

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, January 14, 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 5:30 p.m.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Orenstein

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Orenstein

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of December 9, 2024 and the regular session of December 10, 2024. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, second by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENT

Valdosta Lowndes Development Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item. 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. Vice Chairman Marshall nominated Mrs. Terri Lupo for reappointment. There being no other nominations, Mrs. Terri Lupo was reappointed by acclamation.

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. No one spoke for or against this request. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the license as presented, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

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. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the budget calendar as presented, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

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. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the license as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Approval of DA's Federal VOCA Grant Application Renewal

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from Brad Shealy with the District Attorney's Office during the work session. No further discussion took place. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Approval of the Solicitor General's FY25 VOCA Grant Award

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from Ms. Karen Hayes with the Solicitor General's Office during the work session. No further discussion took place. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the request as presented, second by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

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, including inflation costs. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the request as presented, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

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 on Bemiss Road 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, furniture with misc. items. Staff has filed the claim with insurance and followed all procurement procedures. The insurance adjuster has been to the site for the inspection. Staff does anticipate insurance to cover the repair cost. Mr. McLeod stated this is treated as an emergency project, since this is an essential loss of

government service with the Fire Department not being able to work out of this station. Staff worked with Kellerman Construction to obtain a proposal to complete the repairs at the station. Kellerman Construction proposed \$79,380.00. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the emergency repair as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

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 Grant (LMIG) 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 in your packets. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the grant application as presented, second by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

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. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Commissioner Orenstein. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

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 in the amount of \$51,196.00. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the purchase of a new replacement pump from Xylem in the amount of \$51,196.00, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

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. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

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. Vice Chairman Marshall asked regarding the potential \$190,000.00 forgiveness if all funds are used, Mr. Stalvey answered all of the funds should be used. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the loan as presented, second by Commissioner Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Amendment #1 to Windstream Build Agreement

Assistant Finance Director, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated the United States Treasury provided updated guidance regarding the broadband infrastructure project that Lowndes County has entered into with our internet service provider Windstream. When they updated the guidance of Treasury, they passed it through the Office of Planning and Budget with the state where we made an amended agreement between the state and county; this amendment to our Windstream agreement is simply passing along the new treasury guidance and practices that have been passed to Lowndes County. 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.

BID

Bid for Six Compact SUV Vehicles for Multiple Departments

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black 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 with high mileage. Ms. Blacks 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. Vice Chairman Marshall asked if these were 2024 or 2025 year models, Ms. Black responded she did not have that information. Commissioner Orenstein asked why Jeep Compasses, County Manager responded it was the lowest bid that met specifications. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if these vehicles were four-wheel drive, Public Works Director, Robin Cumbus answered no sir. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to award the bid to Cass Burch in the amount of \$160,122.00, second by Vice Chairman Marshall. Commissioners Evans, Wisenbaker, Smith and Vice Chairman Marshall voted in favor of the request, Commissioner Orenstein opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes reported the following:

- The Lowndes County Bird Supper is scheduled for February 5, 2025 with tickets currently on sale. If there are groups, agencies, boards, authorities, or citizens that you work with, please let them know.
- The deadline for debris removal for the unincorporated area is Friday, January 17, 2025. That is not the deadline for it to be picked up, but the deadline that we have been encouraging citizens to get it to the curb.
- The deadline to apply for FEMA benefits has been extended to February 7, 2025. Mrs. Dukes mentioned she spoke to EMA Director, Ashley Tye and he stated the Disaster Recovery Center is still

seeing about forty (40) people per day, so it will remain open as well. Once the daily average begins to dwindle, we will be able to question whether that resource still needs to be there or not.

- Another issue that we have been working through is staff has been tracking on social media where people are living in tents and asking for donations. We have a FEMA Strike Team in the field that can go visit those places to make sure that people have applied for benefits and that they understand how to do that. There is still plenty of help here as we continue our long term recovery.

- Approximately thirty (30) families/individuals have been supported by GEMA's Hearts of Georgia Campaign. This is a program that provides hotel accommodations for those impacted by the hurricane. The Red Cross and other nonprofits can also help.

- Lowndes County Fire Rescue's graduation for the newest Recruit Class 24-02 is scheduled for Friday, January 17th at 10:00 a.m. at the Lowndes County Historic Courthouse.

- Lowndes County Offices will be closed Monday, January 20th in observance of the Martin Luther King, Jr. holiday.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Vice Chairman Marshall gave a special thanks to Samaritan's Purse for their continued service to our community, especially the elderly and widows. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 5:54 p.m.