

November 6, 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 6th day of November 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.

Senator Greg Reed gave the invocation and Representative Matt Woods led the pledge of allegiance.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS:

Ms. Jesslyn Wilson stated, "Good morning, everyone. If I have not had the pleasure of meeting you, yet, my name is Jesslyn Wilson. I'm the Director of Economic Development for the Regional Planning Commission of Greater Birmingham. I'm so excited to be here, invited by the Commission, to come speak about a project that we received funding for an economic development strategic plan for Walker County. This funding was provided by the Appalachian Regional Commission through a grant program they have to dispense upon economic diversification projects in rural communities. And so, we are really excited to be able to apply for this on behalf of our partners, the Walker County Commission, the Walker County Economic and Industrial Development Authority, as well as the Walker Area Community Foundation. And the purpose of this plan is to look at what are the economic challenges and what are the economic opportunities that the county has, to create an action plan on how to move forward. So, an aspect of this plan will be looking at Interstate 22 and the development potential that we have off the interstate, as well as, looking at outdoor recreation." She stated that the grant was for \$50,000 that they're matching through their agency as a 50 percent match of \$50,000 of in-kind contributions from a fund that they get from the State Legislature and she is so thankful for their contribution. So, she gave the representatives and senator an opportunity to speak on the project to give an update.

Representative Matt Wood stated, "Thank you, Mrs. Wilson. It's great to be here this morning. Mr. Chairman, members of the Commission, thank you for giving me a moment to join you to express my thanks and my enthusiasm for what's transpiring here today. I want to congratulate you and the people of Walker County on this grant that will fund a strategic plan for the future economic growth of Walker County. We've seen the Regional Planning Commission work in other municipalities here in the County and I know that they are going to bring a high-level thorough investigation to our strengths and weaknesses as a county. And then will in turn include input from the private and

public sector to develop a really strong road map for the goals that you ultimately as a Commission are going to set for our county. As this process unfolds, I want to encourage you to emphasize recreation, in particular, recreation that is outdoor as a part of our future economic development plan. I also implore you to think about infrastructure that allows us to fully develop the I-22 Corridor as this process continues. We must have water and sewer at our exits in order to develop them. We cannot grow without this critical piece of infrastructure. And I think that we all share common goals with the people we represent. We want the same amenities that other communities have. We want places for our families to enjoy and for our young people to be entertained. We also must plan for good paying jobs so that our workforce doesn't have to make a long commute or worse yet has to leave Walker County to find a good paying job to support their families. I appreciate your commitment as Commission to industrial recruitment and retention through Walker Development Authority. I appreciate your commitment to retail and tourism, for your support of the Chamber of Commerce. And I now hope that we can all challenge ourselves to look at new opportunities that were previously thought of as out of reach or not the right time for Walker County. And I'm willing to work with you. I appreciate my colleagues and our local delegation. I know we will work hard to fight for the resources to help you reach these economic development goals. So, my hope today is that this is a starting point, a day that we're going to look back on and say that Walker County is a better place to live because of the goals that were set and the plans that were laid, made possible by the Economic Development strategic plan funded through ARC with the help of Ms. Wilson here, through the Regional Planning Commission and resources that were allocated by the Legislature. And, I want to thank several folks including the Regional Planning Commission, ADECA Director, Kenneth Boswell and his team for shepherding that grant through the process. Of course, it has all worked well together at this point and I'm very excited about what's going to happen. I'm excited to be a part of this process. I hope you will all be engaged in it. Thank you for giving us some time to speak this morning."

Senator Reed stated, "Well done, Representative Woods. Well done. It's a privilege for me to be with you this morning. Thank you for the invitation, Mr. Chairman, Commissioners. Y'all are all my buddies. We work great together and I appreciate each of you and what you do and what you stand for and how you serve your community and all those that are a part of serving in the county. Thank you for your efforts and what you do. As the representative said, we're moving forward rapidly, Walker County, with all kinds of exciting things. Don't you agree Ms. Wilson?"

Ms. Wilson responded: "Absolutely."

Senator Reed continued; "And having these opportunities are very important for our community as we look to accomplish what our goals are. They're going to be more announcements coming. I can't share all the specifics this morning, the time is not exactly right. But one of the elements that is so important as we continue to move forward in Walker County is education. There are going to be announcements coming of tens of millions of dollars that are going to be spent in Walker County, Beville State

Community College, in regards to training and education programs that are so vitally important to our economy being able to move forward. That's going to be something that you'll hear more about as time goes along. Looking at our history, some of the things that have been ours to enjoy since I-22 went through this community, we look at a highlight of several things based on the industrial development work. Look as you're heading onto I-22, Heritage Landing, which is a huge development that the Industrial folks have been engaged in and if you look in the northern part of the county you've got other development. We've got a new opportunity in Oakman, Alabama on land that used to be strip-mined property where you've got an organization going to spend five hundred billion dollars on putting solar panels that generate electricity. In south Walker County. All kinds of new things are happening that are ours to enjoy. So, when you've got a good thing going, the thing that's important is pull it together with a plan, so that everybody is pulling in the same direction. We've got all these efforts moving in the same direction. So, I'm thrilled about this opportunity, Ms. Wilson. And what we're doing with Mr. Cosby and his team is to figure out how we aid the Commission and being able to come up with a master plan that's going to allow Walker County to be all we want her to be. Do we have challenges and problems? Of course. But working together we're going to be able to continue to move in the direction that will allow our county to be all we want her to be. So, I appreciate Representative Woods and all his comments. I appreciate Representative Wadsworth. He's not able to be with us this morning. He's engaged and involved in this as well. So, as time goes along, I'm going to be watching close looking to raise my hand anytime I can to be helpful and supportive of what we need to do in being able to move our county forward in the area of economic development and growth. Great things coming. New Ideas. New thoughts. We want to hear from everybody in the county. I know the Commission does as they get ready to move this plan forward. So, thanks for letting me be here with you, gentlemen, God Bless you, God speed. Ms. Wilson, thanks for all your hard work. Thank you all. "

Ms. Wilson stated that Representative Aderholt was not able to be here, that he wished that he could be here today, but he sent comments that he is very serious and that he is fighting for Walker County there on the federal level.

Danny Cain with the Auburn Extension Office gave an informative speech on the Agriculture Industry around the State of Alabama and Chairman Miller read a proclamation declaring November 17 through November 23, 2023 as Alabama Farm Week and presented the Proclamation to Mr. Cain.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Motion was made by Commissioner Aderholt and seconded by Commissioner Borden to Approve the Agenda, to Approve the meeting minutes of October 16, 2023 and the Emergency Meeting Minutes of October 27, 2023; to Approve the New Vendor

List for October 2023 and to Approve the Claims Against the County for October, 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 that the new website is up and running, has been for about a week and a half now, that it's the same logon as the one before it, which is walkercountyal.us. She stated that this one has some of the hiring information on there, and has an employee information portal that they're still in the process of getting that information available. She said the site looks good and that they will continue to improve it, that they're trying to get information out throughout the county of local events and to promote the entire county. She said open enrollment will be November the 8th and that letters will go out today to all the employees for them to sign or come by if they need to make any changes regarding their benefits. November 13 and 14 will be the T-Mobile conversion and they will send out where to be and who you are and where you need to be involved in that conversion and what you need to bring with you. She reported that the pressure washing of the courthouse is complete, that the courthouse will still look dark for a while, but it will look nice and clean after the chemical eats away the grime. She wanted to let the Sheriff and Commission be aware that the QCHC has been having an increased cost which will affect the inmate medical budget. The appropriations will be ready for the first December meeting which is \$169,500 of the liability, which is a little over \$524,000 due by the end of the calendar year. This week they are working on the Christmas bonus for all the employees who worked from 11-1-22 to 11-1-23, that the bonus amount comes from the tipping fees. She said that they did make their wellness quota of 80 percent after three attempts. Robbie said she would like for the Commission to consider a committee to celebrate the county's 200th anniversary which is coming up in December and that she has inquired about whether the county can spend money on it, but has not got a positive answer.

County Engineer Glenn Peek gave an update on Smith Chapel Bridge. He said, they have several roads that are waiting to be striped, and they will have some new paving projects that are scheduled to start later this month.

OLD BUSINESS:

Motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to open discussion of Discussion and Approval of Bids 796 and 797.

After explanation by County Engineer Glenn Peek, input by Commissioner Davis and a brief discussion, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Borden to reject Bids 796 and 797 at this time.

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 Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to open discussion of Discussion and approval of Hanger Lease.

After explanation by County Engineer Glenn Peek that he has no other information other than what was discussed last week and County Attorney Richard Fikes adding that he has no good information on what to charge and a brief discussion, motion was made by Commissioner Aderholt and seconded by Commissioner Borden to lay this issue aside until they have more information.

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.

NEW BUSINESS:

Motion was made by Commissioner Borden and seconded by Commissioners Aderholt and Burrough (simultaneously) to open discussion of Discussion and Approval- POWER GRANT.

After explanation by Chairman Miller, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Borden to Approve the POWER GRANT.

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 Borden and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt to open discussion of Discussion and Approval of Department of Conservation Tyson \$100,000 Grant.

After County Administrator Robbie Dickerson read the Memorandum of Understanding between the State of Alabama, Park and Conservation and Natural Resources and Walker County Commission. She said it had to do with Blackwater Creek kayak access on Highway 69, after input by County Attorney Richard Fikes and County Engineer Glenn Peek, motion was made by Commissioner Aderholt and seconded by Commissioner Burrough that the Commission approve the Department of Conservation Tyson \$100,000 Grant.

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 Borden and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to open discussion of Discussion and Approval of Old Tuscaloosa Road.

After explanation by County Engineer Glenn Peek, motion was made by Commissioner Borden and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to reject the Bid 794-Old Tuscaloosa 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.

Motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Davis to open discussion of Discussion and Approval-Postage meter/machine contracts.

After explanation by County Administrator Robbie Dickerson, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt to approve the Postage meter/machine contracts.

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 Davis and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt to open discussion of Discussion and Approval-NAVY DOD Program Cost for night goggles.

After explanation by Sheriff Nick Smith, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to approve the NAVY DOD Program Cost for night goggles.

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 Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to open discussion of Discussion and Approval to hire Aleesha Wester PT for PH&T.

After explanation by County Administrator Robbie Dickerson, input from Glenn Peek and Commissioner Aderholt stating that she is an excellent worker and that they hate to lose her in District Four, motion was made by Commissioner Aderholt and seconded by Commissioner Borden to Approve to hire Aleesha Wester Part-time for PH&T.

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 Discussion and Approval-Judge Williams request for

decoration funds.

After explanation by Chairman Miller and Probate Judge Lee Tucker asking to be included in the motion and input from County Attorney Richard Fikes and County Administrator Robbie Dickerson, motion was made by Commissioner Aderholt and seconded by Commissioner Borden to approve Judge Williams' and Judge of Probate Lee Tucker's request for decoration funds, subject to the state auditors looking at it.

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 Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Davis to open discussion of Discussion and Approval-GIS services for Board of Registrars.

After explanation by Judge of Probate Lee Tucker, who stated that there was a prior presentation by Rachel Williams with the Board of Registrars on this subject, and a brief discussion, motion was made by Commissioner Burrough and seconded by Commissioner Davis to Approve the GIS services for Board of Registrars.

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 of Discussion and Approval-Work James Dockins as Solid Waste Director for 120 days.

After explanation by County Administrator Robbie Dickerson, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Borden to Approve to work James Dockins out of classification as Solid Waste Director for 120 days.

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 Borden to open discussion of Discussion and Approval-Holiday Meeting Schedule.

After explanation by County Administrator Robbie Dickerson and a brief discussion, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to Approve the Holiday Meeting Schedule as follows: Cancel the meetings on November 20th, December 18th, and January 1st, move the January 15th to January 16th and February 19th meeting to the 20th of February.

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 Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough to open discussion of Discussion and Approval-Quote for painting at shelter.

After explanation by Chairman Miller and a brief discussion, motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Borden to approve the Quote for painting the shelter.

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 meets the criteria for an executive session and a letter stating same was presented to the County Administrator Robbie Dickerson, motion was made by Commissioner Borden and seconded by Commissioner Burrough that this Commission retire to Executive Session and to reconvene afterwards.

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 RETIRES TO EXECUTIVE SESSION)

(COMMISSION RECONVENES)

Motion was made by Commission Borden and seconded by Commissioner Davis that the County 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 meeting back to order.

Chairman Miller recognized County Attorney Richard Fikes.

County Attorney Richard Fikes stated, "Mr. Chairman, it would be my recommendation that – I know sometimes you ask me to do this anyway, so I'm going to put this in a form of a motion so I don't have to repeat it, that Ms. Robbie Dickerson be relocated to the Sheriff's Department for the sole purposes of monitoring and assisting the Sheriff with budget development and administration of the Sheriff's budget and to perform such additional duties as may be assigned to her by the Commission from time

to time and then all other major duties generally assigned to the County Administrator at the main Commission Office will be assigned to other personnel as necessary.”

Motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Aderholt that the motion be approved.

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 thank everybody for their attendance this morning. Continue to pray for us. You will be greatly missed.

County Administrator Robbie Dickerson stated, “I will miss y’all.”

Commissioner Davis stated, “That’s all I’ve got Mr. Chairman.”

Commissioner Burrough stated, “I would like to thank each person for being here. I want to thank Jesslyn.” He said that they’re in Walker County a lot here lately because they’re helping them with certain projects in District Two and that he couldn’t thank her and her staff enough for the things they’re doing to try to create these grants and opportunities for our community. He further stated, “But like I said, I told her before she left, she had to leave for another meeting, I just want to thank her. Also, too, on Smith Chapel Bridge they have started back work as Glenn said awhile ago. It’s exciting if you go down there maybe every other day or whatever and just take a look and see where they’re going. That’s going to be a huge addition to the District Two area and I’m excited about it getting closer and closer. Glenn, I don’t know if they gave you – they probably are having to apply for more time –”

County Engineer Glenn Peek stated, “I believe they’re going to try to get some more time –”

Commissioner Burrough continued, “About January or February, somewhere in that neighborhood?” He gave an update on road projects in his District.

Commissioner Borden stated, “I just want to thank everyone for being here. Like the first two have said, it’s hard to add as you go on this, but we’re getting into the holiday seasons. Just everyone be safe. Remember our troops around the world. We’re in dangerous times now. We don’t know in the coming days, weeks, months what’s going to happen, what troops are going to be deployed around this world. Also, during the holiday season, our first responders, just keep those in your prayers. It’s a dangerous world out there for some of them in certain conditions. Again, just everyone

be safe and have a great holiday season. And we'll see y'all at the next meeting.

Commissioner Aderholt thanked everybody for being there and thanked Robbie for everything she has done for them, that he appreciated it and that she would be greatly missed. He thanked Jesslyn Wilson and the Regional Planning Commission for everything that they have done and are doing for the county. He also thanked Representative Woods and Senator Reed. He stated, "We've got a great group of leadership in the county and around, supporting and representing Walker County. I'm glad those gentlemen step up and do what they do for the county, and everything my fellow commissioners here do. I think we've got a great staff, we've got great leaders in this county and I'm really appreciative for that." He stated that something happened back in 2020, there was an explosion, not only a difficult time of the COVID year, explosion of farming, an idea that people wanted to start producing things themselves because of lock downs and shutdowns. And people started gardening again in Walker County and around the whole country, like they never had before. He stated, "I highlighted that because the proclamation we passed earlier this week that we're really thankful for the centenarian food." He stated that he and his children started doing agricultural things. He said he's not a big farming guy with a farming business, but he encouraged people who have children and grandchildren to grow something, that you could plant it in a small box on the back porch rail. He further stated, "But the idea the children these days think that chicken comes from Walmart. It's funny, but it's not. We're raising a whole generation of children that don't really know where food comes from. It's good to be involved in the process, get their hands in the dirt, see the seeds be planted, see the things grow. I think its just an education that is not necessarily given them in the public education sphere, as much, but parents and grandparents who have children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews. It's really a valuable thing to have in a child's life to be able to see something grow and then they pick the fruit thereof. Holidays are coming up. Thanksgiving is coming up. We've all got something to be thankful for. And, I'll echo Commissioner Borden's comments, pray for our troops, pray for Israel, pray for all of those that are in harms way in conflict, our first responders as well. Also pray for the people that they will learn to be more thankful for what we do have and the peace that we do enjoy."

Chairman Miller stated, "I, too, would just like to say, thank you for everyone in attendance. I'd like to say thank you Ms. Robbie for your work here at the Commission and what you've done over the years and we appreciate that. I'd like to say a shout out to our payroll department. They've worked hard on working on getting our RSA and two or three other things taken care of. And they've done a great job. Ms. Tammy and Ms. Billie Jo, they've really worked hard on this. And our EMA Director, she continues to do a great job. She's just by herself, so she works really hard, the Sheriff and his staff and our first responders we appreciate them. They continue to -- I know, they have a lot to do from day-to-day. And our Brown Bridge finishing up, our Smith Chapel Bridge finishing up, all these road pavings that these gentlemen have had, it has been good times in this

Commission and they're seeing – we're seeing the benefits of those good financial times and we appreciate each one of them for doing a great job. And I won't forget Ms. Barbara here that always does a good job on taking all of these minutes. And of course, we see Ms. Susan, and Judge Tucker of Probate and we appreciate them for being here too. All of the folks that are in this county doing a job, we appreciate them because without each and every one this county could not move forward. With that we'd entertain a motion to adjourn.


ADJOURN:

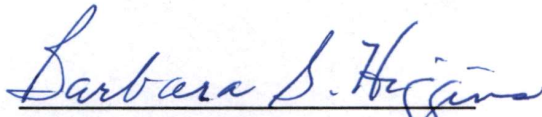
Motion was made by Commissioner Davis and seconded by Commissioner Burrough, that this meeting be adjourned to reconvene at the next regularly scheduled meeting or at the call of the Chairman.

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