

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REG. ADJ. SESSION, JULY 29, 2024

The Lee County Commission convened in regular adjourned session at the Courthouse in Opelika, Alabama, Monday, July 29, 2024. 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, Ross Morris, Gary Long, Tony Langley and Richard LaGrand. Elected officials in attendance: Sheriff Jay Jones, District Attorney Jessica Ventiere and Coroner Daniel Sexton. News media in attendance: Observer owner Michelle Key.

Sheriff Jones recognized Lieutenant Pam Revels upon her recent installment as the first female Board President of the National Association of School Resource Officers (NASRO). Lieutenant Revels was honored to accept the appointment during NASRO's annual conference in Phoenix, Arizona. Sheriff Jones recognized Lieutenant Revels and her accomplishments over the years, saying she is exceptional at what she does along with the entire SRO staff in being responsible for our school children, saying any one of them would put their life down to save a child. Sheriff Jones asked the Commission to join him in congratulating Lieutenant Revels on this honor. Judge English congratulated Lieutenant Revels asking if she would give a speech. Lieutenant Revels said along the way she has learned there are doers and sayers. She said that thankfully we have doers in our community that care, and she thanked the Commission for their leadership and said it is not my accomplishment, but it is our accomplishment which reflects on the community. Commissioner LaGrand thanked Lieutenant Revels for all she does in the community and for being a doer.

Keith Barnett, EMA Director of Elmore County and current President of the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers (AAEM), was in attendance to present certificates to the Lee County EMA team. Those receiving certificates were EMA Director Rita Smith receiving her Master Level re-certification (required every 5 years); Austin Jones, Steven Holden, Michael Holden and Clint Knox all received Advanced EM Certification; Nicholas Glover received Intermediate EM Certification; and Lauren Jeffers received Basic EM Certification. Mr. Barnett said Lee County EMA had done a feat not matched in the State since everyone on the Lee County EMA team is certified. Mr. Barnett said he is trying to get all his Elmore County team certified. Mr. Barnett said it requires a lot of time and dedication to meet the certification requirements saying the basic level requires 300 hours of training, the intermediate level requires 600 hours of training, the advanced level requires 1,000 hours of training, and the master level requires 1,350 hours of training along with professional accomplishment. Commissioner LaGrand and the entire Commission congratulated Mrs. Smith and the staff.

Commissioner Cannon introduced Charles C. Mitchell of the Lee County Historical Society to make a presentation on the Lee County Historical Society. Mr. Mitchell thanked the Commission for their continued support over the years. Mr. Mitchell said the museum is the first and oldest museum in Lee County, which started in 1968. Mr. Mitchell said they have 150

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members in the group. Mr. Mitchell said the volunteers work very hard, saying they had over 30,000 visitors last year with most attending in October during Syrup Soppin' which will be upcoming on October 26 this year. Another event hosted by the Historical Society is the 2nd Saturdays at Pioneer Park when visitors can experience living on a farm, visit a one-room schoolhouse and enjoy a home cooked meal. Myla Reagan representing the 4H Club said she started coming to 2nd Saturdays when she was in 2nd grade, saying she fell in love with it and continues to be involved by being a 4H Leader now. Ms. Reagan said has learned so much, including the love shown for the community by being supportive of the Lee County Historical Society. Last, the youngest member of the Junior 4H, Evelyn Craig, thanked the Commission for their continued support of the Lee County Historical Society. The Commissioners thanked them for their attendance.

Commissioner Morris said he, Commissioner Cannon, County Engineer Justin Hardee, County Administrative Officer Holly Leverette and EMA Director Rita Smith attended the National Association of County Commissions Annual Convention in Orlando, Florida on July 12–15, 2024 and he would like each to have an opportunity to give an update. Commissioner Morris said that 70 people from Alabama attended. Commissioner Morris said the first class they attended was for first-time attendees, which he enjoyed. Commissioner Morris said he went to several sessions including: land ownership, financial management, managing disasters, transportation road funding, mental health and artificial intelligence. Commissioner Morris said those attending divided up and chose to attend different sessions. Next, Mrs. Leverette said she attended a motivational themed event where the speaker was Gabby Douglas, one of the “Magnificent Seven” who were the first group of U. S. gymnasts to bring home a team gold in the 1996 Olympics. Mrs. Leverette said she spoke about how gymnastics is an individual sport, but that as a team you have a duty to come together and to support other team members, which is an important part of what we do is to work together as a team. Next, Mrs. Smith said for an entire day she attended a seminar focusing on justice and public safety. Mrs. Smith said she heard presentations on what a county should lobby for, and discussion on EMPG funding. Mrs. Smith said they talked about upcoming grant opportunities, saying she also was able to meet a lot of new people who do the same job she does and said she has already reached out to some of them. Last, Mr. Hardee said this is the first time he has attended the NACO Convention in his years with the county. Mr. Hardee said he attended the Transportation Steering Committee hearings saying they discussed different funding opportunities, heard about a “Safe Streets for All” program, a bridge improvement program which Lee County is currently participating in, and even heard about opportunities for dirt road paving, which he and Commissioner Canon are pursuing. Mr. Hardee said overall it was a good experience.

Next, Mrs. Leverette gave an update on the Loachapoka Broadband Phase III ARPA Grant project. Mrs. Leverette said two applications were received, one from AT&T and the other from Spectrum. Mrs. Leverette said the committee is currently reviewing the applications and said as

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soon as the committee selects a candidate, she will return to the Commission with a Resolution to move forward with the project. Commissioner LaGrand questioned if they were viable applications. Commissioner LaGrand said these companies are not seeing the urgency for the school children and Lee County families who are having to go to McDonald's for an internet connection for homework or to work.

Copies of the items on the Consent Agenda sent to the Commissioners in their packets included: listings of claims and a procurement card transactions listing and a copy of the July 8, 2024 minutes. Also, the first reading of Dr. Lee Johnson to replace Dr. David Smalley on the East Alabama Health Care Authority was made. Commissioner Cannon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner LaGrand, to approve the consent agenda items as provided. The motion carried unanimously.

Second reading of Vertrina Grubbs to the East Alabama Health Care Authority was made. Mrs. Grubbs will fulfill the unexpired term of Chris Nunn who resigned on March 28, 2024 due to other commitments. Commissioner Cannon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Morris, to approve the following Resolution appointing Mrs. Vertrina Grubbs to the position.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Lee County Commission hereby appoints Vertrina Grubbs to the A-2 position on the East Alabama Health Care Authority Board until September 30, 2026, to fulfill the unexpired term of Chris Nunn.

Commissioner Morris opened discussion of a chief operating officer for the county. Commissioner Morris said since Judge English's term ends in January so will 40 years of experience and of the last 24 years him serving as Chairman and Probate Judge. Mr. Morris said Lee County is the fastest growing county in the state and he feels this position is warranted. Commissioner Morris said a COO is equivalent to a City Manager, every department would report to this person and would work with the elected officials. Commissioner Morris said he feels the position could move us into the 21st century and be more representative of a county our size. Commissioner Morris asked the other Commissioners to voice their opinion on the matter. Commissioner Long said he agrees since the county is growing, saying it is difficult to keep up with neighboring cities. Commissioner Cannon said he is glad to see Commissioner Morris run with this because he feels Lee County needs to be a leader in the State. Commissioner Long questioned if the position would need Legislative approval. Commissioner Morris said it is up to the Commission since it is just the creation of a job. Commissioner Morris said he would suggest looking at several different job descriptions and coming up with our own to best fit our needs. Mrs. Leverette said the county has an amazing employment attorney who would be willing to take on the project to create the job description as discussed. Commissioner Langley asked for clarification asking if the position would be over all appointing authorities, like the City of

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Auburn's City Manager where the buck stops. Commissioner LaGrand said he likes the concept but first would like to look at the current appointing authorities, their job duties and their current salaries. Commissioner LaGrand said he feels it would work with the proper job description. Commissioner Morris said he would like Judge English to take the lead along with Mr. Martin to develop the job description, then have the Commission decide if they want to move forward with it afterwards. Commissioner Cannon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Long, to move forward to create a job description for a chief operating officer as discussed. The motion carried on a vote of 4-1 with Commissioner LaGrand voting "No."

Sheriff Jones presented a proposed Inmate Housing Agreement with Autauga County for Commissioner consideration. Sheriff Jones said Autauga County has a problem with their jail and needed a place to house inmates. He said he assisted through the Sheriff's Association Mutual Aid Agreement. Sheriff Jones said due to the circumstances at the Autauga County jail an agreement is before the Commission for consideration. Sheriff Jones said he receives \$2.25 per day for feeding inmates three meals per day. Sheriff Jones said the agreement was sent to Mr. Martin for his review. Sheriff Jones said it would be the same as the current inmate housing agreements with the Cities of Auburn and Opelika for about \$40.00 per day. Sheriff Jones said Lee County currently houses 10 Autauga County inmates with 300 inmates needing outside housing. Sheriff Jones said Mr. Martin can redraft the agreement and that no action is needed tonight but may possibly be presented at the next meeting.

County Engineer Justin Hardee presented a proposal for a speed limit reduction and a "No Trucks" route on Lee Road 267. Mr. Hardee said a citizen approached the Highway Department about decreasing the speed limit and establishing a "No Trucks" route along Lee Road 267. Mr. Hardee said the road is located in District 4, saying it is a short dirt road behind Perlis Truck Stop. The Highway Department recommends that the speed limit be reduced from 25 mph to 20 mph. The Highway Department recommends this as a reasonable and safe maximum speed limit. Commissioner Langley questioned if it could be lowered from 20 mph to 15 mph since he knows the area and would recommend the slower speed limit. Judge English questioned if the county has prescriptive right-of-way. Mr. Hardee answered in the affirmative. Mr. Hardee said it is up to the Commission. Commissioner Langley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cannon, to reduce the speed limit from 25 mph to 15 mph on Lee Road 267 and post as a "No Trucks" route as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Next, Mr. Hardee presented for Commission consideration a final plat approval for Property Division of Parcels 5 & 6 for a proposed subdivision located adjacent to Lee Road 183 in District 4. Mr. Hardee said there are no new roadways, only creating sub-lots from the owner's property. Mr. Hardee said adjacent property owners were notified of the development by letters mailed out July 2, 2024, so they may attend and voice their support, opposition, or to obtain more

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information. Mr. Hardee asked if anyone was in attendance on the matter and recognized Mrs. Murphy and Mr. Gable who said they had no objection to the development. Commissioner Langley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner LaGrand for final plat approval for Property Division of Parcels 5 & 6 for a proposed subdivision on Lee Road 183. The motion carried unanimously.

Last, Mr. Hardee presented final plat approval for Cherry Hill Subdivision containing 37 lots which is located in District 3. Mr. Hardee said the subdivision has been completed in accordance with the approved plans and meets the minimum requirements of the *Lee County Subdivision and Land Development Regulations*. The proposed development is adjacent to Lee Road 246. Commissioner Long made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Langley for final plat approval for Cherry Hill Subdivision. The motion carried unanimously.

Chief Administrative Officer Holly Leverette presented an updated COVID-19 Policy for Commission consideration. Mrs. Leverette said the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) have updated and simplified recommendations for handling of respiratory viruses at home and in the workplace. The new guidance brings a unified approach to addressing risks from a range of common respiratory viral illnesses such as COVID-19, flu, and Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV). The CDC is making updates to the recommendations because the U.S. is seeing far fewer hospitalizations and deaths associated with COVID-19 and because there are more tools than ever to combat flu, COVID, and RSV. Mrs. Leverette said the edits in the updated policy attached reflect the CDC recommendations. Additionally, because the recommendations do not call for a specific isolation period, it is recommended that the Commission approve removing the 40 hours of sick leave given to new hires upon their hire date. Also, it is recommended that the maximum cap for sick leave balances be adjusted back down to the pre-Covid amount of 1040 hours. Commissioner Cannon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Morris, to approve the updated Lee County Respiratory Viruses Policy effective immediately, which includes removing the 40 hours of sick leave for new hires and resetting the maximum cap on sick leave back to 1040 hours. The motion carried unanimously.

**Lee County Respiratory Viruses Policy
(Revised July 29, 2024)**

A. Wearing of masks or shield coverings are optional.

B. All personnel who are directly impacted by a respiratory virus in the following ways:

1. If you are experiencing respiratory symptoms. According to the Center for Disease Control, symptoms may include but are not limited to chest discomfort, chills, cough, decrease in appetite, diarrhea, fatigue (tiredness), fever or feeling feverish,

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headache, muscle or body aches, new loss of taste or smell, runny or stuffy nose, sneezing, sore throat, vomiting, weakness, wheezing.

2. You should stay home and away from others (including people you live with who are not sick) if you have respiratory virus symptoms that aren't better explained by another cause.

With Symptoms: You can return to work after meeting the following conditions:

- 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and
- Other symptoms of the respiratory virus are improving

Upon return to work, you should take added precaution over the next 5 days, such as taking additional steps such as hygiene, masks, physical distancing, and/or testing when you will be around other people indoors. This is especially important to protect people with factors that increase their risk of severe illness from respiratory viruses.

Severe Illness: The standard FMLA policies and procedures apply (section 7.7.0 of the Lee County Personnel Policies and Procedures).

3. If you develop a fever or start to feel worse after you have gone back to work, follow number 2.

Appropriate Documentation will be required per the Lee County Commission Sick Leave policy 7.3.0 in the Lee County Personnel Policies and Procedures and any required interdepartmental policies. Types of documentation are copy of orders, proof of tests and/or written certifications.

Providing false documents or misleading and false statements associated with the above are Group Two Offenses under 11.4.2 A. (5) and (6).

In addition, anyone who is staying home is being paid to follow orders and instructions for public health and safety reasons. Failure to follow those orders and instructions is a Group Two Offense under 11.4.2 A. (7).

Such actions in this section are grounds for the employee's dismissal from employment.

(For Sheriff Service Employees, enforcement and discipline determination is solely the discretion of the Lee County Sheriff)

- C. Employees under the budgetary and administrative authority of the County Commission should protect the public, their coworkers and themselves by:

NOT reporting to work and notifying their supervisor if they have: a temperature above 100.3 or are experiencing multiple symptoms listed in number 1.

Employees failing to practice such safety measures are in violation of Group One Offense under 11.4.1 A. (6).

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Repeated failure to practice and/or absolute disregard to such safety measures are in violation of Group Two Offense under 11.4.2 A. (12) "Violation of safety practices that might endanger the life or health of the employee or others". Repeated failure and/or absolute disregard should be a suspension without pay or terminated.

(For Sheriff Service Employees, enforcement and discipline determination is solely the discretion of the Lee County Sheriff)

Next, Mrs. Leverette said the ACCA's Legislative Committee is selected annually to set ACCA's legislative priorities for the upcoming legislative sessions saying the 67-member Legislative Committee is essential to the policy success of all Alabama county governments. Each county is encouraged to nominate a representative. ACCA bylaws require that each county submit the name of its representative following a majority vote of the commission. Mrs. Leverette said Commissioner Cannon currently serves in this capacity and understands he would like to nominate Commissioner Langley to serve this year. Commissioner Langley said he appreciates Commission Cannon's service and accepts the nomination. Commissioner Cannon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Morris, to nominate Commissioner Langley as the Commission representative on the 2024-2025 ACCA's Legislative Committee. The motion carried unanimously.

Last, Mrs. Leverette asked the Commission to consider scheduling budget work sessions over the next two months. Mrs. Leverette said her goal this year is to try and move up the timeline for approving the FY2025 personnel and operational budget, so as not to push the limit to approve it in the last week of the current fiscal year. Mrs. Leverette said she would like the Commission to vote on the FY2025 personnel and operational budget at the September 9, 2024 meeting, which would allow for work sessions to be held, if needed, during the month of September for capital requests and outside appropriations. Then the Commission could move forward approving the FY2025 capital budget and outside appropriations at the September 30, 2024 or the October 8, 2024 meeting. The proposed dates and times for the work sessions are as follows: Monday, August 12 after the regularly scheduled meeting; Tuesday, August 13 at 5:00 pm; Monday, August 26 after the regularly scheduled meeting; Tuesday, August 27 at 5:00 pm; and Tuesday, September 3 at 5:00 pm, if needed. Commissioner Cannon said he would like to add Wednesday, August 28 at 5:00 pm instead of September 3. Commissioner Langley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Long, to schedule the work sessions as suggested except to replace September 3 with Wednesday, August 28 at 5:00 pm. The motion carried unanimously.

At approximately 6:15 p.m. Commissioner LaGrand made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Langley to adjourn into a work session to discuss a dirt road paving program and to discuss the solid waste contracts with Arrow Disposal and GFL Environmental. The motion carried unanimously.