

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
WORK SESSION
Monday, January 8, 2024

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

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

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

Chairman Slaughter stated the Vice Chairman for the upcoming rotation would be Commissioner Demarcus Marshall. Chairman Slaughter thanked Commissioner Wisenbaker for his time serving as the Vice Chairman. Chairman Slaughter and the Commission wished County Manager, Paige Dukes a Happy Birthday.

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of December 11, 2023 and regular session of December 12, 2023. No revisions to the minutes were requested.

APPOINTMENTS

Appointments to Board of Tax Assessors

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated in December of last year, the Commission expanded the Board of Tax Assessors from three to five members. Mrs. Dukes stated the Commission needs to appoint three members. One person to succeed James Puckett to complete a three-year term ending December 31, 2026, one person to fill a new position to complete an initial three-year term ending December 31, 2026 and one person to fill a new position to complete an initial four-year term ending December 31, 2027. Mrs. Dukes listed the names of those who have expressed an interest to be appointed to the Board of Tax Assessors: Mr. David Westberry, Mr. Samuel Clemons, Mr. Mike Tanner, Ms. Lucinda Guess, Mrs. Mary Ellen Weeks, Ms. Elizabeth Highsmith, Ms. Sandra Jones, Mr. Richard Holcombe, Ms. Mary Green, Mr. Gene Felts, Mrs. Amy Davis (formerly Amy Carter) and Mr. Thomas Reed. Commissioner Marshall asked to see the information sheets. Chairman Slaughter stated the County Clerk, Belinda Lovern, has that information in her office. Additionally, Chairman Slaughter mentioned that the citizens who have applied for these positions could be contacted to attend the regular session meeting tonight, in case anyone has questions. Vice Chairman Marshall agreed with that suggestion.

FOR CONSIDERATION

2024 Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance and Improvement Grant (LMIG) Application

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated as a part of the Georgia Department of Transportation Local Maintenance and Improvement (LMIG) Grant Program, Lowndes County has been allocated \$1,337,694.10 for fiscal year 2024. Additionally, Mr. McLeod stated Lowndes County would be responsible for a minimum ten percent match in local funding. Vice Chairman Marshall asked when will work begin on River Road? Mr. McLeod answered there is not a contract yet for River Road; this is the application and if the application is approved, the money will be received and the project will be put out to bid for this summer. Chairman Slaughter stated the ten percent match is due to the eighteen counties passing the Transportation Investment Act (TIA) referendum.

Arglass Road Extension - Engineer Selection

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Valdosta Lowndes County Development Authority (VLDA) will be requesting an EIP Grant to extend Arglass Road. The grant request will come at a later date as a request to Lowndes County to be the applicant. Mr. McLeod stated Lowndes County has to procure an engineer and a RFP for engineers was solicited with three bids being received. Lovell Engineering Associates, PC receiving a score of 67, Carter and Sloope Consulting Engineers received a score of 64 and AE Engineering, Inc. received a score of 58. Based on the scoring criteria, staff recommends Lovell Engineering Associates, PC to be approved as the professional engineer.

Hazard Mitigation Planning Grant Application

EMA Director, Ashley Tye, presented the item. Mr. Tye stated in February 2022 the most recent Hazard Mitigation Plan was approved and is set to expire January 2027. Mr. Tye stated after Hurricane Idalia, GEMA has access to hazard mitigation grant funding. Due to the grant process taking a year, it takes a year plus to complete the update. This is a grant application to hire a consultant to facilitate the plan update process with the total cost of the project being \$36,268.00 with a cost share of 12.5%, which is normally 25%, but since this is disaster related funding, there is a decrease. Mr. Tye stated since the time staff spends in attending meetings and participating in plan development as an allowable expense, Lowndes County's cost share can be met by documenting this time and submitting it as part of the reimbursement process of the grant. This will allow Lowndes County to meet the terms of the grant guidance without a cash match being required.

2024 Public Defender Contracts

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the contract. Mrs. Dukes stated this is an ongoing renewal of the current contract required by the state for the public defender services and administration of operating expenses contract for the Valdosta office; adding there are no changes to the contract. Vice Chairman Marshall asked regarding compensation, if this office had increases in their salaries? Mrs. Dukes answered yes, this is determined by the General Assembly with a local supplement increased last year, to their office.

Approval of Solicitor General's FY24 VOCA Grant Award

Solicitor General's Office, Victim Services Director, Karen Hayes, presented the item. Ms. Hayes stated the Solicitor's Office has been a recipient of Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds since 2014 and this grant funds two full-time victim advocates. The Federal Crime Victims Fund that supports this

VOCA grant has declined significantly and the deposits that are currently going into this fund are not expected to sustain awards to states at their current level. The Prosecuting Attorney's Council (PAC) has informed the Solicitor-General's Office that the FY24 VOCA Award will be in the amount of \$75,020.00, which is a decrease from last year's award in the amount of \$98,691.00. Further, Ms. Hayes stated due to cuts in funding and in order for the victim advocates to receive a raise, Lowndes County would be required to provide a cash match of \$33,232.00. This grant period runs from October 1, 2023 - September 30, 2024. Vice Chairman Marshall asked why is there a decrease in funding? Ms. Hayes answered the fines paid on federal cases. Ms. Hayes stated there has been one other instance of this grant being decreased in funding in past years and then in the following year, there was additional money received. Commissioner Orenstein asked if further cuts next year would occur? Ms. Hayes answered she does not expect it, but doesn't guarantee it. Mrs. Dukes mentioned that she met with the Solicitor towards the end of October and Mr. Cabral didn't know what the exact impact was going to be, but there was going to be a decrease and is following this closely. Chairman Slaughter stated we will continue to observe this grant.

BID

Francis Lake Warehouse Modifications Bids

Director of Engineering Services, Chad McLeod, presented the item. Mr. McLeod stated the Francis Lake Warehouse modifications includes enclosing the open bay of the existing metal building and improvements including a new monorail beam, insulation, lighting, and ventilation. Mr. McLeod stated that additional site work includes grading, asphalt paving, a new pump wash basin, a new sanitary drain and a new pump storage shelter structure. Mr. McLeod stated four bids were received with Chuck Smith and Son Construction being the low bidder in the amount of \$395,980.00. Two additive alternates include a new lift station in the amount of \$1,000.00 and spray foam in the amount of \$1,000.00. Chairman Slaughter verified the total amount is \$397,980.00, Mr. McLeod answered that is correct. Vice Chairman Marshall asked is this the same type of foam? Mr. McLeod responded yes. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked what does this warehouse support? Mr. McLeod stated utilities, E/One pump storage and utilities equipment. Utilities Director, Steve Stalvey, added supplies for the utilities department are stored at this location as well as some offices are located in this building. Commissioner Orenstein asked how many E/One pumps are stored at this location? Mr. Stalvey responded seventy (70) pumps and when that number reaches twenty-five (25) an order is placed to restock. Commissioner Wisenbaker asked for the location of the entrance of this facility? Mr. Stalvey answered off of Frontage Road near the camping facilities.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, requested an executive session for the purpose of privileged attorney-client communications regarding the purchase and disposal of real estate. At 8:54 a.m. Commissioner Orenstein and Vice Chairman Marshall made a motion to enter into executive session for the purpose of privileged attorney-client communications regarding the proposed purchase and disposal of real estate, Commissioner Evans second. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

At 9:12 a.m. Chairman Slaughter reconvened the work session with no additional information being discussed. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the work session meeting, Vice Chairman Marshall and Commissioner Griner second. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting.