

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, September 22, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Michael Smith

Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans was not in attendance.

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of September 8, 2025, and the regular session of September 9, 2025. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Opioid Litigation - Secondary Manufacturers

Assistant Finance Director, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated a settlement agreement has been reached by several secondary opioid manufacturers to provide financial resources to combat the opioid epidemic across the United States. We have been advised by special counsel for Lowndes County, Cale Conley, to participate in this settlement to receive funds aimed at addressing the opioid crisis. To participate, the County must agree to the terms set forth in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and authorize the Chairman to sign the MOU, Subdivision Participation Form, and Release Form. Commissioner Marshall inquired about percentage breakdowns and potential dollar amounts which might be received, Mrs. Bowen answered at this time, for this specific settlement, the funds haven't been released. To date, Lowndes County has received approximately \$600,000.00 from all combined opioid settlements. Commissioner Orenstein asked where these funds are held, Mrs. Bowen responded the funds are placed in an intergovernmental grant fund, which is kept in a deferred revenue account, pending decisions on their use. The primary purpose will be opioid abatement efforts. Commissioner Smith asked about the timeline for receiving funds from the new settlement, Mrs. Bowen indicated that funds are expected between spring and summer of 2026. Chairman Slaughter noted that the final amount received will depend on the number of participants in the litigation. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked where the current funds are being held, Mrs. Bowen confirmed they remain in the intergovernmental grant fund and are not yet allocated for specific use, which will require Commission approval.

Update of Budget and Equity Reserve Policy

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item stating this is a proposed amendment to the County's Financial Policy regarding the recognition of grant funds, specifically FEMA reimbursements. She explained that while there is a standard 60-day recognition period after the fiscal year ends, FEMA funds often arrive later due to processing delays. The proposed policy change would extend the recognition window only for grant funds, primarily FEMA related, to ensure these funds can be accounted for in the appropriate fiscal year. The amendment was suggested by Lowndes County's Financial Consultant, Harrison Tillman, and is consistent with steps taken by other governments facing similar delays. Commissioner Smith asked whether the change would affect audit timelines. Ms. Black clarified that most audit-related work is completed within the current 60-day window, and this change would not significantly delay the audit process. Chairman Slaughter emphasized the goal is to better capture delayed grant revenue, noting the Commission could later revert to the original 60/90-day policy once extraordinary events subside. Commissioner Wisenbaker questioned whether the policy would revert automatically and raised a concern about a discrepancy in the policy language defining a quarter as 120 days. Ms. Black acknowledged this may be a scrivener's error, according to County Attorney, Walter Elliott. The policy change is a proactive measure to accommodate delayed FEMA reimbursements without disrupting standard audit procedures. Any revision to prior policy would require formal Commission action.

REPORTS - County Manager

Chairman Slaughter noted that County Manager, Paige Dukes was not in attendance due to travel to Washington, D.C. in support of Moody Air Force Base.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Smith made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the work session meeting at 8:41 a.m.