

**MINUTES, LIMESTONE COUNTY COMMISSION, AUGUST 17, 2020
WORK SESSION**

The Limestone County Commission reconvened the meeting from August 3, 2020 at 9:00 a.m. today at the Clinton Street Courthouse Annex, 100 South Clinton Street, Athens, Alabama.

Present: Daryl Sammet, Steve Turner, and Ben Harrison. Absent: Jason Black. Collin Daly, Chairman presided.

Charles Woodroof, Limestone County Judge of Probate, addressed the commission requesting to change the Ardmore Polling Precinct from the Ardmore Municipal Annex to the Ardmore Senior Center, 29920 Park Avenue, Ardmore, AL 35739 to provide a larger, more effective polling precinct.

Dr. John Kvach, Executive Director of the Singing River Trail, gave an overview of the Singing River Trail in North Alabama that will connect Huntsville, Madison, Decatur, and Athens, and other communities in Madison, Morgan, and Limestone Counties and serve as a 70-mile (greenway) trail spine linking to other trail systems and 105-miles of river (blue way) throughout the region. He thanked the Commissioners for their monetary support of the Master Plan and asked their consideration for an appropriation for FY21.

Items were discussed for the August 17, 2020 commission meeting agenda.

Commissioner Harrison reported his district has started back reclaiming County Line Road that borders Lauderdale County. He said they had made about three tenths of a mile progress and that took about four days. He read from prepared notes regarding road funding. "Each year the Limestone County Commission accepts funding request for the next fiscal year from county department heads. The county commission has a responsibility to decide which department heads needs more funding, which ones stay level, which ones need to be cut. The system works pretty well for most county functions, but there's a critical area that gets overlooked year after year, and this is our county infrastructure funding. There is no department head that represents the resurfacing needs of Limestone County roads, so this year I'm coming to you again. I'm asking for an increase in road funding for all of Limestone County. Look at it as a county instead of each individual district. This is not the first time I've made this request, but every year becomes even more critical because of the continued deterioration of our road conditions. This is one of the single most important issues facing the people of Limestone County. It's time that we need to address it in our 2021 budget. The county commission has a responsibility to properly maintain county roads. It's critical that we manage this area in the same responsible manner we do other departments. We need to look at what it will take to properly maintain our road system. The numbers are clear, our current road funding rates are not sustainable. Every year roads across Limestone County do not get the funding they need to keep up with the needed resurfacing. We have a total of 1,026 paved county road miles; 637 miles of plant mixed roads and 389 miles of chip seal roads. The cost per mile for plant mixed roads is \$97,881, roughly \$98,000 per plant mix road mile; that's equaling \$62,350,000. The cost per mile for a chip seal road is \$32,600; that equals to \$12,680,000. The cost

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to resurface all roads, the total is \$75,031,600. Plant mixed road have a projected lifespan of 18-years, while chip seal roads have an 8-year lifespan; the yearly cost of replacement is \$5,050,000. That's \$5,000,000 needed to resurface every year to just maintain our road system. The 2021 projected budget funding for Limestone County roads is roughly 2.8 million; that includes \$385,000 time four that we get in our 117 funds, and \$400,000 that we get from the Federal Aid Swap, and funding we get from Rebuild Alabama, so that's everything we get for resurfacing roads. At the 2020 rates, our roads are 45% underfunded, that's \$2.265 million underfunded, and that's just to maintain. That's not meeting the increased capacity demands in District 2 and 3. That's not side drains. That's not bridges which we know is incredibly expensive. That's just for road resurfacing. After looking at these numbers it's clear that we need to do something about this issue immediately. We wouldn't let any other department that comes in here and say they're 45% underfunded and we shouldn't do it with roads either. I've brought this issue up multiple times since I've been in office. In the past I've looked at increased road funding by allocating new revenue streams, finding ways we could cut spending; but today I'm asking for a new approach. I want to make Limestone County roads a priority again and to do this I'm recommending that we move guaranteed money from the general fund to be used for roads in the 2021 budget. I'm asking that we increase road funding by 1 million. I know that's a lot but is less than half of what we need to just maintain. I don't think the public really understands how underfunded we are. One million is a lot, but you've got to start somewhere."

Recessed at 9:32 a.m.