

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES  
REGULAR SESSION  
Tuesday, December 14, 2021

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

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

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

**INVOCATION**

Commissioner Orenstein

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

Commissioner Orenstein

**MINUTES**

The minutes were presented for the work session of November 8, 2021 and the regular session of November 9, 2021. Vice Chairman Evans made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**APPOINTMENT**

**Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center and Tourism Authority**, County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated the seat held by Mr. Rick Williams will expire December 31, 2021, adding Mr. Williams would like to be considered for reappointment. Additionally, Mrs. Dukes stated Mr. Nicholas "Big Nick" Harden was also interested in being appointed. Commissioner Marshall nominated Mr. Nicholas Harden. Vice Chairman Evans voted for Mr. Harden. Commissioner Griner nominated Mr. Rick Williams. Commissioners Orenstein and Wisenbaker voted for Mr. Williams. Mr. Williams was reappointed by majority vote.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

**REZ-2021-25 Ethridge, Parker Road, 5.6 acres, E-A, R-1 & CON to R-A, Well & Septic**, Planning and Zoning Director, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated the request represents a change in zoning for 5.6 acres from E-A (Estate Agricultural), R-1 (Low-Density Residential) and CON (Conservation) zoning to R-A (Residential Agricultural) zoning. Mr. Dillard stated the applicant would like to be able to subdivide and create a ULDC conforming parcel upon the recording of the parcel division. Mr. Dillard additionally stated that staff recommends any development should be mindful of

the previous flood zone boundaries. Mr. Dillard further stated that both the TRC and Planning Commission recommended approval. Commissioner Orenstein asked if the county still requires a flood certification survey to be completed by a surveyor if wetlands touch the property, Mr. Dillard answered yes. No one spoke for or against the request. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the rezoning request, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**REZ-2021-26 Ridgecrest at Rocky Ford Road, ~37 acres, M-2 to R-10, County Utilities,** Planning and Zoning Director, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on approximately 37 acres from Heavy Manufacturing (M-2) zoning to Suburban Density Residential (R-10) zoning. Mr. Dillard stated the applicant would like the zoning change for the development of a 114 lot residential subdivision. Additionally, Mr. Dillard stated in 2020, this property was rezoned from EA to M-2. Lastly, Mr. Dillard stated the TRC had no technical objections to the proposed layout beyond the buffering standards and while staff finds this request inconsistent with the Comprehensive Plan and existing land use pattern, the Planning Commission recommended denial. Andrea Schrujjer, 103 Roosevelt Drive, spoke against the request. Mrs. Schrujjer, the Executive Director of the Valdosta-Lowndes County Development Authority, stated the lack of product that is currently zoned manufacturing within the county, with some success over the last few years and manufacturing zoned property is important to their office. Carol Singletary, 4871 Gary Lane, spoke against this request with concerns regarding the future industrial growth in the area. James Warren, 18401 Valdosta Highway, spoke in favor of the request as the developer for this project. Commissioner Griner asked how long the property had been for sale, Mr. Warren answered between four - five years. Commissioner Griner asked Chairman Slaughter if the Valdosta-Lowndes Development Authority office would have an interest in purchasing for development. Chairman Slaughter stated he was uncertain of that answer. Chairman Slaughter stated this property is currently zoned M-2 and that classification is difficult to acquire. Additionally, Chairman Slaughter mentioned that bringing residential homes closer to heavy industrial development would make noise a potential issue. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to deny the rezoning request, Commissioner Marshall second. Vice Chairman Evans, Commissioners Wisenbaker and Marshall voted in opposition of the request, Commissioner Griner opposed. Commissioner Orenstein recused himself from voting on this request. Motion carried.

**REZ-2021-27 Charles Flythe, Val Tech Road, ~16 acres, C-H to R-1, County Water & Septic,** Planning and Zoning Director, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on approximately 16.2 acres from C-H (Highway Commercial) zoning to R-1 (Low-Density Residential) zoning, in order for an additional single family home to be constructed. Mr. Dillard stated the property was zoned A-U, F-H and C-H, and then changed to R-1, CON and C-H upon adoption of the ULDC. Mr. Dillard stated the TRC and Planning Commission recommended approval. Commissioner Orenstein stated in reviewing the survey, there seems to be no way to make 16 one acre lots considering the wetland areas, Mr. Dillard responded correct. No one spoke for or against the request. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the rezoning request as presented, Commissioner Griner second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**REZ-2021-28 Windy Hill S/D, 7532 Miller Bridge Road, ~34 acres, E-A to R-1, Community Well & Septic (WITHDRAWN)**, Chairman Slaughter introduced the item and stated the request has been withdrawn.

**REZ-2021-29 LR83 LLC, 5716 Race Track Road, ~3.6 acres, R-A to R-1, Well & Septic**, Planning and Zoning Director, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on the subject property from Residential Agricultural (R-A) to Low-Density Residential (R-1) in order to produce two (2) ULDC conforming lots. Further, Mr. Dillard stated the TRC and Planning Commission recommended approval. No one spoke for or against this request. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the request, Vice Chairman Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**REZ-2021-30 Interstate Land Management, LLC, Briarwood Rd., ~66 acres, R-1 to R-A, Well & Septic**, Planning and Zoning Director, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request is an attempt by the applicant to rezone their property from R-1 (Low-Density Residential) to R-A (Residential Agricultural). Mr. Dillard stated this request stems from the applicant's desire to allow for agricultural uses on the lots. Mr. Dillard stated if approved, the multiple parcels will be combined. Mr. Dillard stated the subject properties are generally open fields in cultivation or heavily wooded and serve as a buffer between the surrounding properties. Mr. Dillard stated the TRC and Planning Commission recommended approval. No one spoke against the request. Bobby Brogdon, 1929 Seminole Drive, spoke in favor of the request as the applicant. Mr. Brogdon stated the 66 acres would be used for agricultural use. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the request, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

## **FOR CONSIDERATION**

**Proposed Purchase of Real Estate on Stewart Circle**, Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated staff seeks the Board's approval for the purchase of 1.2 acres on Stewart Circle from Stewart Properties, LLC. The proposed purchase price is \$95,000.00 based on an appraisal from Mr. Bajalia. Mr. McLeod stated this property will be used to construct a new fire station. Further, Mr. McLeod stated staff is awaiting completion of the Phase 1 Environmental Site Assessment; if approved, closing will not proceed until staff reviews the pending assessment to verify there are no adverse issues. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the proposed purchase of real estate on Stewart Circle, Vice Chairman Evans and Commissioner Griner second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Crowder Gulf Disaster Debris Removal Contract Renewal with Updated Pricing**, EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated Crowder Gulf Disaster Debris Removal submitted a contract renewal with an updated fee schedule which reflects the increase on each item and/or services included with their original proposal. Vice Chairman Evans made a motion to approve the contract renewal request as presented, Commissioner Griner second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Resolution to Adopt Updated Lowndes County Hazard Mitigation Plan**, EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated the plan is required to be updated every five years in order for local governments to remain eligible for grant funds. Mr. Tye introduced Elizabeth Backe, the Planning Director with the Southern Georgia Regional Commission, if any additional information was needed. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the plan as presented, Vice Chairman Evans and Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Proposed Utilities Cost Adjustments**, Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated there has been no price increase in several years and due to recent cost increases, with meters, pumps and related components, staff recommends the proposed price increases be approved and become effective January 1, 2022. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the utilities price increase, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Application**, Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated that as a result of the Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) program, Lowndes County has been allocated \$1,211,881.49 for FY2022. Additionally, Mr. McLeod stated Lowndes County would be responsible for a minimum 10% match in local funding. Commissioner Marshall asked for a time frame regarding Skipper Bridge Road, Mr. McLeod responded hopefully six months. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the grant as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Resolution Authorizing Judicial In Rem Tax Foreclosures**, County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the resolution stating this request is before the Commission at the request of the Tax Commissioner and this is a resolution that will renew his authority to be able to move forward with foreclosures on delinquent taxes. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the resolution as presented, Vice Chairman Evans and Commissioner Griner second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Section 125 Plan Document Renewal for 2022**, Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the item. Mr. Beals stated the plan provides for qualifying employee deductions to be withheld pretax. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the renewal as presented, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**2022 ACCG Workers' Compensation Insurance Renewal**, Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the renewal in the amount of \$201,681.00 to include discounts and safety credits that reduce the annual premium to \$183,428.00. Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the renewal as presented, Vice Chairman Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**2022 Holiday Schedule**, Human Resources Director, Kevin Beals, presented the holiday schedule. Mr. Beals stated the holidays have been prepared in accordance with Lowndes County's Personnel Policy. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the schedule, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**2022 Commission Meeting Calendar**, County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the calendar. Mrs. Dukes stated staff took into consideration the annual holidays and ACCG Annual Training Conference when preparing the calendar. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the calendar as presented, Vice Chairman Evans and Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Supporting Reform to Georgia's Annexation Dispute Resolution Law**, County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the resolution that the Association of County Commissioners of Georgia (ACCG) has sent to all counties in Georgia, expecting this to be discussion surrounding legislation in the upcoming session related to annexation dispute resolution and are asking that counties affirm their position through resolution. Commissioner Griner made a motion to adopt the resolution, Commissioner Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Extension of Agreement for ULDC Updates**, Planning and Zoning Director, J.D. Dillard, stated this request is to extend the current contract between Lowndes County and the consulting firm Goodwin Mills Cawood for updates to the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) and additional technical assistance throughout the course of the extension. Mr. Dillard stated the contract is proposed to have the same rates, terms and conditions as in the original agreement. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the extension of agreement for ULDC updates with Goodwin Mills Cawood, Commissioner Wisenbaker 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 District Attorney, Brad Shealy, attended the work session and spoke regarding this item. Vice Chairman Evans made a motion to approve the request as presented, Commissioner Griner second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Approval of Solicitor General's VOCA Continuation Grant Award for 2021-2022**, Chairman Slaughter stated Ms. Karen Hayes presented this grant request during the work session. There being no additional questions, Commissioner Griner made a motion to approve the request as presented, Commissioner Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Approval of Solicitor General's VAWA Continuation Grant for 2022**, Chairman Slaughter presented the item stating the Commission heard from Ms. Hayes with the Solicitor's Office during the work session. No further discussion took place. Vice Chairman Evans made a motion to approve the grant as presented to include the \$21,611.00, cash match as required, Commissioner Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Opioid Litigation**, County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated as a follow up to the last update the Commission received in November from Mrs. Haynes Studstill, there are two forms that need to be approved for the County to continue to move forward. Mrs. Dukes stated Mrs. Haynes Studstill was in attendance if further clarification was needed. Commissioner Marshall asked if the cities would be receiving any award monies, Mrs. Dukes responded each government entered into the action on their own, so those allocations would be made per government. Commissioner Orenstein made a motion to approve the request as presented, Vice Chairman Evans second. All voted in for, no one opposed. Motion carried.

**Land Bank Authority Coordinator**, County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated staff has researched this on behalf of Commissioner Evans and is requesting authority to spend up to \$30,000.00 to partner with the City of Valdosta to pursue a part time person to assist the Land Bank Authority. Commissioner Marshall asked if the City of Valdosta does not participate will this position still be an option, Chairman Slaughter answered no. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the request, Commissioner Griner second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

## **BID**

**Bid for Qty-4 Custom Cab Pumpers for the Fire Department**, Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item with Sutphen Corporation submitting the low bid, in the amount of \$2,192,388.00. Mrs. Black stated two 2022 custom cab pumpers will be paid upon order and two 2022 custom cab pumpers will be paid upon delivery in the next fiscal year. Commissioner Griner made a motion to purchase the four new 2022 custom cab pumpers from Sutphen Corporation, in the total amount of \$2,192,388.00, Commissioner Orenstein second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

## **REPORTS - County Manager**

County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated staff would like to thank Commissioner Marshall for his leadership with the ACCG Workers Compensation Board. Mrs. Dukes recognized the Valdosta State University Blazers for moving on to the Championship game and the local businesses and community will be downtown at 4:00 p.m. on Wednesday, December 15th to send the team off. Additionally, Mrs. Dukes stated the Employee Christmas luncheon will be held Thursday, December 16th. Mrs. Dukes recognized Public Works Director, Robin Cumbus and her staff for the tree lighting and Christmas decorations on the historic courthouse square.

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

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chairman Slaughter thanked everyone for a good year and wished the commissioners and staff a Merry Christmas. The Valdosta-Lowndes County Conference Center Executive Director, Mr. David DiSalvo, was in attendance and recognized by Chairman Slaughter. Vice Chairman Evans made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Orenstein second. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the regular session meeting at 6:24 p.m.