

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REGULAR TERM, AUGUST 25, 2025

The Lee County Commission convened in regular session at the Courthouse in Opelika, Alabama, Monday, August 25, 2025, at 5:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by an invocation by Commissioner Cannon.

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 and Richard LaGrand.

John Sophocleus addressed the Commission stating it was good to see the Commission Office utilize an intern and encouraged the Probate Office to consider it as well to assist the Probate Judge. He stated he was once again asking for a copy of contract #01-981 0, and the recently received mailing from the Billing Office was undated and contained a typo. He said he appreciates the work sessions, but stated there was an added agenda item that was not seen on the packet and requested the public be given time on new items. He urged the county to stop wasting money on fraudulent billings and mailings, as it could face a class action suit for fraudulent actions.

Lance Farrar discussed items on page 36 of the packet which mentioned a settlement between Lee County and the owners of Shady Grove and a consent decree which was filed on Aug. 8, 2025. He stated the consent decree states the county commission was to approve the agreement or request revision of its terms. He said the quarry issue was a major concern because a large majority citizens opposed the quarry and the citizens in Beat 13 were told that to stop the quarry, a planning commission needed to be formed. Immediately after forming in 2022, the planning commission said it couldn't stop the quarry as did the county commission. He said the quarry seems to have won as there is now a quarry. He stated a major concern with the quarry is the potential of damage to the water table which could be remedied with proper bonding and regulation which he feels is not in place. He ended his comments by stating the Planning Commission should be disbanded.

JoJo Van Horn expressed gratitude to the Commission for all it does. He stated he loves the area and moved here in 2022; he was surprised when a large timber tract near his home was slated for a multi-use urban style development. He said it could have a significant negative community impact and began researching. Through his research he learned of the County Commission and the engineers who are responsible for ensuring developments are held to proper standards. He said he met with Mr. Hardee and Commissioner Cannon and was impressed with their professionalism, generosity of time, caliber of people and the processes he had observed. He was and was looking forward to continuing to work with both on engagement to protect the community.

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Judge Colley recognized the elected officials in attendance: Sheriff Jay Jones, Revenue Commissioner Oline Price, District Attorney Jessica Ventiere and Coroner Daniel Sexton. News media in attendance: Hannah Goldfinger with the Opelika Observer.

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 Aug. 11, 2025. Commissioner Cannon made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda which was seconded by Commissioner Morris. The motion carried unanimously.

Under old business, Commissioner Cannon discussed the county attorney search. He asked Ms. Leverette to provide an update on the process. Ms. Leverette stated five applications had been received with a sixth coming after the deadline, which could also be forwarded on if requested. It was asked that all six be sent with Commissioner Cannon suggesting a committee be formed at the meeting on Sept. 8th. Commissioner Morris recommended for Ms. Leverette, Interim County Attorney Tutt Barrett and two or three commissioners to be on the committee; Commissioner Cannon suggested also included the COO. Interviews would take place the week after the budget work sessions and be coordinated around the COO's availability. No action was taken, and the item will be placed on the next agenda.

Commissioner Drury introduced the termination of subdivision review and approval process agreement with the City of Phenix City. He stated this was discussed previously, but additional discussion with Phenix City had been needed. He stated Mr. Barrett had been in communication with their attorney and recommended it be placed back on the agenda for approval. He stated this would limit the subdivision jurisdictional rights to their corporate limits and not extend beyond that line and would not allow them to make decisions on subdivision in Lee County beyond those lines. Commissioner Cannon and Langley asked a question on the current process, with Mr. Hardee stating that any subdivisions or variances within a 1.5-mile radius has to get approval by both entities. Commissioner Drury made the motion to approve the termination letter which was seconded by Commissioner Cannon. The motion passed unanimously.

Next, Judge Colley discussed the hiring of a COO. He stated that following multiple rounds of interviews, the Commission was ready to move forward with hiring a COO. He stated that following the interviews and his discussions with him he felt Blake Beck was the best candidate for the position. Commissioner Drury made a motion to hire Blake Beck to be COO effective Oct. 1, 2025, with Commissioner Morris seconding. Commissioner LaGrand stated he

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could not vote in support not because of the candidate, but due to the process and wished for more communication. The motion carried on a vote of 4-1, with Commissioners Cannon, Morris, Drury and Langley voting yes and Commissioner LaGrand voting no. Mr. Beck thanked the Commission and stated he was looking forward to the opportunity.

Sheriff Jones presented a Special Events Retail license application for Ocie and Belles LLC for a one-day event to be held at Twenty-One Acres on Friday, Sept. 12. Commissioner LaGrand made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Langley to approve the following Resolution approving the Special Events Retail license application as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

BE IT RESOLVED, the Lee County Commission hereby approves the special events retail license for Ocie and Belles LLC for a one-day event on Sept. 12 at Twenty-One Acres, located at 5505 Wire Road, Auburn, Alabama.

Revenue Commissioner Oline Price presented a tax abatement extension request for KRAEM USA, LLC. She stated the previous abatement application for \$13,200,000 was granted in 2023; due to unforeseen circumstances the entity wasn't able to meet the original deadline which expired on June 30, 2025. She stated the state can give one extension, following that the granting authority must approve any additional requests. She requested the Commission grant an extension through June 30, 2026. Commissioner Morris made a motion to approve the extension which was seconded by Commissioner LaGrand. The motion passed unanimously.

County Administrator Holly Leverette presented the Parks and Recreation reorganization to add grounds maintenance. She stated that the item had been discussed previously in the Aug. 12 work session and wanted to bring the item back for consideration. She said if the Commission wished to move forward with the reorganization, the Grounds Maintenance would become a division of the Parks Department. She outlined three actions the Commission needed to take, which included a workforce transfer, reclassification of Parks Manager Position and the transfer of Buildings and Grounds Vehicles and Equipment.

She stated the workforce transfer included one supervisor at a pay grade of 115, two workers at a pay grade of 108 and three vacant grounds positions also at a pay grade of 108. The reclassifying of the Parks Manager Position into Parks and Grounds Director and a pay grade increase to 202, results in a 5.85% or \$4,500 annual increase. The equipment transfer includes two vehicles and trailers, all other equipment used in ground maintenance and two capital items including a truck for \$50,000 and a zero-turn mower for \$14,000. She stated if the truck is not needed, those funds could be used to replace three irrigation systems that are inoperable.

Commissioner Langley asked how many employees are currently under the Building Grounds Director. Ms. Leverette stated there were currently two supervisors - a grounds supervisor and a custodial supervisor with other employees flowing under the supervisors. She stated with this reorganization there would still remain 15 custodial staff. Some concerns were

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expressed over the possibility of events and projects being hindered, with reassurances provided that others would be able to assist. Commissioner LaGrand asked when these changes would begin with Ms. Leverette stating October 1. She said if it were to be approved, there are three vacancies that could be opened and filled in the Parks Department. Commissioner Cannon made a motion to approve the reorganization which was seconded by Commissioner Drury. The motion passed unanimously.

The next item presented by Ms. Leverette concerned the administration and collection of taxes levied by the county. She said this topic was first presented a few years ago with the Commission choosing not to make a change at that time and stated it was now time to renew the contract with Avenu. She said the Alabama Department of Revenue contacted the county again and performed an audit similar to two years showing what the estimated savings could have been if the ADOR had been performing the county's tax collection. Using the months of July 2024, September 2024 and November 2024 the estimated cost savings would have been \$110,927 and \$43,000 in savings for the fees associated with the collection of severance, cable franchise, wine and video rental taxes. When the analysis was done two years ago the potential savings were \$96,399. She stated Donna Mathis, an auditor with the ADOR, was available for any questions. If not, she requested the approval of the agreement with ADOR effective December 1. Commissioner Morris made the motion to approve the agreement with Commissioner LaGrand seconding. The motion passed unanimously.

County Engineer Justin Hardee presented a proposed environmental services agreement for Shady Grove Quarry. He stated it was part of the settlement agreement between Lee County and the owners of the quarry and was in compliance with the terms of the consent decree. He said he has reviewed this agreement which the Commission also had a chance to review in November 2024. The agreement does meet its intended purpose of a third-party consultant to look at the best management practices consistent with the Alabama Handbook for roads and sediment control and stormwater management at construction sites. He stated per the consent decree, it was being brought before the Commission for approval or revision. Commissioner Cannon made a motion to approve with Commissioner Morris seconding. The motion passed on a 3-2 vote, with Commissioners Cannon, Morris and Drury voting for and Commissioners Langley and LaGrand voting against.

Mr. Hardee next presented a civil engineering graduation job description. He stated the department has struggled to fill an open assistant engineer position which is listed as an engineering intern. To clarify the positions responsible, title and attract more applicants he is requesting a title change to Civil Engineering Graduate- Federal Aid. He stated he worked with HR to clarify the job description and that the position is a full-time position; in addition, the requested title change and description does not affect the listed pay grade. Commissioner

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Cannon made the motion which was seconded by Commissioner Langley. The motion passed unanimously.

For his final item, the FY2026 County Transportation Plan, Mr. Hardee turned the presentation over to Mr. Patrick Harvill. Mr. Harvill presented Lee County's FY2026 County Transportation Plan (CTP) for allocation of the Rebuild Alabama and Federal Exchange funds which are some of the most restricted funds. This year's estimated revenue is \$2.3 million and also recognizes \$1.655 million in beginning balance for the Rebuild Alabama funds. He stated the significant amount in unobligated balance of Rebuild Alabama funds come from additional revenues received over the last 4-5 years from the RA tax, projects coming in under budget and some conservative estimates. In addition, the RA gas tax increased by 1% this year which is also reflected in the higher revenue.

He said there is also \$400K in Federal Exchange funds which are restricted to collector and arterial routes - those funds this year will be used on Lee Road 166. The FY26 CTP list will address 25.873 miles of county roads and a total project estimated cost of \$4,350,279.99 with a remaining balance of \$4,720. Commissioner Drury made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Langley, to approve Lee County's FY2026 County Transportation Plan for allocation of the Rebuild Alabama and Federal Exchange Funds. The motion carried unanimously.

EMA Director Rita Smith presented an Inter-Local Mutual Aid Agreement Resolution. She stated the agreement would ensure that if mutual aid were provided to or by other areas and counties, that there is documentation. In addition, if an invoice is issued either to or by the entity, there must be a signed mutual aid agreement. The proposed agreement also includes a forgiveness provision which would only be granted by Commission approval. She stated the Lee County EMA currently has approximately 75 mutual aid agreements it manages and has requested the Cities of Auburn and Opelika, the volunteer fire departments and the Fire Association to also sign agreements. Commissioner Morris made a motion to authorize the Chair to sign the resolution, which was seconded by Commissioner Langley. The motion passed on a vote of 4-0-1 with Commissioner LaGrand abstaining.

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING PARTICIPATION IN THE ALABAMA INTER-LOCAL MUTUAL AID AGREEMENT

WHEREAS, Act of Alabama 2025-206 amended the Code of Alabama 1975 §§31-9-9 and §31-9-11 to expand the scope wherein local jurisdictions may provide reciprocal aid and assistance to other public or private agencies in the State of Alabama pursuant to a mutual aid agreement; and

WHEREAS, Act of Alabama 2025-206 grants the authority to the governing body of each local jurisdiction to develop mutual aid agreements with other public and private agencies within this state for mutual aid and assistance to protect the public peace, health, safety

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and to preserve the lives and property of the people of the state and it further provides that employees of political subdivisions have the same powers and immunity when they act outside of the political subdivision pursuant to a mutual aid agreement; and

WHEREAS each Entity desiring to participate in the Alabama Inter-Local Mutual Aid Agreement is required to adopt a resolution, signifying its desire to participate and its agreement to the terms and condition or participation.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Lee County Commission enters the Alabama Inter-Local Mutual Aid Agreement with all other participating Entities and agrees to all terms and conditions set out therein.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Lee County Commission designates the Lee County EMA Director as its representative and administrator, and as such grants them the authority to carry out all duties as outlined in the Alabama Inter-Local Mutual Aid Agreement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Chairman of the Lee County Commission is hereby granted authority to execute all documents required for participation in the Alabama Inter-Local Mutual Aid Agreement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution and the executed Alabama Inter-Local Mutual Aid Agreement be immediately forwarded to the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers and the State of Alabama Emergency Management Agency.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, the Lee County Commission has caused this Resolution to be executed in its name and on its behalf on this the 25th day of August. 2025.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned into a Budget Work Session at 6:01 p.m.