

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES  
WORK SESSION  
Monday, January 13, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

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

Chairman Slaughter welcomed Commissioner Michael Smith to his first work session.

**MINUTES**

The minutes were presented for the work session of December 9, 2024 and the regular session of December 10, 2024. County Attorney, Walter Elliott, requested in writing, that the minutes be revised to reflect changes regarding the Emergency Repair Bid for the Lowndes County Sheriff's Office and the Emergency Discharge Manhole Replacements as far as an explanation of the emergency.

**APPOINTMENT**

**Valdosta Lowndes Development Authority**

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated the seat held by Mrs. Terri Lupo has expired as of January 1, 2025 and she has expressed a desire to continue to serve. Mrs. Dukes stated Mr. Robert Green and Mr. Brice Evans have also expressed an interest in serving. Chairman Slaughter stated he supports Mrs. Lupo and has known her for years during her employment with Georgia Power. Chairman Slaughter mentioned if there are any additional candidates to discuss, those can be nominated at the regular session meeting.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**Beer, Wine & Liquor License - Brian Walker of Beezy Bee, LLC, DBA Rum Runner, 3988 N. Valdosta Rd., Valdosta, GA**

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Mrs. Black stated this is due to a change of ownership request from Brian Walker of Beezy Bee, LLC, dba Rum Runner. The request is for the sale of beer, wine and liquor for consumption on premises.

**FOR CONSIDERATION**

**Budget Calendar for FY 2026 Operating Budget**

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the budget calendar. Ms. Black stated the Commission

is required to adopt a balanced budget by June 30, 2025, adding the other dates are presented as guidelines for the process.

**Beer and Wine License - Heather Louise Holmstrom of Speedway, LLC, DBA Speedway Store # 42348 (1883), 2165 Old Clyattville Rd., Valdosta, GA**

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated Speedway, located at 2165 Old Clyattville Road, is requesting a license for the sale of beer and wine for consumption off premises. Ms. Black stated this is a new establishment.

**Approval of DA's Federal VOCA Grant Application Renewal**

District Attorney, Brad Shealy, presented the item. Mr. Shealy stated this is an annual request in which the District Attorney's Office has received the Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) Grant since 1997, adding that it benefits all five counties in the Southern Judicial Circuit. Mr. Shealy stated the funds benefit victims of crimes that are handled by Superior Court.

**Approval of the Solicitor General's FY25 VOCA Grant Award**

Solicitor General's Office, Victim Services Director, Karen Hayes presented the item. Ms. Hayes stated the Solicitor General's Office has been a recipient of the Federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) since 2014 and this grant funds two full-time victim advocates. Ms. Hayes stated there are no significant decreases in funding this year for fiscal year 2025. The VOCA Award amount is \$75,020.00, which is the same amount as last year. Lowndes County would be required to provide a cash match amount of \$33,232.00. This grant period runs from October 1, 2024 -September 30, 2025.

**Coleman Road NW Paving and Drainage Improvements, P.I.0016279 Supplemental Agreement**

**No. 1** Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the original agreement dated April 28, 2022, with the Georgia Department of Transportation has a "not to exceed amount" of \$2,300,000.00 for the Coleman Road NW Paving and Drainage Improvements. Staff asked the TIA office for an additional funding request to cover the cost difference between the actual cost of the project and the agreement amount. After reviewing, the TIA office agreed to provide additional funds in the amount of \$1,300,000.00, to cover the total cost of the project.

**Emergency Repair - Lowndes County Fire Station #5**

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated on November 6, 2024 Lowndes County received an abnormal rain event. Due to the rain event that occurred, Station #5 had a sewage backup of 3" in depth. Staff called in ServiceMaster Pro to clean the building, remove all items to include the millwork, flooring, 2' of drywall, and furniture. Staff has filed the claim with insurance and followed all procurement procedures. The insurance adjuster has been to the site for the inspection. 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 worked with Kellerman Construction to obtain a proposal to complete the repairs at the station. Kellerman Construction proposed \$79,380.00. Staff has issued a purchase order to Kellerman Construction for \$79,380.00. Materials have been ordered and work has started. Chairman Slaughter stated this was an emergency repair in order to get the fire station back up and running. Commissioner Orenstein asked if Kellerman Construction was the original contractor, Mr. McLeod answered yes and the repairs are about 60% complete. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked the location for Fire Station #5, Mr. McLeod answered this station is located on Bemiss Road.

## **2025 Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Application**

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated as a part of the Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance and Improvement (LMIG) Grant Program, Lowndes County has been allotted \$1,366,958.46 for fiscal year 2025. Additionally, Mr. McLeod stated Lowndes County will be responsible for a minimum ten percent match in local funding, which is allocated from SPLOST VIII. The grant money is proposed to be used for resurfacing the roads listed. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if there is an upcoming list of roads which need restriping, Mr. McLeod answered there is a Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) program which is used to restripe every two years, and there is an ongoing list. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if Old Clyattville Road was on the list, Mr. McLeod answered no, it is proposed to be bid for widening.

## **Lowndes County Local Bridge Replacement at Jumping Gully Road at Bevel Creek (0019937)**

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated Georgia Department of Transportation (GDOT) has identified the bridge on Jumping Gully Road at Bevel Creek as a candidate for replacement in its Local Bridge Replacement Program. In this program the department will fund preliminary engineering, utility coordination and reimbursement, construction and a portion of the right of way phase. GDOT has designated the project as Tier 1 meaning Lowndes County would have a financial commitment of \$50,000.00. GDOT is asking for a response confirming support and the financial participation. Vice Chairman Marshall asked regarding a timeline, Mr. McLeod answered they have not provided one, but the utilities project list is slated for 2028. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked regarding raising the bridge, Mr. McLeod responded there are no design parameters at this time.

## **Union Road Lift Station Pump Replacement**

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the Union Road Lift Station is on the north end of the county serving Creekside West and Frank's Creek subdivisions. This is a duplex station with 45hp pumps. One of the pumps is in need of major repair. The pump was examined by Xylem and to repair it would cost \$45,761.60 and to buy a new pump would cost \$51,196.00. Staff recommends to purchase a new replacement pump from Xylem for \$51,196.00. Commissioner Orenstein asked if Xylem is the only vendor we utilize for repairs, Mr. Stalvey responded other vendors may be used depending on the horse power, Xylem is used and they are more affordable. Chairman Slaughter asked if Xylem is the manufacturer of the pump itself, Mr. Stalvey answered yes, that is correct.

## **GEFA Loan Modification**

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated Lowndes County received a loan from Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) for a project to rehabilitate the sewer collection system and related appurtenances. This project has taken longer to complete than anticipated. After consulting with GEFA, it has been recommended that the loan be modified to extend the completion date to June 2026 for the manhole and lift station rehab. Staff recommends approval.

## **GEFA Loan DWLSL2023097 for Lead Service Line Inventory**

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the Georgia Environmental Finance Authority (GEFA) offers funding through the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund, specifically for the lead service line inventory requirement. The lead service line inventory is a new requirement

from Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) for all public water systems. This loan can be used for engineering, administration, service line investigation, potholing, devices and equipment. Lowndes County has been approved for a \$635,000.00 loan, with a 3.25% interest rate and a potential forgiveness of \$190,000.00, if all funds are used. Staff recommends approval.

**Amendment #1 to Windstream Build Agreement**

Assistant Finance Director, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated Lowndes County was awarded a Broadband Expansion Infrastructure grant by the Georgia Office of Planning and Budget for the purpose of developing broadband facilities for Lowndes County citizens either underserved or unserved in our county. Since the initial Build Agreement between Lowndes County and Windstream went into effect, the U.S. Treasury has since provided updated guidance and conditions for this grant funding, which required an amendment to the grant agreement between the Office of Planning and Budget and Lowndes County itself. Amendment #1 to the Build Agreement between Lowndes County and Windstream is simply passing along the amended grant agreements and the amended requirements between the Georgia Office of Planning and Budget and the County and passing through our internet service provider Windstream. Staff recommends approval.

**BID**

**Bid for Six Compact SUV Vehicles for Multiple Departments**

Purchasing Agent, Amy Woods, presented the item. Mrs. Woods stated Lowndes County solicited bids for a quantity of six new compact SUV's for the Public Works Department, Magistrate Court and the Inspections Department. These vehicles will be replacing older vehicles. Mrs. Woods stated three bids were received that met specifications, with Cass Burch submitting the low bid in the amount of \$160,122.00, for Jeep Compasses.

**REPORTS - County Manager**

County Manager, Paige Dukes, welcomed Commissioner Michael Smith.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Evans. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 8:48 a.m.