

The Russell County Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
October 22, 2014  
9:30 A.M. EST.

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

The invocation was given by Steve Reneau, Pastor of Trinity United Methodist Church.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Screws.

Chair Martin welcomed elected officials, department heads, media and guests. She also thanked Cable T.V. of East Alabama and the Citizens News for coverage of the Commission meeting. Chair Martin also recognized Russell County School Board Supernatant Mr. Greene and School Board Member, Dillie Elliott.

The Commission roll was called, members present were: Chair Peggy Martin, Vice Chair Cattie Epps, Gentry Lee, Tillman Pugh, Ronnie Reed, Chance Corbett and Larry Screws.

A quorum was established.

Public Comments:

Eric Woodson discussed the u-verse system of AT&T. He stated that he thinks the Commission need to let the citizens know how they stand on the offer that AT&T has made.

Chair Martin requested a motion to approve the October 8<sup>th</sup>, 2014 meeting minutes. Commissioner Epps motioned to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Screws. The vote was unanimous.

Father Tom Weise was given a proclamation congratulating him on his retirement.

Commissioner Lee motioned to approve all of the proclamations on today's agenda by acclamation. Seconded by Commissioner Screws. There were no objections for the proclamations approval.

The Family of Della Mae Gordon was presented a proclamation expressing the Commission's condolences to them. Della Gordon was a long time employee of the County.

October is Pro Bono Month and a resolution was approved for the Russell County Bar Association by the Commission for recognition of this event.

Economic Director James McGill presented a Tax Abatement and PILOT (Payment in Lieu of Taxes) documents and agreement concerning the Georgia Power Renewable Energy project in Fort Benning, Alabama. Commissioner Reed motioned to approve the abatement and was seconded by Commissioner Epps.

Commissioner Reed stated that he would like to know that Georgia Power will be willing to give back to this community and be active.

Commissioner Epps thanked them for bringing this project to Russell County and the Fort Mitchell area. This is the first project like this in the State of Alabama. It is not only helping our area it is helping the children and education of Russell County. This project will help fund other development for the growth of the county and she thought the tax abatement agreement should be approved.

Commissioner Lee asked for his statement to be placed in the minutes: The purpose of the law passed locally and by the State to allow the County Commission to abate taxes was for economic development, which means bringing in jobs. As we have been told, this project brings in two jobs. To me this is not an economic development in Russell County, but this law has been turned around and is a slap in the face for those who wrote and created the law. To make it a school issue; it is not a school issue. Before the law was passed, abatements could be given but it also abated school taxes, which was punishment to the schools. The law was passed in its current form to allow those abatements but to exclude school taxes. This has turned into a funding mechanism for schools and it makes it look as if a vote against abatement is a vote against a school, which it is not. I don't count two (2) jobs with an abatement of \$1.6 or however many millions of dollars of taxes is equivalent to allowing it to be abated. I am not opposed to schools, I have always supported schools. I worked for the schools and retired from the schools. I think the law has been turned around and used to be a fund-raiser for schools and exclude counties. How are we going to go to the Legislators to say we need sales tax when we are abating \$750,000 in sales tax? That is hard to plead that case. My second point is the Chamber of Commerce interview with the Garrison Commander at Fort Benning, who announced the project stated it was a done deal before abatements were given. The project was coming whether we abated or not. That is why I'm voting against it.

Commissioner Reed stated that we are going to receive the same amount of money as Mead, which will be over \$100,000 in Pilot payments.

Mr. Funderburk stated the set amount of the abatement is for 10 years and is a one-time only deal.

Other Commissioners discussed questions that they had concerning the abatement, but gave their reasons for supporting it. Administrator Horne polled the Commission: District 1(Lee) voted, no; District 2 (Pugh) voted,

yes; District 3 (Martin) voted, yes; District 4 (Reed) voted, yes; District 5 (Epps) voted, yes; District 6(Corbett) voted, yes; District 7(Screws) voted, yes. Six (6) yes votes and one (1) no vote the motion passed.

Administrator Horne requested the Commission accept the Hecht-Burdeshaw Architect's contract to draft and present plans for the ambulance building being proposed along with a precinct to be included in the building. Commissioner Screws motioned to accept the contract. Seconded by Commissioners Corbett and Epps. This will be an in-house project that will be constructed by the county maintenance. The vote was unanimous.

Administrator Horne presented a vacancy on the Southeastern Emergency Medical Services Council which needs to be filled. The Commission has 3 appointments and terms are at the pleasure of the Commission, unless the member does not attend 2 meeting or request to be replaced. Meetings are held twice a year. It was suggested that the current EMA Director serve in this capacity. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the appointment of the current EMA Director Bob Franklin to the Southeastern EMA Council. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. The vote was unanimous.

A brief financial report was given by Administrator Horne: the fund balance is projected to be \$4.2 million and have received in revenue to date \$12.5 million, expenses to date \$12.1 million. We are under our revenue as far as expenses and she thanked department heads for working hard to keep their budgets in line and reduce expense everywhere possible.

Announcements were made:

- Oktoberfest at Uchee Creek begins Friday at 4:00 p.m. on October 24<sup>th</sup> and ends October 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.
- Blacksmith Expo will be held at Fort Mitchell 1813 Fort & Museum on Saturday October 25<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 a.m. - 2:00p.m.
- November 4<sup>th</sup> is Election Day.
- Wanda Lamb announced beginning October 20<sup>th</sup> Coats for Vets will be taken at the 431 South Fireworks stand.
- Commissioner Corbett stated the Day in the Park Event was held on Saturday and was very successful.
- Chair Martin read a thank you card from the Russell County 2014 All Star Team for the Commissions support at the State Tournament. They are the District 10 Champs and runner up to the state title.
- The Annual Veteran Appreciation Day will be held October 25<sup>th</sup> at the Fort Mitchell Volunteer Fire Department.
- The County Administrator announced that the Commission approved \$62 million economic development project in Russell County which is one of largest in the state's history which will be located in District 5. She wanted to let the public know that the Russell County Commission is working hard for the citizens. Chair Martin added that the project did not require any of the tax payers' money.

The meeting was adjourned.