

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES  
REGULAR SESSION  
Monday, January 8, 2024

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

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

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**INVOCATION**

Commissioner Wisenbaker

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

Commissioner Wisenbaker

**MINUTES**

The minutes were presented for the work session of December 11, 2023 and the regular session of December 12, 2023. There were no revisions requested. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**APPOINTMENTS**

**Appointments to Board of Tax Assessors**

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated in December of last year, the Commission expanded the Board of Tax Assessors from three to five members. Mrs. Dukes stated the Commission needs to appoint three members. One person to succeed Mr. James Puckett to complete a three-year term ending December 31, 2026, one person to fill a new position to complete an initial three-year term ending December 31, 2026 and one person to fill a new position to complete an initial four-year term ending December 31, 2027. Mrs. Dukes listed the names of those who submitted applications: Mr. David Westberry, Mr. Samuel Clemons, Mr. Mike Tanner, Ms. Lucinda Guess, Ms. Mary Ellen Weeks, Ms. Elizabeth Highsmith, Ms. Sandra Jones, Mr. Richard Holcombe, Ms. Mary Green, Mr. Gene Felts, Ms. Amy Davis (formerly Amy Carter) and Mr. Thomas Reed. Commissioner Wisenbaker nominated Mr. Gene Felts to succeed James Puckett's seat for a three-year term ending December 31, 2026. There being no other nominations, Mr. Gene Felts was appointed by acclamation. Commissioner Griner nominated Mr. Thomas Reed for a three-year term ending December 31, 2026. There being no other nominations, Mr. Thomas Reed was appointed by

acclamation. Commissioner Evans nominated Ms. Sandra Jones for a four-year term ending December 31, 2027. There being no other nominations, Ms. Sandra Jones was appointed by acclamation. Mrs. Dukes stated the appointees would need to report to the Clerk of Court's Office at 10:00 a.m. Wednesday, January 10, 2024, to be sworn in.

## **FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **2024 Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Application**

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated as a part of the Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance and Improvement (LMIG) Grant Program, Lowndes County has been allocated \$1,337,694.10 for fiscal year 2024. Additionally, Mr. McLeod stated Lowndes County would be responsible for a minimum ten percent match in local funding. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the grant application as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

### **Arglass Road Extension - Engineer Selection**

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the ValdostaLowndes County Development Authority (VLDA) will be requesting an EIP Grant to extend Arglass Road. The grant request will come at a later date as a request to Lowndes County to be the applicant. Mr. McLeod stated Lowndes County has to procure an engineer and a RFP for engineers was solicited with three bids being received. Lovell Engineering Associates, PC receiving a score of 67, Carter and Sloope Consulting Engineers received a score of 64 and AE Engineering, Inc. received a score of 58. Based on the scoring criteria, staff recommends Lovell Engineering Associates, PC to be approved as the Professional Engineer. Commissioner Orenstein asked if Lovell Engineering Associates was the Professional Engineer (PE) for the original Arglass project? Mr. McLeod answered yes, for the road. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve Lovell Engineering Associates, PC as the Professional Engineer, Commissioner Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

### **Hazard Mitigation Planning Grant Application**

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated this is a request for approval to submit the hazard mitigation planning grant application, which will allow us to acquire funding for the upcoming update. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the grant application as presented, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

### **2024 Public Defender Contracts**

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from the County Manager, Paige Dukes, during the work session and the contract hasn't changed. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the contract as presented, Commissioner Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

### **Approval of Solicitor General's FY24 VOCA Grant Award**

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from Ms. Hayes with the Solicitor's Office during the work session. No further discussion took place. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the grant with a not to exceed cash match amount of \$33,232.00, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**412-416 N. Lee Street Real Estate Purchase and Sale Agreement \*Agenda Item Added\***

Chairman Slaughter stated if there were no objections, staff would like to add an item to the agenda, 412-416 North Lee Street Real Estate Purchase and Sale Agreement. There being no objections, Chairman Slaughter asked that the item be added as requested.

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated that Lowndes County has been pursuing the purchase of the properties located at 412-416 North Lee Street. Mr. McLeod stated staff has reached an agreement with Ms. Shirley Joseph for the purchase of the property in the amount of \$75,000.00. The title search revealed that Ms. Joseph does not have a clean title to the properties and curative title work will need to be completed. Within this real estate purchase and sale agreement is the purchase amount as well as the curative title work. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the item as presented, Commissioner Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**BID**

**Francis Lake Warehouse Modifications Bids**

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Francis Lake Warehouse modifications include enclosing the open bay of the existing metal building and improvements including a new monorail beam, insulation, lighting, and ventilation. Mr. McLeod stated that additional site work includes grading, asphalt paving, a new pump wash basin, a new sanitary drain and a new pump storage shelter structure. Mr. McLeod stated four bids were received with Chuck Smith and Son Construction being the low bidder in the amount of \$395,980.00. Two additive alternates include a new lift station \$1,000.00 and spray foam \$1,000.00. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve Chuck Smith and Son Construction in the amount of \$397,980.00, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**REPORTS - County Manager**

County Manager, Mrs. Dukes, congratulated Ms. Black and her staff for submitting the audit on time. The Lowndes County Bird Supper will be held next Wednesday, January 17th in Atlanta. The Utilities software update will be ready March 11th with the new meter install in April and a communications plan being finalized. Lowndes County offices will be closed tomorrow due to the weather. Mrs. Dukes asked EMA Director, Ashley Tye, to give an update to the Commission regarding the weather. Vice Chairman Marshall asked regarding shelter options for the homeless? Mr. Tye responded he has been coordinating with one of the local churches, but LAMP and the Salvation Army would be the first resort. Chairman Slaughter thanked Mr. Tye for his diligence and hard work. Mrs. Dukes stated departments are ready on standby, if the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) needs to be stood up.

**CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD** - There were no citizens wishing to be heard.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Slaughter thanked Commissioner Wisenbaker as his term for Vice Chairman has come to an end and now the rotation begins for Vice Chairman Marshall. Commissioner Orenstein and Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to adjourn the regular session meeting, Commissioner Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 5:56 p.m.