

**MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, APRIL 28, 2025**

The Lee County Commission convened in regular session at the Courthouse in Opelika, Alabama, Monday, April 28, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by an invocation by Commissioner Drury.

The Chairman declared a quorum and officially opened the meeting with the following members recorded as being present: Judge Jere Colley, Chairman, and Commissioners Doug Cannon, Ross Morris, Jeff Drury, Commissioner Tony Langley and Commissioner Richard LaGrand who participated electronically.

Commissioner LaGrand spoke and thanked everyone for being in attendance. He wanted to remind everyone of the National Day of Prayer at the Courthouse Square at noon on Thursday, May 1. For those not able to attend in person, he stated the event would also be broadcast on 1520AM. He also encouraged people to attend the Relay for Life fundraiser on Friday, May 2, and urged everyone to get checked. He thanked his radio family, the Spencer Cancer Center's doctors, radiologists and chemo technicians for all they do. He also gave special thanks to his wife Katie and son Richie for their support following his diagnosis.

John Sophocleus thanked the Commission for relocating the clock. He also thanked the Commissioners for the letter notifying of the reopening of certain dumpsters and hopes the phasing out of curbside continues; he would like to be first on the list to have his can removed. He again stated he would like to be provided the guidelines for the county access management policy and subdivision rules particularly in regard to Green Chapel Road and now Moore Mill and Lee Road 112. He stated the vehicles per day for Moore's Mill is in the thousands and if guidelines won't be followed then he asked for common sense as he feels that area presents a safety issue. In closing, he announced that he was recently named to the Board of Trustees at Southern Preparatory Academy located in Camp Hill.

Judge Colley recognized the elected officials in attendance: Revenue Commissioner Oline Price and Sheriff Jay Jones. News media in attendance: Hannah Goldfinger with the Opelika Observer and John West with the Citizen of East Alabama.

Commissioner Cannon recognized Jaylen T. Hart, a senior at Loachapoka High School.

**MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, APRIL 28, 2025**

Mr. Hart is an accomplished athlete in cheerleading, football and track and received the Bryant-Jordan Achievement for Class 2A Region 3. The Bryant-Jordan Scholarship Program brings together the best and brightest high school senior student-athletes from 52 regions in Alabama awarding college scholarships to celebrate their achievements. Selection considerations for the achievement award include: academic performance relative to measured ability, sport involvement, athletic honors, student leadership, civic/church leadership. Mr. Hart stood out in our region both on and off the field, and was awarded the highest level award possible.

Commissioner Langley recognized students from the Skills for Success program at Beauregard High School. Through the Skill for Success program, several students have become certified operators of skid steers and excavators providing them a stepping stone for a brighter future. Certified on the Excavator: Jackson McGhar, Hannah McClanney, Taylor Morgan, Nik Lundy and Gary Phillips. Certified on the Skid Steer: Ison McAnally, Jeffery Butler, Michael Pope and Tyler VanHook. Commissioner Langley also recognized FFA teachers Jared and Whitney Dyess for guiding the students and for the Beauregard High School FFA being named the No. 1 FFA in 2024. Mr. Dyess thanked the Commission for recognizing the hard work and dedication of the students.

Copies of the items on the Consent Agenda sent to the Commissioners in their packets included: listings of claims to be approved and ratified, procurement card transactions listing, two approvals for excess tax funds and a copy of the minutes from April 14, 2025. Also included was a listing of travel requests. Following a roll call vote with all voting yes, the motion carried unanimously.

Under Old Business, Commissioner LaGrand discussed internet issues in Beauregard and Loachapoka. He stated there had been questions by the citizens regarding ISP services and the status of awarded projects and requested an update. Providing the update, County Administrator Holly Leverette, stated the Phase 1 ARPA project in the Salem area has been completed and is now in the operational phase where citizens can request service at their location. The Southeast project, covering 26 miles and 196 households, is currently ongoing with the map illustrating which roads are included as well as which roads need permitting. That project began on July 25, 2024, with an estimated completion of Dec. 31, 2026. Upon completion, citizens can then request service. The East Central Project is also ongoing and began on Jan. 1, 2025, with an expected completion date of Dec. 31, 2025. This project covers 24 miles and 370 households. Ms. Leverette stated some of this area overlapped with the Salem project, so it allowed for some incorporation of construction. The South Central Project is scheduled to begin in October 2025 with an expected completion date of March 31, 2026. It includes 21 miles and 127 households. The last project which has not begun yet was the last project awarded which was the Loachapoka

**MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, APRIL 28, 2025**

project. It is scheduled to begin Sept. 1, 2025, and be ready for operations phase by Dec. 31, 2026. That project had to be rebid and is split between two ISPs. It will cover 9.9 miles and 89 households. Ms. Hicks requested the Commission stay on top of the providers to ensure the projects are completed in a timely matter and requested periodic updates with Ms. Leverette agreeing to do so. Ms. Leverette then presented information from ADECA discussing the BEAD program which is meant to reach areas that are unserved and underserved following the completion of individual county projects. She provided the ADECA website which shows which areas of the county remain unserved and underserved. She stated the site identified 1,850 locations in Lee County with that designation. As part of the BEAD program, it identified BEAD eligible community anchor institutions which are hospitals, schools, etc., which are seen as vital to get coverage too. There were 30 such entities identified in Lee County with 16 of them being schools in rural Lee County. A push to cover those 16 areas will also increase coverage in surrounding areas. Some of the schools listed include Beauregard and Smiths Station High School, Lakewood Primary School, Wacoochee Elementary School, etc. Judge Colley asked when the ADECA BEAD projects might begin; Ms. Leverette stated a timeline was not provided by ADECA but it is currently accepting applications from the ISPs. She stated what has already been approved or vetted is listed on the ADECA site with varying completion dates, however the total end date has been stated to be 2030. Ms. Leverette said the areas listed on the ADECA site exclude the projects the county awarded to prevent duplication of services. Ms. Hicks asked what could be done by the Board of Education to move the BEAD projects along; Ms. Leverette encouraged the schools and Board to contact ADECA. Ms. Leverette said she will continue to attend the ADECA webinars and will provide the Commission with updates on the BEAD program. Commissioner LaGrand stated he had been getting calls from concerned citizens about people roaming around their houses and without internet, they are unable to obtain doorbell cameras. He wanted to make the citizens know the Commission is aware of the problem and addressing the issue through these projects.

Under New Business, Judge Colley requested an item to be added to the agenda. Commissioner Cannon made a motion to add the item, which was seconded by Commissioner Morris. The roll call vote to add the item passed unanimously. Judge Colley introduced Dr. Nathaniel Dunlap to discuss Financial Literacy Month. Dr. Dunlap stated Alabama is a state with a high poverty rate which affects the citizens in the county and cities. He said the PRF Institute began their work in 2008 and assists 27 communities throughout the United States to provide financial literacy resources to those that need it most and has been operating in Lee County for four years. He stated that although the State of Alabama has made it a graduation requirement for high school students to take a financial literacy course, there are other young adults needing this information as well. Commissioner Morris made a motion for the month of April to be declared Financial Literacy Month in Lee County which was seconded by Commissioner LaGrand. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

**MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, APRIL 28, 2025**

**Proclamation for Financial Literacy Month**

**WHEREAS**, financial literacy is a foundational skill that empowers individuals and families to make informed decisions, build stability, and contribute to the economic strength of their communities; and

**WHEREAS**, the month of April is recognized nationally as Financial Literacy Month, providing an opportunity to promote education and access to tools that improve financial decision-making, asset-building, and long-term security; and

**WHEREAS**, the PRF Teaching Ministry, also known as the PRF Institute, is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization operating as a Community Financial Empowerment Center (CFEC)—a trusted local, regional, and national resource committed to equipping individuals and families with the knowledge, tools, and support needed to achieve financial independence; and

**WHEREAS**, the PRF Institute has made a significant impact throughout Lee County, both in its municipalities and in rural, unincorporated communities, by offering personalized financial coaching, debt relief assistance, and estate planning services to residents who may not otherwise have access to these critical resources; and

**WHEREAS**, PRF has helped protect over \$8.9 million in generational wealth across the county, provided \$680,025 in free services, and offered \$115,727 in estate planning services, including 27 wills, 76 advance directives, 19 powers of attorney, and 70 healthcare POAs—ensuring families are financially prepared and protected across generations; and brought debt relief to 131 of our neighbors totaling \$244,351.75; and

**WHEREAS**, in a short time, PRF has in rural Lee County alone, PRF has supported 127 families, provided \$112,750 in generational wealth protection, \$112,925 in free services, and \$14,450 in estate planning services, while helping 85 individuals achieve over \$107,000 in debt relief, averaging more than \$1,250 per person—directly reducing financial burden in areas where access to such support is often limited; and

**WHEREAS**, PRF continues to drive long-term transformation by educating the community on poverty and its root causes, equipping residents and local leaders with tools for change, and working alongside landlords, property managers, and organizations across the region to reduce financial hardship and create pathways to lasting stability; and

**WHEREAS**, PRF Institute's outreach has made a total family impact on 2,200 citizens (including 946 children and dependents), conducted 1,300 consultations, coached 566 individuals, and hosts a plethora of financial literacy opportunities throughout the year.

**NOW, THEREFORE**, the Lee County Commission does hereby proclaim April 2025 as Financial Literacy Month in Lee County, Alabama, and commends the PRF Teaching Ministry for its outstanding commitment to bridging gaps in access, empowering rural and urban communities alike, and being a vital resource for financial strength and well-being across our region.

Sheriff Jones presented an application for a Retail Table Wine (Off Premises Only) license from Store 109 located in District 3. Sheriff Jones stated licenses were previously approved in November 2024 for this location, however this particular license had been left off that application. . Commissioner Drury made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Langley, to approve the following Resolution for issuance of the license to Locals. Following a

**MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, APRIL 28, 2025**

roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

**BE IT RESOLVED**, the Lee County Commission hereby approves the application for a Retail Table Wine (Off Premises Only) liquor license from Store 109 located at 10780 Lee Road 240, Phenix City, Alabama.

Mr. Hardee presented a preliminary plat for Sweet Home Estates Subdivision, Phase I, located off Lee Road 158 in District 4. Included in the packets was a location map and a copy of the plat which will create 6 lots which currently fronts Lee Road 158. A small cul-de-sac will come off 158 to serve five of the lots for access. The remaining six lots will remain fronting 158. Adjacent property owners were notified of the development by letters sent on April 14, 2025, so that they may attend and voice their support, opposition, or obtain more information. Judge Colley questioned if there was anyone in attendance on Sweet Home Estates. There were none. Commissioner Langley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Drury, to approve the item. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Ryan Norris presented a capital project for Beulah Park. He stated this was the same project discussed previously, of a need for a batting cage structure at the new park. As it is a capital project on county property, it needs Commission approval. Commissioner Cannon asked how the project would be funded with Mr. Norris stating funds would come from the Beulah Rec Board allocation. Commissioner Cannon stated it was pulled initially because of insurance concerns; Mr. Norris said additional guidance had been received from County Risk Services that the liability of the structure would be covered. MS. Leverette asked if there was a cost estimate; Mr. Norris said the number provided was \$150,000 which included design, working with an architect. He stated there are sufficient funds in the Beulah allocation provided the bids do not come back higher than expected. Commissioner Langley made a motion to approve the project with Commissioner Drury seconded. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Judge Colley encouraged everyone to attend the Relay for Life on Friday, May 2. There being no other business, Commissioner Cannon made a motion seconded by Commissioner Langley to adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 5:41 p.m.