

**MINUTES  
COVINGTON COUNTY COMMISSION**

**February 24, 2026  
9:00 A.M.**

The Covington County Commission met in a Regular Meeting in the Commission Chambers at 260 Hillcrest Drive, Andalusia, Alabama, on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 9:00 a.m. The roll was checked and those present and absent were as follows:

**PRESENT:**

Michael Smith, Chairman  
Ben Courson, Commissioner, District 1  
Lynne Holmes, Commissioner, District 3  
Tommy McGaha, Commissioner, District 4  
Karen L. Sowell, County Administrator  
Morgan Arrington, County Attorney

**ABSENT:**

Robbie Weaver, Commissioner, District 2

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Chairman Smith called the meeting to order and declared that a quorum was present.

**WELCOME AND RECOGNITION OF GUESTS:**

Chairman Smith welcomed guests and the news media. He thanked those in attendance for their interest in county government. The Chairman then asked Communications Director Kyle Adams to lead the group in prayer, after which everyone joined in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

**AGENDA  
COVINGTON COUNTY COMMISSION**

February 24, 2026  
9:00 A.M.

- I. Call to Order and Establish Quorum
- II. Welcome, Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Scheduled Public Hearings
  - a. Road Closures
- IV. Public Comments from Citizens, as scheduled
  - a. Walter Lewis, Piper Sandler & Co.
  - b. Chuck Simon, Covington County Extension Office
  - c. Gentry Shows, Meridian Waste
- V. Awards and Presentations
  - a. Proclamations

- VI. Public Comments from Other Elected or Appointed Officials
- VII. Consent Agenda
  - a. Consider Approval of Minutes for February 10, 2026, Regular Meeting
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business
  - a. Consider Approval of Road Closures
  - b. Consider Facility Cost Recovery Additive for Combined Public Communications
  - c. Consider County Levies for Alcohol Licensing
  - d. Announce Expiration of Board Positions for SARCOA Board
  - e. Executive Session
  - f. Consider Appointment of EMA Director
- X. Reports from Staff
- XI. Discussion Items by Commissioners
- XII. Adjourn

**PUBLIC HEARING:**

Chairman Smith stated there is a petition submitted to close a portion of Lloyd Mill Road in District 4. He stated this is where the new road named James Lee Road turns off Lloyd Mill Road and goes towards the bridge. He then asked if there was anyone present to speak on this road being closed. Twin Creek wanted to know where the liability goes if the road closes and Lynn Ralls, County Engineer stated the county will still own the bridge and there is a permanent barricade there. Mason Farley with Covington County Water Authority stated he had some easements drawn up to allow them to still maintain the water lines but wasn't sure who to present them to. Mrs. Arrington stated he would need to work with the property owners regarding the easements.

Commissioner Holmes made a motion to amend the agenda to act on the road closures during the public hearings and was seconded by Commissioner McGaha. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

Commissioner McGaha made a motion to close the portion of Lloyd Mill Road with the easements for the water authority to be worked out with the landowners and was seconded by Commissioner Holmes. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

Chairman Smith stated there was a petition submitted to close Tobacco Road and asked if there was anyone present to speak on this road closure. Susan Grimes Baker stated this section of the road lies between two pieces of property that she owns and has not been maintained since 1995 when hurricane Opal came through. She stated she had to have the state put in a driveway just so she could get to her property due to the damage to the road. Mr. Farley stated there is also a water main that runs through that property so he will need to get an easement on this as well. Ms. Baker stated the main waterline runs along Hwy 29 and she believes the one on her property is just a cleanout valve. She stated that is where a lot of the issues came from the water standing on her property. Mr. Farley stated he is not sure about this being a clean out valve, but he stated he will investigate what they can do. Ms. Baker stated she does not have an issue allowing the water authority access the property. Commissioner McGaha made a motion to close Tobacco Road with the easements for the water authority to be worked out with the landowners and was seconded by Commissioner Holmes. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

Chairman Smith stated there was a petition submitted to close an unnamed road that is off Boston Road which is in District 4. Mr. Ralls stated this road has not been maintained in a very long time and dead ends to private landowners. Chairman Smith asked if anyone wanted to speak on this road closure and no one present spoke up. Commissioner McGaha made a motion to close the unnamed

road off Boston Road and was seconded by Commissioner Holmes. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

Chairman Smith stated there was a petition submitted to close an unnamed road off Rockhole Bridge Road and Andy Road. Mr. Ralls stated the joint landowners would like the road to be closed. Chairman Smith asked if there was anyone present to speak on the road closure and there was no one present that wished to speak. Commissioner Holmes made a motion to close the unnamed road off Rockhole Bridge Road and Andy Road and was seconded by Commissioner McGaha. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

Chairman Smith stated there was a petition submitted to close Sassy Lane and asked if there was anyone present to speak regarding the closure. Jeremy Norton stated he had lived on Sassy Lane most of his life and he has been a landowner for 15 years. He stated this road is the only access he has to be able to get on or off his property. He stated the other landowners have other access to get to their property. Mr. Norton stated the county has done a lot of work on that road to maintain it and he doesn't see a reason to close the road. He also stated that it would affect his family greatly if this road is closed. Mr. Ralls stated the length of the road is about a quarter mile that the county maintains. Mr. Norton stated the issue regarding this road is another landowner does not want the school bus to go down the road, but he has children that ride the school bus, and he isn't comfortable with the kids being dropped off at the main road to walk all the way to the house. He also stated the landowner paid to have speed bumps put on the road and Mr. Ralls stated they were removed since they were put on county property by the landowner not the county. Chairman Smith asked if the school bus comes all the way down to his property and Mr. Norton stated the bus turns around closer to his property off the county road. Commissioner Holmes stated she does not see how the county can close the road when someone lives at the end and that is their only access. Mrs. Arrington stated she heard that Mr. Norton would not have ingress or egress if this road was closed. She also stated there is an email that states there is an easement, but she has not seen the easement, so her advice is to have a look at this easement before you choose to close the road. Mr. Norton stated since this has been a county road he only needed the easement for the property at the end of the county road through another landowner's property to get to his property but if the road is closed, he will not have access. Chairman Smith stated that is what he would call a utility easement. Commissioner Courson made a motion to not close Sassy Lane and was seconded by Commissioner Holmes. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

#### **COMMISSION TOOK A RECESS UNTIL 9:30 A.M.**

#### **AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS:**

Commissioner Holmes made a motion to amend the agenda to go ahead with presenting the proclamations before the public comments from citizens as scheduled and was seconded by Commissioner McGaha. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed. Commissioner McGaha presented proclamations to Raylan Stacks, Ronan Stacks, Jaden Lockhart, and Ace George for achievements in youth wrestling state competition.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS:**

Walter Lewis stated he is an investment banker with Piper Sandler & Co. He thanked the Commission for allowing him to come speak to them. He also stated that Mrs. Sowell has been wonderful to work with over phone calls and email. He stated if the Commission is interested in talking about the debt in terms of borrowing money or not borrowing money, he would love the opportunity to speak to them.

Chuck Simon with the Covington County Extension Office stated that Levi Blackmon, who is the new resource with the extension office for ponds and lakes, is here today to introduce himself. Mr. Blackmon stated he has already worked with many individuals in Covington County and looks

forward to serving the people of Covington County. He also stated if anyone needs to get up with him, they can call the extension office.

Gentry Shows with Meridian Waste thanked the Commission for allowing him to speak. He stated we are currently in year six of the contract which is expiring this year. He also stated there is a renewal clause in the contract for an additional three-year term and would like to express their interest in renewing the contract. Mr. Shows stated they employ local citizens and have brought property here in Opp, Alabama for their shop.

**COMMISSION APPROVES MINUTES FOR FEBRUARY 10, 2026. REGULAR MEETING:**

Chairman Smith stated that the minutes for the February 10, 2026, regular meeting were emailed to all Commissioners for review. Commissioner Holmes made a motion to approve the minutes for February 10, 2026, regular meeting, and was seconded by Commissioner McGaha. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

**COMMISSION APPROVES AGREEMENT FOR FACILITY COST RECOVERY ADDITIVE FOR COMBINED PUBLIC COMMUNICATIONS:**

Chairman Smith stated this is something that was sent down by the Federal Government. Sheriff Turman stated this is an FCC requirement which adds \$0.02 per minute to the phone and video visitation at the jail. He also stated these funds will be put into a separate account that can only be used for things that deal with communication at the jail. Commissioner McGaha made a motion to approve the agreement with Combined Public Communications and was seconded by Commissioner Courson. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.



FACILITY COST RECOVERY ATTESTATION & AUTHORIZATION

Corrections Facility Cost Recovery Authorization

This Facility Cost Recovery Attestation and Authorization ("Attestation") is provided by the undersigned correctional facility ("Customer") to Combined Public Communications, LLC ("CPC") in connection with the Federal Communications Commission's ("FCC") Final Rule governing Incarcerated People's Communications Services ("IPCS").

Background and Purpose

The FCC's Final Rule permits IPCS providers to assess an optional interim facility cost recovery additive of up to \$0.02 per minute for regulated inmate telephone services ("ITS") and/or regulated video communications services, subject to applicable FCC rules and limitations. Amounts collected through this additive may be remitted to a correctional facility to offset costs incurred by the facility in allowing access to IPCS. Participation in facility cost recovery is optional and must be affirmatively elected by the Customer.

Customer Election

By executing this Attestation, the Customer requests that CPC implement the FCC-authorized facility cost recovery additive and remit the amounts collected directly to the Customer, subject to applicable law. Please indicate the Customer's election below:

- Options for facility cost recovery: Inmate Telephone Services (ITS) only, Video Communications Services only, or Both Inmate Telephone Services (ITS) and Video Communications Services (selected).

The Customer acknowledges that the facility cost recovery additive shall not exceed the maximum amount permitted under FCC rules, which is currently up to \$0.02 per minute, and may be adjusted solely as required to maintain regulatory compliance.

Scope of CPC's Role

If elected by the Customer, CPC's role with respect to facility cost recovery is limited solely to administrative and ministerial functions, including:

- Applying the Customer-elected facility cost recovery additive to applicable regulated IPCS usage; and Collecting and remitting the facility cost recovery amounts directly to the Customer.

CPC does not determine, evaluate, approve, audit, certify, or validate the Customer's costs and shall not be responsible for determining whether any cost is "used and useful" under FCC rules. CPC shall not retain any portion of the facility cost recovery amounts.

Customer Attestation Regarding Costs

The undersigned certifies that the Customer incurs costs directly related to the provision of IPCS that are "used and useful," as that term is interpreted by the FCC, and that such costs meet or exceed the amount of facility cost recovery requested through this Attestation.

The Customer understands and agrees that:

- The FCC has not exhaustively defined which facility costs qualify as "used and useful"; The responsibility for identifying, documenting, justifying, and supporting such costs rests solely with the Customer; and CPC makes no representation or warranty regarding the permissibility or recoverability of any such costs under applicable law.



Exclusions and Limitations

Facility cost recovery shall not be used to fund or offset costs associated with:

- General facility operations or staffing not directly attributable to IPCS; Jail Management System (JMS) licenses, maintenance, or support; Non-regulated services or products; Incentives, bonuses, or commissions of any kind; or Any costs later determined to be impermissible under applicable FCC rules.

Facility cost recovery shall not be used to fund ancillary or optional services not directly required for the provision of regulated IPCS.

Regulatory Responsibility

Each party is responsible for its own compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The Customer agrees to indemnify and hold CPC harmless from any claims, enforcement actions, or regulatory findings arising from the Customer's use of facility cost recovery funds or from costs later determined to be impermissible or unrecoverable.

Acknowledgment and Authorization

By signing below, the undersigned certifies that they have authority to bind the Customer and that the information provided in this Attestation is true and accurate.

Facility Name: COVINGTON COUNTY JAIL
Print Name: Michael Smith
Print Title: Chairman
Signature: [Handwritten Signature]
Date: 12/24/06

**COUNTY APPROVES COUNTY LEVIES FOR ALCOHOL LICENSING:**

Mrs. Sowell stated this is the annual levy for alcohol licensing and we have previously adopted the maximum amount allowed and this is for the 2026-2027 fiscal year. Commissioner Holmes made a motion to approve the county levies for alcohol licensing and was seconded by Commissioner Courson. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.



**Alabama Alcoholic Beverage Control Board  
Licensing and Compliance Division**

2715 Gunter Park Drive West  
Montgomery, AL 36109  
Phone: 334-213-6300  
Fax: 334-213-6322

**February 6, 2026**

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** All Wet County Commissions  
**From:** Summer Childers  
Licensing and Compliance Division Director  
**Subject:** County Levies for Alcohol Licensing

Sec. 28-3A-4, Code of Alabama, requires the Alcoholic Beverage Control Board to collect all county license fees for all new license applications and renewed licenses. In order for this program to be set up for fiscal year **2026-2027**, the **attached form must be completed** listing all amounts set by your county in column four (4). **If your county does not wish to make changes to the fees for a particular license type, please indicate that by writing "no change".**

Limitations of the maximum amount of county fees for the following ten (10) types of licenses have been set.

<u>Type</u>	<u>Maximum County Fee</u>
Retail Beer (On or Off Premises)	\$75.00
Retail Beer (Off Premises Only)	\$75.00
Retail Table Wine (On or Off Premises)	\$75.00
Retail Table Wine (Off Premises Only)	\$75.00
Wholesale Beer Only	\$275.00
Wholesale Table Wine Only	\$275.00
Wholesale Table Wine and Beer	\$375.00
Additional Warehouse Wine or Beer or Both	\$100.00
Importer	\$250.00
Brewpub	\$500.00

Please supply us with this information no later than **April 17, 2026**. This form must be signed by an authorized county official. Please return your completed document to [scarlett.spivey@abc.alabama.gov](mailto:scarlett.spivey@abc.alabama.gov) or mail to the address above. **If there are any changes in your contact information, it is your responsibility to notify the ABC Board as soon as possible.**

Received by: Karen L Sowell  
County: Covington

COUNTY ( 20 ) COVINGTON 2026-2027

TYPE LICENSE & CODE	*FILING FEE	STATE LICENSE FEE	COUNTY LICENSE FEE	NEW	
				RENEWAL LICENSE TOTAL	LICENSE TOTAL
010 - LOUNGE RETAIL LIQUOR - CLASS I	\$ 50.00	\$300.00	\$100.00	\$400.00	\$450.00
011 - LOUNGE RETAIL LIQUOR - CLASS II - ( PACKAGE)	\$ 50.00	\$300.00	\$100.00	\$400.00	\$450.00
020 - RESTAURANT RETAIL LIQUOR	\$ 50.00	\$300.00	\$100.00	\$400.00	\$450.00
031 - CLUB LIQUOR - CLASS I	\$ 50.00	\$300.00	\$100.00	\$400.00	\$450.00
032 - CLUB LIQUOR - CLASS II	\$ 50.00	\$750.00	\$100.00	\$850.00	\$900.00
**					
040 - RETAIL BEER - (ON OR OFF PREMISES)	\$ 50.00	\$150.00	\$75.00	\$225.00	\$275.00
**					
050 - RETAIL BEER (OFF PREMISES ONLY)	\$ 50.00	\$150.00	\$75.00	\$225.00	\$275.00
**					
060 - RETAIL TABLE WINE (ON OR OFF PREMISES)	\$ 50.00	\$150.00	\$75.00	\$225.00	\$275.00
**					
070 - RETAIL TABLE WINE (OFF PREMISES ONLY)	\$ 50.00	\$150.00	\$75.00	\$225.00	\$275.00
080 - LIQUOR WHOLESALE	\$ 50.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,050.00
**					
090 - WHOLESALE BEER ONLY	\$ 50.00	\$550.00	\$275.00	\$825.00	\$850.00
**					
100 - WHOLESALE TABLE WINE ONLY - 16.5% OR LESS	\$ 50.00	\$550.00	\$275.00	\$825.00	\$850.00
**					
110 - WHOLESALE TABLE WINE & BEER COMBINED	\$ 50.00	\$750.00	\$375.00	\$1,125.00	\$1,150.00
120 - WAREHOUSE LICENSE	\$ 50.00	\$200.00	\$100.00	\$300.00	\$350.00
**					
130 - ADDITIONAL WAREHOUSE-WINE, BEER OR BOTH	\$ 50.00	\$200.00	\$100.00	\$300.00	\$350.00
140 - SPECIAL EVENTS RETAIL	\$ 50.00	\$150.00	\$100.00	N/A	\$300.00
150 - SPECIAL RETAIL LICENSE - 30 DAYS OR LESS	\$ 50.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	N/A	\$250.00
160 - SPECIAL RETAIL - MORE THAN 30 DAYS	\$ 50.00	\$250.00	\$100.00	\$350.00	\$400.00
170 - RETAIL COMMON CARRIER	\$ 50.00	\$150.00	\$100.00	\$250.00	\$300.00
200 - MANUFACTURER	\$ 50.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,050.00
**					
210 - IMPORTER	\$ 50.00	\$500.00	\$250.00	\$750.00	\$800.00
**					
220 - BREWPUB	\$ 50.00	\$1,000.00	\$500.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,550.00
230 - INTERNATIONAL MOTOR SPEEDWAY	\$ 50.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$1,500.00	\$1,550.00
240 - NON PROFIT - TAX EXEMPT	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
250 - WINE FESTIVAL LICENSE	\$ 0.00	\$50.00	\$50.00	N/A	\$100.00
260 - WINE FESTIVAL PARTICIPANT LICENSE	\$ 0.00	\$10.00	\$15.00	N/A	\$30.00
300 - HOSPITALITY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM LICENSE	\$ 50.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,050.00
310 - FOOD OR BEVERAGE TRUCK LICENSE	\$ 50.00	\$300.00	\$300.00	\$600.00	\$650.00
320 - EDUCATIONAL TOURISM DISTILLERY	\$ 50.00	\$1,000.00	\$1,000.00	\$2,000.00	\$2,050.00
500 - DIRECT WINE SHIPPER	\$ 50.00	\$200.00	\$200.00	\$0.00	\$400.00
510 - WINE FULFILLMENT CENTER	\$ 50.00	\$500.00	\$500.00	\$0.00	\$1,000.00
520 - ADDITIONAL WINE FULFILLMENT CENTER	\$ 50.00	\$100.00	\$100.00	\$0.00	\$200.00
530 - DELIVERY SERVICE LICENSE	\$ 100.00	\$250.00	N/A		\$350.00
800 - IN-STATE WINERY OFF-SITE TASTING PERMIT	\$ 50.00	N/A	N/A		\$50.00
810 - EVENT STORAGE LICENSE	\$ 50.00	\$550.00	\$550.00	\$1,100.00	\$1,150.00
820 - GOVERNMENT VENUE LICENSE	\$ 50.00	\$250.00	\$250.00	\$500.00	\$550.00

\*\* May not charge more than one-half of the state fee for this type of license.

SIGNED: Karen K. Swell  
Authorized County Official

Administrator  
Title

3/4/26  
Date

**COMMISSION ANNOUNCES EXPIRATION OF BOARD POSITIONS FOR SARCOA BOARD:**

Chairman Smith stated there are three board positions that are expiring March 2026 for the SARCOA Board. Mrs. Sowell stated there must be an elected official and two non-elected. She also stated that the elected position is currently held by Gary Strickland who is not an elected official anymore nor wants to be reappointed. She also stated she has not reached out to the other two board appointments to see if they are still interested. Chairman Smith stated this will need to be announced that we will take applications for those that are interested in being on this board.

**COMMISSION AMENDS AGENDA TO ADD APPROVAL OF ROOF REPAIR FOR THE COURTHOUSE:**

Chairman Smith asked Phillip Anderson, Maintenance Director to explain what is going on with the repair of the roof at the courthouse. Mr. Anderson stated the individual that was approved at a previous meeting to reseal the courthouse roof stated as they were cleaning the roof they noticed gashes in the roof. He also stated he was told they can patch the gashes for \$5,000 with no warranty or for an additional \$4,500 a new roof can be done which has a 15-year warranty. Commissioner Holmes made a motion to amend the agenda to consider the proposal for the new roof at the courthouse and was seconded by Commissioner Courson. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed. Mr. Anderson stated he was also told that at 14 years and 11 months if they call him to come reseal the roof then it will cost \$3,000 but will add another 15 years of warranty to the roof. Commissioner Holmes made a motion to approve the proposal for a new roof and was seconded by Commissioner McGaha. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

**COMMISSION RECESSED. MOVING INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION:**

County Attorney, Morgan Arrington, reported that there is an item to be considered by the commission in an executive session. Mrs. Arrington stated that in her legal opinion the matter before the Commission is appropriate for executive session under Alabama Code Section 36-25A-7(a)(3). A motion was made to enter executive session to discuss with the county attorney the hiring of the EMA Director by Commissioner McGaha with a second by Commissioner Courson. Upon being put to an oral declaration the results are as follows:

District 1 Commissioner Ben Courson, Yes, District 3 Commissioner Lynne Holmes, Yes, and District 4 Commissioner Tommy McGaha, Yes. Chairman Smith stated there would be action taken by the body after the executive session and the Commission recessed into the executive session at 9:58 a.m.

**COMMISSION RECONVENES IN REGULAR SESSION:**

The Commission reconvened in regular session at 10:33 am and Commissioner Courson made a motion to hire Alan Syler as the new EMA Director contingent upon the approval of the MOU with the Sheriff's Department and was seconded by Commissioner Holmes. Upon being put to vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

**DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMMISSIONERS:**

Chairman Smith stated that County Engineer Lynn Ralls is retiring and Derick Donaldson who is the new engineer will start March 16, 2026. She also stated the new Assistant Engineer Sarah Jones will start on March 9, 2026.

Commissioner Holmes wanted to remind everyone that there would be a retirement reception for Susan Harris from 1 to 3 in the commission chambers. She also stated that Jason Walker, who is the bridge supervisor, will also be retiring after 31 years with the county and his last day is February 26, 2026.

**ADJOURNMENT:**

There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Commissioner Courson and seconded by Commissioner McGaha to adjourn. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed and the meeting adjourned at 10:35 a.m.

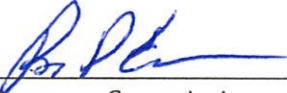
**APPROVED THIS 10<sup>TH</sup> DAY OF MARCH 2026.**



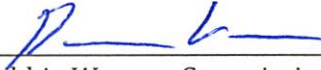
Michael Smith, Chairman



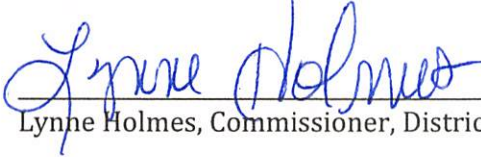
Karen L. Sowell, Administrator



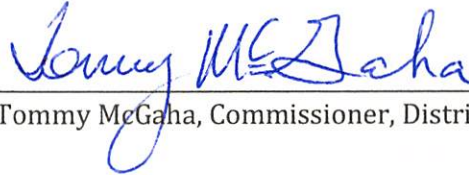
Ben Courson, Commissioner, District 1



Robbie Weaver, Commissioner, District 2



Lynne Holmes, Commissioner, District 3



Tommy McGaha, Commissioner, District 4