

**MINUTES, LIMESTONE COUNTY COMMISSION, JUNE 15, 2020  
COMMISSION MEETING**

The Limestone County Commission met in a regular meeting today, at 10:00 a.m. at the Clinton Street Courthouse Annex, 100 South Clinton Street, Athens, Alabama.

Present: Daryl Sammet, Steve Turner, Jason Black, and Ben Harrison. Absent: None. Collin Daly, Chairman presided.

Garth Lovvorn, 301 East Washington Street. "I'm here to talk about the issue that's come up lately about the Confederate statue at the courthouse. I was born one block from there and I live three blocks from there, so I know it pretty well. We've got a lot of people on both sides of the issue about whether the statue should be removed or taken down. I'm coming to present a compromise. We've got a lot of issues of people's descendants black and white that have gone through hard times in the past. So, what I want to do is keep a progression of history, not take down any statue or monument, but build on it. I would like for the black minority to come up with an idea of a statue that should be placed on The Square."

Waylon Norma, 27120 Sleepy Hollow Road. "I'm here to speak about law and order. If somebody can simply raise \$25,000 and break the law and take a statue down, I will speed my \$25,000 to remove whichever statue of my choosing. "

Zack Magnusson, 27922 Meadow Drive. "I'm from Ardmore and my ancestral roots in Limestone County predate statehood. I'm here in support of the preservation of the Limestone county Confederate soldier's memorial where it now stands and has stood 111 years." He spoke of six confederate soldiers, saying that each has a decedent in the room, John Wesley Holt, Company C 11<sup>th</sup> Alabama Cavalry; Corporal Blake Bartlett, Company B 18<sup>th</sup> Regiment Georgia Infantry; Private William Woodfin, Company 53<sup>rd</sup> A Tennessee Infantry; Private William Coleman Barksdale, Company E 26<sup>th</sup> Regiment Alabama Infantry; Private James Henry Rogers, Company F 50<sup>th</sup> Alabama Infantry; and Private William Riley Roberts, 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment Russell's Cavalry. "Each of these six men share the common bond, brothers in arms that answered the call of their state to defend it from invasion. They put their lives on the line in a very real sense, hours on the field of battle. Think of the men who did not survive and the people who never existed because of it. I think how fortunate we are to even be here as a descendant of one of these men. I stand here reminding that you swore an oath to support the Constitution of Alabama and the laws pursuant thereto and that there is no legal path by which this monument can be moved or altered."

Blake Sulcer, 203 Whitfield Drive. "Myself and my colleagues are here to speak about a very important subject and an issue in Limestone County. My colleagues and I are a group of caring professionals, intelligent and like-minded people who have lived or still currently reside in Limestone County are a constant reminder of the grueling and violent history of the Confederate era stands. My colleagues have passionately researched and worked to show what we consider extremely relevant and factual information as to why we should relocate this memorial. We have seen and heard the comments that we were trying to erase history and I can assure you that is the furthest from the truth. We

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simply want every human being that walks by or drives through our beautiful hometown to see the true progress in equality we have all fought so hard for.”

Madeline Burkhardt, 22841 Winged Ft. Lane. “I’m coming as a historian and a professional conservationist, so what Blake said is true, we are not trying to erase history at all, actually we’re trying to save it. We’re wanting to move it to a place where it can be better conserved, put an educational plaque on it because there’s not one that exists there now. However, if we are going to talk about this history, I do think there needs to be a better understanding of it. From my research, I found that the first monument was placed by the Daughters of the Confederacy and actually it wasn’t in that location, but it was on Market Street. People didn’t like it, they thought that the man look whipped. They took it down and so a man by the name of Thomas Macklin Hobbs steps up to the plate and paid for the next monument, from my research he was associated with the Ku Klux Klan. I have evidence that this statue was up as an active soldier, the previous one that the Daughters of the Confederacy put up, that they intended to be a memorial to those who had fallen, now resides in the graveyard, so forever looks over his comrades. The one that is standing at the courthouse is facing northeast, is forever looking down at their opponent. We’re just wanting to rehome him, fix the crack in the base, put an educational plaque with it, and have him in a better home to fully complete the narrative of the Civil War.”

Lindsay Sims, 207 Brookwood Drive. “I appreciate the words regardless of the standpoint of everyone I’ve heard this morning. A quote from F. Scott Fitzgerald is the test of first-rate intelligence is the ability to hold two opposed ideas in mind at the same time and still retain the ability to function. I must confess that I’m the individual responsible for organizing the Go Fund Me account in support of relocation of the Confederate monument. I want to explain the background and the reasoning behind this group. Since the murder of George Floyd, I began a soul search of myself and have been overcome with deep sorrow for the state of our nation as a whole. After watching Birmingham with what happened to the monument, I realized that Athens must take action to educate and unify in order to better our community and to prevent such from happening in our town. I can assure you that this campaign was not born of resentment or hatred for our county, it is born of an immense respect in a true love for it. I’m an educator with a passion for child advocacy. I’m here on behalf of my students and all of the children in this city. The very first call that I got on this matter was from a 12-year old child asking me about my standpoint and asking for a ride to a peaceful protest. If you don’t believe that our children aren’t watching, they are. Please take this into consideration. I encourage you to visit the Go Fund Me page where we’re sharing educational resources for everyone.”

Caroline Foret, 201 Jefferson Street. “I come here today with many other representing the next generation of Limestone leaders who aim to continue to build a prosperous and successful community. I’m here urging the Commission to approve and plan for the relocation of the Confederate statue that is currently located on the courthouse lawn. I’d like to express this as a priority. It is something that demands our local leaders’ attention. Without supporting the relocation of this monument, the Commission

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positions itself as uninterested in preserving our County's tract to prosperity. I know that this Commission does value success in growth, just as much as it invests in the preservation of history. You can take action and help this community do both. This issue is something that affects the growth of this county in real dollars and cents. Many individuals and families are looking to relocate to North Alabama due to huge job opportunities arriving at our doorstep. The presence of this statue on our city center, our courthouse lawn, is directly related and hugely symbolic of how people consider our values, what our people stand for. You've heard the history of this monument today with this monument in place, we're expressing that our County stands for inequality, injustice and oppression. Let us instead choose to lead by example. The relocation to a museum or to a cemetery symbolizes your support of growth for Limestone County and your preservation of history. We challenge you to think not what the status quo has been, but what is to come, and what is right. As a county leader, we urge you to fulfill that obligation with action."

Walker Sims, 802 Box Street. "I want to start by reading you a statement that I took from the [visitahtensalabama.com](http://visitahtensalabama.com) website. It says community is more than buildings, boundaries and roadways, it's the people. The people are the pulse of the community. They are a heart of the community and they are the soul of the community. It is the people that strive to make the community the best it can be, through stewardship, through sweat, through tears and through joy. To me, in order to start actually fulfilling such a mission statement, we need to realize how extremely divisive this statue is. I believe that relocating it to a proper location shows that we can move forward and promote growth as a united community. I believe this community must allow diversity to flourish in order to grow and strengthen for its future."

Shauna Kunz, 1316 Wheeler Street. "You may question why we're even talking about these statues now; we are just used to seeing them anywhere, everywhere anyways. I ask, have you ever been blind to something and then God unveils the truth and then you realize the work you have ahead of you, uncomfortable work you have to do. The work to make a change. Our community needs transparency to ensure trust. Imagine a community focused on healing and love. First John 3:38 states, dear children let us not love with words or speech, but with actions and in truth. There is an infection of racism around our country. It can spread and grow in our town. You're never going heal an infection without cleansing it first. Relocating the Confederate statue would be a part of this healing. Addressing this means we embrace the tenants that reflect the southern culture to be connection, equality, charm, history over lost cause attitudes."

Dakota Cotton, 300 N. Beaty Street. "I'm actually have something to read from a friend of mine who's a local African-American woman, but she was nervous about coming to this place and saying these things. These are not my words, but hers. When I see the monument in front of the courthouse, my reaction is seldom visible. Part of this is condition, 30-years of living and looking at a marble studded southern landscape that seldom changes. The other part stems from guised professional advice warning me that my thoughts and opinions are futile. (She works in the historical industry.) Both of these are orchestrated attempts to encourage silence and create paralyzing

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insecurities. In short, it is a way to normalize that which is not normal. Confederate monuments, paintings and other symbols are supposed to be noticed and in the South's case, they are presented as a source of connection. They were erected to connect people to the land, to their southern pride and to the past. So, when we talk about these artifacts, I know how people want me to feel. I also know that not feeling pride usually results in confusion and often defensiveness. As we see, statues and symbols removed, arguments occur ranging from the loss of southern history to the claim that they represent (quote) heritage not hate. Upon hearing these or others, I become perplexed and think then when is it that my heritage and my southern-ness is not encompassed in these same monuments. The statues exemplify this issue, as they omit many parts of our history including the 110<sup>th</sup>, 111<sup>th</sup>, and 106<sup>th</sup> United States Colored Troops. These were valiant men from Limestone County and the surrounding areas who fought for their freedom. As southern as they were, their valor is not memorialized in the manner of Confederates. Heritage stems from culture and unfortunately our culture values victory over truth. To me the paintings or statues are another symbol of that cultural system. But not the South itself, they glorify some southern experience and ignore the oppression, discrimination and other ism that black individuals are constantly resisting. The monuments distill down to powerful questions. One that we must keep asking, as African Americans continue to be discriminated against, harmed and murdered. W.E. Dubois posed it over 100 years ago saying (quote) "The real question how does it feel to be a problem? I answer seldom a word." (end quote) The process of defending our opposition and demanding equality is exhausting. Part of the problem is that our Southern heritage contradicts the story the South would like to exude contextualization of the memorial states, paintings and other artifacts. Our symbols should be an option reserved for when you cannot simply get to the point and repair the narrative as it should be."

Leigh Key, 21913 Williamsburg. "I want to speak from my heart about how I feel about Athens and growing up here. The monuments, that we heard earlier, are there to represent those who have died protecting us in this area. I see that as one statue there looking at all those that suffered through the Civil War to protect what they felt was right. There's another monument up there that has my grandfather's name on it, Lt. Benton McLemore was a police officer here in Athens. In the 60's he was shot and killed in the line of duty by a black man on the north end of town. I've never let that hold me against anyone, black, white, whatever nationality. I feel like the nation has allowed a very bad act by a police officer to affect how we think and now they're thinking police officers are bad. To me there are good and bad no matter where we are, so I think we should look at this in light of the situation of what we're trying to protect now from our heritage and keep that too as a reminder of what people have gone through. If there are any other statues to be erected in recognition of others that have suffered, I would have no problem with that. I feel like the City of Athens is proud of where we are and what we've gone through to get to where we are today. I get times change, but we need to understand and respect the past."

The meeting began with the Pledge of Allegiance.

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**MOTION** was made by Jason Black and seconded by Ben Harrison to approve the minutes of June 2, 2020.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Jason Black, aye; Ben Harrison, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Steve Turner, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Steve Turner and seconded by Daryl Sammet to approve the following claims

5/29/20	Check # 57419 – 57500	\$1,363,533.09
6/05/20	Check # 57501 – 57569	\$ 463,699.70
6/05/20	Check # 57570	<u>\$ 283.63</u>
	TOTAL	<u>\$1,827,516.42</u>

with detailed claims of the above being on file for review upon request to the County Administrator.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Steve Turner, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; Jason Black, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Steve Turner and seconded by Ben Harrison to authorize the Chairman to execute a 3-year payment plan to purchase a VMware licenses for the Information Technology Department; \$7,200.00 due now, \$8,606.94 due year 2 and \$8,606.94 due year 3.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Steve Turner, aye; Ben Harrison, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Jason Black, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Jason Black and seconded by Steve Turner to approve the following budget revision:

Department	Account Number	Title of Line Item	Amount
Council on Aging	102-56200-234	R & M Motor Vehicles	+\$25,000.00
	102-35910-000	Budgetary Fund Balance	-\$25,000.00

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Jason Black, aye; Steve Turner, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

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**MOTION** was made by Steve Turner and seconded by Daryl Sammet to appoint Jason Black to serve on the 2020 – 2021 ACCA Legislative Committee.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. Commissioner Turner stated he won't be here, but would like to make the appointment a four-year term or two-year term if that person only has two years left to serve on the Commission. The Administrator called the roll. Steve Turner, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; Jason Black, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Daryl Sammet and seconded by Jason Black to nominate the following candidates to be submitted to the Governor to appoint one nominee to serve a four-year term on the Board of Directors of the Alabama Elk River Development Agency:

- Mayor Tracy Compton
- Mayor Ronnie Marks
- Mayor Billy Shannon

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Daryl Sammet, aye; Jason Black, aye; Steve Turner, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Ben Harrison and seconded by Jason Black to employ Sydnae Townsend as a Deputy, pending drug screening.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Ben Harrison, aye; Jason Black, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Steve Turner, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Steve Turner and seconded by Jason Black to promote Mark Heard from Corrections Officer Corporal to Corrections Officer Sergeant.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Steve Turner, aye; Jason Black, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Jason Black and seconded by Steve Turner to transfer Caleb King from Work Release Superintendent to Deputy/School Resource Officer.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Jason Black, aye; Steve Turner, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Ben Harrison and seconded by Daryl Sammet to transfer Jon Russell from Corrections Sergeant to Work Release Superintendent.

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The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Ben Harrison, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; Steve Turner, aye; and Jason Black, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Jason Black and seconded by Daryl Sammet to promote Tracy Tyler from Corrections Officer to Corrections Officer Corporal.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Jason Black, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; Steve Turner, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Steve Turner and seconded by Daryl Sammet to transfer Blake McMahan from Equipment Operator III to Herbicide Operator in Engineering.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Steve Turner, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; Jason Black, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Jason Black and seconded by Steve Turner to promote Quentin Wise from Engineering Assistant Sign Tech to Equipment Operator III in Engineering.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Jason Black, aye; Steve Turner, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Steve Turner and seconded by Daryl Sammet to amend the Staffing Plan to add (3) Equipment Operator 1 positions to the Paving-Road Maintenance in the Engineering.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Steve Turner, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; Jason Black, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Ben Harrison and seconded by Jason Black to approve to hire the following as Equipment Operator 1 in the Engineering, pending drug screenings:

- Doug Watson
- Logan McMahan
- Cameron Wright

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. Commissioner Harrison explained that agenda items 7, 8 & 9 are an attempt to keep the paving crew staffed and be able to address projects. The Administrator called the roll. Ben Harrison, aye; Jason Black, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Steve Turner, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

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**MOTION** was made by Steve Turner and seconded by Jason Black to approve the following merit increases, which are included in the base pay and cost of living pay as listed below.

Name	Position	Effective Date
Chris Davis	District 1 Foreman	7/18/20
Megan Goode	Warrants Clerk	7/18/20
Jonathan Hardiman	Deputy	7/18/20
Gary McNatt	Lieutenant	7/18/20
John Moore	Corrections Officer	7/01/20
Connie Powers	Corrections Officer	7/08/20
Justin Todd Romine	Equipment Operator III	7/05/20
William D. Russell	Equipment Operator III	7/18/20
Maggie Settle	Court Security Officer	7/11/20
Corey Watkins	Equipment Operator III	7/13/20
Mark Zivat	Deputy	7/02/20

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Steve Turner, aye; Jason Black, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Ben Harrison, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Steve Turner and seconded by Ben Harrison approve the following subdivisions:

Name	S/D Type	Approval Type	Lots	District	Location
Jones Estates	Minor	Preliminary & Final	8	2	West side of Jones Rd
Rainey Estates Sub. Replat tracts 4 & 5	Minor	Preliminary & Final	1	3	Approx. 871' north of Snake Rd & Davis Rd intersection
Bowman Acres Phase 2	Major	Preliminary	24	2	Northeast corner of Brown Rd & Bledsoe Rd

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. Commissioner Turner said that everybody developing a subdivision in Limestone County, we need you to take care of the housekeeping along the roads and along the entrances to those subdivisions. It makes it better on everybody involved; the people that are currently living in those areas and the people that are going to be living in those areas. The county's maintenance of the road is a whole lot easier to take care of when contractors pitch in and help.

The Administrator called the roll. Steve Turner, aye; Ben Harrison, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Jason Black, aye. Motion carries unanimously.



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**MOTION** was made by Ben Harrison and seconded by Jason Black to approve to change the name of the section road that appears to be the west to east cut thru between Red Hill Hollow Rd and Easter Ferry Road. The request is to change this section of road that is currently known as Red Hill Hollow Rd to Abigail Lane.

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Ben Harrison, aye; Jason Black, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; and Steve Turner, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

**MOTION** was made by Ben Harrison and seconded by Daryl Sammet remove the following from inventory:

<b>Department</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Inventory #</b>	<b>Serial #</b>
District 4	2010 Kubota KX-057 Mini Excavator	17527	KX057R3A

The Chairman asked if there was any discussion. There was no discussion. The Administrator called the roll. Ben Harrison, aye; Daryl Sammet, aye; Steve Turner, aye; and Jason Black, aye. Motion carries unanimously.

Commissioner Sammet thanked everyone for coming out to voice their opinions today. He thanked Chief Sloss for the deputies working at the Clinton Annex since COVID-19. He said they have done a great job maintaining control.

Commissioner Turner said he appreciates all the comments on both sides of the question at hand here today. "I don't know what the Commission will do, if there's anything we'll do, but we're glad to be able to hear from people and get both comments." He thanked the Sheriff's Office for helping with some traffic control on a paving project. He pleaded for motorists to please obey the traffic signs and the commands being given by the flagman when you're approaching a work zone.

Commissioner Black reported his district is reclaiming from Seven-Mile Post Road to Shaw Road and a portion of Snake Road in preparation for chip sealing; which is part of the Rebuild Alabama money received from the recent tax on fuel. He said he appreciates everyone's comments on the Civil War monument. "When you're in this position and have to make a decision, somebody's going to be upset, someone's not going to get their way. When we vote, we vote based on those people that come before us, we vote based on the Constitution of Alabama. We as a County Commission vowed to follow the Constitution. I don't know if it will be on the agenda someday to vote to keep or remove or relocate. I just want everyone to know that I will value everyone's opinion and I value everyone's wishes, but somebody on one side is not going to get what they want, so when that time comes, I will tell you why I chose to do what I chose to do and that will be a very well thought-out process."

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Commissioner Harrison reported his district is working on County Line Road adding cross drains, side drains and pulling ditches getting ready for reclaiming. Later Lauderdale County will come in and plant mix the road. He thanked everyone that came out to speak on the issue and applaud them for taking the time to make their wishes known. "You may be nervous, but that just shows us that you're passionate about getting your views across. Stating your position is good to let us know how you feel, so we can see the different perspectives that go into our decision. I appreciate you for doing that. I look at what's going on in our country today and it's just craziness. We should oppose injustice anywhere and everywhere. We should work to eliminate all injustice. I appreciate you coming out and we will take all into advisement."

Chairman Daly thanked everyone for coming out. "I know it's hard to get in front of the public and I value the opinions from both sides. When I took office, I placed my hand on the Bible and raised my hand to uphold the law. The law right now, is the monument is protected and the Legislators can change the law. I want to thank all the commissioners for dedicating time to work on the Rails to Trails to finish a grant project."

Adjourned at 10:51 a.m. until 9:00 a.m. on Monday, July 6, 2020, Clinton Street Courthouse Annex, 100 South Clinton Street, Athens, Alabama.