

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, JULY 12, 2021

The Lee County Commission convened in regular session at the Courthouse in Opelika, Alabama, Monday, July 12, 2021, at 5:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by an invocation by Judge English.

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. News media in attendance: Opelika Observer reporter Hannah Lester and Opelika-Auburn News reporter Alex Hosey.

CEO and Executive Director Katie Murrah of the Witthauer Murrah Foundation provided information to the Commission about AO Discover! Children's Hands-on Science Center which is a nonprofit children's museum and science center created to provide exceptional hands-on educational opportunities in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics and Arts for the children and families of East Alabama and beyond. The research-based practices ensure that the children of our area receive high quality experiences that will leave a lasting impact and create a firm foundation for a lifetime of inquiry, critical thinking skills, creativity, and perseverance in the face of failure. The packet provided by Mrs. Murrah outlined the various programs and included an initial request of \$125,652. Judge English stated the Commission will soon be working on the upcoming budget and asked Mrs. Murrah to submit specific requests to County Administrative Officer Roger Rendleman.

Copies of the items on the Consent Agenda sent to the Commissioners in their packets included: listing of claims, Blackbaud and procurement card transaction listings and minutes of the June 21 and June 28 meetings. Judge English mentioned one correction noted by Commissioner Long who made a motion in the minutes of the June 21 meeting. Commissioner Ham questioned Mr. Hardee how an increase of \$1.00/gallon on diesel fuel will affect his budget. Mr. Hardee stated the department is ok until the end of this year. Commissioner Long made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cannon to approve the consent agenda items as presented. The motion carried 4-0-1 with Commissioner Ham abstaining.

Governmental Relations/Safety Coordinator Wendy Swann reminded the Commission of the upcoming deadline to join the IAC-ARPA. Judge English stated the deadline to join is Friday, July 16. Commissioner Long stated he has no interest in joining the ACCA-IAC. Commissioner Ham concurred stating he would like to explore hiring a contractor or utilizing our own employees. Judge English agreed that joining may be a good idea, but at this time we just do not know enough. Mr. Rendleman stated these funds are an opportunity for Lee County to invest in infrastructure for water or sewer projects or other large projects. Mr. Rendleman

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noted that with either of those projects, the money could all be spent quickly since they are costly ventures to tackle. Mr. Rendleman stated additional staff would need to be hired and initially those salaries could be paid by the program. Commissioner Ham questioned if 10% of the funds can be used for administration purposes. Mr. Rendleman answered in the affirmative. Judge English questioned Mr. Hardee on whether his office has maps of the water and sewer systems in the county, to determine where the end of water/sewer lines are located. Mr. Hardee stated his office does not, but he would be happy to work with the local water and sewer authorities to obtain them. Judge English recommended that we first look at suggestions from department heads and county commissioners before we explore outside subjects. Commissioner Ham stated he would also like to look at projects pertaining to the Sheriff's Office, and projects for the Courthouse and/or EMA. Judge English suggested taking a look from a policy perspective, since he feels the Commission will receive numerous requests from outside agencies and individuals. Commissioner LaGrand agreed stating he would like the Commission to consider promoting from within to invest in our own employees. Commissioner Brown agreed stating it is a substantial amount of money and the Commission should stand behind whatever decision is made. Judge English further stated the county will not find anyone who will cover us on liability since there are no guarantees, but that the Commission is responsible for the expenditure of the funds. Commissioner Brown noted the new administrator should be involved in the process too. Commissioner Long agreed. Judge English stated that since last Wednesday, he has not found a county our size or larger that has joined or is going to join the ACCA-IAC. Mr. Rendleman stated the first step is for the Commission to make some big picture policy decisions about the use of these funds before making decisions about individual requests, and his recommendation is to stay focused on policies since there are many questions unanswered at this time, especially concerning state law and the Alabama Constitution. Mr. Rendleman stated the best-case scenario is long-term investments with long-term benefits to the county. Mr. Rendleman noted interpretation of it is definitely changing. No action was taken by the Commission.

Commissioner Long said he liked the draft of the agenda format included in the packets and felt like it would consolidate the meetings. Commissioner Ham agreed. Commissioner Long made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Ham to begin using the new format on the next Agenda. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Long at approximately 5:37 p.m. made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Brown. The motion carried unanimously.