

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, August 21, 2023

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

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

Commissioner Demarcus Marshall was not present.

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

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of July 24, 2023 and the regular session of July 25, 2023. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

PUBLIC HEARING

Beer and Wine License - John Michael Ricks and Cherry L. Trouille of The Fish Net, Inc., DBA The Fish Net Restaurant - 3949 Sportsman Cove, Lake Park, GA

Finance Accounts Receivable Technician, Lorraine Taylor, presented the item. Mrs. Taylor stated the applicant is requesting a beer and wine license for consumption on premises at 3949 Sportsman Cove in Lake Park. Mrs. Taylor stated this is due to a change in ownership and all requirements have been met.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Beer and Wine License - Faisal Ijaz of Sandhu Bros, LLC, DBA Little River Groceries - 8235 Ga Hwy. 122 W., Hahira, GA

Finance Accounts Receivable Technician, Lorraine Taylor, presented a request for a beer and wine license for consumption off premises, due to a change in ownership.

Beer and Wine License - Ashish Patel of Rudra 7415, LLC, DBA JP Foods - 7415 GA Hwy 376, Lake Park, GA

Finance Accounts Receivable Technician, Lorraine Taylor, presented a request for a beer and wine license for consumption off premises, due to a change in ownership.

Adoption of Millage Rate for 2023

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, gave a presentation on the millage to the Commissioners. Mrs. Bowen stated that if adopted, the county-wide millage rate for 2023 is recommended to be set at a rollback rate of 8.896 mills with the Industrial Authority receiving 1.00 mill and the Parks and

Recreation Authority receiving 1.25 mills. Additionally, Mrs. Bowen stated this represents a reduction of 1.315 mills from 2022. Commissioner Griner asked for the millage rate required to rollback to our exact budgeted forecast? Mrs. Bowen stated she believes the millage rate of 8.896 is the prediction for the 95% assessment rate that would cover all of the budget requirements. Commissioner Griner asked what is the approved budget requirements for property tax collection? Mrs. Bowen stated she did not have that information with her, but could obtain it before the meeting tomorrow night. Commissioner Griner also asked for the fire tax information as well. Chairman Slaughter stated related to the rollback and what was budgeted, the millage rate would be 8.778 mills which is based on a 95% collection rate to be at zero. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked if Parks and Recreation has always been 1.20 mills? County Attorney, Walter Elliott, stated it is 1.25 mills and you cannot go below that amount. Chairman Slaughter stated you could increase, but not decrease the amount. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked what is the value of a mill? Chairman Slaughter stated that based on the current assessments, it is at 4.20 million. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker stated that the difference is because of the value of the mill increasing. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked if the fire tax rate should be adjusted? Chairman Slaughter stated he would not recommend changing. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked when all of the fire stations are in place, will we be adjusting the rate down from 2.50 mills or will the taxpayers continue to pay 2.50 mills? Chairman Slaughter stated this would be considered based on the budgeted needs. County Manager, Paige Dukes, responded through this next year we need to build fund balance; since the plan was presented to the Commission, inflation has hit significantly to cover the growing cost of personnel, we will need to consider. If the voters choose to pass SPLOST IX, there are capital needs in the budget to be put on the SPLOST IX list which would take some pressure off of the millage and look at an adjustment. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked what balance do we have in fire fund? County Manager, Paige Dukes, answered she would have to look that information up.

Adoption of Fire District Millage Rate for 2023

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated the 2023 fire district millage rate should be set at 2.50 mills, which is no change from the prior year.

BID

Bid for Animal Services Chassis Box

Purchasing Agent, Amy Woods, presented the item. Mrs. Woods stated the only bid that met specifications was Jackson Creek Manufacturing, Inc., located in North Carolina, in the amount of \$41,650.00. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked is this for a dog box? Mrs. Woods responded yes sir. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked what was being done with the old dog box? County Manager, Paige Dukes, responded this box is in pieces and at its end of life and will be disposed of. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked where is it? Mrs. Dukes responded it is still being used on one of the trucks. Chairman Slaughter stated typically with surplus items they are advertised on GovDeals. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked if the commissioners could bid on items on GovDeals? County Manager, Paige Dukes, answered yes. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked if it is aluminum or stainless steel? Animal Services Director, Linda Patelski, responded it is both.

REPORTS - County Manager

There was no additional information to report.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Griner second. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 8:47 a.m.

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, August 22, 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 p.m. and recognized the presence of Leadership Lowndes Class Members and thanked them for their interest in our community.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Marshall

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Marshall

MINUTES

Chairman Slaughter requested that an item be added to the agenda. Chairman Slaughter stated the Val Del Road Watermain Extension Change Order will be added "For Consideration" Item 6e, for the Utilities Department. The minutes were presented for the work session of July 24, 2023 and the regular session of July 25, 2023. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING

Beer and Wine License - John Michael Ricks and Cherry L. Trouille of The Fish Net, Inc., DBA The Fish Net Restaurant - 3949 Sportsman Cove, Lake Park, GA

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated this request is for a beer and wine license for consumption on premises and is due to a change in ownership. Mrs. Bowen further stated all requirements have been met. No one spoke for or against the request. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the license as presented, Vice Chairman Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Beer and Wine License - Faisal Ijaz of Sandhu Bros, LLC, DBA Little River Groceries - 8235 Ga Hwy. 122 W., Hahira, GA

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated this is a request for a beer and wine license for consumption off premises, due to a change in ownership. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the license as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Beer and Wine License - Ashish Patel of Rudra 7415, LLC, DBA JP Foods - 7415 GA Hwy 376, Lake Park, GA

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated this is a request for a beer and wine license for consumption off premises, due to a change in ownership. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the license, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Adoption of Millage Rate for 2023

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated the county-wide millage for 2023 is recommended to be set at the rollback rate of 8.896 mills with the Industrial Authority receiving 1.00 mill and the Parks and Recreation Authority receiving 1.25 mills. Mrs. Bowen stated this represents a reduction of 1.315 mills from 2022. Chairman Slaughter stated there has been much discussion regarding this issue and he does agree to roll the millage back to meet the budget numbers, based on a 95% collection rate should give us a zero balance on the budget and the rate should be 8.778 mills. Chairman Slaughter stated the basic rollback would be 8.896 and the recommendation is 8.778 mills. Commissioner Marshall asked how many mills is this reduction? Mrs. Bowen responded 1.434 mills. Commissioner Orenstein asked the collection rate? Chairman Slaughter responded 95%. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adopt the 2023 county-wide millage rate at 8.778 mills to reflect a reduction of 1.434 mills from last year, Vice Chairman Wisenbaker second. Commissioner Evans, Vice Chairman Wisenbaker and Commissioner Marshall all voted in favor, Commissioners Orenstein and Griner opposed. Motion carried.

Adoption of Fire District Millage Rate for 2023

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated this item is for the unincorporated fire millage for a special district that is made up of the unincorporated area and is used to fund fire services. Mrs. Bowen stated the 2023 rate should be set at 2.50 mills, which is no change from the prior year. Chairman Slaughter stated in standing up the full-time fire department for Lowndes County, it was agreed to set the fire district millage rate at 2.50 mills and hold for five years in order to maintain a healthy fund balance so that we could finance the needs for the growth of the fire department. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to adopt the 2023 fire district millage rate at 2.50 mills, Commissioner Evans second. Commissioners Evans, Orenstein and Marshall voted in favor. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker and Commissioner Griner opposed. Motion carried.

Val-del Road Watermain Extension Change Order

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the Val-Del Road Watermain Extension was approved earlier this year and due to multiple fiber lines, this project has been very challenging. After discussion with the contractor and engineer, the only path forward to ensure the watermain will not be in conflict with the road widening project will be to directional drill several of the small parcels on the southern end of the project. The amount to be drilled will be under 3,000 linear feet for approximately \$180,000.00. Mr. Stalvey stated staff recommends approval of this change order. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the change order request as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BID

Bid for Animal Services Chassis Box

Finance Chief Accountant, Rachel Bowen, presented the item. Mrs. Bowen stated bids were solicited for Animal Services to purchase a replacement chassis box due to wear and tear with the current box being unable to be repaired. One bid was received that met specifications; Jackson Creek Manufacturing, Inc. in the amount of \$41,650.00. Commissioner Marshall asked what is a chassis box? Chairman Slaughter stated it is like a work chassis on a 3/4 ton truck, this is a dog box to transport the animals. Commissioner Marshall asked how many dogs will it hold? County Manager, Paige Dukes, asked Sergeant Mike Brown, with Animal Services, to come up to answer this question. Sgt. Brown answered it has six compartments with a hydraulic lift. Commissioner Orenstein asked how many vehicles does the Animal Services Department have? Sgt. Brown responded five. Commissioner Orenstein verified that this chassis box has been repaired numerous times, Mr. Brown answered that is correct and it is the oldest chassis box. County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated Sgt. Brown has done research on the chassis boxes, so hopefully these will have a longer life than previous boxes purchased. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the sole bidder, Jackson Creek Manufacturing, Inc. in the amount of \$41,650.00, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORT - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated Commissioner Evans has been chosen to represent Lowndes County at the national level through the National Association of Counties as a member of the Justice and Public Safety Steering Committee. Commissioner Marshall also represents us on the federal level where NACO is concerned, which puts Lowndes County on the map as well as rural counties. Mrs. Dukes thanked those that supported Lowndes County Fire Rescue and their playground rehab initiative at the Clyattville Elementary School this morning. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker and Commissioner Evans attended as well as Lowndes County Fire Chief Billy Young and his staff and Public Information Officer, Meghan Barwick. Mrs. Dukes stated she emailed the commissioners with VSU's updated economic impact numbers, which increased 1.3 percent over last year, surpassing 409 million dollars. Hurricane season is picking up and personnel is staying prepared. Thursday, The Happening is at VSU, a welcome initiative for their new students, the Chamber Business Expo will be held at the Rainwater Conference Center and a welcome reception for Colonel Sheets will be held as well. There will be a dinner for the VSU Blazer Football Team at 7:00 p.m. on Friday at the field house and there is the 100 Black Men Annual Dinner on Friday evening as well. Mrs. Dukes stated this is Danny Weeks' last commission meeting and his retirement reception will be held on Thursday, August 31, 2023. Mrs. Dukes stated Danny will be missed and we are grateful for his service. Mrs. Dukes asked Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, to give an update on the historic courthouse. Mr. McLeod stated it is estimated to be complete by this Thursday and he and the architect will begin to start a punch list. Mr. McLeod stated the furniture will be moved in on September 12th and if everything goes according to plan, move in will begin late October. Mrs. Dukes stated the historic courthouse grounds should be ready for the 9/11 ceremony. Commissioner Orenstein publicly acknowledged 911 Director, Mr. Danny Weeks, for the great job he's done with the 911 Center on a daily basis. Commissioner Orenstein asked the Commissioners to join in a round of applause for Danny Weeks. Mr. Weeks thanked the Commissioners for their continuous support of the 911 Center and stated he is excited for the next chapter of his life.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

Diane Cox, 1009 Cherry Creek Drive, addressed the commission regarding election integrity and the use of paper ballots.

Cherry Whitney, 4513 Water Oak Trail, addressed the commission regarding public comment.

Chairman Slaughter stated a memo was passed out by the County Attorney's office regarding the above requests. County Attorney, Walter Elliott, stated Chairman Slaughter asked him to give direction regarding the Board of Elections using paper ballots. Mr. Elliott stated Georgia Law does not authorize the Lowndes County Board of Commissioners to give direction to the Board of Elections to use paper ballots.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Evans second. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the regular session meeting at 6:07 p.m.