

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, October 15, 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. and recognized the Youth Leadership Lowndes class members.

Chairman Slaughter stated if there were no objections, staff would like to add an item to the agenda, Revitalization of North Lowndes UPS with Battery Replacement. There being no objections, Chairman Slaughter asked that the item be added as agenda item 7C. Commissioner Evans made a motion to add the Revitalization of North Lowndes UPS with Battery Replacement as an agenda item, Commissioner Griner seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Orenstein

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Orenstein

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of September 9, 2024 and the regular session minutes of September 10, 2024. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Marshall seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING

TXT-2024-03 ULDC Text Amendments

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the proposed update to the Unified Land Development Code. Mr. Dillard stated the proposed revisions include the maximum number of lots accessible for ingress/egress, the creation, implementation and enforcement of a tree bank and administrative and/or clerical changes. Staff is recommending to table this item until the November 12, 2024 meeting to allow additional time for stakeholders to review. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to table this request until the November 12, 2024 commission meeting, Vice Chairman Marshall seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REZ-2024-15 Loch Winn LTD, Loch Laurel Rd & Carroll Ulmer Rd, ~62ac, R-A to R-1 & R-A, Well and Septic

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this item is being requested to be tabled in order to be reviewed by the Planning Commission at their October 28, 2024 meeting. Staff is asking that this rezoning request be tabled to the November 12, 2024, commission meeting. Commissioner Orenstein asked if the delay was an issue with the applicant? Mr. Dillard responded no. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to table this item until the November 12, 2024 commission meeting, Commissioner Orenstein seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Adoption of Millage Rate for 2024

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated that following the third public hearing held at 5:00 p.m. tonight, the commission is required to set the millage rate for 2024. The millage rate for 2023 was 8.778 mills. The county-wide millage for 2024 was advertised at 7.804 mills. The rollback millage for 2024 is 7.356 mills. Commissioner Griner made a motion to adopt the rollback millage for 2024 at 7.356 mills, Commissioners Evans and Wisenbaker seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Adoption of Fire District Millage Rate for 2024

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated the 2024 fire district millage rate is recommended to be set at 2.50 mills, which is no change from the prior year. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked how long will this rate remain at 2.50 mills? Chairman Slaughter responded this was initially discussed when the fire department was expanded that this rate would be set for five years. Commissioner Griner made a motion to set the fire millage for 2.50 mills, Commissioners Wisenbaker and Orenstein seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Joint Funding Agreement with USGS for Stream Gauge Maintenance

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the agreement in the amount of \$27,850.00. The stream gauge for the Little River site is \$17,000.00, and the Withlacoochee River site is \$10,850.00. Mr. Tye stated there is an increase in cost due to USGS charging for the maintenance of the rain gauges which are attached to each stream gauge and that amount is \$3,025.00. Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to approve the agreement as presented, Commissioner Orenstein seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BID

Sprayfield Expansion Phase I

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated an expansion plan was submitted to the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) to expand the sprayfield to accommodate increased flow due to growth. Mr. Stalvey mentioned currently, the county is permitted for two million gallons per day and Georgia EPD has approved up to three million gallons per day. This additional capacity requires approximately 150 acres of additional field for spraying. Mr. Stalvey stated four bids were received, ranging from \$3,369,213.71 - \$4,053,303.00. Southeast Connections, LLC from Conyers, Georgia submitted the low bid in the amount of \$3,369,213.71. Commissioner Orenstein asked what effect would this have on a future wastewater plant? Mrs. Dukes responded none at all, the expansion is needed to provide for growth. The wastewater treatment plant will still be necessary to be able to maintain future industry as well as expansion of residential. Commissioner

Wisembaker made a motion to approve the agreement with Southeast Connections, LLC in the amount of \$3,369,213.71 and to authorize the Chairman to sign, Vice Chairman Marshall seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Grove Pointe Nelson Hill Watermain Interconnection

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated staff recommends installing an 8" interconnection between Grove Pointe Subdivision and Nelson Hill Subdivision to create a second feed and looping of the water system. Easements have been acquired and the interconnection will be installed from the southwest corner of Nelson Hill Place to the northeast corner of Hatfield Circle. Mr. Stalvey stated three bids were received ranging from \$78,392.60 - \$187,565.40. Mr. Stalvey stated RPI, Inc. submitted the low bid in the amount of \$78,392.60. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the agreement with RPI, Inc. in the amount of \$78,392.60 and to authorize the Chairman to sign, Commissioner Griner seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Revitalization of North Lowndes UPS with Battery Replacement

IT Director, Aaron Kostyu, presented the item. Mr. Kostyu stated this request is for the purchase of a revitalization for the Lowndes County Judicial Complex Uninterruptable Power System (UPS). The current system has reached end-of-life and support for all major components, including power modules and batteries. This request became more critical after the recent standby generator transfer switch related fire on August 12, 2024. The fire caused fifteen of seventy-eight batteries to fail. Vice Chairman Marshall asked if Schneider Electric was the only company that submitted a bid? Mr. Kostyu responded it is sole sourced. Commissioner Orenstein asked to verify this is funded through SPLOST? Mrs. Dukes responded yes. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the request as presented, Commissioner Evans seconded. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, reported the following:

- As we are recovering from Hurricane Helene, the normal order of business also moves forward. We are grateful for our teams and staff that have done an incredible job over the last two and a half weeks working to take care of the community.
- Fire Prevention Month for October has kicked off. She has the schedule if any commissioners would like to appear at any of the events. The majority of the events are to visit schools and some are public education opportunities.
- We will host Leadership Lowndes Thursday, October 17th. They are in line for their Courts and Public Safety Day with the adult class, but given the response that we are under as a part of Hurricane Helene, there is an abbreviated program that we will be hosting in the Chambers. We will be providing the class with an overview of the storm and our response.
- She forwarded the commissioners the Ag Tour Schedule for tomorrow hosted by the Extension Office. After Hurricane Idalia we had FSA come in with the Extension Office and toured several local farms to get input. There is over \$6 billion dollars in agricultural loss to Georgia's economy, which also affects our food. Farmers remain in our thoughts and prayers as we move forward with recovering from Hurricane Helene.
- Representative John LaHood has an event at Coleman Talley Thursday evening, October 17th at 5:00 p.m. that the commissioners are invited to attend.

- There are two items for consideration next week that we will need to have a commission meeting for Tuesday evening, October 22nd. At the direction of Chairman Slaughter, we have canceled the work session for Monday, October 21st. We have two items that cannot wait until the November meeting.
- We are working closely with the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS). Some of us have gotten comments regarding food insecurities for some of our citizens as a result of Hurricane Helene. The Red Cross continues to provide hot meals, but that will dwindle. DFCS will bring in a DSNAP program which is disaster benefits for families with food insecurities. This is not technically for people who were already receiving SNAP benefits, but for people who may not qualify for those benefits but may have lost everything in their refrigerator and have food insecurities. The state will bring in a team of about 300 people that will serve an eight-county area, not only Lowndes County. We are in the process of working with DFCS to get that scheduled. Let us know if you have citizens who are calling in with those issues and we will get them connected with times and locations for them to apply for those benefits.
- Thanked the commissioners for their support. Some of the policies, procedures and funding that the commissioners put into place after Hurricane Idalia, from a pre-disaster mitigation standpoint, such as the Crisis Track Software, we have definitely seen the benefits of those things from our response to Hurricane Helene. Thank you for your continued leadership and support. We will come to you again with lessons learned when we finish this recovery through the next budget cycle to see what other things need to be put in place for us to be even better prepared next time.

Chairman Slaughter stated this has been a hard time in the last thirteen months. It is unprecedented that we have been hit by basically three hurricanes, with two of them being hurricane strength here in Lowndes County. How the community stood up, cooperated, and worked together to get through this is unprecedented. There are people who are still without electricity, but that is not because of the utility companies. There are other repairs that have to be made before they can get electricity back to those homes. The great work that electrical utilities, Colquitt EMC and Georgia Power did, again is unprecedented. The lessons learned from Hurricane Idalia, we took to fruition and we stood strong together and did what we had to do as a community to get through this difficult time. I am extremely proud of the Commission, staff, and more than anything, the community. Mrs. Dukes recognized Ashley Tye, EMA Director, for his leadership and efforts. Commissioner Orenstein recognized Chief Young for his efforts and wished him a Happy Birthday. Vice Chairman Marshall thanked Chairman Slaughter and County Manager, Paige Dukes for standing in the gap when he and some of the other commissioners could not be there. Vice Chairman Marshall also thanked the community.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Griner made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Marshall seconded. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the regular session meeting at 5:55 p.m.