

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, January 28, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Chairman Bill Slaughter
Vice Chairperson Joyce Evans
Commissioner Scott Orenstein
Commissioner Mark Wisenbaker
Commissioner Demarcus Marshall
Commissioner Michael Smith

Chairman Slaughter called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. and recognized the presence of Leadership Lowndes class members.

Commissioner Orenstein arrived late at 5:44 p.m.

INVOCATION

Commissioner Wisenbaker

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Wisenbaker

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of January 13, 2025 and the regular session of January 14, 2025. No revisions to the minutes were requested. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Chairman Slaughter stated the Vice Chairperson for the upcoming rotation would be Commissioner Joyce Evans. Chairman Slaughter thanked Commissioner Marshall for his time serving as the Vice Chairman.

PRESENTATION

GFOA Distinguished Budget Presentation Award

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) of the United States and Canada is pleased to announce that Lowndes County has received the GFOA's Distinguished Budget Presentation Award for its Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. Ms. Black stated this is the 19th consecutive year that Lowndes County has won this award. The Chairman and Commission thanked Ms. Black and her staff for their continued success.

APPOINTMENTS

Appointment to the Board of Tax Assessors

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated the initial term of Mrs. Gretchen Quarterman ended December 31, 2024. Mrs. Dukes stated per Georgia statute provides a vacancy on a board of tax assessors shall be immediately filled by appointment of the county governing authority. Per Georgia statute and Resolution of the Board of Commissioners, the appointment or reappointment of a successor to Mrs. Quarterman shall be for the remainder of a three-year term ending December 31, 2027. Mrs. Gretchen Quarterman has expressed an interest in being reappointed and Mr. James Michael Tanner has also expressed an interest in being appointed. Mrs. Dukes stated Mr. Tanner could not be in attendance tonight, but there is an email from him with information for your review. Vice Chairperson Evans nominated Mr. Mike Tanner. Commissioner Marshall nominated Mrs. Gretchen Quarterman for reappointment. Vice Chairperson Evans and Commissioner Wisenbaker voted in favor of appointing Mr. Tanner. Commissioners Marshall and Smith voted in favor of reappointing Mrs. Quarterman. Chairman Slaughter voted to break the tie, with his vote being in favor of appointing Mr. Tanner. Mr. Tanner was appointed with his term ending December 31, 2027. Motion carried.

Valdosta-Lowndes County Land Bank Authority

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the appointment. Mrs. Dukes stated the term of Commissioner Joyce Evans will expire January 31, 2025. Commissioner Evans has expressed an interest in continuing to serve. Commissioner Wisenbaker nominated Chairperson Joyce Evans for reappointment. There being no other nominations, Vice Chairperson Evans was reappointed by acclamation.

PUBLIC HEARING

Beer, Wine & Liquor License - Lisa Ash of Lisa's Billiards and Sports Bar, 5129 Mill Store Road, Lake Park, Georgia

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated this request is for Lisa Ash of Lisa's Billiards and Sports Bar, formerly Lake Park Billiards Academy, and this is due to a change in ownership. Ms. Black stated this request is for the sale of beer, wine and liquor for consumption on premises. No one spoke for or against the request. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the license, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Special Assessment Rate for 2025

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated the Commission is required to set a special assessment rate every year to address paving and utility assessments that are not paid within ninety days. Ms. Black further stated the rate is based on two percent above prime, with the current prime rate being 7.5%; therefore, the rate for special assessments should be set at 9.5%. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the special assessment at 9.5% for 2025, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Approval of Elected Officials Using County Issued Purchase Cards and Credit Cards

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated that in accordance with House Bill 192, the County is required to approve requests from county elected officials in order to be

issued a county purchasing card. Ms. Black further stated that the current requests are from newly elected Tax Commissioner, Clay Guess and newly elected Probate Judge, H. Burke Sherwood. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the request as presented, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Approval of the Solicitor General's FY2025 VAWA Continuance Grant Application

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated the Solicitor General's Office has been a recipient of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) Grant since 2018. The Solicitor General's Office is submitting a request for federal funding in the amount of \$79,112.00. In addition to the federal funds, Lowndes County would be responsible for \$26,371.00 in matching funds. Vice Chairperson Evans made a motion to approve the grant application as presented, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Authorization to Publish Intent to Opt Out Regarding HB 581 *Agenda Item Added*

Chairman Slaughter stated this item, Authorization to Publish Intent to Opt Out House Bill 581, was discussed at the work session. There being no objections, Chairman Slaughter asked that the item be added as agenda item 8d. Chairman Slaughter stated he has the ad and a press release that will go out to help educate the citizens regarding this matter. Chairman Slaughter asked for a motion to approve Authorization to Publish Intent to Opt Out regarding House Bill 581. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the Authorization of Publish Intent to Opt Out regarding House Bill 581, second by Commissioner Wisenbaker. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

REPORTS - County Manager

County Manager, Paige Dukes, reported the following:

Mrs. Dukes echoed Chairman Slaughter's comments about Ms. Black and the Finance Department. She further stated it is tremendous for the Finance Department to continue to pull this award off, especially over the last twelve months, with all the required paperwork for processing two hurricanes, managing ARPA funds, and all the reporting required, along with day to day financial management, and two budgets. She thanked Ms. Black and her team again for all of their hard work. Commissioner Orenstein arrived at 5:44 p.m.

The Extension Service fourth quarter report is available for review.

County Clerk, Belinda Lovern and Deputy County Clerk, Sabrina Denson will be recognized as certified County Clerks on Monday at the Georgia Clerks Education Institute Conference being held in Jekyll Island. Mrs. Dukes congratulated Mrs. Lovern.

Next week kicks off Severe Weather Preparedness Week. Certainly, there are things that we can improve from a preparedness standpoint. Those things will be highlighted next week through the Public Information Officer, Meghan Barwick.

Next Wednesday, February 5, 2025, is the Lowndes County Bird Supper. If you have questions regarding arrangements, please contact Mrs. Lovern or Mrs. Barwick.

On February 8th, the Georgia Department of Natural Resources will be holding a meeting at the Lowndes County Historic Courthouse to address the recently identified Chronic Wasting Disease that has shown up in our deer population.

Mrs. Dukes mentioned she spoke with EMA Director, Ashley Tye and the funding that we were looking for from Hurricane Idalia has made it to the state level. GEMA is going through their process to allocate and process those checks.

Thank you to Public Information Officer, Meghan Barwick and Public Works Director, Robin Cumbus for the new bicentennial banners in the parking lot for the 200th birthday of Lowndes County.

Chairman Slaughter added this is the 200th year for Lowndes County, and he is looking for great things in the future for the community and for Lowndes County.

Commissioner Marshall mentioned that Commissioner Tyler Harper with the Department of Agriculture had sent notice that all poultry activities in Georgia were suspended due to Pathogenic Avian Influenza. Chairman Slaughter stated the bird flu is an issue and many chicken houses from here to Savannah were destroyed. Commissioner Orenstein apologized for being late and stated he is in agreement with the agenda item regarding House Bill 581.

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

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Vice Chairperson Evans. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 5:50 p.m.