

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, JUNE 9, 2025

The Lee County Commission convened in regular session at the Courthouse in Opelika, Alabama, Tuesday, June 9, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by an invocation by Judge Colley.

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, Tony Langley. Commissioner Richard LaGrand participated electronically.

Mike Watkins spoke and commended three Highway Department employees for their work cutting the Right-of-Way on Lee Road 10. Mr. Watkins stated the overgrowth had created unsafe conditions and Cherric Evans, Jamario Cochran and Wyatt Jones, worked diligently and tirelessly to make the area safe for citizens to see when exiting their driveways.

John Sophocleus stated he would first like to welcome Tutt Barrett as the County Attorney. He then addressed agenda item 7a. He said he had previously asked the Commission to provide the Probate Judge relief and said he applauded the discussion of the new position and suggested if the county stops its trash collection, it could use funds from that program to help fund the position. He stated only a dozen counties have Probate Judge as chair and requested relief for him as that position is overburdened.

Judge Colley recognized the elected officials in attendance: Sheriff Jay Jones and Sheriff Matt Gentry from Cullman County who is running for the Public Service Commission. News media in attendance: Alex Husting with the Opelika-Auburn News.

Commissioner Drury recognized two students from Smiths Station High School for their accomplishments. Bryant Pearce finished third in the state for the 2025 Skills USA Competition in Firefighting. Also recognized was Logan Freymoyer who won the state level competition for the Visual Arts Achievement Program in the crafts category with his teapot titled "Fibonacci." The VAAP program provides local and state recognition for student achievement in the visual arts. The program is designed to offer encouragement to young artists, showcase their work and offer opportunities for advanced training beyond high school.

Commissioner Langley recognized two students from Beauregard High School. Will McConnell, (son of county employee Ken McConnell), was selected to attend the Auburn University High School Symphonic Honor Band, culminating in a concert at the Gogue PAC. He also participated in the Southeastern United States Honor Band at Troy University and was also selected as a member of the Atlanta CV Drum and Bugle Corps. In addition, he was

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selected to attend the University of West Alabama Concert Honor Band and was named as First Chair for the percussion section, receiving not only the title but also a \$1,000 UWA band scholarship. Lucy Perkins, an upcoming freshman, auditioned and was selected for the Alabama Band Masters Association All-State Jazz Band as well as the Alabama Band Masters Association All-State Band where she earned first chair as a trumpet player.

Lisa Johnson, the Executive Director of the Central East Chapter of the American Red Cross, gave a brief overview of the Red Cross and the services it provides. She stated the mission of the Red Cross is to prevent and alleviate human suffering in the face of emergencies by mobilizing the power of volunteers and the generosity of donors. She stated the Red Cross is there when natural disasters occur, but many may not be aware that the Red Cross also offers support in instances of house fires. The Red Cross provides free smoke alarms and installation in vulnerable communities as well as assisting those members with home escape plans. The Red Cross also collects 40% of the nation's blood, provides CPR and first aid training and provides services to the armed forces as the only agency in the United States contracted by the US Military to directly communicate with active military members in times of emergencies.

Commissioner LaGrand discussed the upcoming Juneteenth Holiday. He thanked the Opelika Observer and the Auburn-Opelika News for publicizing the events. Juneteenth commemorates the end of slavery in the United States two years after the Emancipation Proclamation. He invited everyone to attend the area's events, beginning with a Juneteenth parade in Auburn at 2 p.m. on June 14; St. Luke AME Juneteenth Freedom Day on June 28; and Juneteenth on the Square at the Opelika Courthouse Square at 5:30 p.m. on June 20. He introduced Janatka Holmes, one of the organizers of the Juneteenth on the Square event. Ms. Holmes thanked the Commissioner for allowing Juneteenth to be a county holiday and it is now celebrated as a federal, state, county and city holiday. She invited everyone to attend the event which will have enlightenment and education, food, fun and games and an opportunity for the entire community to come together.

County Administrator Holly Leverette recognized Lisa Pippin for her recent accomplishments. Ms. Pippin received the Local Government Professional Management Certification through the Alabama City County Management Association. This program is designed for all leaders and aspiring leaders in Alabama's local governments, increasing their specialized knowledge and skills around the political, social, and economic complexities of public administration. Course topics include public leadership, financial management, community and economic development, strategic planning, as well as classes centered around laws and ethics in public administration and budgeting and financial management. The program, also sponsored by Auburn University's Government and Economic Development Institute, helps advance professional management in the State through the ACCMA.

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EMA Director Rita Smith introduced David Martin, Russell County EMA Director and President of the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers, who presented several awards to Lee County EMA. The AAEM Rookie of the Year award was presented to Lauren Jeffers. The award is presented to a new emergency manager with less than 2 years of experience who goes above and beyond. He stated that in addition to meeting and exceeding the award criteria, Ms. Jeffers exhibits exceptional dedication, professionalism and a strong commitment to excellence in this field of Emergency Management.

Mr. Martin then presented the Lee County EMA with the 2025 Response Program of the Year, Medium County. Mr. Martin stated the county received this award due to its response to the ice storms. Members of the EMA rescued and provided aid to stranded motorists, kept citizens aware of concerns, offered warming resources and delivered formula to residents in need as well as other missions.

Last, Mr. Martin presented the Pat Neuhauser Spirit of EMA Award to Director Rita Smith. The award, the most prestigious award offered by AAEM, is presented to an individual who is dedicated, faithful and loyal with a high level of enthusiasm in promoting emergency management and a willingness to share and serve. He stated that throughout her 20 years of service and participation in more than 22 federally declared disasters and 12 deployments, her passion and dedication for Emergency Management extended well beyond official duties. She actively engages in legislative matters impacting public safety and county government and her advocacy reflects a deep commitment to strengthening community resiliency and advancing Emergency Management practices.

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, and a copy of the minutes from May 27, 2025. Commissioner Cannon made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda which was seconded by Commissioner Morris. Following a roll call vote with all voting yes, the motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Leverette presented a resolution to amend the solid waste disposal program rules and regulations following the passage of Act 2025-228. The Act granted an additional exemption to households with income levels not exceeding 75% of the federal poverty level. She stated that the poverty level changes annually, but exemptions for this year will be based on this year's numbers with the application period running concurrent with other exemptions with the same application period of July 1 through Sept. 30. There will be a social media push for the new exemption. Commissioner Cannon asked how many people would be affected by the new exemption. Ms. Leverette stated that number would be difficult to predict. She stated there were approximately 650 receiving the SSI exemption. Commissioner Drury asked what the timeline was for completing the paperwork with Ms. Leverette stating the application would be open from July 1 through September 30. Commissioner LaGrand made a motion to approve the resolution, which was seconded by Commissioner Langley. Following a roll call vote, the

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motion passed unanimously.

Solid Waste Disposal Program Fee Income Level Exemption Resolution

WHEREAS, the Code of Alabama Section 22-27-3 allows for the State Legislature by local law to authorize county commissions to grant an additional exemption to mandatory solid waste disposal program fees to households whose total income level does not exceed 75% of the federal poverty level; and

WHEREAS, the State Legislature passed local act 2025-228 authorizing the Lee County Commission to grant said exemption.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Lee County Commission, that the Solid Waste Disposal Program rules and regulations shall be amended to include an exemption to the mandatory solid waste collection program fees to any household whose total income does not exceed 75 percent of the federal poverty level. The exemption will run concurrent with existing exemptions and must be requested by submitting an application and other necessary documents to the Lee County Health Department every year between July 1 and September 30 for the next fiscal year beginning on October 1.

Ms. Leverette presented a request for a third letter of support for the ADECA BEAD program. She stated the request is from Point Broadband and was placed on the agenda for consideration and discussion. There being no discussion or motion, the item died for lack of support.

Judge Colley presented two supervisor job descriptions for approval. The position would be for a Recording Clerk Supervisor/Trainer and an Auburn Satellite Office Supervisor/Trainer, both at a pay grade level of 114. The Recording Clerk Supervisor would supervise not only the recording office employees at the courthouse, but also the employee at Smiths Station who primarily does recording. He stated this would actually eliminate one position and add a supervisor position. Commissioner Cannon made a motion to approve the positions, which was seconded by Commissioner Morris. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Sheriff Jones presented a request to use a portion of the former Highway Department building on Orr Avenue for office space for the Investigations Computer Forensics Group, which has outgrown the space it is currently using at the Sheriff's Office. If approved, approximately 5-6 investigations personnel would relocate to the north portion of the building and would provide additional security for the coroner's office and morgue, which are housed in the building. Sheriff Jones stated the space would also allow for sensitive operation planning. Commissioner Morris made the motion to authorize the use of the building, which was seconded by Commissioner Langley. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Sheriff Jones presented an application for a Retail Beer and Retail Table Wine (On or Off Premises) license from The Hornet's Nest located in District 4. Sheriff Jones stated there were no objections to the license. Commissioner Langley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner

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Drury, to approve the following Resolution for issuance of the license to The Hornet's Nest. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Lee County Commission hereby approves the application for a Retail Beer and Retail Table Wine (On or Off Premises) license for The Hornet's Nest located at 9415 AL Highway 51, Opelika, Alabama.

Mr. Hardee presented a final plat for approval for Jerry Scott Subdivision, Redivision of Lot 1, located in District 4. Mr. Hardee said it is creating three lots with the smallest just over three acres. The development will utilize existing road frontage and has been reviewed and meets the minimum requirements of the Lee County Subdivision and Land Development Regulations. Mr. Hardee said the subdivision is located adjacent to Lee Road 42 and a copy of the plat and location map were included in the packets. Mr. Hardee said adjacent property owner(s) were notified of the development via letters sent out May 29, 2025, so they may attend and voice their support, opposition, or obtain more information. Judge Colley asked if anyone in attendance wished to speak. There being none, Commissioner Langley made a motion for approval with Commissioner Morris seconding. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hardee then presented a speed limit reduction request for a portion of Lee Road 151. Mr. Hardee said a citizen approached the Highway Department asking to reduce the speed limit on a portion of Lee Road 151 from Lee Road 740 south to the end of the pavement. The Highway Department looked at the area and recommended that due to the number of intersecting roads and driveways, the speed limit for this .41-mile-long section be reduced from 45 m.p.h. to 35 m.p.h., which is a reasonable and safe maximum speed limit. Commissioner Langley made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Drury, to approve the speed limit reduction on this particular .41-mile section of Lee Road 151. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Hardee presented a request to accept Flat Stone Estates Subdivision, Phase II, for maintenance. This is an extension of Lee Road 483 and is 732 linear feet (0.139 miles) long. The subdivision has completed its maintenance period with the final wearing surface placed, and all improvements completed; a final inspection was conducted by the Highway Department on June 4, 2025. If approved, this would add 0.139 miles to the paved road maintenance system. A location map and a copy of the plat were included in the packets, with the Highway Department requesting approval and acceptance of the subdivision in the county maintenance system. Commissioner Langley made a motion to accept, which was seconded by Commissioner Morris. Following a roll call vote, the motion passed unanimously.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:52 p.m.