An adjourned meeting of the Russell County Commission was called to order by Chair Lee.

The invocation was given by Reverend Brady Baird, Seale United Methodist Church.

Commissioner Larry Screws led the Pledge of Allegiance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

Chair Lee called Ms. Martha Alfred Islam to speak.

Ms. Martha Alfred Islam stated: I am here to talk about 10 Spartan Road in Pittsview.

Chair Lee called Michael Cannon to speak.

Mr. Michael Cannon stated: I am here to talk about my mobile homes.

Chair Lee stated: We do not make decisions during this part of our meeting.

Chair Lee called Mr. Leroy Davis to speak.

Mr. Leroy Davis with the Wiregrass RC&D stated: I want to invite all the Commissioners to a luncheon on April 8, 2020 at 11:30 at T-Bones Restaurant which the Wiregrass will hold their first meeting in Russell County.

Chair Lee welcomed elected officials, department heads, media and guests. He also thanked Cable T.V. of East Alabama and The Citizen News for their coverage of the Commission Meeting.

County Administrator LeAnn Horne called roll. Members present were Chair Gentry Lee, Commissioner Carl Currington, Commissioner Peggy Martin, Commissioner Ronnie Reed, Commissioner Cattie Epps, Commissioner Chance Corbett and Commissioner Larry Screws. Also, present was the County Attorney Kenneth Funderburk. A quorum was established.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chair Lee requested approval of the February 12, 2020 minutes. Commissioner Martin motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Currington.
County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to approve the February 26, 2020 minutes.

PROCLAMATIONS & RESOLUTIONS:

Commissioner Corbett stated: As I spoke about this Monday night at the Work Session it has come to my attention several months ago, we had a local legislation that was passed in 2008. It was attempted in 2007, but it was vetoed by the Governor. It changed the way we do business in the County upon a vacancy of a County Commission seat. I am not forecasting any vacancies on this Commission seat. Across the State of Alabama, it is the common State law the vacancy is filled by the Governor. For some reason the Commission that was sitting at the time, the Legislative Delegation passed a local law and the request of an individual to change that law and change it to the first three years of the term, anything outside of less than a year out of the term would call for the Probate Judge to call for a special election. Your talking $10,000 possibly in doing special elections that would not be reimbursed by the State. Your talking about a special election that would not have a very good turnout. This is something that should not be put in place.

Commissioner Corbett made a motion to approve the resolution. Seconded by Commissioner Martin.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. District 1, Lee voted yes; District 2, Currington voted yes; District 3, Martin voted yes; District 4 Reed voted no; District 5 Epps voted no; District 6 Corbett voted yes; District 7 Screws voted no.

The motion was approved for the Resolution to Repeal Local Legislation.

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: We have a bill that is coming up in the Legislature that the Sheriff’s Association and the County Commission Association is actively opposing. It is in reference to the pistol permit and the State taking over and removing the Sheriff’s around the State from handling the pistol permits. I asked Monday night at the Work Session and provided a sample Resolution in opposition of this. They have asked for each one of our Commission’s to each pass a Resolution of House Bill 39 and Senate Bill 47.

Chair Lee stated: The way this is written if approved only the Chair has to sign it.

Commissioner Martin motioned to approve. Seconded by Chair Lee.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to approve the Resolution to support the Sheriff’s Association to oppose House Bill 39 and Senate Bill 47.

County Coroner Sumbry stated: The Coroner’s office is asking the vote of approval for the below budget transfer.
Line item transfer of $2200 from Line item # 250 Communications and $1500 from line item #265 Registration & Training into line item #234 Motor Vehicle Repairs & Maintenance.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Reed.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission; The vote was unanimous for the Coroner’s Office budget transfer.

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: We have been asked about a month or so ago about a liquor license for Criolla located 4100 Sandfort Road, Phenix City, AL 36869. At this time after receiving the letter from the church next door, I would recommend to the Commission that we grant a 020-Restaurant Retail Liquor license. The bill is being changed down the road. The letter from the church states they have no opposition to it. I would recommend we go ahead and grant them their license.

Commissioner Lee stated: You heard from the Sheriff. I am going to ask County Attorney Funderburk do you have an opinion on this?

County Attorney Funderburk stated: We are in line with this.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Currington.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous to grant Criolla Restaurant located 4100 Sandfort Road, Phenix City, AL 36869 a 020-Restaurant Retail Liquor License.

Sheriff Heath Taylor stated: We have a deputy that has been called up for Military duty for approximately 13 months. Historically we have asked the Commission when this occurs can we fill his position while he is gone. We won't be paying him he will be on Military leave. When he returns, we just won't hire the next available position. We will actually be saving a little money during the time he is gone because he is in a position 5 and we will be hiring in a position 1.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Martin.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. The vote was unanimous for hiring a deputy to fill a deputy’s position that is going on Military leave for approximately 13 months.

Economic & Tourism Director Victor Cross stated: We would like the Commission to approve an abatement for a local manufacturer.

Shaun Culligan Economic Development Manager of the City of Phenix City stated: I placed in front of you a sheet with some slightly detailed information on it. If in fact, I
have done all that I can to understand how the sales taxing situation works. We did get some clarification from the State Department of Revenue. The City is still the granting authority inside the City but also within the Police Jurisdiction. So that being the case the City does have control over the sales tax portion; however, the City does not have control over the property tax situation. The way I understand it from them, we will be asking the Commission for the property tax abatement. We will approach the City for the sales tax portion of the abatement on March 3. I can’t speak for them if they will pass that or not. I can say, historically that has been the case.

Chair Lee stated: That is not necessarily true. I don’t think they granted sales tax when Home Depot was built.

Shaun Culligan Economic Development Manager of City of Phenix City stated: The way that it works for property tax is if the County and the City both don’t pass the property tax portion then the state will not pass the property tax portion. The Resolution will just be for the property tax for 5 years. What we are discussing today is about the average of a $7,000 a year commitment for over 5 years.

Chair Lee stated: Let me state what I think you are asking for now. You are asking for an abatement of property tax on the new expansion and renovation for JVL Laboratories. This will be for 5 years at approximately $7,000 to $8,000 a year.

Shaun Culligan Economic Development Manager of City of Phenix City stated: I want it to be clear that number will depreciate it may be a little more the first year.

Commissioner Reed stated: Mr. Chairman, how come we have to go 5 years and we can’t just go 4 years?

Chair Lee stated: If you make a motion to go 4 years, we will discuss it and vote on it. That is permissible.

Commissioner Reed stated: The reason I say that is because the City is constantly taking all of our revenue and when the time for us comes to give the employees a pay raise sometime this year, the City of Phenix City is going to be able to give their employees a 2% and we might not be able to give our employees a pay raise. I am just looking at the big picture.

Probate Judge Harden stated: In 2 years you are going to get $6,400 of your $7,000 back. We are really only talking about 2 years.

Commissioner Corbett stated: I am not typically in favor for giving abatements for renovations and keeping a business more profitable than they are. At some point I think they need to pay back into the Community more. However, I treat this one a little different. They lost the jobs due to the loss of the contract. Now they are making a huge attempt to bring more jobs back into the community.
Commissioner Corbett made a motion to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Martin.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission: The vote was unanimous to approve the Tax Abatement for JVL Laboratories for a period of 5 years.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney stated: The first thing on the Agenda is to rebid our Bituminous Paving. I want to send out bids today and open bids in the Commission Chamber on April 2 at 2:30 EDT. Once we review the bids, we will bring back to the Commission on April 8 at the Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Martin.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission: The vote was unanimous to approve the Engineering Department to rebid Bituminous Paving.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney stated: The Freeman Road Resolution is an MPO project 80-20 match with the State federal aid money. It is going from County Road 61 (Freeman Road) from County Road 28 (Sandfort Road) to US Highway 431. This is tentatively scheduled for July of this year. The County portion is budgeted.

Commissioner Epps motioned to approve. Commissioner Martin seconded.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission: The vote was unanimous to approve the Freeman Road Resolution.

County Engineer Shawn Blakeney stated: The Bradley Road Resolution is just an update Resolution. This Resolution was done about 2 or 3 years ago with a project that initially kicked off. We were waiting for the railroad crossing to get completed. It is completed. This is updating the Resolution. This is going from County Road 24 (Bradley Road) from County Road 39 (Nuckols Road) to AL Highway 165. This has been budgeted.

Commissioner Epps motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission: The vote was unanimous to approve the Bradley Road Resolution.

Chair Lee stated: We normally donate to the CVCC Foundation Banquet that they have annually. I am asking for a motion to contribute $500 to the CVCC Foundation Banquet. This is the amount we have done in the past. This will be paid out of the Contingency Fund.

Commissioner Reed motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Currington.

County Administrator Horne polled the Commission. District 1, Lee voted yes; District 2, Currington voted yes; District 3, Martin voted yes; District 4 Reed voted yes; District 5,
Epps voted yes; District 6, Corbett abstained due to his receiving an award; District 7, Screws voted yes.

Announcements were made.

County Attorney stated: We have issues which involve the Sanitation Department that clearly comes under the Executive Session law and these being a result of information obtained by the Administrator. I recommend we go into Executive Session.

Commissioner Corbett motioned to recess to Executive Session.

Chair Lee stated: We are in Executive Session.

Commissioner Screws made a motion to reconvene. Seconded by Commissioner Epps.

Commissioner Reed made a motion to adjourn.

The meeting was adjourned.