

STATE OF ALABAMA)
COLBERT COUNTY)

Minutes of a Regular Meeting
of the
Colbert County Commission
06/16/2026

The Colbert County Commission met today in regular session at the Colbert County Courthouse. Chairman Isom called the work session to order at 5:00 p.m. with the regular meeting following at 5:36 p.m., the time and place previously scheduled for such work session and regular meeting. All Commissioners answered “present” at the call of the roll. Commissioner Barnes offered the prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance. Chairman Isom declared that a quorum was present for the purpose of the transaction of business.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Sheriff Eric Balentine was recognized by the Chair and addressed the alleged chicken fighting off Jones Rd. Balentine said that he has been aware of the activity for several weeks and deputies gained access to the property 2 different times. Both times they made contact with individuals but saw no evidence of chicken fighting. However, the Sheriff is convinced that it is a chicken fighting ring. The problem is the location is on private property, miles off a public road, a drone cannot gather evidence because the “ring” is inside a barn, therefore, when the gate is closed, without access, lacking evidence to obtain a warrant and with no extenuating circumstances, his officers would not be lawfully present. Balentine has spoken with the D.A. who confirmed that it is a misdemeanor and carries a \$50 fine. Based on body cam footage obtained during the previous visits, his department has identified a couple of individuals who have been contacted and warned that this activity is not acceptable and will not be tolerated.

Commissioner Barnes asked if this should be addressed by the Legislature, increasing the fines. Balentine answered that based on information gathered there is a lot of money involved and he feels the penalty needs to be upgraded to animal cruelty. Commissioner Bailey stated, to be clear, fighting dogs is animal cruelty but fighting roosters is not. The statement was confirmed by Administrator Creekmore. Commissioner Bailey, as a reminder, said that Counties are responsible for the control of dogs, cats, ferrets, everything else will probably have to be kicked up to the State. Commissioner Bailey reached out to the representative of the Department of Agriculture, Monty Wearman, who said that they basically do farm animals. Balentine also spoke to Monty after getting the initial complaint and in his opinion, reading between the lines, the State is not going to intervene.

Sheriff Balentine spoke about the Confirm Okay Program. The initiative was started about a month ago. It is simply a list of people 65 or older that live alone to receive an automated phone

call at a specified time of their choosing which says, "Hello, this is Sheriff Balentine if you're okay press #1." If they reply to it, then the department knows that they are okay. If they do not press #1, a series of 3 calls are made. After the 3rd call, if there is no response, a welfare check will be dispatched to the residence to check on their well-being. This has been a good program and has worked well. There are about 20 more spots available. Citizens can call the Sheriff's Department, answer a few questions and be placed on the list. They have already found 2 people on the floor. The Department takes on the cost of \$9, which is worth it. They are called 7 days a week.

Sheriff Balentine also reported that they are getting closer to having our new jail completed. Once it is, they will need to talk to the municipalities to see what this is going to look like for them. They also discussed getting new staffing. Balentine stated that it may not hurt in the near future to have a meeting with the committee to talk about how we are going to approach it, just to have a good plan to move forward with the other municipalities. He feels that they should be getting close to moving in a year from September. Commissioner Bailey clarified the members of the Justice Center Committee and suggested that this group schedule a meeting as soon as possible to begin discussions.

Balentine stated that his department would open a new substation at Barton soon. It will provide 24 hr. surveillance and meet up spots for internet purposes and child custody exchange. He is looking for a location on the East end to do the same.

Sheriff Balentine briefly addressed the 287(g) program and his desire to use funds provided by ICE in this program. The money will be used for purchases of equipment and cars which may provide some relief to the county general fund. Balentine contends that ICE will be coming regardless and he wants the county to benefit from involvement.

County Solid Waste Manager Jake Flanagan was recognized by the Chair and provided an update on the Cartee/South Junk Ordinance situation. He stated that he had spoken to Mrs. South. They have moved some of the cars and are supposed to get the campers sometime this week. Mr. Cartee is no longer staying there. Mrs. South told Flanagan that as soon as they come to get the campers, they will bring some equipment in and start cleaning some things up as well as tearing the building down. HHG has already picked up trash from out there.

BOARD APPOINTEE REPORTS

None

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

None

PUBLIC HEARING

None

CONSENT AGENDA

Chairman Isom announced that the business before the Commission was the approval of the consent agenda. Commissioner Gardiner made a motion to adopt and approve the matters placed on the consent agenda during the work session. The motion was duly seconded by Commissioner Bailey. Chairman Isom stated that the adoption and approval of a consent agenda comprised of the following items of business was properly before the Commission and stated the matters as follows:

1. Approved June 2, 2026, meeting minutes, with necessary changes, and waived reading of same.
2. Approved June 16, 2026, bills as presented by the County CFO.
3. Approved payment request by Emily Benson for testing of voting machines for the June 16 primary run-off election in the amount of \$2,475.00.
4. Approved to set speed limits and post at 30 mph, Lagrange College Rd and Lagrange College Lane.
5. Approved Request from Revenue Commissioner Oswalt for salary correction due to error and that Business Personal Property Appraiser Kellie Clark's salary be corrected to \$36,827.01 and she receive back pay in the amount of \$5,497.18 effective July 1, 2026.
6. Adopted the following resolution authorizing a one-time lump-sum payment to eligible retired employees of the County:

RESOLUTION NUMBER 2026-0031

A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A ONE-TIME LUMP-SUM PAYMENT TO RETIRED EMPLOYEES OF COLBERT COUNTY

WHEREAS, Colbert County is a participating employer in the Employees' Retirement System of Alabama (the "ERS"), which is administered by the Retirement Systems of Alabama (the "RSA"); and

WHEREAS, the Legislature of the State of Alabama has authorized a one-time lump-sum payment to be made to certain retired members of the ERS (Act No. 2026-608); and

WHEREAS, in order for its retired members to receive the one-time lump-sum payment, a participating employer must elect, by resolution of its governing body, to provide such payment and to bear the cost thereof as determined and billed by the RSA; and

WHEREAS the Colbert County Commission desires to provide the one-time lump-sum payment to its eligible retired employees and to authorize payment of the County's share of the cost thereof to the RSA.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Colbert County Commission that the Commission hereby elects to provide the one-time lump-sum payment to its eligible retired members of the Employees' Retirement System of Alabama and authorizes the payment of the County's proportionate share of the cost thereof to the Retirement Systems of Alabama, in the amount determined and billed by the RSA.

7. Adopted the following resolution authorizing the expenditure of \$100,000.00 of 287(g) funds toward payment of the Sheriff's Department vehicle loan with First Metro Bank:
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RESOLUTION NUMBER 2026-0032

**A RESOLUTION APPROVING EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS RECEIVED FOR
COLBERT COUNTY SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT PARTICIPATION IN ICE /
287(g) PROGRAM**

WHEREAS the Sheriff of Colbert County entered into a Service Agreement with the United States Department of Homeland Security Immigration and Customs Enforcement for specific enforcement actions; and

WHEREAS, the General Fund of Colbert County has received One Time Stipend / Reimbursement payments as a result of the Colbert County Sheriff's Department's participation in the 287(g) program; and

WHEREAS, the Colbert County Commission has responsibility for the allocation and expenditure of monies contained in the County General Fund; and

WHEREAS the Colbert County Commission previously authorized a loan from First Metro Bank for the purchase of fleet vehicles for the Sheriff's Department; and

WHEREAS, Eric Balentine, the Sheriff of Colbert County, is requesting the expenditure of 287(g) funds for law enforcement purposes, specifically, the payment of One Hundred Thousand and 00/100 Dollars (\$100,000.00) toward the Sheriff's Department vehicle loan with First Metro Bank; and

WHEREAS the Commission recognizes that the vehicles financed by said loan are used to support the law enforcement operations of the Sheriff's Department, and that application of 287(g) funds toward the loan will provide relief to the County General Fund. Therefore, the Commission desires to approve the allocation of 287(g) funds toward payment of the vehicle loan.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Colbert County Commission, having deemed that payment toward the Sheriff's Department vehicle loan is a necessary, reasonable, and proportionate expenditure of the 287(g) funds, elects to allocate One Hundred Thousand and 00/100 Dollars (\$100,000.00) of the 287(g) funds toward payment of the Sheriff's Department vehicle loan with First Metro Bank.

REPORTS FROM STAFF

Chairman Isom announced that the Commission would hear reports from staff. Upon being recognized by the Chair, the following reports were heard by the Commission:

County Administrator:

County Administrator Creekmore informed the Commission that he has received written communication from Helen Keller Hospital saying that the following people are holding board positions currently are now past due for appointments: Melanie Huguley, Dr. Alford Boyd, Jr. and Dr. Jack McClendon. Dr. McClendon had declined to continue to serve on the board due to his position as VP of Medical Affairs of the hospital. Applications have been posted on the County's website and will be on the agenda for the first meeting in July. There is also an airport board appointment that will also be on the agenda. Dr. William Collignon currently holds that position. The Administrator gave a brief update about the jail. According to our architect, we are approximately 20% complete, demolition is over 90% complete and the scrap sales from the demolition have yielded \$162,000.00. The cells are now under construction; the air-conditioning units have begun to arrive and most of the plumbing roughed in. Creekmore is anticipating a change order to replace the roof on the tower part of the building. Creekmore requested that a Resolution for expenditure of 287(g) funds be added to the agenda. Commissioners consented.

From the Household Garbage Department, Jim Belue resigned from his job as PT Litter Crew effective June 11. Christopher Berry has been hired as a HHG Helper, full time, beginning June 8 at the rate of \$14.74/hr.

County CFO:

CFO April Eaton reports as follows: RSVP has been informed that their grant application will be approved this year. Eaton is hoping by the end of the month we should be able to draw down funds and repay the monies loaned to RSVP by the Commission.

County Attorney:

No Report but expressed his appreciation for being allowed to miss a couple of meetings for personal time.

E-911/EMA Director:

No Report

County Engineer:

Engineer Jeremy Robison reported as follows: The pavement marker project is finished and appears under budget. The second round of herbicide spraying is now complete.

NEW BUSINESS

None

DISCUSSION ITEMS BY COMMISSIONERS

None

Being no further business before the Commission, the meeting was duly adjourned at 5:39 P.M.

COMMISSIONER BARNES, DIST. 1

COMMISSIONER MANSELL, DIST. 2

COMMISSIONER GARDINER, DIST. 3

COMMISSIONER BAILEY, DIST. 4

COMMISSIONER BENDALL, DIST. 5

CHAIRMAN ISOM, DIST. 6