

The Russell County Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
February 28, 2018  
9:30 A.M. E.S.T

An Adjourned meeting of the Russell County Commission was called to order by Chair Peggy Martin.

Chair Martin stated the Agenda needed to be approved.

Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the Agenda. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Administrator Horne called the Commission roll. Members present were Chair Peggy Martin, Vice Chair Carl Currington, Commissioners Gentry Lee, Ronnie Reed and Larry Screws. Commissioner Cattie Epps & Chance Corbett were absent. Also present was the County Attorney Kenneth Funderburk and County Administrator Horne who kept the minutes.

A quorum was established, and the Agenda was approved.

The invocation was given by Reverend Alan Griffin—Emmanuel Baptist Church, Pastor

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Gentry Lee.

A public announcement; Natasha Davis-Walker spoke on behalf of the Tifon Activity Center Incorporated, located in Russell County Alabama, where I grew up. I am working with non-profit organizations to help them get established in the community. We met with Commissioner Corbett about 7 months ago to set up a Community Center in the Crawford area.

As you know, we can't depend on City or County Government to come up with every great idea or set up every establishment that helps the community. Dr. Jessie Horne is a psychologist who works in the Russell County School System. She and her husband are here today. Their daughter passed a few years ago of cancer so they are raising three of their grandchildren. They realize there are lots of grandparents raising children in the Russell County area. Part of the reason is the Opioid crisis we are facing. The parents are incarcerated and cannot take care of their children. Russell County has always agreed family first.

Dr. Jessie Horne and her husband own a home in the Crawford area that is not being used. They thought why we don't use this as the opportunity to set up a non-profit Community Center. Our plan is to operate as a Senior Center during the day time hours. In the evening hours it will operate as a Community Center/Tutoring Center for children, particularly those with special needs and are being raised by their grandparents and those who are not doing well in the School System.

Because Dr. Horne works in the School System, she has been able to identify that there a lot of cases in that area. When we met with Commissioner Corbett, we realized that one of the old Historic Buildings, the old Masonic Lodge, across the street had already been restored and the County had already put money into restoring the building. It wouldn't be suitable for that building to be used for the kind of traffic day in and day out needed for the children. We thought it would be a great idea that we moved it across the street from the park to that home. That way we would be able to function as a center for seniors and in the evening for the children. It could also be used for families to come together for family reunions or birthday parties. We wanted to make sure the community was on board before we came to you.

There is a group of seniors that meet at Rising Star Baptist Church one day out of the month. We went and conducted a survey of the seniors and 30 of 40 seniors are totally ambulatory. Some of them drive. Last year, we've established ourselves as a non-profit organization. We have received our 501(c)3 set up. We are tax exempt. We have connected with Tuskegee Corporation. They came and tested our soil for free and prepped it for a septic tank. We now can switch from a regular house use to commercial use. We have received estimates for the septic tank, and it ranges from about \$5,000.00 to a high end of \$15,000. Obviously, we are inclined to lean toward the lower estimate. We are here to ask the Commissioners, on behalf of the Tifon Organization and for Dr. Jesse Horne and her husband, for a donation to help us with the septic tank. A package is supplied to the Commissioners with the estimates included and a letter from their Commissioner for his support.

Commissioner Reed stated to Chair Martin that the Commissioners need to get them connected to the Lee-Russell Council Government which does the grant writing.

Chair Martin welcomed elected officials, department heads, media and guests. She also thanked Cable T.V. of East Alabama (BEAM), Channel 9 (WTVM), TV and The Citizen News for their coverage of the Commission Meeting.

Chair Martin requested a motion to approve the February 14th, 2018, meeting minutes. Commissioner Currington motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Administrator polled the Commission: District 1 (Lee) voted, yes; District 2 (Currington) voted, yes; District 3 (Martin) voted, yes; District 4 (Reed) voted, District 7(Screws) voted, yes. The Vote was unanimous.

Chair Martin announced we are losing one of our faithful Public Safety Members, Grover Goodrich and his spouse Charlotte. The Commissioners and Administrator presented both Charlotte and Grover Goodrich with a Certificate of Appreciation for their years of service, support and dedicated services to Russell County, Alabama. Mrs. Charlotte Goodrich retired from the City of Phenix City as the City Clerk after thirteen (plus) years. Grover Goodrich is retiring again from Russell County from the Sheriff's Department as a County Deputy. She presented the certifications. The Commission extended their best wishes for a happy and healthy retirement.

Economic & Tourism Director, Victor Cross reported on the PER-Kentec. They are having a meeting on February 28<sup>th</sup>, 2018 at 11:30 A.M. at the Courtyard Marriott. The owners are going to explain what PER-Kentec's plans are for the state of Alabama.

Coroner Sumbry presented court ordered cremations for Thomas Carter and John Stephen Mann. Costs for both are to be paid to Colonial Funeral Home and are not to exceed \$400 each. Commissioner Reed motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Currington. The vote was unanimous.

County Administrator LeAnn Horne welcomed Mr. Jim Forsythe. Mr. Forsythe is here to review with you a membership opportunity that we have through Columbia Southern University through the Association City County Manager's Association which I am President-Elect this year. Mr. Jim Forsythe has agreed to come share and provide an overview to the Commissioners, Department Heads and public.

Mr. Forsythe explained the ACCMA is the Alabama City County Management Association. Through that Association, the County is provided a membership. Columbia Southern University is based in Orange Beach, AL. This is a partnership to provide online programs for college credits across the membership of Russell County employees, associates, and their family members. Mr. Forsythe provided an electronic presentation to the Commissioners and meeting attendees. The City of Phenix City is also a member and participates as well. County Administrator noted that Columbia Southern tuition, degrees and certifications information is included in the Commission's packets. The overview Mr. Forsythe presented here today is in email format so that it can be easily distributed throughout county departments. The Administrator stated she is always looking for educational opportunities for all county employees and this educational opportunity is not just a benefit for employee's, but it also extends to their spouses and children.

County Attorney Mr. Funderburk report that the property on Fontaine Road has been deeded and given to the Abercrombie Cemetery.

Attorney Ryan with Beasley Law Firm recommends Russell County hire their firm for representation in the Opioid Epidemic Law Suit. Our fee is normally a third, which is standard. That third is only if we are successful and an important part of this discussion is if we are fortunate enough to get a resolution, the commission makes the call whether we take the offer or not. We make sure the figure is acceptable before we do anything.

Commissioner Reed asked if he knew how long it would take them to have it settled? Ryan stated that there are settlements going on now. The judge in Cleveland, Ohio, is taking a very aggressive stance, because people are dying every single day from Opioid over dosage. Most people believe that it will not be successful at this current time. It is too early, and these companies are too big and there are too many of them. The shortest time Ryan could envision is 18 to 24 months. These suits take years if there are appeals; or, if there are litigations.

Chair Martin made a motion to accept the Beasley Law Firm, to represent Russell County. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The Administrator polled the Commission: District 1 (Lee) voted, yes; District 2 (Currington) voted, yes; District 3 (Martin) voted, yes; District 4 (Reed) voted, District 7(Screws) voted, yes. The Vote was unanimous.

Chair Martin announced the Chamber of Commerce annual dinner is March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2018 6:30 P.M. to 8:30 P.M. at the Max Wilkes Idler Hour Community Center. Russell County Family Fun Day is Saturday, March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2018 11:00 A.M. at the Russell County Sports Complex. Commissioner Screws announced: Psi Phi is sponsoring a talent program for High School Students from 9<sup>th</sup> grade through the 12<sup>th</sup> grade. If there are any students that are interested in displaying their talent they can see their school counselor, Commissioner Screws or any Brother of the Omega Psi Phi and get a packet. This could reward a student with a scholarship at the local, state and national level.

Chair Martin motioned to adjourn. Adjournment approved.