

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES  
WORK SESSION  
Monday, January 27, 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.

**MINUTES**

The minutes were presented for the work session meeting of January 13, 2025 and the regular session meeting of January 14, 2025. There were no revisions requested.

**PRESENTATION**

**GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award**

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada is pleased to announce that Lowndes County has received the GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for its Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. Ms. Black stated this is the 19th consecutive year that Lowndes County has won this award. The Chairman and Commission thanked Ms. Black and her staff for their continued success.

**APPOINTMENTS**

**Appointment to the Board of Tax Assessors**

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated the initial term of Mrs. Gretchen Quarterman ended December 31, 2024. Mrs. Dukes stated Georgia statute provides a vacancy on a board of tax assessors shall be immediately filled by appointment of the county governing authority. Per Georgia statute and Resolution of the Board of Commissioners, the appointment or reappointment of a successor to Mrs. Quarterman shall be for the remainder of a three-year term ending December 31, 2027. Mrs. Gretchen Quarterman has expressed an interest in being reappointed and Mr. James Michael Tanner has also expressed an interest in being appointed. Vice Chairman Marshall asked if those nominated could speak to the Commission, Chairman Slaughter responded they could speak tomorrow night at the regular session meeting, since Mr. Tanner is not present.

**Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority**

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated the term of Commissioner Joyce Evans will expire January 31, 2025. Commissioner Evans has expressed an interest in continuing to serve.

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

### **Beer, Wine & Liquor License - Lisa Ash of Lisa's Billiards and Sports Bar, 5129 Mill Store Road, Lake Park, Georgia**

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated this request is for Lisa Ash of Lisa's Billiards and Sports Bar, formerly Lake Park Billiards Academy, and this is due to a change in ownership. Ms. Black stated this request is for the sale of beer, wine and liquor for consumption on premises.

## **FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Special Assessment Rate for 2025**

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated the Commission is required to set the special assessment rate every year to address paving and utility assessments that are not paid within ninety days. Ms. Black further stated the rate is based on two percent above prime, with the current prime rate being 7.5%; therefore, the rate for special assessments should be set at 9.5%.

### **Approval of Elected Officials Using County Issued Purchase Cards and Credit Cards**

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated that in accordance with House Bill 192, the County is required to approve requests from county elected officials in order to be issued a county purchasing card. Ms. Black further stated that the current requests are from newly elected Tax Commissioner, Clay Guess and newly elected Probate Judge, H. Burke Sherwood. Vice Chairman Marshall asked if the Sheriff would have to sign a credit card user agreement as well, Ms. Black responded yes, any elected official requesting a credit card issued by the county would have to sign. Chairman Slaughter asked how many elected officials currently have a county credit card, Ms. Black responded two, the previous Tax Commissioner and the previous Probate Judge. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if this was per term, Mrs. Dukes responded it is per person.

### **Approval of the Solicitor General's FY2025 VAWA Continuance Grant Application**

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the Solicitor General's Office has been a recipient of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Grant since 2018. These funds are associated with supporting those victims, who are women. The Solicitor General's Office is submitting a request for federal funding in the amount of \$79,112.00. In addition to the federal funds, Lowndes County would be responsible for \$26,371.00 in matching funds, if this grant is awarded.

## **REPORTS - County Manager**

Chairman Slaughter asked the commissioners to consider amending the agenda to add an agenda item to vote to 'Authorize to Publish the Intent to Opt Out of House Bill 581'. Chairman Slaughter stated this does not mean that Lowndes County is opting out. The County Attorney has furnished a timeline that will keep us on track to make that decision prior to March 1, 2025, to decide if the county will opt in or opt out. Chairman Slaughter stated there may be an opportunity to provide for 65-year-old and older citizens a better senior exemption. Commissioner Orenstein asked what plans we have to clarify to the public regarding this item being added, Chairman Slaughter responded there is required legal advertising. Commissioner Orenstein asked to verify that if we don't move forward advertising to opt out, we won't be able to opt out, Chairman Slaughter responded yes, that is correct. Mrs. Dukes stated there will be a press release that will be available this afternoon. Vice Chairman Marshall concurred that it would be beneficial to present the pros and cons, and explain how it would impact Lowndes County.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Vice Chairman Marshall. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 8:47 a.m.