

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES  
WORK SESSION  
Monday, June 26, 2023

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

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

Commissioner Scott Orenstein was not present.

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

**MINUTES**

The minutes were presented for the work session of June 12, 2023, the Special Called Meeting of June 12, 2023, the regular session of June 13, 2023, and the Budget Public Hearing of June 20, 2023. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

**Fire Officer of the Year & Fire Fighter of the Year Recognition (Work Session)**

Fire Chief, Lloyd Green presented the item, recognizing Captain Jeff Talley as Fire Officer of the Year and Sergeant Bowen Brooks as Fire Fighter of the Year. Mr. Green stated Captain Talley was recently nominated by his supervisor, Bill Young, and awarded Fire Officer of the Year for the Valdosta Elks Lodge for Lowndes County. Chief Green stated Sergeant Bowen Brooks was nominated by his supervisor, Ben Amiot, for Fire Fighter of the Year for the Valdosta Exchange Club of Lowndes County. Chief Green also stated Sergeant Brooks recently made Sergeant. In addition, Chief Green stated he is proud of both gentlemen for their accomplishments, service, and dedication to the community and Lowndes County Fire Rescue. Before getting a picture with the Commissioners and Mr. Brooks, County Manager, Paige Dukes stated Sergeant Brooks was a part of our expansion. Mrs. Dukes went on to say he came in as a brand new fire fighter and has done a phenomenal job. She stated EMS has been extremely busy and we have been mitigating some of that with our fire departments. Mrs. Dukes stated Captain Talley ran EMS calls recently and does not mind jumping in the truck to run a call if he needs to; to take pressure off of one of our apparatus or if EMS is overwhelmed in general. She stated that is just one example of Captain Talley's abilities and his commitment to go above and beyond where our community is concerned. She went on to say she is grateful to both of them and thanked them for what they do.

**APPOINTMENTS**

**Lowndes County Division of Family and Children Services**

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item stating the seat currently held by Mrs. Elsie Napier will expire on June 30th and Mrs. Napier has expressed a desire to continue to serve.

### **Valdosta-Lowndes Parks and Recreation Authority**

County Manager Paige Dukes presented the item stating Mrs. Suzan Garnett's term on the VLPRA expires on June 30th and she has expressed a desire to continue to serve. Mrs. Dukes stated Mrs. Garnett is currently Chair of the VLPRA Board and is a tremendous part of that initiative. Mrs. Dukes also stated staff is in favor of her consideration.

### **Valdosta Lowndes County Construction Board of Adjustments and Appeals**

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item stating Mr. Tripp Howell's seat will expire June 30th and he has expressed a desire to continue to serve. She also stated Commissioner Evans is part of this initiative. Once we complete bringing Permits and Inspections in house as of July 1, 2023 we will come to you later in July for an appointment for the Construction Board of Appeals for Lowndes County, stating we cannot use the same one, but if you all choose to appoint the same members that currently serve on the existing board so that there are not two groups of people there, that can be done. Mrs. Dukes stated we are in the process of reaching out to them now to see if they would be interested. That is a board that meets once per quarter, so there is no large time commitment. Chairman Slaughter asked Mrs. Dukes to help him understand the reason why we could not use the same Board, to which Mrs. Dukes responded it is Valdosta-Lowndes County because we have the agreement. Further stating, the agreement is tied to that and once we split out of that, it will no longer be Valdosta-Lowndes County, there will be a Valdosta Board and a Lowndes County Board.

## **FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Lowndes County Accountability Court Grant Approval and Cash Match**

Program Director, Jennifer Fabbri presented the item. Mrs. Fabbri stated she is happy to report that they did receive a state grant to continue them through Fiscal Year 2024. She stated, as always, that grant provides 88% of the total budget and they are asking the County for a 12% cash match. The actual amount requested this year is a little lower than last year. She also wanted to point out that the program was recognized by CACJ for adhering to best practices state standards. Mrs. Fabbri also stated she is happy to say that at last year's annual conference she was awarded the Star Coordinator Award for the State of Georgia. Mrs. Fabbri also mentioned that she provided a savings analysis print out for the Commissioners. Commissioner Evans thanked Mrs. Fabbri for the work that she does. Mrs. Fabbri stated the next graduation is August 9, 2023. She also invited the Commissioners to a special recognition for Judge Voyles, stating he has stepped in and done an amazing job. Chairman Slaughter thanked Mrs. Fabbri.

### **Annual Contract Renewal with the State of Georgia Department of Corrections**

Public Works Director, Robin Cumbus presented the item. Mrs. Cumbus stated this item is for three prison work details, one for the Engineering Department to meet state requirements for storm water and two for Public Works for the maintenance of easements. Mrs. Cumbus also stated this contract does not come with a cost increase like previous years. Chairman Slaughter asked if this contract is only if the County needs the details, to which Mrs. Cumbus responded, that is correct. In addition, Mrs. Cumbus stated if the County does not use the details, the County is not charged.

### **Budget Plan for Hotel Motel Proceeds for Fiscal Year 2024**

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item stating, Georgia Statute requires the Commission to adopt prior to each fiscal year a budget plan for the use of hotel/motel tax proceeds for the upcoming

fiscal year. Mrs. Dukes stated the same statute also requires the Commission to obtain from the Conference Center and Tourism Authority a budget plan. In addition, Mrs. Dukes stated, the Authority plan has been made a part of the County budget plan and all of those things have been incorporated as required. Both plans are scheduled to be adopted by the authority board on June 27, 2023.

### **Adoption of Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget**

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the changes to the budget have been made and over the weekend the Commission received a copy of the draft budget plan. Mrs. Dukes stated they are still available to make any adjustments that the Commission would like to make before tomorrow evening's consideration. Mrs. Dukes also stated she would encourage the Commission to allow them to make adjustments if the Commission has any and not delay the adoption of the budget. If it is delayed, additional hearings and advertisements are required. She also asked the Commission to let them know today or tomorrow before the meeting if there are any changes they would like to make. Commissioner Marshall asked if \$146 million is the approximate amount for the total budget, to which Mrs. Dukes responded yes, that is the total budget amount.

### **Resolution Making Designations Required by OCGA 36-66-5.1(c)**

County Planner, JD Dillard presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated changes in State Law regarding appeals of certain land use decisions take effect on July 1, 2023. Mr. Dillard further stated staff plans to address the newer ULDC Text amendments. Mr. Dillard also stated the resolution serves as a stop gap between July 1 and July 11. In addition, Mr. Dillard stated the resolution has been prepared by the County Attorney's Office and staff recommends adopting the resolution making designations required by OCGA.

### **REPORTS - County Manager**

County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated on Wednesday at 12:30 pm and again at 2:00 pm we have stakeholder meetings scheduled to help our development community become familiar with software for permits and inspections. Homebuilders are coming at 2:00pm and all other general stakeholders are scheduled for 12:30 pm. Mrs. Dukes invited the Commission to attend either or both of those sessions. Mrs. Dukes also stated the software will go live July 1, but we are in a test phase right now so that they can go in and put in information for a permit and create accounts and see how all of it works. In addition, Mrs. Dukes stated, the evening before July 1, the training system will be wiped and the new process will begin. Mrs. Dukes further stated, we are on board and moving forward, and she believes all the technology will go in today if it is not already on the second floor, adding, the desks are in, the staff is hired, and we are ready. She also mentioned that they have talked to homebuilders and other stakeholders and let them know this is a fluid process, we are here to meet their needs, and we will make changes if need be and there is still plenty of time to make changes as we make sure that this is a service that meets their needs.

Mrs. Dukes introduced Mrs. Mary Beth Brownlee, the Director of the One Valdosta - Lowndes Initiative and recognized Ms. Christie Moore, the Chamber Director, who was in the audience. Mrs. Dukes stated we have been going through the One Valdosta-Lowndes Initiative for several years, and are very blessed to get to a point where the Chamber could hire a director and they had their first committee meeting last week and Mrs. Dukes asked Mrs. Brownlee to come in and give the Commission an update. Mrs. Brownlee introduced herself, shared a little about her background, thanked the Commission for their investment that they made to the initiative, and updated the Commission on the One Valdosta-Lowndes Initiative. Chairman Slaughter thanked Mrs. Brownlee.

Mrs. Dukes stated the groundbreaking for Second Harvest has been cancelled. Mrs. Dukes also mentioned that we will be feeding our employees Chick Fil A for employee appreciation on Thursday, ahead of the July fourth holiday. She further stated if any of the Commissioners would like to help deliver, please let her know before noon today so that she can provide them with the information. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked for the date of the event and Mrs. Dukes replied, this Thursday.

Chairman Slaughter requested an executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel. At 8:58 a.m. Commissioner Griner made a motion to enter into executive session for the purpose of discussing personnel, Vice Chairman Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

At 9.06 a.m. Chairman Slaughter reconvened the work session with no additional information being discussed. Commissioner Griner made a motion to adjourn the work session meeting, Commissioner Marshall second. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting.

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES  
REGULAR SESSION  
Tuesday, June 27, 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 pm.

Chairman Slaughter recognized one Leadership Lowndes member in the audience. County Manager Paige Dukes recognized Mrs. Rachel Thrasher's daughter Mackenzie Noles, who was in the audience. Chairman Slaughter stated he was glad to have them with us.

**INVOCATION**

Commissioner Clay Griner

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

Commissioner Clay Griner

**MINUTES**

The minutes were presented for the work session of June 12, 2023, the Special Called Meeting of June 12, 2023, the Regular Session of June 13, 2023, and the Budget Hearing of June 20, 2023. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**APPOINTMENTS**

**Lowndes County Division of Family and Children Services**

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item stating the seat that is currently held by Mrs. Elsie Napier will expire on June 30, 2023. Mrs. Dukes further stated, Mrs. Napier has expressed a willingness to continue to serve another term on the Division of Family and Children Services Board. Commissioner Evans nominated Mrs. Napier for reappointment. There being no other nominations, Mrs. Napier was reappointed by acclamation.

**Valdosta-Lowndes Parks and Recreation Authority**

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item stating the term that is currently held by Mrs. Suzan Garnett will be expiring on June 30, 2023, and Mrs. Garnett has expressed a desire to continue to serve.

Commissioner Marshall nominated Mrs. Garnett to be reappointed. There being no other nominations, Mrs. Garnett was reappointed by acclamation.

**Valdosta Lowndes County Construction Board of Adjustments and Appeals**

County Manager, Paige Dukes presented the item stating the seat currently held by Mr. Tripp Howell will expire on June 30, 2023 and Mr. Howell has expressed a desire to continue to serve. Commissioner Orenstein nominated Mr. Howell for reappointment. There being no other nominations, Mr. Howell was reappointed by acclamation.

**FOR CONSIDERATION**

**Lowndes County Accountability Court Grant Approval and Cash Match**

Chairman Slaughter stated Mrs. Fabbri presented the item at yesterday's work session. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the continued funding and cash match of \$25,139.00, as requested, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Annual Contract Renewal with the State of Georgia Department of Corrections**

Public Works Director, Robin Cumbus presented the item. Mrs. Cumbus stated this item is for three prison work details, one for the Engineering Department to meet state requirements for storm water and two for Public Works for the maintenance of drainage easements. Commissioner Marshall asked how many individuals the County gets for each detail, Mrs. Cumbus responded, since COVID we have been down to one detail, but according to the contract, we only pay for them when they come out. She further stated, historically, for the past two or three years, we have only paid for one detail. Mrs. Cumbus also stated the annual cost is for three details, just in case they are available. Mrs. Cumbus further stated there are anywhere from five to eight prisoners per detail and there is a lot of work that is completed for the price paid. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the contract renewal and authorize the Chairman to execute the contract, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Budget Plan for Hotel Motel Proceeds for Fiscal Year 2024**

Finance Director, Stephanie Black presented the item. Ms. Black stated following state statute, this is the County Budget Plan for the hotel/motel proceeds for fiscal year 2024 as well as the Conference Center and Tourism Authority Budget Plan for their use to promote tourism, conventions, and trade shows. Ms. Black further stated it was adopted today by the Authority Board. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adopt the budget plan and authorize the Chairman to sign, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Adoption of Fiscal Year 2024 Operating Budget**

Finance Director, Stephanie Black presented the item. Ms. Black stated following the public hearing on June 20, 2023, this is the operating budget for fiscal year 2024 for the general fund and all other operating funds. Commissioner Griner made a motion to adopt the budget as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Resolution Making Designations Required by OCGA 36-66-5.1(c)**

County Planner, JD Dillard presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated the attached resolution that was drafted by the County Attorney's office is to help address specific applicable requirements from state law that go into effect on July 1, 2023 regarding appeals of certain land use decisions and this will be effective until amendments can be adopted in the ULDC at a later date. Commissioner Orenstein

asked if this is just a stop gap until we get the revisions done, Chairman Slaughter responded that is correct. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to adopt the resolution making the designations required by OCGA, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

### **REPORTS - County Manager**

County Manager, Paige Dukes thanked the County attorney for the last item that was approved. It puts in place what the citizens need and also protects the County and staff from liability. Mrs. Dukes discussed a report that she received from the Conference Center and Tourism Authority meeting that she and Commissioner Evans attended earlier today and she thought that the Commission might find it interesting. Mrs. Dukes went on to mention that our property offer was accepted for \$75,000.00 for the Lee Street Property and that is moved to the County Attorney's Office. In addition, she stated, the County will be able to get those blighted houses down and then Chad McLeod and Rachel Thrasher will be making adjustments to our plan on the Griner property so that can be incorporated. It will also be important for future development where County offices are concerned. Mrs. Dukes stated the Honor Guard with Lowndes County Fire Rescue served in Waycross last week for a line of duty death. Tomorrow they will start a funeral watch for Mr. Bob Condrey, who is the stepdad of Sergeant Fischbach, who is currently with Lowndes County. He was also a 20-plus-year volunteer with LCFR. He served with the Eastside department, which has also been a very important department where volunteers are concerned, with tremendous leadership. We are extremely proud of the Honor Guard and Chief Green and his leadership. Lt. Jaime Gandy who works out of the Clyattville Fire Department, manages the Honor Guard Program. Our thoughts and prayers remain with the Fischbach family over Mr. Condrey's passing. Tomorrow are the stakeholder meetings at 12:30 pm and 2:00 pm with permits and inspections, mentioned at the work session meeting. On Friday at 10:00 am we will hold the Lowndes County Fire Rescue Birthday Celebration and the public is invited. Yesterday, we received notification from Senator Ossoff's Office that Moody is in line for the next F-35 A Mission. We are very excited and have several years to prepare the community. There will be an infusion into our construction and development community with some of the needs that will be needed there. This will bring an additional 500 personnel to Moody. Mr. Stalvey and his team have continued to work on a solution for the water issues at Alapaha Plantation. The trial with the Nanofiltration System did not work as we thought it would, because there was an issue with the provider that the County Attorney is currently working through; however, Mr. Stalvey has found an alternative and has reviewed it with our partners. Mrs. Dukes asked Mr. Stalvey to provide information for the Commission. Mr. Stalvey stated Cornerstone HTO out of Atlanta is a vendor that provides water and wastewater equipment to municipalities in industry and they reached out to Mr. Stalvey with a relatively new product called cerafiltec. They came out last fall and did a pilot study and there were good results. They offered it to the County at a very reduced rate. HTO will provide weekly visits and oversight to help us run it. The pilot was delivered last week and will probably be connected next week or the week after. This is a good opportunity to check out this new technology. Mrs. Dukes thanked the Commission for approving the budget. She also thanked Ms. Black, Mrs. Bowen, Mrs. RathKamp, and Mr. Beals for all their help in the budget process.

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

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Chairman Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 5:48 pm.