

**MINUTES
COVINGTON COUNTY COMMISSION**

**January 27, 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, January 27, 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
Robbie Weaver, Commissioner, District 2
Lynne Holmes, Commissioner, District 3
Tommy McGaha, Commissioner, District 4
Karen L. Sowell, County Administrator
Morgan Arrington, County Attorney

ABSENT:

None

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 Chuck Patterson, Revenue Commissioner to lead the group in prayer, after which everyone joined in the pledge of allegiance to the flag.

**AGENDA
COVINGTON COUNTY COMMISSION**

**January 27, 2026
9:00 A.M.**

- I. Call to Order and Establish Quorum
- II. Welcome, Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance
- III. Scheduled Public Hearings
- IV. Public Comments from Citizens, as scheduled
- V. Awards and Presentations
- VI. Public Comments from Other Elected or Appointed Officials
- VII. Consent Agenda
 - a. Consider Approval of Minutes for January 15, 2026, Regular Meeting, and January 20, 2026, Special Meeting
- VIII. Old Business
- IX. New Business

- a. Consider Declaration of Surplus for Sheriff's Department
 - b. Consider Purchase of Vehicle for Sheriff's Department
 - c. Consider 2025 Transportation Plan Update
- X. Reports from Staff
 - XI. Discussion Items by Commissioners
 - XII. Adjourn

PUBLIC COMMENTS FROM OTHER ELECTED OR APPOINTED OFFICIALS:

Tami Baxley, CATS Director, wanted to let the Commissioners know that the state will hold training here on March 24-25, 2026. She stated that her office will be closed those two days to the public as her employees will also attend the training. Chairman Smith asked where the training would be held and Mrs. Baxley stated right now, she has the USDA building reserved.

Susan Harris, EMA Director, stated there was some minor damage to a house and a shed was destroyed in the storm that we just had but that was all the damage reported for Covington County.

Chuck Patterson, Revenue Commissioner, stated there is \$1,660,779.12 unpaid on property taxes. He also stated they are working with a few individuals about getting their exemption for being over 65. Mr. Patterson stated there is going to be a \$100,000 exemption provided by the state for business personal property. He also stated his office will send a letter to the Commission to either opt in or opt out on this exemption. Mr. Patterson stated that if the county opts in on the exemption it would be a loss of \$37,580 of revenue for a year. Chairman Smith asked what the total property tax for this year would be and Mr. Patterson stated it's too early to tell at this time.

COMMISSION APPROVES MINUTES FOR JANUARY 15, 2026, REGULAR MEETING, AND JANUARY 20, 2026, SPECIAL MEETING:

Chairman Smith stated that the minutes for the January 15, 2026, regular meeting, January 20, 2026, special meeting were emailed to all Commissioners for review. Commissioner Courson made a motion to approve the minutes for January 15, 2026, regular meeting, January 20, 2026, special meeting, and was seconded by Commissioner McGaha. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

COMMISSION APPROVES DECLARATION OF SURPLUS FOR SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT:

Sheriff Turman stated he is requesting for two vehicles in his department to be declared surplus. He stated one has engine problems that would cost more to fix and he would like to have the other one declared surplus to trade in on another vehicle. Chairman Smith asked Mrs. Sowell since this was bought with the Sheriff's discretionary funds then the vehicle can be traded in and Mrs. Sowell stated yes. Commissioner Holmes asked why the Sheriff doesn't want to keep the truck and Sheriff Turman stated he would like to get rid of this while the value is better. Commissioner McGaha made a motion to approve the declaration of surplus for both vehicles and was seconded by Commissioner Weaver. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

COMMISSION APPROVES SOLICITATION OF BIDS FOR PURCHASE OF VEHICLE FOR SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT:

Sheriff Turman stated he is requesting approval to purchase a vehicle on the state bid. He also stated there is a state bid on a Ford Explorer and a Ford Maverick which is the least expensive one. Sheriff stated this will be used for school resource officer. Morgan Arrington, County Attorney stated they can purchase new off state bid or to purchase used it will have to be solicited for bids. Commissioner Weaver stated he would like to see this bid sent out locally and Sheriff Turman stated yes it can be bid locally. Commissioner McGaha stated the local vehicles do not come equipped like they do on the state bid. Commissioner Weaver stated we can include in the bid the amounts to have the vehicle

equipped. Commissioner Courson stated these vehicles will be bought with the Sheriff's discretionary funds. Sheriff Turman stated he is trading in two vehicles, and one will be purchased with discretionary funds and the other will not be purchased with discretionary funds. Mrs. Sowell stated he has already purchased the ones that were approved in the budget for this year, so he is requested to purchase one more that was not in the budget. Commissioner Holmes asked if he was only asking for one more vehicle and Sheriff Turman stated yes. Sheriff Turman stated one will be traded in for another vehicle, and one will just be sold as surplus. Commissioner Holmes made a motion to approve the solicitation of bids for vehicle purchase locally and was seconded by Commissioner Weaver. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was passed with a majority vote as Commissioner Courson voted no. Mrs. Sowell asked the Commission how they would like the vehicle to be purchased and Sheriff Turman stated usually it is purchased by the county and then he writes a check back to the county out of his discretionary funds. Mrs. Sowell stated yes but you just asked for approval to purchase more than one vehicle that would not be paid out of discretionary funds. Mrs. Sowell then asked Sheriff if he was only requesting to purchase one vehicle and he stated yes. Sheriff Turman also asked if he could get approval to move forward with purchasing from state bid if the local bids do not work. Commissioner Holmes made a motion to approve the alternative purchase off state bid if the local bid is not within the 5% window to include accessories and was seconded by Commissioner Weaver. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

COUNTY ENGINEER GIVES 2025 TRANSPORTATION PLAN UPDATE:

Lynn Ralls, County Engineer, gave an update on the 2025 transportation plan. He stated Rosin Ridge and Union Grove Roads were not finished and will carry over into this year. He stated a total of \$405,000 of County Rebuild funds as well as \$207,000 in federal aide exchange funds should carry over this year. Mr. Ralls stated there is a certificate of compliance that states there must be at least 50% of the work contracted and he stated we have about 95% contracted.

COMMISSION GIVES COUNTY ATTORNEY AUTHORITY TO MOVE FORWARD WITH RESEARCH HOME RULE:

Chairman Smith stated that several of the Commissioners have been contacted regarding the carbon capture project. He stated there has been much discussion about the Commission having authority to move forward with home-rule which would give the Commission a local authority. Mrs. Arrington stated at this time the Commission has no authority for home-rule in Covington County. She stated that HB61 is a great option for the citizens to vote on. She also stated that home rule will give the county more authority and that a proposal can be drafted and sent to legislation and if approved then it will go to the citizens to be voted on. Mrs. Arrington stated this will give the Commission limited authority on the local level. Commissioner Courson made a motion to give Mrs. Arrington the authority to draft a document to be sent to legislation regarding home-rule for Covington County and was seconded by Commissioner McGaha. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

REPORTS FROM STAFF:

Chairman Smith asked Mr. Ralls about an update on the power pole being moved for the Eden Creek Bridge project and Mr. Ralls stated he spoke with Covington Electric yesterday and they should hopefully start on that next week. Commissioner Holmes asked once the power pole was moved if the county was ready to start and Mr. Ralls stated yes. Commissioner Holmes asked for update on the LBW project and Mr. Ralls stated they must put a topsoil on the field which they need dryer weather to complete.

Mrs. Sowell stated there is a closed event at the Covington Center Arena this weekend. Commissioner Holmes asked about an old fence out front, and Mrs. Sowell stated it's a prop that has been used for vendors to put their signs on and Commissioner Holmes stated it has fallen over and needs to be removed.

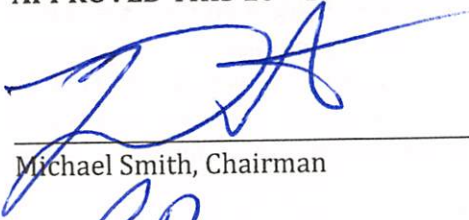
DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMMISSIONERS:

Commissioner Courson asked about taking applications for a CFO since that was included in the budget. Commissioner Holmes made a motion to approve taking applications for a comptroller and was seconded by Commissioner Weaver. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed.

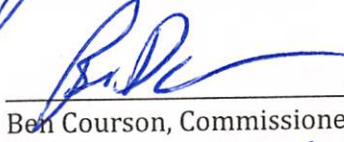
ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Commission, a motion was made by Commissioner McGaha and seconded by Commissioner Courson to adjourn. Upon being put to a vote, the motion was unanimously passed and the meeting adjourned at 9:33 a.m.

APPROVED THIS 10TH DAY OF FEBRUARY 2026.



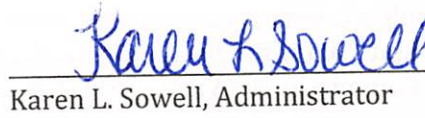
Michael Smith, Chairman



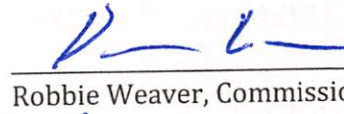
Ben Courson, Commissioner, District 1



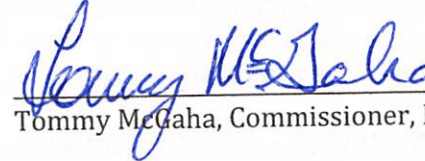
Lynne Holmes, Commissioner, District 3



Karen L. Sowell, Administrator



Robbie Weaver, Commissioner, District 2



Tommy McGaha, Commissioner, District 4