

**May 15, 2023**

At a scheduled meeting of the Walker County Commission held in their offices in the Walker County Courthouse Annex, Jasper, Alabama, at 9:30 a.m. on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of May 2023, Chairman Miller gave the welcome and called the meeting to order.

After Chairman Miller gave the invitation for comment from citizens and other elected officials, the County Administrator called the roll and Commissioners present were Keith Davis, Jeff Burrough, Jim Borden and Steven Aderholt.

Mr. Al Blanton gave the invocation and County Attorney Richard Fikes led the pledge of allegiance.

**AWARDS AND PRESENTATION:**

A Certificate of Proclamation was presented to Representatives from Mental Health proclaiming Month of May, 2023 as Mental Health Month.

The Representatives thanked the Commission and stated that they will be having an open house this Friday.

(Photos were taken of Proclamation, Representatives and Commission)

**CONSENT AGENDA:**

Motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Davis to Approve the Agenda and to Approve the Meeting Minutes of May 1, 2023.

With no discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

**REPORTS FROM STAFF:**

County Administrator Robbie Dickerson stated, "Last week I attended the Administrator's Conference, in which there were three main topics. Of course, we covered a few more things. But the three main topics, the first main one was insurances, where the insurance market is going and what to expect in the coming months, which, of course, August is when we get some of our rates, we know what's going on and all that. It has been submitted to the ACCA. Most likely we will see significant increases in insurances." She said they also discussed State Reimbursements and Pistol Permit money, which is being addressed through the State and that there will be a mid-workshop before August put on by the ACCA on what new limits have been passed and signed and so forth. She further stated; "With new limits comes new regulations. It's not the same rules with the different amounts. It will not go into effect until August 1<sup>st</sup> and we will have the workshop before August to learn about this."

County Engineer Glenn Peek stated that Brown's Bridge is getting closer to being completed; that they're looking at possibly the first or second week of June to be completely finished. He also stated that they have begun construction on the Smith Chapel Bridge; that they are actually looking at an extension because they don't think they will be able to finish within the contract time, so he doesn't have a completion date as of yet. He stated that they also have some striping and paving jobs that should be started on this next month.

#### **OLD BUSINESS**

Motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Davis to open discussion of the Townley Miskelley Road Project.

After explanation by Commissioner Burrough, motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Davis to approve the Townley Miskelley Road Project.

With no discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Borden to open discussion of Revenue Commission Final Assessment Approval.

After explanation by County Administrator Robbie Dickerson, motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt to Approve the Revenue Commission Final Assessment.

With no discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

Motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt to open discussion for Discussion and Approval to Rescind May 1, 2023, Simple Grants USDA Grant.

After explanation by Chairman Miller that this was a grant he was thinking was for the road project but instead was for the Broadband, motion was made by Commissioner Aderholt and seconded by Commissioner Davis to rescind the May 1, 2023 Simple Grants USDA Grant.

With no further discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

Motion was made by Commissioner Borden and seconded by Commissioner Davis to open discussion of Discussion and Approval for Simple Grants SS4A Safe Roads and Streets Grant.

After Commissioner Borden inquired if this is the item they thought they were voting on last meeting and Chairman Miller apologizing that it was his fault and that this is the correct one they thought they were approving last meeting, motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Borden to Approve Simple Grants SS4A Safe Roads and Streets Grant.

With no further discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: No.

With three Ayes and one no, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

Motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to open discussion of Budget Amendments for Sheriff/Jail for wrecked autos, radios & deductibles.

After explanation by County Administrator Robbie Dickerson, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt to approve the Budget Amendments for Sheriff/Jail for wrecked autos, radios & deductibles.

With no further discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

Motion was made by Commissioner Borden and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt to open discussion to Move H. F. Scott from District Three to Solid Waste as Journeyman Mechanic effective 5/17/2023.

After explanation by Commissioner Borden, motion was made by Commissioner Borden and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt to Move H. F. Scott from District Three to Solid Waste as Journeyman Mechanic effective 5/17/2023.

With no discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

Motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt, to open for discussion to Hire Alexander Glass as Full-time Common Laborer/Maintenance Dept.

After explanation by Chairman Miller, motion was made by Commissioner Aderholt and seconded by Commissioner Davis to Approve to Hire Alexander Glass as Full-time Common Laborer/Maintenance Department.

With no discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

Motion was made by Commissioner Aderholt and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to open discussion of the JAFSC Request Help with Head Start Opioid Crisis from Opioid Funds.

After an informative presentation by Dr. Suzanne Snow, input by Commissioner Burrough and County Attorney Richard Fikes, motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt to approve the sum of \$10,000 (\$2,500 from each District) to the JAFSC Program from any Opioid Funds received.

With no further discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

After County Attorney Richard Fikes stated that the matters to be discussed involves anticipated or pending litigation and meets the criteria for executive session and asked that the Commission reconvene, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough that this meeting retire to Executive Session.

With no discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

(Commission retired to Executive Session at 10:02 a.m. & Reconvened at 10:32 a.m.)

Motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough that the Commission Meeting Reconvene.

With no discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried,

Chairman Miller called the Commission Meeting back to order.

County Attorney Richard Fikes stated, "Based on the facts presented, I would recommend the following motion for your consideration: Any time there is an ongoing investigation where I have a conflict or my firm has a conflict or for instance, Randy McNeil, any attorney representing the county has a conflict and after looking at the elements set forth in the AG Opinions for providing an attorney for employees during an ongoing investigation, which the county can do, I suggest a motion to provide an attorney for those employees who may be called to give statements to investigators during an investigative process. It's necessary, I think, obviously, that the employees

have an attorney with them to protect from further litigation. And the motion would only be to provide an attorney during the completion of the investigation phase if the employee is requested to give a statement. And nothing more, just somebody to be with them when I'm conflicted out or any other attorney representing the County is conflicted out, so that the employee can have an attorney with them when requested to give a statement. And that's what I would recommend that the County do. And that would be the form of the motion."

Motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough that the Commission approve, as previously stated by County Attorney Richard Fikes, to provide an attorney for any employee who has been requested to make a statement during any of the investigative processes when the attorneys representing Walker County have a conflict of interest.

With no further discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

#### **PUBLIC HEARINGS:**

None.

#### **DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMMISSIONERS:**

Commissioner Davis stated, "I want to add to the Agenda, I think we had a public hearing on the El Clair Farm Road last meeting and we need to make a motion to add that to the Agenda for us to discuss about vacating that portion of that road.

Motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to add to the Agenda Item Number 8 – El Clair Farm Road Resolution.

With no discussion the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye; Chairman Miller: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

After explanation by Commissioner Davis that there were no objections to vacating that portion of the road, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to approve the Resolution to Vacate El Clair Farm Road.

With no discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition, the Chairman declared the motion carried.

Commissioner Davis stated, "I do want to make mention of the mental health

awareness month and thank the ladies and the gentlemen that work for the Mental Health in our county and across the State. I deal with a family member that suffers mental illness and it is an ongoing struggle. There is not enough beds in our State of Alabama and it is an ongoing process to advocate for more beds and more facilities for treatment. It's something I've dealt with my whole entire life and it is a major problem. On day 19 they want the patient out of the facility whether they're in the state of psychosis or not. They're still needing treatment. So, we need to all advocate to our Legislatures and to our Governor for more State Funding and also to bring more private funding to this State. It's desperately needed. I know I went and talked with some other folks about maybe pushing the cause to try to get more treatment facilities. When they closed a lot of hospitals, and you ladies know, because they deal with this on a day-to-day basis across the State, they didn't replace those beds. So, I don't know what the waiting list today is, but it's long for a bed for treatment and it shouldn't be that way. There are too many individuals that are in county jails across this State that need to be in a mental health facility or getting treatment. County Jail is not a treatment place. It should never be viewed as one. So, our Legislatures across the State need to step up and provide the beds and funding that's needed quickly. I know they're working on plans. I've talked to several. I know there's small facilities being constructed and thought about being constructed. We need immediate things done today not years from now. So, again, thank y'all for what you do. It's near and dear to my heart. And I appreciate you so much."

Commissioner Burrough stated that he appreciated Anna and the other representatives for coming. He said he felt like their meeting today was very productive in continuing to help the needs of Walker County. He said they have a lot of projects going within this Commission and different groups come and that they want to do their best to try to help and provide what they need to. He stated, "But thank you for the job that you do and continue to do. And Ms. Suzanne thank you so much for what you do. If you want to get a blessing, take a visit to one of these facilities that she usually oversees and watch these three and four-year-olds get educated or get brought into learning how to cope and deal with each other, I guess you'd say. But anyways they do a remarkable job. I try to do all I can do to help their facility at Townley and appreciate you so much. We all have road projects and I had mentioned to Keith, I did have a chance to talk to Wiregrass, the guy that is taking over, Malcolm. They've got projects on I-22 in July and he said he was going to try to get everything started or done before July. That's what he told me, but I don't know if you can confirm that or not."

County Engineer Glenn Peek stated he was told next month.

Commissioner Burrough continued and stated, "Maybe in the month of June we'll have all of these projects going. I'm excited to help on the Townley project and



also the Smith Chapel Bridge, they've done a lot of cleaning and getting that bridge in right, the area is cleaned up on each side and like Keith said, they've started pouring shafts. It will be sometime this year, but that bridge will be open soon. Other than that, thank each person for coming."

Commissioner Borden, "Again, thank everyone for coming today. The other two Commissioners on the Opioid and the Mental Health, it's hard to add to what they have said, but they are correct. That is something that in our society today that is a major issue. We need more funding. Again, thank y'all for what y'all do. We have our road projects that were mentioned last meeting. We're still working for the taxpayers of District Three and with that, that's all I have."

Commissioner Aderholt thanked the Chairman and thanked everybody for being here today. He stated, "I'll echo the first three on Mental Health issues. Thank everybody that does what they do to participate in helping that cause. Obviously, the greatest thing we could do is head off as much of it as we possibly can. Obviously, you do what you do. Dr. Snow, you do what you do and that's trying to help the family stability issues that we have in the County. And, I sincerely appreciate everything that you have going on. And as Jeff says, go to the facilities, get out in the community and see some of these children, some of the things going on. It's truly heartbreaking. It's also truly encouraging at the same time that the community and every resource we can throw at it is doing some good. To me, ultimately, it's a gospel issue. We need people that are going to make a difference in our county because without our children, without raising productive children into a productive society, we won't have a future. Thank all of y'all for everything you're doing."

Chairman Miller stated, "I, too, would like to say thank you for everyone being here. I appreciate all of our county employees, elected officials, everybody from the communities, Mental Health, echoing everything every one of these gentlemen have said. We really appreciate you. I appreciate what you do. It takes special people to do that. Thank you. Ms. Snow, same thing on your side, it takes special people to work with those children. I know my patience gets really short sometimes with everything, because I have so much going on, but children they can be a blessing, but I know they're a burden to work with sometimes, but thank you for what you do. I'd like to thank our folks and ladies here, Ms. Robbie has been to the Administrator meeting and she works hard on that. I know she's had a lot of things going on, personally, and all that too, but she's been down and I know she eat seafood, so you know we're going to have to say that, too."

County Administrator Robbie Dickerson stated, "Just one time."

Chairman Miller continued, "Just one time. And Ms. Regina back here we appreciate her being here and working hard for EMA and, like I say, all of our elected officials, Sheriff and our Chief Jailer and Mr. Dunagan. You know, I appreciate every one of you that are here. And I see Mr. Terry (King) came back here, we appreciate him being here, too. And so with that thanks everyone and hopefully we'll continue to move Walker County forward. That's our goal. With that we'd entertain a motion to dismiss."

**ADJOURN:**


Motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt, that this meeting be adjourned to reconvene at the next regularly scheduled meeting or at the call of the Chairman.

With no discussion, the vote taken resulted as follows: District One: Aye; District Two: Aye; District Three: Aye; District Four: Aye.

With no opposition the Chairman declared the motion carried.

Read and Approved:

  
Chairman

  
Attest