

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS  
MINUTES  
REGULAR SESSION  
Tuesday, September 12, 2023

**COMMISSIONERS PRESENT**

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

Commissioner Orenstein was not present.

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order a 5:30 p.m. and recognized Leadership Lowndes and Youth Leadership Lowndes class members.

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, recognized the following volunteer groups supporting Lowndes County and the community, with some being in attendance at the meeting. Georgia VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster), with a special thanks to Lanita Lloyd, Adventist Disaster Services – Donation Center, American Red Cross, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Convoy of Hope, CORE (Community Organized Relief Effort), Crisis Cleanup, Cutters Edge Enterprises, Friends of Disabled Adults and Children, GA Baptist Disaster Relief, God's Pit Crew, Greater Valdosta United Way, Hearts with Hands, Inspiritus – Volunteer Reception Center, ITDRC (Information Technology Disaster Resource Center), Operation BBQ Relief, Rebuilding Hope, Samaritan's Purse, Second Harvest Food Bank, Sirens Project, South GA UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief), Team Rubicon, The Salvation Army, World Central Kitchen. Additionally, Mr. Tye mentioned the churches providing shelter for citizens and volunteers: Park Avenue Church, Bethany Baptist Church, Camp Tygart, Francis Lake Baptist Church, GA Bible Camp, Morningside Baptist Church, Northside Baptist Church, Redland Baptist Church, Camp Rock and Valdosta Nazarene Church. Chairman Slaughter stated approximately 980 homes were destroyed or significantly damaged during Hurricane Idalia and our community owes a debt of gratitude to each of you. Thank you for your efforts to help our community.

**INVOCATION**

Commissioner Griner

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG**

Commissioner Griner

**MINUTES**

The minutes were presented for the work session of August 21, 2023 and the regular session of August 22, 2023. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

## **APPOINTMENT**

### **Lowndes County Board of Health**

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated there is a vacant seat due to Dr. Mark Eanes moving into the District Health Director position, previously held by Dr. William Grow. Dr. Anthony Johnson has expressed a desire to serve. Chairman Slaughter nominated Dr. Anthony Johnson for the vacant seat. There being no other nominations, Dr. Anthony Johnson was appointed by acclamation.

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

### **REZ-2023-04 Chase, 6119 Quarterman Rd, ~18 acres, E-A to R-A, Well & Septic**

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on approximately 18 acres at 6119 Quarterman Road from E-A (Estate Agricultural) to R-A (Residential Agricultural) zoning, in order for the property to be subdivided. Mr. Dillard stated the property is in the rural service area and an agricultural/forestry character area with possible pocket wetlands and streams running through this area. When staff did the analysis, there are 131 properties that have access to Quarterman Road, with an average lot size of 12.10 acres. Mr. Dillard stated there is a report from the opposition challenging the number of parcels. Additionally, Mr. Dillard stated there is a large discrepancy in acreage between all of these properties, some being under an acre, some being one acre or more and some larger parcels over 150 acres. Mr. Dillard stated a petition was signed in opposition and the addresses of those who have signed. Mr. Dillard stated the request is from E-A to R-A zoning and the Planning Commission recommended denial. Gretchen Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, spoke against this request. Mrs. Quarterman stated this area is forestry, conservation and agriculture and the zoning of R-A is not appropriate. Carolyn Selby, 6361 Quarterman Road, spoke against this request. Ms. Selby stated she moved from Atlanta and she enjoys the hay fields, planted fields, forestry and wetlands. Ms. Selby stated she does not agree with a small subdivision with additional septic tanks and wells. Keri Stoeffler, 5869 Quarterman Road, spoke against the request. Mrs. Stoeffler stated she has five acres and the woodlands all around their property and is asking for denial. Tom Larson, 6245 Quarterman Road, spoke against this request. Mr. Larson moved from Atlanta to live in a rural setting with less traffic and fewer disturbances and is asking the commission to deny the request. John Quarterman, 6565 Quarterman Road, spoke against this request. Mr. Quarterman stated there are wetlands on the property and a creek across the road and with more building being done, there will be more runoff and pollution in the creek. Mr. Quarterman asked the Commission to do the same as was done for the Miller Bridge Road and the rezoning on Skipper Bridge and is asking for denial. No one spoke in favor of this request. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to deny the request following the recommendations of the Planning Commission, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor. No one opposed. Motion carried.

### **REZ-2023-10 Copeland, 3728 Mt. Zion Church Rd., ~4ac, E-A to R-21**

County Planner, J.D. Dillard, presented the item. Mr. Dillard stated this request represents a change in zoning on approximately 3.5 acres at 3728 Mt. Zion Church Road from E-A (Estate Agricultural) zoning to R21 (Medium Density Residential) zoning, in order for the property to be developed as a neighborhood. Mr. Dillard stated it was rezoned to R-21 zoning in 2006, but the previous owners asked that it be returned to E-A zoning and has since remained. The current property owner, Mr. Roy Copeland, has requested that the E-A

portion be returned to R-21 zoning. Mr. Dillard stated it is within the suburban character area and there are no wetlands on the property. Mr. Dillard stated the Planning Commission recommended approval and the TRC has no objectionable comments. No one spoke against this request. Roy W. Copeland, 6 Foxhollow Circle, spoke in favor of the request. Mr. Copeland stated this property is important to him since his family has owned this property since 1873. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the rezoning request as presented, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

## **FOR CONSIDERATION**

### **Bevel Creek Lift Station Pump**

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated this is the primary lift station on our trunk line going to the Land Application System (LAS). Mr. Stalvey stated this is a triplex station with 160 HP pumps and one of the pumps has quit running. After an evaluation was completed, it was determined that the county needs to purchase a new pump with Xylem for \$68,889.40 for the Bevel Creek lift station. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the request as presented, Vice Chairman Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

### **Hamilton Green Acceptance of Water & Sewer Infrastructure**

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated the Hamilton Green Subdivision is located on Bemiss Road and the Utilities staff has made the final inspections of the project. Mr. Stalvey stated staff recommends acceptance of the water and sewer infrastructure for Hamilton Green Subdivision excluding the privately owned lift station. Commissioner Griner asked why is the lift station staying private? Mr. Stalvey stated they chose to use a lift station that was more economical and did not meet county specifications. Commissioner Griner asked when this lift station fails and they walk away, what happens next? Commissioner Griner asked if we would have to repair the lift station? Mr. Stalvey stated the lift station should hold up with this being the option they chose. Chairman Slaughter stated at that point, if they walked away, the county would have to take over. Commissioner Griner asked if we should have made them meet county requirements to accept the lift station? Mr. Stalvey stated they do accept responsibility for the lift station. Commissioner Griner made a motion to deny the request as presented, Commissioner Marshall second. Commissioner Evans and Vice Chairman Wisenbaker opposed. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the request as presented, Commissioner Evans second. Commissioners Griner and Marshall opposed. Chairman Slaughter voted to break the tie with his vote being in favor of the request; with a 3-2 vote, the request was approved.

### **Meter Backflow Device Purchase**

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated as part of Lowndes County's mass meter change-out, several backflow devices will be replaced. A backflow device is installed with every new meter installation. Mr. Stalvey stated staff recommends purchasing a quantity of 3,000 backflow devices from Consolidated Pipe in the amount of \$105,000.00. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the request as presented, Vice Chairman Wisenbaker second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

### **Annual Contract Renewal with VSU for Mosquito Identification and Testing**

Public Works Director, Robin Cumbus, presented an agreement in the amount of \$55,194.30. Mrs. Cumbus stated the agreement represents the annual renewal of the work Dr. Mark Blackmore and his staff, as well as students, perform with regards to the trapping, identifying and testing of mosquitoes. Commissioner Marshall asked if the results are posted? Mrs. Cumbus answered no.

Commissioner Marshall asked if a citizen wanted to review the results, would they complete an open records request? Mrs. Dukes responded they would need to contact the Lowndes County Health Department. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the agreement as presented, Commission Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

## **BID**

### **LAS Expansion Clearing & Grubbing**

Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, presented the item. Mr. Stalvey stated due to the growth and increased flow, Lowndes County is working with the Georgia Environmental Protection Division (EPD) and Carter and Sloope Engineering to expand the Land Application Site (LAS). Phase one of this project includes the clearing and grubbing of approximately 88 acres. There were five bids received with K-Dug Corporation submitting the low bid in the amount of \$287,736.39. Commissioner Griner stated Commissioner Orenstein asked a question at the work session yesterday about going from two million to three million gallons a day, how long will it take to get to three million gallons a day? Mr. Stalvey answered this is phase one, with the current rate, possibly three to five years. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked will that number max out this LAS, Mr. Stalvey answered this will not take the entire 1,000 acres. Mrs. Dukes stated a plan and presentation for the spring retreat regarding a waste water treatment plant, gives an option for serving future industry, with currently outgrowing the concept of a LAS. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked if the future plant would discharge into a stream or river? Mrs. Dukes answered yes. Commissioner Evans made a motion to approve the request as presented, Commissioner Marshall second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

### **REPORTS - County Manager**

County Manager, Paige Dukes, stated this past Saturday, after a long week, employees participated in the 9/11 Memorial 5K sponsored by the Valdosta Fire Department with the largest group of public safety attending, as well as having the largest group of walkers/runners participating in the event. Chairman Slaughter and Mrs. Dukes met with the Georgia Department of Transportation Commissioner, Russell McMurry, today and received an update on the Old Quitman Road Bridge with a longest lead time of 2025, with the project being delayed by the railroad. Also, the maintenance on Bemiss Road was discussed, with the district engineer currently working with our engineering department to take a look at the current maintenance contract with the Georgia Department of Transportation to see what could be done to have Bemiss Road look cleaner and to get the shoulder maintenance returned to the state. There will be TIA 2 presentations held in Nashville, Georgia tomorrow with the Chairman and staff attending. Wild Adventures will hold a press conference on Thursday morning. There is a Partnership for Health Gala with a table purchased for dinner on Thursday night. On Friday, Lowndes County will host Leadership Lowndes for their annual board retreat. On Saturday morning, Lowndes County will have staff and the Fire Department participating in the South Georgia Buddy Walk, which is an awareness initiative for Down Syndrome, being held at Unity Park. On behalf of staff, County Manager, Paige Dukes, recognized Commissioner Evans having a birthday last week, Chairman Slaughter's birthday is tomorrow and Commissioner Griner's birthday is Sunday. Mrs. Dukes updated the Commission stating all of the departments helped the community during Hurricane Idalia as well as helping the EMA Department with answering the telephone calls coming in through the Emergency Operations Center (EOC). Mrs. Dukes expressed her gratitude to staff for their exceptional work and also to the Commission, for their leadership and support during this time. Mrs. Dukes asked EMA Director, Ashley Tye, to give the Commission a brief update. Mr. Tye stated currently from the public assistance process of working with county staff, cities, both school districts, parks and recreation, Wiregrass Georgia Technical College and Valdosta State University, to start moving through the public assistance process, the first step is to apply to the

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). Mr. Tye stated the public assistance process will be a lengthy process extending into next year. Mr. Tye stated there was a declaration for individual assistance, additionally stating that FEMA does not have a physical location in Lowndes County. There is an 800 telephone number which can be used or you can register online. Mr. Tye mentioned there are approximately 1,000 individuals with major or destroyed damage to their homes and this will take time to process these claims. Mr. Tye stated if a citizen qualifies for FEMA assistance or does not qualify, they can still apply with the Small Business Administration (SBA). The SBA did set up a location at the Valdosta-Lowndes County Chamber of Commerce today at noon, with the hours being 9:00 am - 6:00 pm, Monday-Saturday. Another source of assistance is the American Red Cross. That website will be set up beginning tomorrow and can be viewed at [www.redcross.org/idalia](http://www.redcross.org/idalia). Mr. Tye stated Public Works Director, Robin Cumbus and Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, will be coordinating the debris clean up with an estimate of two months or longer before debris is picked up. Vice Chairman Wisenbaker asked if the Small Business Administration (SBA) opened at the Chamber of Commerce? Mr. Tye answered yes, they opened at noon today. Commissioner Marshall thanked Mr. Tye for everything he's done as well as the County Manager, to receive the information and communication was very much appreciated. Commissioner Marshall thanked all of the county staff and all of the volunteer groups. Chairman Slaughter thanked staff for their efforts to include EMA Director, Ashley Tye, for addressing planning and response. The Chairman stated we were prepared and able to recover with this being a testament to planning. Commissioner Evans thanked Mr. Tye for communicating with her. Chairman Slaughter stated this team worked as good as it did, due to the management. Chairman Slaughter stated Mrs. Dukes kept the Commission updated, she was at the EOC and her communication with her staff was encouraging and kept them motivated to get the job done. Mrs. Dukes stated we have a tremendous Lowndes County Team.

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

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Vice Chairman Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, Commissioner Griner second. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the regular session meeting at 6:29 p.m.