

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, August 22, 2023

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Vice Chairman Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Joyce Evans
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Clay Griner

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and recognized the presence of Leadership Lowndes Class Members and thanked them for their interest in our community.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Marshall

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Marshall

MINUTES

Chairman Slaughter requested that an item be added to the agenda. Chairman Slaughter stated the Val Del Road Watermain Extension Change Order will be added "For Consideration" Item 6e, for the Utilities Department. The minutes were presented for the work session of July 24, 2023 and the regular session of July 25, 2023. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING

Beer and Wine License - John Michael Ricks and Cherry L. Trouille of The Fish Net, Inc., DBA The Fish Net Restaurant - 3949 Sportsman Cove, Lake Park, GA

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated this request is for a beer and wine license for consumption on premises and is due to a change in ownership. Mrs. Bowen further stated all requirements have been met. No one spoke for or against the request. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the license as presented, Vice Chairman Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Beer and Wine License - Faisal Ijaz of Sandhu Bros, LLC, DBA Little River Groceries - 8235 Ga Hwy. 122 W., Hahira, GA

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated this is a request for a beer and wine license for consumption off premises, due to a change in ownership. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the license as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Beer and Wine License - Ashish Patel of Rudra 7415, LLC, DBA JP Foods - 7415 GA Hwy 376, Lake Park, GA

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated this is a request for a beer and wine license for consumption off premises, due to a change in ownership. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the license, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Adoption of Millage Rate for 2023

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated the county-wide millage for 2023 is recommended to be set at the rollback rate of 8.896 mills with the Industrial Authority receiving 1.00 mill and the Parks and Recreation Authority receiving 1.25 mills. Mrs. Bowen stated this represents a reduction of 1.315 mills from 2022. Chairman Slaughter stated there has been much discussion regarding this issue and he does agree to roll the millage back to meet the budget numbers, based on a 95% collection rate should give us a zero balance on the budget and the rate should be 8.778 mills. Chairman Slaughter stated the basic rollback would be 8.896 and the recommendation is 8.778 mills. Commissioner Marshall asked how many mills is this reduction? Mrs. Bowen responded 1.434 mills. Commissioner Orenstein asked the collection rate? Chairman Slaughter responded 95%. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adopt the 2023 county-wide millage rate at 8.778 mills to reflect a reduction of 1.434 mills from last year, Vice Chairman Wisenbaker second. Commissioner Evans, Vice Chairman Wisenbaker and Commissioner Marshall all voted in favor, Commissioners Orenstein and Griner opposed. Motion carried.

Adoption of Fire District Millage Rate for 2023

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated this item is for the unincorporated fire millage for a special district that is made up of the unincorporated area and is used to fund fire services. Mrs. Bowen stated the 2023 rate should be set at 2.50 mills, which is no change from the prior year. Chairman Slaughter stated in standing up the full-time fire department for Lowndes County, it was agreed to set the fire district millage rate at 2.50 mills and hold for five years in order to maintain a healthy fund balance so that we could finance the needs for the growth of the fire department. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adopt the 2023 fire district millage rate at 2.50 mills, Commissioner Evans second. Commissioners Evans, Orenstein and Marshall voted in favor. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker and Commissioner Griner opposed. Motion carried.

Val-del Road Watermain Extension Change Order

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the Val-Del Road Watermain Extension was approved earlier this year and due to multiple fiber lines, this project has been very challenging. After discussion with the contractor and engineer, the only path forward to ensure the watermain will not be in conflict with the road widening project will be to directional drill several of the small parcels on the southern end of the project. The amount to be drilled will be under 3,000 linear feet for approximately \$180,000.00. Mr. Stalvey stated staff recommends approval of this change order. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the change order request as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BID

Bid for Animal Services Chassis Box

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated bids were solicited for Animal Services to purchase a replacement chassis box due to wear and tear with the current box being unable to be repaired. One bid was received that met specifications; Jackson Creek Manufacturing, Inc. in the amount of \$41,650.00. Commissioner Marshall asked what is a chassis box? Chairman Slaughter stated it is like a work chassis on a 3/4 ton truck, this is a dog box to transport the animals. Commissioner Marshall asked how many dogs will it hold? County Manager, Paige Dukes, asked Sergeant Mike Brown, with Animal Services, to come up to answer this question. Sgt. Brown answered it has six compartments with a hydraulic lift. Commissioner Orenstein asked how many vehicles does the Animal Services Department have? Sgt. Brown responded five. Commissioner Orenstein verified that this chassis box has been repaired numerous times, Mr. Brown answered that is correct and it is the oldest chassis box. County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated Sgt. Brown has done research on the chassis boxes, so hopefully these will have a longer life than previous boxes purchased. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the sole bidder, Jackson Creek Manufacturing, Inc. in the amount of \$41,650.00, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORT - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated Commissioner Evans has been chosen to represent Lowndes County at the national level through the National Association of Counties as a member of the Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee. Commissioner Marshall also represents us on the federal level where NACO is concerned, which puts Lowndes County on the map as well as rural counties. Mrs. Dukes thanked those that supported Lowndes County Fire Rescue and their playground rehab initiative at the Clyattville Elementary School this morning. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker and Commissioner Evans attended as well as Lowndes County Fire Chief Billy Young and his staff and Public Information Officer, Meghan Barwick. Mrs. Dukes stated she emailed the commissioners with VSU's updated economic impact numbers, which increased 1.3 percent over last year, surpassing 409 million dollars. Hurricane season is picking up and personnel is staying prepared. Thursday, The Happening is at VSU, a welcome initiative for their new students, the Chamber Business Expo will be held at the Rainwater Conference Center and a welcome reception for Colonel Sheets will be held as well. There will be a dinner for the VSU Blazer Football Team at 7:00 p.m. on Friday at the field house and there is the 100 Black Men Annual Dinner on Friday evening as well. Mrs. Dukes stated this is Danny Weeks' last commission meeting and his retirement reception will be held on Thursday, August 31, 2023. Mrs. Dukes stated Danny will be missed and we are grateful for his service. Mrs. Dukes asked Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, to give an update on the historic courthouse. Mr. McLeod stated it is estimated to be complete by this Thursday and he and the architect will begin to start a punch list. Mr. McLeod stated the furniture will be moved in on September 12th and if everything goes according to plan, move in will begin late October. Mrs. Dukes stated the historic courthouse grounds should be ready for the 9/11 ceremony. Commissioner Orenstein publicly acknowledged 911 Director, Mr. Danny Weeks, for the great job he's done with the 911 Center on a daily basis. Commissioner Orenstein asked the Commissioners to join in a round of applause for Danny Weeks. Mr. Weeks thanked the Commissioners for their continuous support of the 911 Center and stated he is excited for the next chapter of his life.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

Diane Cox, 1009 Cherry Creek Drive, addressed the commission regarding election integrity and the use of paper ballots.

Cherry Whitney, 4513 Water Oak Trail, addressed the commission regarding public comment.

Chairman Slaughter stated a memo was passed out by the County Attorney's office regarding the above requests. County Attorney, Walter Elliott, stated Chairman Slaughter asked him to give direction regarding the Board of Elections using paper ballots. Mr. Elliott stated Georgia Law does not authorize the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners to give direction to the Board of Elections to use paper ballots.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Evans second. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the regular session meeting at 6:07 p.m.