

The Russell County Commission  
Meeting Minutes  
June 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015  
9:30 A.M. EST

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

The invocation was given by Johnnie Robinson, Pastor of Higher Power Church.

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Commissioner Lee.

Chair Martin welcomed elected officials, department heads, media and guests. She also thanked Cable T.V. of East Alabama and the Citizen News for coverage of the Commission meeting.

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. Also present were Attorney Kenneth Funderburk and County Administrator LeAnn Horne, who kept the minutes.

A quorum was established

Chair Martin requested a motion to approve the May 27<sup>th</sup>, 2015 meeting minutes. Commissioner Pugh motioned to approve the minutes and was seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Chair Martin presented the World Elder Abuse Awareness Day Proclamation to Russell County DHR Representative Florence Bellamy. Mrs. Bellamy introduced volunteers, and County Department Heads who contribute to the protection of our elderly and disabled adults. A vote of approval was not taken.

Commissioner Corbett gave an update on Crawford Park and the Tuckabatchee Masonic Lodge restoration. He also proposed that the committee that worked on the restorations of the lodge and creation of park to continue overseeing this property. Commissioner Corbett motioned that the current Crawford Park Committee is recognized as the official committee by the Russell County Commission and the same is charged with the creating of by-laws, which will include how committee members are chosen, and how the committee operates. The Crawford Park Committee is hereby charged with running the daily operations and making operating decisions for the Crawford Park and all buildings located at the property of 4497 U.S. Hwy 80 West, Phenix City, Alabama. Anyone wishing to rent the buildings located at Crawford Park can do so through the Russell Commission Office. The County Administrator be allowed to open a new checking account to manage associated funds. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. The vote was unanimous.

Lee-Russell Council of Governments Planning and Economic Development Specialist, Barbara Scott announced that Russell County has been invited to apply for the second level of the Land and Water Conservation Fund Grant. The original application was for a walking trail around the Seale Sorts Complex. Prior to the invitation for the second level application, ADECA toured the Seale Complex and made note of deficiencies at the facility, which would need correcting before submitting the second application. Some of the corrections are relatively easy and inexpensive, others are more costly. Discussions had taken place before the submitting the pre-application because when accepting Federal funding the Complex will have to be operated and maintained in perpetuity. Mrs. Scott asked if the Commission would like to go forward with the application. Commissioner Corbett stated that due to the perpetuity, the facility being landlocked and the cost of the project; it would not be feasible to proceed with the walking trail. Commissioner Corbett motioned that the Chair sign a letter of appreciation for consideration and notifies the agency that the Commission has made the decision not to pursue the LWCF grant for the walking trail in Russell County. Seconded by Commissioner Lee. The vote was unanimous.

Revenue Commissioner Naomi Elliott gave the Final Settlement Report for the Commission to review. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve and was seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Judge Alford Harden, Jr. requested to remove his agenda item concerning the Phillips Family Cemetery. Commissioner Epps motioned accept the request and was seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Two East Alabama Mental Health Board appointments terms will expire this month. Commissioner Pugh has spoken with Isaiah Sumbry who wishes to remain on the board. Commissioner Screws stated he had not been able to contact Cedric Darty who currently holds the other expiring position and requested to bring this appointment back at the next Commission meeting. Commissioner Pugh motioned to approve the reappointment of Isaiah Sumbry and was seconded by Commissioner Lee. The vote was unanimous.

Assistant Engineer Shawn Blakeney requested approval to purchase a 2015 Ford F250 Crew Cab Pick-up Truck off the state Bid list for the amount of \$26,983. The truck is at Stivers Ford Lincoln. Commissioner Screws motioned to approve the purchase. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Sheriff Taylor stated after several years of being closed; the COPS Grant has been reopened for application. He requested approval to move forward with application. The grant has a 25% match for three years and the Commission has to agree to employ those hired (up to 2 people) for one year after completion of the grant. He would like to apply for the maximum, 2 deputies, which is based on the size of the Sheriff's Department. Commissioner Epps motioned to accept the recommendation of Sheriff Taylor. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Reed requested to table the Recreation and Sports Contract. He understands that some of the Commissioner have more ideas concerning the contracts and need more time. Commissioner Pugh motioned to allow the County Attorney to review the contract for both Ladonia and Seale as discussed at Monday night's work session, so he can bring back recommendations. Seconded by Commissioner Corbett. The vote was unanimous.

Commissioner Screws stated there has been a lot of deliberation concerning the Ambulance building and thanked the Ambulance Committee for their work on this project. The design that they presented was a good, but not affordable for the County at this time. Commissioner Screws met with the Maintenance Department and the architect, Scott Holmes, to discuss how to trim the cost. Maintenance Supervisor Richard Sellers assured him the building could be built with the remaining budgeted funds of \$129,000. He motioned to reduce the size of the main structure of the Ambulance Building between 1,500 to 1,600 square feet. Seconded by Commissioner Reed. Pictures were displayed of a similar building occupied in a Smith's Station strip mall. This is one of 3 Smith Station locations occupied by the ambulance service. Administrator Horne visited this particular facility and discussed the details of the 900 square foot building and their recommendation of installing a shower for employees who may become contaminated while working a call. It was also recommended by this ambulance service to have a covered parking area to keep employees out of the weather while the vehicles are being restocked.

Commissioner Corbett detailed the blueprint that Mr. Holmes provided and gave reasoning behind those plans. He also reminded that providing a building for the Ambulance is part of the ambulance contract providing a 24/7 service for residents in the lower county. Also, providing a station keeps the County from paying subsidies for ambulance services and as done so for the past 17 years. If the plans for the building do not include a bedroom for employees to rest between calls, the regional manager stated that the service will pull out of the area at 10:00 p.m. each night which will hurt critical response time.

Commissioner Screws reviewed his proposed plans which list: air conditioning, electrical services, plumbing, concrete pad, and outside of the building look the same as Mr. Holmes' plans. The only difference is the building will have an awning with a concrete pad, which our maintenance department will construct. The county will save money. He also stated that he prefers an open concept which walls can be added later. There is an office space, lounge area, kitchenette, lockers and a restroom which will include a shower. Nothing will change inside the building we are only decreasing the size of the building so it will be affordable. There is a day area that later can be partitioned. There was \$150,000 budgeted; \$20,000 was spent leaving \$129,000 for construction.

Commissioner Pugh asked Commissioner Screws if he was suggesting removing the bays for vehicle parking and only constructing the main building.

Commissioner Screws stated that is his intention. The Commission could add the bays at a later date if they wished. Commissioner Screw's concern is that this project has been discussed for almost 2 years and there is nothing to show. Also the Seale Fire Department wants the Ambulance Service to have their own building. If we put this off, then we are looking at another year before we begin construction. He suggests making this move and going forward with this project.

Commissioner Epps recalled the Investigations Building that the County Maintenance along with inmates constructed and asked if Commissioner Screws was certain they could construct the Ambulance Station with in-kind service as they did the Investigations Buildings with \$129,000 that remains in the budget for this project.

Commissioner Screws stated that Mr. Sellers had assured that is possible.

Commissioner Epps asked if the building that the Maintenance Department will be just like the plans provide.

Commissioner Screws replied they will just be constructing the main building not the left side which is the bay area. Later that portion could be built.

Commissioner Epps asked the Sheriff if he could give his input.

Sheriff Taylor is concerned that a building without walls and based on the concept being presented, there is no longer an area for the Sheriff's Department. Sheriff Taylor reminded the Commission that he has proved placing precincts in the county reduces our crime rate. It has helped Hartsboro and Ft. Mitchell to have substations in their area. With two schools and recreational facility in this area, it would be beneficial to also have a substation to deal with juveniles on a daily basis. If there are more Deputies stationed out in the County and not in the City, where there are already City police, there will be more reductions in the crime rate. He did not understand it will save money to cut out some walls on the inside of the structure. Building walls will be a minimal cost.

Sheriff Taylor also reminded the Commission there is three months left in this year's budget. If the building was started now it would not be finished by the time the new budget year began. He recommended going forward with the project and as the 2015-2016 budget comes in there will be money left to build the ambulance building. The last 10 years the Sheriff's Department has returned \$300,000 to the budget. Every Department head turns in money at the end of the budget year.

Commissioner Lee discussed how little would be save if walls were left out and if Scott Holmes original plans are used and approve to build in-kind with inmate labor and try to keep the cost at \$130,000 and if it goes \$50,000 over place that in the next budget. The most expense is in the plumbing, electrical wiring, air conditioning and sprinkler systems. If the County can build a 1,800 square foot building for \$130,000 then why can't they build two rooms and a door?

After more discussion, Commissioner Corbett motioned to table the item and was seconded by Commissioner Lee. District 1 (Lee) voted, yes; District 2 (Pugh) voted, yes; District 3 (Martin) voted, yes; District 4 (Reed) voted, no; District 5 (Epps) voted, yes; District 6 (Corbett) voted, yes; District 7 (Screws) voted, no. Five (5) yes votes and two (2) no votes the motioned passed.

Administrator Horne presented the Back to School Sales Tax Holiday scheduled for the first full week-end in August. It begins 12:00 a.m. Friday, August 7<sup>th</sup>, and ends Sunday at 12:00 a.m. August 9<sup>th</sup>. Commissioner Lee motioned to approve the Sales Tax Holiday and was seconded by Commissioner Reed. The vote was unanimous.

Administrator Horne requested approval for the drainage correction cost needed around the Ladonia Football field. The cost of making the correction is approximately \$38,100. This project was included in the 2013-2014 Budget. Commissioner Pugh motioned to approve. Seconded by Commissioner Epps. The vote was unanimous.

Personnel items were included in the Commission packets.

Announcements were made.

Commissioner Lee motioned to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned.