

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, January 23, 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

Vice Chairman Marshall

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Vice Chairman Marshall

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of January 8, 2024 and the regular session of January 8, 2024. 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.

APPOINTMENT

Appointment to the Board of Tax Assessors

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated Mr. Gene Felts was appointed to serve a term ending December 31, 2026. Mr. Felts was sworn in and resigned immediately. Mrs. Dukes stated this appointment is to fill the unexpired term of Mr. Gene Felts. Mr. David Westberry, Mr. Samuel Clemons, Mr. Mike Tanner, Ms. Lucinda Guess, Ms. Mary Ellen Weeks, Ms. Elizabeth Highsmith, Mr. Richard Holcombe, Ms. Mary Green, and Mrs. Amy Davis have all expressed a desire to serve. Commissioner Orenstein nominated Mr. Richard Holcombe to succeed Mr. Gene Felts' seat for a three-year term ending December 31, 2026. There being no other nominations, Mr. Richard Holcombe was appointed by acclamation.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Special Assessment Rate for 2024

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated the Commission is required to set the special assessment rate every year to address paving and utility assessments that are not

paid within ninety days. Ms. Black further stated the rate is based on two percent above prime, which the prime rate is 8.5% so that rate is 10.5%. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the special assessment rate at 10.5% for 2024, Commissioner Griner second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Approval of the District Attorney's Federal VOCA Grant Application Renewal

Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from Mr. Brad Shealy with the District Attorney's Office during the work session. No further discussion took place. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the request as presented, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

InfoSend Bill Print Contract

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated with the replacement of the utility billing software, several customer service processes have been reviewed with one being the outsourcing of the bill printing and mailing. Mr. Stalvey stated this contract with InfoSend will coincide with the 'go live' in March and the bills will be processed in Ft. Meyers, not Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Commissioner Orenstein asked if you could pay through the app with the new software, Mr. Stalvey answered yes and customers also have the option to choose paperless billing. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the contract as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Agreement with Cornerstone

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the agreement. Mrs. Dukes stated Lowndes County is currently under contract with Cornerstone Consulting for representation at the federal level. This agreement will extend the consulting service to the state level as well. Commissioner Orenstein asked if the rate was the same? Mrs. Dukes answered the rate is less than the federal rate. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the agreement as presented, Vice Chairman Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, thanked those who attended the Lowndes County Bird Supper and thanked County Clerk, Belinda Lovern and her staff, as well as Public Information Officer, Meghan Barwick and her staff for all of their work related to this event.

Mrs. Dukes mentioned the below:

- Yesterday, the fifth graders from Georgia Christian school toured the Lowndes County Historic Courthouse.
- During the Tourism Authority Board meeting held this morning, the Authority took action to move forward with a request for expansion of the conference center and they are going to request conceptual design funding from the General Assembly.
- A meeting is scheduled regarding moving forward with the animal shelter project.
- On Friday, January 26th from 6:00 - 8:30p.m. at the Rainwater Conference Center, the Valdosta Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce has partnered with others to host the South Georgia Film Unscripted Roadshow.
- On February 6th, Lowndes County Fire Rescue will be participating in a Safe Driving Summit at Lowndes High School.
- There have been calls received from citizens regarding the Old Quitman Road Bridge, in which a fire recently occurred. The Lowndes County Fire Department came in from the other side, so

the bridge being closed did not affect their response time. Chairman Slaughter asked in the event the railroad crossing at Ousley is blocked, is there a notification system in place to notify Emergency 911 operators so they could notify first-responders? Mrs. Dukes stated there is not an automatic notification from the railroad, but many times since law enforcement arrives first on scene, they will notify 911. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked if the first responders were dispatched from the Clyattville Fire Station? Mrs. Dukes responded yes.

Commissioner Wisenbaker asked regarding the animal shelter progress? Mrs. Dukes answered there is a meeting scheduled with the contractor to discuss the budget.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the regular session meeting, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 5:46 p.m.