

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, December 9, 2024

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

County Manager, Paige Dukes introduced and recognized the Lowndes County Utilities Department. Mrs. Dukes asked Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey to speak regarding the recent accomplishments of staff. Mr. Stalvey stated with training available for state licenses in water and waste water, last year three different classes were held and offered here in our building. Matt Ehling, Jason McLeod and Carson Rice have taken the training classes, tested for the Class II license and have passed. Chairman Slaughter commended Mr. Ehling, Mr. McLeod and Mr. Rice. Additionally, Chairman Slaughter mentioned training is important and being able to have the classes given here in our building has been a cost savings to Lowndes County.

Mrs. Dukes asked EMA Director, Ashley Tye to introduce a representative with FEMA. Mr. Tye introduced FEMA Representative Keith Denning and asked him to give the commission an update. Mr. Denning gave an update related to Hurricane Helene stating since October, there is a branch office located at Georgia Military College with approximately one hundred people working at that location. A disaster recovery center opened in Valdosta on October 7th and seventy (70) citizens are being seen daily. There are disaster survivor assistance teams canvassing the Valdosta and Lowndes County area and looking at acute care and case work with those not finding an answer with housing. Families are being contacted and helped with resources, usually with locating rental properties. Over 30,000 registrations with FEMA have been received, in the individual households program, with the overall program having \$23 million dollars distributed in Lowndes County. 17,000 residents have received housing assistance with repairs and/or replacements. Chairman Slaughter and the Commission thanked Mr. Denning.

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session and regular session of November 12, 2024. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

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 has expressed a desire to continue to serve. Mrs. Dukes stated

there is also a vacancy due to the election of commission district 5, Commissioner-Elect Michael Smith currently serves on this board and will resign his position. Ms. Amanda Peacock has expressed an interest in serving on this board.

PUBLIC HEARING

REZ-2024-18 LSO Invest, 3910 Old US 41 N, ~0.93ac, R-21 to C-C, 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) 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. The Planning Commission recommended denial. Vice Chairman Marshall asked what conditions did the Planning Commission suggest, Mr. Dillard responded restricting uses such as liquor stores and night clubs, there are standard conditions next to residential landscaping and buffering, hours of operation, but no conditions were stated. Vice Chairman Marshall mentioned the only issue he was aware of was with the entrance and exiting on Barker Road.

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.

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. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on a portion of the subject property from E-A (Estate Agricultural) zoning to R-1 (Low Density Residential) zoning. The motivation for this rezoning is to allow the property to be subdivided into a conforming residential lot. The subject property includes approximately twenty-two (22) acres in total, possesses road frontage on Thunder Bowl Road and Vickers Drive, both County maintained local roads, is within the Rural Service Area and Rural Residential Character Area, which recommend R-1 zoning. The Planning Commission and TRC recommended approval of the approximately 1.7 acres depicted being rezoned.

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.

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.

2025 Public Defender Contracts

Public Defender, Wade Krueger, presented the contracts. Mr. Krueger stated this is an ongoing renewal of the current agreement required by the state, adding there are no changes to the contract, which have been in place since 2007.

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. County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated the work is already in progress and these items will be brought to you for your approval and direction with following financial policies as well as sending to Mr. Tye for FEMA purposes.

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 asked when this project would be completed, Mr. Wright responded after the permits are approved, approximately sixty (60) days.

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. Additionally, Mr. Tye stated there have been 52 families that have completed the Strengthening Families Program.

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 2024 Holiday Schedule is being presented for the Commission's consideration.

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 accordance with the IRS guidelines.

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. County Manager, Paige Dukes, thanked Vice Chairman Marshall for his leadership as he continues to be invaluable on this board.

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.

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.

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.

Bevel Creek Pump Repair

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item, stating that the Bevel Creek lift station 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.

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.

BID

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. Commissioner Orenstein asked what did we lose in the approximate \$700,000.00 amount? Mr. McLeod stated in speaking with the TIA office, 19 ml base and we will be using a six inch lime rock base instead of eight inches. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked what was the budget impact? Mr. McLeod answered \$3,068,176.54. Chairman Slaughter stated this is in TSPLOST money.

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. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if both bidders were local, Mr. McLeod answered yes and the work has begun as of this morning.

Lease-Purchase Two New Motor Graders for Public Works

Purchasing Agent, Amy Woods, presented the item for a quantity of two new motor graders for the Public Works Department. Mrs. Woods stated two bids were received with the low bidder for the lease-purchase being Caterpillar, in the amount of \$405,838.00 and a monthly amount of \$6,091.04.

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 it has 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 will be opened at 11:00 a.m. on Tuesday, December 10, 2024.

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 Wisenbaker asked if this damage was near the south end of the lake? Mr. Stalvey answered on Hammock Trail where the lift station

is located, it is the second to the last house on the right. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked behind the Chick-fil-A restaurant area, Mr. Stalvey answered yes.

REPORTS - County Manager

Chairman Slaughter asked Probation Director, Ferlisha Rountree to address the commission. Mrs. Rountree stated on December 7th, Beautiful Creations by Chanel held a fundraiser event called Celebrity Waiter. At this event there were local “celebrities” who served at Outback Steakhouse and volunteered to be waiters for this event. They were tasked at taking orders, serving drinks, food and even clearing the tables. There were eleven (11) local celebrities to volunteer their time from 11am-1pm. Some of the waiters were the County Manager Paige Dukes, Joe Brownlee, Commissioner Michael Smith, and Nick “Big Nick” Harden to name a few. During this event, the citizens of Lowndes County purchased a meal ticket from Outback Steakhouse. The waiters worked the tables and the customers left tips. We had a friendly competition to see which waiter could raise the most tips. The tips were added up and we want to present County Manager, Paige Dukes with the trophy for raising the most tips. She raised \$745.00 in tips. Mrs. Dukes stated she has watched Chanel's program evolve over the years and commended her, for her work and involvement in the community.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Evans. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 9:26 a.m.