

MINUTES OF THE LEE COUNTY COMMISSION, REG. ADJ. TERM, FEBRUARY 28, 2022

The Lee County Commission convened in regular adjourned session at the Courthouse in Opelika, Alabama, Monday, February 28, 2022. The Chairman declared a quorum and officially opened the meeting with the following members recorded as being present: Judge Bill English, Chairman, and Commissioners Doug Cannon, Ross Morris, Gary Long, Robert Ham and Richard LaGrand. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited, followed by an invocation by Commissioner Long. Elected Officials in attendance: Smiths Station Mayor Bubba Copeland, Sheriff Jay Jones, and Opelika City Council member Erica Norris. News media in attendance: Opelika Observer reporter Hannah Lester, Opelika-Auburn News reporter Tim Nail, WRBL reporter Elizabeth White and WTVM reporter Rico Mitchell.

Environmental Services Director John McDonald gave an update on the curbside collection service. Mr. McDonald said curbside collection services will begin tomorrow March 1. Mr. McDonald stated by the end of today over 18,000 carts will have been delivered to the unincorporated areas of Lee County. Mr. McDonald said Arrow Disposal has worked diligently in delivery of the carts. Further, he stated that they will run cart collection a few weeks before phasing in county bulk routes and phasing out the dumpster sites. Also, notifications will go out concerning the closures. Mr. McDonald said the site on US 280E will close by March 15 at the request of the landowner, due to other construction. Mr. McDonald stated the next closest site to the location is approximately nine miles. Judge English questioned if the landowner is building something at that location. Mr. McDonald said a communications tower is being installed there. Mr. McDonald wished to commend all the employees in his department due to the increased workload at the collection sites. Mr. McDonald said he would like to thank them and employees from other departments that have stepped up to assist Environmental Services, saying they have done a fantastic job.

Copies of the items on the Consent Agenda sent to the Commissioners in their packets included: listings of claims, a procurement card transactions listing, and minutes of the February 14 meeting. First reading of Kimberly Deal Johns to the Cemetery Preservation Commission was made. Commissioner Cannon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Ham to approve the consent agenda items as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Daniel Sexton asked for Commission consideration to establish the Smiths Station Fire Protection District. Mr. Sexton the need is due to funding and staffing issues and the suspension of the ambulance service. Additionally, he said the nationwide pandemic has caused ambulance personnel shortages. Mr. Sexton pointed out that the fire fees were set at \$50 back in 2012 and have not kept up with inflation. Mr. Sexton said area residents are concerned with the loss of the ambulance service especially in a dire emergency where seconds count. The current wait time for an ambulance dispatched from Opelika is approximately 20-30 minutes or longer if one is not available. Mr. Sexton said the only action needed by the

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Commission is a Resolution approving the Fire Protection District. Commissioner Ham said he commended the improved relationship with EAMC and their ability to work together; but agreed ambulance service is needed in that area. Commissioner LaGrand stated he is supportive of it too. Commissioner Long stated since he is a Smiths Station Fire & Rescue board member he could not participate in the discussion or vote on the matter. Commissioner Cannon asked the advice of County Attorney Stan Martin. Mr. Martin said he received the information prior to the meeting, so he would like time to look at the documents and to get clarification on a few items from Mr. Sexton. Judge English questioned the additional fire fee amount and how it will be collected. Mr. Sexton stated the Fire Protection District Board of Directors would establish the fee and it would be similar to how it is done in Beulah. Mr. Sexton stated they have talked to the Smiths Station Water and Sewer to see if the fee can be included on the water bill. Mr. Sexton said the total of \$125 is \$50 from the county fee and an additional \$75 fee established by the Board. Mr. Sexton said the agreement will be finalized once the Commission approves their part. Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cannon to approve the following Resolution for the Smiths Station Fire Protection District conditional on approval of County Attorney Stan Martin. The motion carried on a vote of 4-0-1 with Commissioner Long abstaining.

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, Felton Adkinson, Earline Morris, Joseph Walden, Daniel Sexton, Dwight Christopher, Clinton Knox, Billy Jones, and Ronald Cecil Martin (hereinafter the “Applicants”, all duly qualified electors of Lee County, Alabama) have made application (hereinafter the “Application”) to the Lee County Commission of Lee County, Alabama for permission to incorporate a fire protection district under the authority granted by the Code of Alabama, 1975, Section 11-89-1, et. seq.; and

WHEREAS, the County Commission has reviewed the contents of the Application and has found and determined as a matter of fact that it is wise, expedient, and necessary that the proposed fire protection district be formed.

WHEREAS, the City of Smiths Station, Alabama has previously adopted an authorizing Resolution approving an identical Application and has found and determined as a matter of fact that it is wise, expedient, and necessary that the proposed fire protection district be formed.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE COUNTY COMMISSION OF LEE COUNTY, ALABAMA that the Application be, and the same hereby is approved.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the County Commission of Lee County, Alabama that the said Applicants are authorized to proceed to form the proposed Smiths Station Fire Protection District by the filing for record of a certificate of incorporation in accordance with the provisions of Section 11-89-4 Code of Alabama (1975).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED by the County Commission of Lee County, Alabama that the said Application be spread upon or otherwise made a part of the minutes of the Lee County Commission meeting held on February 28, 2022.

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ADOPTED in Regular Meeting on February 28, 2022.

**Application to Establish the
Smiths Station Fire Protection District**

WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue was incorporated in the State of Alabama, County of Lee County as The Friendship Firefighters Association on September 29, 1966; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue was originally organized in the State of Alabama, County of Lee County, as a 501(c)4 non-profit social welfare organization for the purpose of providing Volunteer Fire & Rescue services to the community; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue is a Fire Department recognized by the Lee County Commission; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue is a Fire Department recognized by the City Council of the City of Smiths Station; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue is a Fire Department recognized by the Alabama State Fire Marshal; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue is a Fire Department recognized by the Lee County 911 Emergency Communications District; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue is a Fire Department recognized by the Alabama Forestry Commission; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue is a Fire Department recognized by the Alabama Fire College & Personnel Standards and Education Commission, which was established by the Code of Alabama 1975 § 36-32-2; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue services a response area in south east Lee County and the boundaries of the response area were originally defined by the Lee County Commission; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue response boundaries include the entirety of the City of Smith Station; and,
WHEREAS, a concise legal description of the Smiths Station Fire & Rescue response area has been prepared by an engineer licensed in the State of Alabama and is attached to this application as exhibit 99, as required by the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-89-3 (a)(2)(i); and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue provides fire protection and rescue services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year inside the boundaries of its response area; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue is the primary first responding agency to Fire & Rescue calls inside its response area; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue provides automatic mutual aid for structure fires to 3 other fire departments in Lee County; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue provides mutual aid for fire & rescue calls to all other fire departments in Lee County when requested; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue provided mutual aid ambulance services and transport to all of Lee & Russell Counties when requested; and,

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WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue is dispatched by the E911 PSAP located at the Lee County Sheriff's office; and,
WHEREAS, the population of Lee County was 49,754 in 1960 and is estimated to be 164,542 as of 2019 an increase of 331%; and,
WHEREAS, the population of the Smiths Station Fire response area is estimated to have been approximately 11,480 in 1964 and 39,000 as of 2022; and,
WHEREAS, the Lee County GIS department lists 14,086 addresses in the Smiths Station Fire & Rescue response area; and,
WHEREAS, the City of Smiths Station was incorporated on June 22, 2001; and,
WHEREAS, the estimated population of the City of Smiths Station is 5,391 as of 2019; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue answered approximately 25 calls for service per year in the 1960's; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue answered 2,899 calls for service in 2020; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue has grown from a small organization with a single station and fire engine to a large organization with 20+ volunteers, 6 Stations, 6 Engines, 1 Ladder Truck, 3 Brush Trucks, 1 Ambulance, and 3 quick response SUVs; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue is currently funded by a Fire Fee assessed by the Lee County Commission; and,
WHEREAS, the amount of this fire fee was set by a vote of the citizens within the Smiths Station Fire & Rescue response area in 2012; and,
WHEREAS, approximately 80% of the voters inside the Smiths Station Fire & Rescue response area voted to approve this fire fee in 2012; and,
WHEREAS, the cost of everything from electricity, to fuel, to vehicle maintenance, to Fire Engines & Medical Supplies and Turn Out Gear has increased substantially since 2012; and,
WHEREAS, the US Bureau of Labor Statics estimates that inflation has increased 14% since 2012; and,
WHEREAS, inflation as a result of the Covid-19 Pandemic has caused prices to rise at an even faster rate; and,
WHEREAS, the current fire fee does not include any provisions for increase; and,
WHEREAS, the current fire fee is not permanent funding, and is set to expire in 2037; and,
WHEREAS, the increased growth of the Smiths Station area has driven demand from the citizens within the Smiths Station Fire & Rescue response area for more and quicker responses as well as expanded services that typically are provided by larger "paid city" Fire Departments; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue has used the current fire fee to build or rebuild 3 stations, purchase a ladder truck and 3 fire engines; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue has a 1991 E-One fire engine that is beyond repair and urgently needs to be replaced; and,
WHEREAS, failure to replace this 1991 E-One fire engine will have a detrimental effect on the ISO rating of Smiths Station Fire & Rescue as well as the insurance premiums of the citizens within the response area; and,

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WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue wishes to continue to modernize, grow, and to provide “city” level fire and rescue services to the citizens in the response area; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue wishes to become a “combination department” and have both paid firefighters and volunteer firefighters to insure availability as well as adequate and fast response at all times of the day and night; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue wishes to provide any paid firefighters and ambulance personnel with standard benefits such as a competitive salary, state retirement, and state health insurance; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue wishes to make substantial capital investments in both equipment, training, and facilities; and,
WHEREAS, the current fire fee does not provide adequate funding for personnel or additional equipment, training, or facilities; and,
WHEREAS, other fire departments in our area and within the State of Alabama are organized as Fire Protection Districts under the Code of Alabama § 11-89-1 et sq.; and,
WHEREAS, without additional funding Smiths Station Fire and Rescue will likely be forced to further reduce or eliminate services to remain solvent; and,
WHEREAS, any reduction or elimination of services would have extreme and lasting detrimental affects to both life and property within the response area; and,
WHEREAS, the current fire is not equitably applied, and does not distinguish between a single-family residence and an multifamily dwelling units, which results in an unfair and disproportionate fee system; and,
WHEREAS, the current fire is not equitably applied, and does not distinguish between a single-family residence and a commercial structure, which results in an unfair and disproportionate fee system; and,
WHEREAS, Smiths Station Fire & Rescue wishes to equitably charge proportionally higher rates for multi-family dwelling units and commercial structures, than it charges for single family residential structures; and,
WHEREAS, the Code of Alabama 1975 Chapter 11 Section 89 provides for the establishment of Fire Protection Districts; and,
WHEREAS, the Code of Alabama § 11-89-3(a) states: In order to incorporate a district under this chapter, any number of natural persons, not less than three, shall first file an identical written application with the governing body of each county and municipality located in whole or in part within the boundaries of the area or areas to be served by the proposed district; and,
WHEREAS, an identical copy of this application and all attachments has been or will be filed with both the City of Smiths Station and the Lee County Commission as required by the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-89-3 (a); and,
WHEREAS, the Code of Alabama § 11-89-9 (a) states: The district shall have the following powers, together with all powers incidental thereto or necessary to the discharge thereof in corporate form: (10) To furnish and provide fire protection service in the service area or in any part thereof or to or on behalf of one or more counties, municipalities, or other public corporations upon such reasonable terms and for such reasonable rates and consideration as the board may prescribe; and,

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WHEREAS, the Code of Alabama § 11-89-9 (a) states: The district shall have the following powers, together with all powers incidental thereto or necessary to the discharge thereof in corporate form: (24) To fix and revise from time to time reasonable rates, fees, and other charges for water service, sewer service, fire protection service, or any thereof, furnished or to be furnished by any water system, sewer system, or fire protection facility, or portion of any thereof, owned or operated by the district, and to collect all charges made by it; and,

WHEREAS, the Code of Alabama § 11-89-12 gives Fire Protection Districts the powers to: Establish and revise rates, fees, and charges for services rendered by district. And further states:

Rates, fees, and charges for fire protection service rendered by the district from any of its fire protection facilities shall be so fixed and from time to time revised as at all times to provide funds at least sufficient to:

- (1) Pay the cost of operating, maintaining, repairing, replacing, extending, and improving the systems and facilities or either from which such services are rendered;
- (2) Pay the principal of and the interest on all bonds issued and obligations assumed by the district that are payable out of the revenues derived from operation of those systems and facilities as the said principal and interest become due and payable;
- (3) Create and maintain such reserve for the foregoing purposes or any of them as may be provided in any mortgage and deed of trust or trust indenture executed by the district under this chapter or in any resolutions of the board authorizing the issuance of bonds, the assumption of any obligation or the acquisition of any such system or facility; and
- (4) Make such annual payments, if any, to the United States of America or any agency or instrumentality thereof, the state, municipalities, counties, departments, authorities, agencies, and political subdivisions of the state and any public corporations organized under the laws of the state as the district may have contracted to make; and,

WHEREAS, the Board of Directors for Smiths Station Fire & Rescue met in at the regular meeting in March 23, 2021 and with a proper quorum present, unanimously voted in favor of establishing a Fire Protection District; and,

WHEREAS, in accordance with Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-89-3 (5) that each of the undersigned applicants is a duly qualified elector of the county of which such application is filed.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Directors and the undersigned hereby submit this document to serve as a written application to the Lee County Commission and the City of Smiths Station to create/establish the Smiths Station Fire Protection District as required by the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-89-3 (a).

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the current entity now known as Smiths Station Fire & Rescue along with all of its assets, accounts, real estate, personal property, and debts shall be merged with and into the new Smiths Station Fire Protection District.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the Smiths Station Fire Protection District shall operate as Smiths Station Fire & Rescue.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in accordance the Code of Alabama § 11-89-3 (1); that the purpose of the Smiths Station Fire Protection District shall be to provide fire protection service(s) within the boundaries of the response district herein described and under mutual aid agreements with other departments.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in accordance with the Code of Alabama § 11-89-3 (2)(i), that the legal boundaries of Smiths Station Fire Protection District shall be the same as those currently defined for Smiths Station Fire & Rescue and that a concise legal description of those boundaries is attached to this document.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in accordance with the Code of Alabama § 11-89-3 (3) Code of Alabama, that the Board of Directors for the Smiths Station Fire Protection District will be made up of 5 Members, each serving 4-year terms.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that in accordance with the Code of Alabama § 11-89-6:

- The terms of the Board Members shall be staggered in a 2-2-1 format
- The Lee County Commission shall appoint place 1-4 using the following method:
 - Board Member places 1-2 shall be nominated by District 3 Commissioner
 - Board Member place 3 shall be nominated by District 4 Commissioner
 - Board Member place 4 shall be nominated by District 5 Commissioner
 - All Nominees shall be confirmed by a vote of the County Commission as a whole
- The City of Smiths Station shall appoint place 5 using the following method:
 - Board Member place 5 shall be nominated by the Mayor
 - Nominee shall be confirmed by a vote of the City Council as a whole

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, the proposed initial board members shall be:

Place 1: Felton Adkinson – 2 years

Place 2: Walter Cox – 4 years

Place 3: Todd Boatner - 3 years

Place 4: Joe Walden – 3 years

Place 5: Cecil Martin - 2 years

Should any position become vacated before the end of the term a successor shall be appointed to complete that term.

The board of directors shall have the authority to elect officers such as Chairman, Vice Chairman, Treasurer, and Secretary, as well as any other officers as the board feels necessary.

Unless otherwise specified by the laws of the State of Alabama all votes by the Board of Directors shall require a simple majority and each Director shall have one (1) vote.

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BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in accordance with the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-89-3(4), The location of the principal office of the Smiths Station Fire Protection District shall be 50 Lee Rd 430, Smiths Station, AL 36877

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, in accordance with the Code of Alabama 1975 § 11-89-3 (6) the undersigned request that the Lee County Commission and the City of Smiths Station adopt a resolution declaring that it is wise, expedient, and necessary that the proposed district be formed and authorizing the applicants to proceed to form the proposed district by the filing for record of a certificate of incorporation in accordance with the provisions of Section §11-89-4.

Commissioner Ham said it is time for the one-year performance evaluation of EMA Director Rita Smith. Commissioner Ham said Ms. Smith is doing a great job. Commissioner Ham asked Ms. Smith to give an overview of the last year. Ms. Smith stated the biggest goal is the new EMA building after delays and issues but hopes to occupy it soon. Ms. Smith said over the past year they have continued with COVID testing sites including setting them up and then tearing them down; keeping up with grant requirements; provided technical assistance to Randolph County, Geneva County and Pike County for the Individual Storm Shelter grant process; served on the Alabama Association of Emergency Managers Legislative Committee; developed the Lee County Crisis Communication team and exercised the capabilities of this new tool; instructor for the Basic Public Information Officer course; maintained Certified Level Emergency Manager certification which provides an additional \$12,000 annually to Lee County; co-instructed G402 course in Elmore County; worked with film production crew on a tornado documentary; hosted program at the Courthouse Square on the 2nd year anniversary of the tornadoes that impacted the Smiths Station and Beauregard community; secured \$130,000 in outside contributions for the EMA Building project; and rebranding of agency to maintain the expectations of the citizens and County Commissioners. Commissioner Ham said he supports a merit raise for Ms. Smith. Commissioner Cannon thanked Ms. Smith and her staff for the job they perform. Commissioner LaGrand said it is hard to believe the three-year anniversary of the tornadoes is upcoming. Commissioner Ham made a motion to give her a 5% merit increase. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Cannon for discussion. Commissioner Long stated he is not taking anything from Ms. Smith, but this is one year after coming off probation and receiving a significant raise then. Ms. Smith stated it is her annual evaluation, she is one of three employees that are evaluated by the Commission. Commissioner Long suggested looking at all department heads and to support them in the same manner. Commissioner Ham again supported a 5% increase for Ms. Smith now and to look at the other department heads at the next meeting. Commissioner Long asked the Commission to table the action until the next meeting. Commissioner Ham disagreed stating Ms. Smith's evaluation is due today, then at the next meeting take a look at the other departments. Judge English pointed out that the only three employees that are evaluated by the Commission are the Administrator, the Engineer, and the EMA Director. The other department heads are evaluated by their appointing authorities. Judge English called for a vote on the motion and the motion passed on a vote of 4-1 with Commissioner Long voting "No".

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Judge English presented the Annual Levy of Alcoholic Beverages for FY2022-2023 and stated there are no changes in the county fees, since currently most are at the maximum rate. Commissioner Long made a motion to approve the following Resolution to set the Annual Levy of Alcoholic Beverages for FY2022-2023. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Ham and carried unanimously.

BE IT RESOLVED by the Lee County Commission that the County license levies for the sale of liquor, beer and wine for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2022, to be set in the following amounts:

010 Lounge Retail Liquor – Class I	\$150.00
011 Lounge Retail Liquor – Class II (Package)	\$150.00
020 Restaurant Retail Liquor	\$150.00
031 Club Liquor – Class I	\$150.00
032 Club Liquor – Class II	\$375.00
040 Retail Beer (On or Off Premises)	\$75.00
050 Retail Beer (Off Premises Only)	\$75.00
060 Retail Table Wine (On or Off Premises)	\$75.00
070 Retail Table Wine (Off Premises Only)	\$75.00
080 Liquor Wholesale	\$500.00
090 Wholesale Beer Only	\$275.00
100 Wholesale Table Wine Only – 16.5% or less	\$275.00
110 Wholesale Table Wine & Beer Combined	\$375.00
120 Warehouse License	\$100.00
130 Additional Warehouse – Wine, Beer or Both	\$100.00
140 Special Events Retail	\$75.00
150 Special Retail License – 30 days or less	\$100.00
160 Special Retail License – More than 30 days	\$250.00
170 Retail Common Carrier	\$150.00
200 Manufacturer	\$500.00
210 Importer	\$250.00
220 Brewpub	\$500.00
230 International Motor Speedway	\$3,000.00
250 Wine Festival License	\$50.00
260 Wine Festival Participant License	\$15.00
500 Direct Wine Shipper	\$200.00
510 Wine Fulfillment Center	\$500.00
520 Additional Wine Fulfillment Center	\$100.00
530 Delivery Service License	\$250.00
800 In-State Winery Off-Site Testing Permit	\$0.00

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Sheriff Jay Jones requested Commission support of local legislation to increase the salary of the Lee County Sheriff. Sheriff Jones said the most recent legislation regarding a salary increase was passed in 2015 (Act 2015-491) and set the salary at \$100,700. Sheriff Jones is proposing the salary be set at \$125,000 which is in line with and actually less than the current compensation provided to some municipal law enforcement executives in the area. Sheriff Jones would propose the increase be effective at the beginning of the next term of office of the Sheriff in January 2023. Commissioner Cannon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Long to adopt the following Resolution. The motion carried on a vote of 5-0.

WHEREAS, Lee County is one of the fastest growing counties in the state and the Lee County Sheriff is responsible for the safety and security of its citizens; and

WHEREAS, the Sheriff is the county's highest-elected law enforcement official and draws a salary lower than that of his municipal counterparts; and

WHEREAS, the Sheriff has not received an increase in salary since 2015; and

WHEREAS, the salary of the Lee County Sheriff is set by local bill.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Lee County Commission, that the Lee County Legislative Delegation is asked to pass a local act setting the Lee County Sheriff's salary at \$125,000.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that a copy of this resolution and a copy of the proposed legislation be transmitted to each of the nine members of the Lee County Legislative Delegation.

County Engineer Justin Hardee presented a plat for final approval for Boo's Landing II Subdivision in District 4. Mr. Hardee said there are no new roadways and existing road frontage will be utilized. Commissioner Ham questioned if this is a one-way road. Mr. Hardee said no, the road has a 60 ft. right-of-way. Commissioner Morris questioned if the speed limit will remain the same. Mr. Hardee stated it should because nothing changes with the plat approval. After discussion, Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Long to approve the final plat for Boo's Landing II Subdivision. The motion carried unanimously.

Ms. Smith made a recommendation to the Commission to authorize the promotion of Austin Jones to EMA Deputy Director. Ms. Smith said the Commission has a long-standing record of promoting quality individuals within the organization. Ms. Smith stated Mr. Jones began as a volunteer in 2017 as a CERT Instructor/Team Lead. In 2019, Mr. Jones was employed full-time during the tornado outbreak as community relations specialist. Mr. Jones also completed his bachelor's degree from Auburn University during the pandemic. He is certified as a basic EMT technician and recently completed HAZMAT training in New Mexico. Ms. Smith said Mr. Jones is her right-hand man and recommended he be promoted to Deputy Director at the rate of pay requested. Commissioner Cannon questioned the salary at a

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Grade 119. Ms. Smith stated Mr. Jones will continue to be on call and his current salary is at a Grade 116. Commissioner LaGrand asked to hear a few words from Mr. Jones. Mr. Jones reiterated that he had been employed full-time since 2019, after being an EMA volunteer since 2017. Mr. Jones said he has spear-headed several projects which include: 1) led the implementation of Fire Fighter rehab; 2) further developed relationships with local police and fire departments; 3) trained SRO Groups for the school systems; 4) enhanced response time with Fire and Police Departments.

Commissioner Morris said it is his understanding the promotion will start at a Grade level 119 which starts at \$57,125.33. Ms. Smith said requests for exceptions above the starting salary can be brought before the Commission as is being done in this case. Commissioner Morris stated talent is hard to keep, but it will also set a precedence, stating the Commission must consider a compromise for a fair salary. Ms. Smith stated 10% above starting puts the salary at \$62,837.56. Commissioner Ham made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Cannon to approve the promotion of Austin Jones to EMA Deputy Director at a Grade 119 at a beginning salary of \$62,837.56, which is 10% above the minimum salary, along with a one-year probationary status. The motion carried on a vote of 4-0-1 with Commissioner LaGrand abstaining.

Parks Manager Ryan Norris presented three Lee County Sports Complex Use Agreements for Commission consideration. Mr. Norris stated the three agreements are with the following associations for use of the respective parks: 1) Beulah Recreation Association; 2) Beauregard Youth Softball Association; and 3) Beauregard Baseball Association. Mr. Norris stated these are 12-month agreements from the date of execution. Commissioner Morris questioned the amount of \$1 on the Agreement with Beauregard Baseball Association. Mr. Norris explained that it is for liability insurance purposes to add the county as an additional insured. Commissioner Cannon made a motion, seconded by Commissioner Ham to authorize the Chairman to sign the three agreements as presented. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner Cannon made a motion at approximately 6:15 p.m. to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Morris and the motion carried unanimously.