County as our health insurance broker and HM Insurance Group is currently offering the lowest available rates for the upcoming 2025 plan. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the annual renewal as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

ACCG-IRMA Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Insurance Program

Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented this new program adopted by the state, HB541 which requires all public entities in Georgia to offer a supplemental benefit program for first responders diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) resulting from exposure to line of duty traumatic events. The Association of County Commissioners (ACCG) has developed a solution for Georgia counties that need this coverage which provides financial protections to first responders and their families in the event they develop PTSD. It creates a once per lifetime financial safety net, to assist with uninsured costs associated with PTSD treatment and recovery. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

2025 Commission Meeting Calendar

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated staff took into consideration the annual holidays and the ACCG Annual Conference when preparing the 2025 commission meeting calendar for your consideration. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the calendar as presented, second by Commissioner Griner. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Bevel Creek Pump Repair

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item, stating that this pump is in need of repair due to running high amps and tripping the breaker. Mr. Stalvey added the cost to rebuild this pump with Xylem is \$32,306.82 and the cost of a new pump is \$77,626.15. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion

to approve the complete rebuild of the pump in the amount of \$32,306.82, second by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Office of the Governor Criminal Justice Coordinating Council Accountability Court Lowndes County DUI Court - State Court

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the grant. Mrs. Dukes stated this award is made under the Accountability Courts State of Georgia grant program. The Lowndes County DUI Court has been awarded a Local Law Enforcement Subgrant by the Criminal Justice Coordinating Council for a total of \$12,584.00 with no match requirement by Lowndes County. This will help fund the surveillance officer curfew checks, drug and alcohol screens and surveillance duties for the remainder of the fiscal year ending June 30, 2024. Commissioner Orenstein asked for an update regarding the success of this program, Mrs. Dukes responded she would verify the numbers and convey to the commission. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the grant as presented, second by Commissioner Griner. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Intergovernmental Support Agreement between Moody AFB and Lowndes County Board of Commissioners *Agenda Item Added*

Chairman Slaughter stated if there were no objections, staff would like to add an item to the agenda, a Request on IGSA Agreement with Moody Air Force Base. There being no objections, Chairman Slaughter asked that the item be added as requested. County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the final documentation for the blanket IGSA was received this afternoon. Mrs. Dukes stated IGSA is the Intergovernmental Governmental Service Agreement that allows the county to manage some projects that fall under the terms of the agreement for Moody Air Force Base. This allows us to provide our local government regulatory with respect to the bid process for them to be able to move forward with their projects. No changes to this agreement, it will be for smaller items such as paving and smaller capital projects. There is a \$15 million dollar limit for the life of the grant over a ten year period. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the agreement as presented, second by Commissioner Griner. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried. Chairman Slaughter stated this agreement will be official after Moody Air Force Base has approved and signed.

BIDS

PI# 0016279 TIA-07 Coleman Road NW Paving and Drainage Improvements Bids

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Coleman Road NW paving and drainage improvements is a TSPLOST approved project that is 2.21 miles long. Mr. McLeod stated two bids were received with the low bid being over budget, but staff worked with the low bidder to value engineer the project, reducing the amount to \$3,068,176.54. Vice Chairman Marshall asked an estimated time frame of completion, Mr. McLeod responded the award notice will go out in January 2025, if approved, then approximately sixteen months before completely finished. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the Scruggs Company as the low bidder in the amount of \$3,068,176.54, second by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Emergency Repair Bid - Lowndes County Sheriff's Office Patrol Division

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod presented, the item. Mr. McLeod stated Hurricane Helene blew approximately 9,500 square feet of TPO roof and membrane off of the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office Patrol Division. Staff has followed all procurement procedures for FEMA. The insurance adjuster and insurance engineer have been to the site for their inspections. Staff does

anticipate insurance to cover the repair cost. Emergency purchases are those that are made to alleviate a situation in which there is a threat to health, welfare, or safety under certain conditions defined as an emergency by jurisdiction that does not allow time for normal, competitive purchasing procedures. For example, flooding, power outages or other natural disasters. Staff does anticipate insurance to cover the repair cost. Staff was able to procure two quotes to repair the roof with JHS Strickland Construction submitting the low bid in the amount of \$114,720.00. Staff has issued a purchase order to JHS Strickland Construction in the amount of \$114,720.00 and materials have been ordered and work has begun. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the low bidder, JHS Strickland Construction in the amount of \$114,720.00, second by Commissioners Evans and Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Lease-Purchase Two New Motor Graders for Public Works

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item for a quantity of two new motor graders for the Public Works Department. Ms. Black stated two bids were received with the low bidder for the lease-purchase being Caterpillar, in the total amount of \$405,838.00 and a monthly amount of \$6,091.04. Commissioner Orenstein asked to verify this was the lease/purchase price for a quantity of two? Ms. Black answered yes. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the low bidder, Caterpillar in the amount of \$405,838.00, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Emergency Discharge Manhole Replacement

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated there are three manholes on Val Del Road and one manhole near the Francis Lake office that need to be replaced. Mr. Stalvey stated due to the proximity of manholes to the roadway these replacements have been deemed an emergency to prevent catastrophic failure to the roadway and sewer systems. Staff advertised the project and two contractors were present for the pre-bid meeting. Bids were opened today, Tuesday, December 10th at 11:00 a.m. and two bids were received with the low bidder being RPI, Inc. in the amount of \$318,708.50. Commissioner Orenstein asked regarding the difference in the amounts? Mr. Stalvey stated RPI, Inc. did view the site and they are satisfied with the amount quoted. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the low bidder, RPI, Inc. in the amount of \$ 318,708.50, second by Vice Chairman Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Hammock Trail Drainage Repair

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated during Hurricane Helene a section of property at 5070 Hammock Trail was eroded, cutting a large ditch through the yard down to Hammock Lake. This damage was caused by a two inch water main break that could not be accessed immediately due to downed trees and power lines. Additional erosion occurred during the flooding on November 6, 2024. Mr. Stalvey stated two bids were received with Rountree Construction submitting the low bid in the amount of \$179,227.00. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, reported the following:

- The Employee Christmas Luncheon is tomorrow, December 11, 2024, at the Civic Center in building D, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

- The Farmer Appreciation Breakfast is scheduled for Friday, December 13, 2024, at 7:30 a.m. Mrs. Dukes stated if there ever was a time to show support to our farmers, it certainly is this year.
- Saturday, December 14, 2024, Lowndes County Fire Rescue will be hosting the Toys for Tots Softball Tournament at Freedom Park.
- Support the VSU Blazers Saturday, December 14, 2024 as they continue their playoff season.
- December 19, 2024 from 4:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m. at the Historic Courthouse we will celebrate Commissioner Griner and his departure.
- December 20, 2024 at 10:00 a.m. on the Judicial side of the building, Chairman Slaughter and Commissioner Evans will be sworn in for their new terms beginning January 1, 2025.
- January 3, 2025 at 4:00 p.m. Commissioner-Elect Michael Smith will be sworn in for his first term.

Mrs. Dukes recognized Commissioner Griner, stating we are grateful for your leadership, service, and your support. It has been a fantastic run and we wish you well. We are grateful for you and your family and you will always be a part of our Lowndes County Family.

Commissioner Griner stated he enjoyed being a part of this group, he has learned a lot, and he is going to miss it. He further stated he is proud of where the county is and what has been accomplished during the past ten years. He also thanked staff, stating they make a tough job much easier.

Chairman Slaughter stated he appreciates everything Commissioner Griner has done for the Commission. Further stating he appreciates the knowledge that Commissioner Griner provided from the accounting and budgeting side as well as resources from him and the whole commission that are beneficial to this group. Chairman Slaughter stated Commissioner Griner will be thoroughly missed and he has been humbled by the opportunity to serve with him. Chairman Slaughter stated he has learned very much from Commissioner Griner, and it has been wonderful working with him. We continue to see the growth in this community and you will forever be a part of that growth.

Commissioner Orenstein stated Commissioner Griner has become a very good friend, advisor, and mentor. He further stated he remembers Commissioner Griner telling him that they could make the County better and discussing their commitments to the County. He also stated Commissioner Griner said he wants to leave the County better than he found it, and Commissioner Orenstein stated there is no doubt that Commissioner Griner has done just that. You have accomplished your mission. Commissioner Orenstein stated he looks forward to Commissioner Griner's future endeavors, and he will always be a part of this family.

Commissioner Wisenbaker and Vice Chairman Marshall let Commissioner Griner know they appreciate him and wished him farewell.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD - There were no citizens wishing to be heard.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Griner made a motion to adjourn the regular session meeting, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Chairman Slaughter wished those in attendance, staff and the commission a very Merry Christmas and adjourned the meeting at 6:35 p.m.