

LOWNDES COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
MINUTES
REGULAR SESSION
Tuesday, February 25, 2025

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

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

Commissioner Scott Orenstein was not present.

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

INVOCATION

Commissioner Michael Smith

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG

Commissioner Michael Smith

MINUTES

The minutes were presented for the work session of February 10, 2025, the House Bill 581 public hearing of February 10, 2025, the regular session of February 11, 2025, the House Bill 581 public hearing of February 11, 2025, and the House Bill 581 public hearing of February 24, 2025. Vice Chairperson Evans 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 if there were no objections, two items would be added to the agenda: A Resolution to Opt Out of OCGA § 48-5-44.2 Homestead Exemption and a Proposed Local Act to Increase Homestead Exemptions. There being no objections, Chairman Slaughter asked that the items be added as 5b and 5c.

FOR CONSIDERATION

Lowndes County Accountability Court Grant Approval

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item stating the Lowndes County Accountability Court has received a federal grant in the amount of \$7,500.00, with no cash match requirement by Lowndes County. This funding will be used to implement a PEER program for the Lowndes County Accountability Court. Commissioner Smith made a motion to approve the grant in the amount of \$7,500.00, second by Vice Chairperson Evans. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Resolution to Opt Out of OCGA § 48-5-44.2 Homestead Exemption

Chairman Slaughter stated this is the Resolution to Opt Out of OCGA 48-5-44.2 Homestead Exemption and asked for a motion. Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to approve the resolution as presented, second by Commissioner Marshall. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

Proposed Local Act to Increase Homestead Exemptions

County Manager, Paige Dukes, presented the item. Mrs. Dukes stated that in light of the county's decision to opt out of House Bill 581, Lowndes County is taking a proactive approach to provide tax relief for homeowners while maintaining a strong financial foundation for our local government and citizens in our community. The proposed exemption adjustments will help balance the needs of our taxpayers, especially seniors, while ensuring continued local management and responsibility. The proposed increases are a blanket homestead exemption for the standard exemption which is a standard increase from \$6,000 to \$12,000 for all eligible homeowners. For those residents 65 years of age and over, the recommendation is to increase the current \$10,000 exemption to \$40,000. It also grants for residents 70 years of age or over a \$50,000 exemption for county purposes. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to approve the item as presented, second by Commissioner Smith. All voted in favor, no one opposed. Motion carried.

BID

Bid for One Truck for Magistrate Court

Finance Director, Stephanie Black, presented the item. Ms. Black stated Lowndes County solicited bids for one new truck for Magistrate Court. This vehicle will replace an older vehicle. Two bids were received which met specifications and the low bidder was Stivers Ford for a 2025 Ford F150 for the amount of \$39,852.00. Commissioner Marshall made a motion to award the bid to Stivers Ford in the amount of \$39,852.00, 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 thanked Chairman Slaughter, Vice Chairperson Evans and Commissioner Smith for attending the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) meeting held today at the Southern Georgia Regional Commission Office.
- Lt. Governor Burt Jones and his staff will be at the historic courthouse tomorrow to meet with his constituents.
- There will be a public announcement and photo opportunity regarding the new homestead exemption at the historic courthouse tomorrow at 3:00 p.m.
- Vice Chairperson Evans was named Woman of the Year today, by the Boys and Girls Club of Valdosta. Mrs. Dukes thanked Vice Chairperson Evans for her leadership and the continued commitment which she has towards the youth in our community.

CITIZENS WISHING TO BE HEARD

Kelley Saxon, 8 Baldwin Place, addressed the commission regarding long-term disaster recovery efforts and the ongoing needs of the community. Ms. Saxon mentioned during and after storm events, for community organizations to be included in the planning process since communication and collaboration are critical.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Wisenbaker made a motion to adjourn the meeting, second by Vice Chairperson Evans. Chairman Slaughter adjourned the meeting at 5:45 p.m.