

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, MARCH 8, 2021

The Lee County Commission convened in regular session at the Courthouse in Opelika, Alabama, Monday, March 8, 2021 at 5:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by an invocation by Commissioner Long.

During citizens' communications, John Sophocleus once again asked for a 3-minute clock to view the countdown while presenting to the Commission. Mr. Sophocleus appeared to address several agenda items. First, Mr. Sophocleus questioned Revenue Commissioner Oline Price's request for the Commission to authorize a \$6,000 salary increase for the new Chief Appraiser. Second, he addressed Coroner Harris' \$4,500 request to help with vehicle expenses, since Mr. Harris gets an expense allowance for this. Last, he questioned County Administrator Roger Rendleman's agenda item requesting to raise the capital asset threshold from \$800 to \$3,000. Commissioner Ham stated Mr. Rendleman will explain the reason for raising the threshold on capital items when it appears on the Agenda.

Next, Commissioner Brown thanked County Engineer Justin Hardee and his team for the clean-up performed over the weekend. Commissioner Brown questioned how many bags of trash were collected. Mr. Hardee stated 395 bags were picked up on 15 miles of roadway. Commissioner Brown also thanked EMA Director Rita Smith and her team for the Reflection & Remembrance event held commemorating the 23 lives lost in the March 2019 tornadoes. Commissioner Brown stated the event was very touching.

Loachapoka Mayor Ricky Holder appeared before the Commission to discuss several issues. Mayor Holder stated that the Loachapoka Community Center had been torn down due to structural damage from termites. Mayor Holder stated they have a walking trail at the site and are looking to add a playground. At the site, Mayor Holder said in the future they would like to rebuild a Community Center and possibly a new Post Office. Mayor Holder stated he is seeking assistance from the Lee County Recreation Board to install a multi-purpose field for softball and/or baseball. Mayor Holder stated he met with Commissioners Cannon, LaGrand and Ham to discuss it; stating he would like to get the ball rolling on the project. Mayor Holder invited the Commissioners to attend their monthly meetings which are held at 6:00 p. m. on the first Monday of each month at Loachapoka Town Hall. Further, Mayor Holder stated they have two new council members and a third coming on soon. Commissioner LaGrand thanked Mayor Holder for his willingness to serve the Loachapoka community. Commissioner LaGrand stated he was glad to see people utilizing the walking trail each time he visited the area. Commissioner Ham thanked Mayor Holder for attending, saying they all on the same page for this project.

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, MARCH 8, 2021

The Chairman declared a quorum and officially opened the meeting with the following members recorded as being present: Judge Bill English, Chairman, and Commissioners Doug Cannon, Sarah Brown, Gary Long, Robert Ham and Richard LaGrand. Elected Officials in attendance: Sheriff Jay Jones, Revenue Commissioner Oline Price, Coroner Bill Harris, and Loachapoka Mayor Ricky Holder. News media in attendance: Opelika Observer reporters Hannah Lester and J. D. McCarthy.

Copies of the items on the Consent Agenda sent to the Commissioners in their packets included: listing of claims, procurement card and Blackbaud transaction listings and minutes of the February 22 meeting. Judge English mentioned that all Commissioners received their mailed packets on time. Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Long to approve the consent agenda items as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Under old business, Judge English presented second reading of the Lee County Planning Commission nominees. Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cannon to approve the following Resolution to appoint the members to the Lee County Planning Commission for six-year terms. Commissioner LaGrand made first reading of Sherry Cook as his second nominee. Judge English stated second reading will be held at the next meeting for Ms. Cook. Judge English stated the first order of business for the Planning Commission will be to hold an organizational meeting as soon as possible.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Lee County Commission hereby appoints the following as their representatives to serve a six-year term on the Lee County Planning Commission. They are:

Commission Chairman – Kevin Flanagan
Commission District 1 – Tom Kelly and Murray Neighbors
Commission District 2 – Ross Morris and Joe Stokes
Commission District 3 – Jason Flowers and Adam Littleton
Commission District 4 – Danielle Ritch and Will Neighbors
Commission District 5 – Christine Berry-Bradshaw

At the last meeting Mr. Hardee presented the names of the two architectural firms who submitted proposals for facility design of a central maintenance shop and engineering building on county owned property at the corner of Williamson Avenue and Society Hill Road. Mr. Hardee stated after review, the Highway Department requests the Commission approve the proposal from JRW Architect submitted by John Randall Wilson, Architect of Auburn, and move forward with site design and plans for the project. Commissioner Long made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Brown to approve the proposal from JRW Architect for the facility design of a central maintenance shop and engineering building. The motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, MARCH 8, 2021

Under new business, Regina Meadows of Circles Opelika made a presentation to provide information to the Commission on the organization's mission. Ms. Meadows stated the program is a poverty reduction program and the targeted audience are those in the low to moderate income levels. Ms. Meadows explained the program is a financial behavior modification program, which many are hesitant to participate. Ms. Meadows stated since the inception of the program in 2018 they have worked with 26 families. Ms. Meadows stated they meet weekly with the families at the Southside Center for the Arts. Further, Ms. Meadows stated the families have positive allies who help them set manageable goals. Ms. Meadows stated they currently offer two programs, they are: 1) a poverty reduction program; and 2) a loan program. Ms. Meadows stated she included more information on the program in the packets given to the Commission at the beginning of her presentation. Commissioner Ham questioned if her program worked with the homeless in the community. Ms. Meadows stated they are not ready at this time to work with the homeless sector. Commissioner LaGrand thanked Ms. Meadows for the job she is doing in the community. Board Member Rev. Tom Tippet stated interest has been shown from individuals from the county outside the Opelika city limits, which is the reason for Ms. Meadows presentation tonight. Commissioner Brown questioned how the program is funded. Ms. Meadows stated funding is provided by local churches, individuals, but mostly is volunteer driven. Ms. Meadows stated she is a staff of one. Rev. Tippet stated the hospital was generous enough to provide funding for the first three years to get the program started. Commissioner Brown questioned how mentors are recruited. Ms. Meadows stated from word of mouth, church groups and Facebook. The Commission thanked Ms. Meadows for her presentation.

Oline Price appeared before the Commission requesting a salary adjustment for a new Chief Appraiser. Mrs. Price stated the interview process is complete, and she has made an offer to a candidate, who has asked for a higher salary than what is currently allowed for the position. Mrs. Price stated the individual has education and knowledge of the position far superior to anyone else who applied. Mrs. Price stated Richie LaGrand did an amazing job while he held the position, but this person will take Lee County to the next level. Mrs. Price stated this individual will need no training; and will be able to hire and train entry-level positions from the moment she is hired. Commissioner Ham stated the increase in population in the county and the fact that the Commission asked Mrs. Price to do this job; he stated we will stand behind you and trust you on this. Commissioner LaGrand questioned the amount of the salary request. Mrs. Price stated \$95,000. Commissioner Brown questioned if that was within budget. Mrs. Price answered in the affirmative. Mr. Rendleman stated that this is a rare thing to do and according to county policy it must come before the Commission for their approval to provide flexibility in a situation such as this. Mr. Rendleman stated this person has experience way beyond the range of the position, having over 20 years of experience with the Alabama Department of Revenue in appraisal functions. Mr. Rendleman stated this person, once onboard, will be able address deficiencies before they become a problem. Mrs. Price stated she selected this person because of their knowledge and experience. Commissioner Brown

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, MARCH 8, 2021

reiterated that no training will be needed and that she agrees with Commissioner Ham, that they trust Mrs. Price's decision. Mr. Rendleman stated that based on the recent retirements in this department there are only a few experienced people left, so this person would be able to lead without relying on other seasoned employees. Commissioner LaGrand asked why this person will be paid more than the previous Chief Appraiser. Mrs. Price indicated that Richie LaGrand was involved in this selection process, adding Richie will be staying aboard on a part-time basis. Commissioner LaGrand stated for the reasons he has questioned he will abstain on the vote. Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Brown to approve the salary of \$95,000 for the new Chief Appraiser. The motion carried on a 4-0-1 vote with Commissioner LaGrand abstaining.

Next, Coroner Bill Harris appeared asking for a one-time budget adjustment for a vehicle repair to his personal vehicle. Mr. Harris stated he uses his personal vehicle for his coroner duties. Mr. Harris stated the \$400 expense allowance he receives barely covers his fuel expenses and he has to pay for all maintenance, tires, oil changes, service, etc. on his own. Mr. Harris stated in the last five years he has amassed over 100,000 miles on this vehicle, 90% of which are coroner-related, and had to decide whether to purchase a new truck or to repair his current vehicle and he chose the latter. Mr. Harris stated it will cost around \$9,000 for a new engine and requested the Commission pay up to \$4,500 to assist in the repair. Commissioner Brown questioned if he has receipts for his fuel expenses. Mr. Harris stated he put 18,000 miles per year on his truck. Commissioner Brown stated if the Commission request receipts, could he provide them. Mr. Harris stated it would not be a problem to produce those. Commissioner Brown questioned which county officials are provided vehicles. Mr. Rendleman stated the only official allowed a vehicle is Sheriff Jones. Mr. Rendleman stated up until 2011 the Commission paid the lease on the Coroner's vehicle, but then the expense allowance was increased to account for it. Mr. Rendleman stated the Commission cannot pay for the repairs to Mr. Harris' personal vehicle. Commissioner Long questioned if the deputy coroners receive a vehicle allowance. Mr. Harris answered that he gets an expense allowance, but his deputy coroners do not. Mr. Harris stated he receives about 700 calls per year. Judge English asked how many of those involve travel, and how many are handled by telephone. Commissioner Brown questioned the average number of calls he goes on and the average number of calls his deputy coroners respond to. Mr. Harris said he shares the calls with each of his deputy coroners. Mr. Harris again stated he travels 18,000 miles per year and has requested an increase in his expense allowance or for a new vehicle but stated he has been overlooked each time. Commissioner LaGrand questioned how he would handle calls if he does not have a vehicle. Mr. Harris stated if he cannot handle it over the phone, then he does not go. Mr. Harris stated he is asking the Commission to provide assistance up to \$4,500 for vehicle repairs. Commissioner Brown reiterated that Mr. Rendleman said the Commission cannot pay for the vehicle repair on his personal vehicle. Mr. Rendleman addressed the Commission stating the Commission can consider increasing his expense allowance, since there has been no increase in nine years. Commissioner Brown asked Mr. Harris to provide information on the actual number of calls

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, MARCH 8, 2021

and corresponding mileage and to provide the same information for the number of calls and mileage for each of his deputy coroners. Commissioner Cannon suggested that Mr. Harris keep a ledger to keep up with the mileage for Coroner calls, which would help in understanding this situation. Commissioner LaGrand questioned Mr. Harris what he is doing right now about his Coroner duties while he is without a vehicle. Mr. Harris stated he is currently using his wife's vehicle.

Mr. Hardee presented a request to decrease the speed limit in Sedona Ridge Subdivision located in District 4. Mr. Hardee stated the Highway Department recommends that the speed limit be reduced from 45 mph to 25 mph for Lee Roads 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209 and 2210. The Highway Department recommends this as a reasonable and safe maximum speed limit. Commissioner Ham stated he drove the roads and agrees that the speed limit needs to be reduced within the subdivision. Commissioner Brown questioned why the roads within a subdivision are not posted at 25 mph instead of Mr. Hardee having to bring each one before the Commission for Commission consideration. Mr. Hardee stated unless posted the speed limit on county roads is set at 45 mph by state law. Mr. Hardee agreed with Commission Brown and stated he would look at developing a policy that would address this in the future. Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner LaGrand to decrease the speed limit from 45 mph to 25 mph on Lee Roads 2206, 2207, 2208, 2209 and 2210 in Sedona Ridge Subdivision. The motion carried unanimously.

Next, Mr. Hardee presented for Commission consideration a final plat approval for Mill Creek Landings Subdivision. Mr. Hardee stated all required improvements for Mill Creek Landings have been completed in accordance with the minimum requirements of the *Lee County Subdivisions and Land Developments Regulations*. The proposed subdivision is located adjacent to Lee Road 334 and Lee Road 340, it includes 27 lots along the roadway. Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Long to approve the final plat for Mill Creek Landings. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Rendleman presented the bid results for the expansion and renovation of the EMA Building. Mr. Rendleman stated three bids were received on March 4, from the following: 1) Whatley Construction LLC: \$1,971,629.00; 2) J and L Contractors, Inc.: \$1,978,000.00; and 3) J.A. Lett Construction: \$2,043,675.00. Mr. Rendleman stated the bids were very competitive with a 3.5% price spread among the three bids. Mr. Rendleman stated the bid is within budget expectations and recommends the Commission award the bid to the lowest responsive bidder for \$1,971,629.00 from Whatley Construction, LLC. Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Brown to award the bid for the EMA Expansion and Renovation to Whatley Construction, LLC for \$1,971,629.00. The motion carried unanimously.

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, MARCH 8, 2021

Mr. Rendleman presented for Commission consideration seven positions to be added to the Lee County Commission's Classified Personnel system and the associated Pay Grade assignment. Mr. Rendleman stated these positions were determined to be necessary based on the review of existing positions along with the development of the supplement program which will create more structure and delineation of different job responsibilities within existing classes. The seven positions and corresponding pay grade follow:

- Sheriff's Office Training Officer Pay Grade 115: \$45,517.83 - \$68,731.92
- Deputy Sheriff – K9 Officer Pay Grade 115: \$45,517.83 - \$68,731.92
- Personal and Benefits Coordinator Pay Grade 114: \$43,350.31 - \$65,458.97
- Corrections Work Release Officer Pay Grade 112: \$39,320.01 - \$59,373.21
- Corrections Booking Officer Pay Grade 112: \$39,320.01 - \$59,373.21
- Purchasing Fiscal Agent Pay Grade 111: \$37,447.63 - \$56,545.92
- Procurement and Payables Specialist Pay Grade 111: \$37,447.63 - \$56,545.92

Upon the recommendation, Commissioner Long made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cannon to approve the creation of the seven classified positions and corresponding pay grades. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Rendleman presented a request to increase the fixed asset inventory threshold from \$800 to \$3,000. Mr. Rendleman explained to the Commission that the last time the threshold was evaluated was in 2002 and the amount was set at \$800 for all assets other than roads, bridges, and buildings. Mr. Rendleman stated after reviewing the current fixed asset listing almost 20 years later there are a large number of items being tracked with an immaterial impact on the County's Financial Statements. Mr. Rendleman stated the low threshold amount creates a significant amount of work in tagging and inventorying the items with little to no benefit. Mr. Rendleman stated the recommendation is to increase the capitalization threshold for all assets other than roads, bridges, and buildings to \$3,000 beginning immediately. Mr. Rendleman stated increasing the threshold will only reduce the current value of the County's fixed assets by 0.93%; however, the number of items that have to be tracked will be reduced by 51.11%. Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Long to increase the capitalization threshold from \$800 to \$3,000 for all assets other than roads, bridges and buildings. The motion carried unanimously.

Governmental Relations/Safety Coordinator Wendy Swann presented the following ADECA CDBG-CV Resolution for Commission consideration. Mrs. Swann explained this is the allocation provided by the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs geared toward coronavirus pandemic recovery efforts as previously presented. Mrs. Swann stated that although the funds have been allocated to Lee County, an application must still be submitted. As part of the application, the Commission must pass a resolution supporting the County's intention to apply and to provide an outline of the proposed projects. Upon this

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, MARCH 8, 2021

presentation, Commissioner Brown made a motion, seconded by Commissioner LaGrand to approve the following ADECA CDBG-CV Resolution. The motion carried unanimously.

RESOLUTION 2021-0308

WHEREAS, Lee County is committed to serving those impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic through rental/mortgage assistance, utility assistance, and by addressing food insecurity as well as the health and financial resources of its citizens and the community at large; and

WHEREAS, evidenced by that commitment, the County wishes to make an application to the Alabama Department of Economic and Community Affairs for Community Development and Block Grant-CV Program for the funding in the amount of \$500,000 to provide rental/mortgage assistance and utility assistance as well as resources to address food insecurity.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the County Commission of Lee County hereby authorizes the filing of said application, including all understandings and assurances contained therein, and directs and authorizes its Chairman to act in connection with the application and to provide such additional information as may be required, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Lee County agrees to be responsible for any cost overruns associated with the project.

Judge English stated the Commission needs to adjourn into Executive Session to discuss potential litigation. Judge English stated the following should attend: Mr. Rendleman, County Attorney Stan Martin, and possibly Mrs. Swann, if needed. Judge English stated the Executive Session should last approximately 15–30 minutes and no action is expected at the conclusion. Commissioner Ham made a motion at approximately 6:10 pm to adjourn into Executive Session. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Long and carried unanimously.

At the conclusion of the Executive Session, Commissioner Brown made a motion at approximately 6:30 p.m. to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Long and carried unanimously.