

FIRST BANCSHARES INC /MS/  
Form 424B3

January 11, 2018

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Registration No. 333-222067

Proxy Statement/Prospectus

**MERGER PROPOSED — YOUR VOTE IS VERY IMPORTANT**

To the Shareholders of Southwest Banc Shares, Inc.:

The boards of directors of The First Bancshares, Inc., or First Bancshares, and Southwest Banc Shares, Inc., or Southwest, have each unanimously approved the acquisition of Southwest by First Bancshares. The acquisition will be accomplished pursuant to the terms of an Agreement and Plan of Merger, dated as of October 24, 2017, which we refer to as the merger agreement, by and between First Bancshares and Southwest, whereby Southwest will be merged with and into First Bancshares, which we refer to as the merger. Immediately following the merger of Southwest with and into First Bancshares, First Community Bank, or First Community, a wholly owned bank subsidiary of Southwest, will merge with and into First Bancshares' wholly owned bank subsidiary, The First, A National Banking Association, with The First as the surviving bank, which we refer to as the bank merger.

If the merger is completed, each share of Southwest common stock will be converted into the right to receive a "pro rata portion" of shares of the First Bancshares common stock and cash to be paid in the merger. The pro rata portion is a ratio equal to one divided by the number of shares of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding as of the closing. Thus, each share of Southwest common stock shall be converted into the right to receive a pro rata portion of: (i) a number of shares of First Bancshares common stock equal to \$36,000,000 divided by the average closing price of First Bancshares' common stock during the ten trading days preceding the fifth business day prior to the closing date (subject to a maximum per-share price of First Bancshares' common stock of \$36.54 and a minimum price of \$24.36), which we refer to as the stock consideration, and (ii) a cash amount equal to \$24,000,000 (subject to downward adjustment in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement in the event that Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000), which we refer to as the cash consideration. We collectively refer to the stock consideration and the cash consideration as the merger consideration. Southwest shareholders will own approximately 8.86% of First Bancshares if the merger is completed, assuming that the average closing price of First Bancshares common stock in calculating the stock consideration as of the effective time of the merger will be \$33.15, the closing sale price of First Bancshares common stock on January 5, 2018.

Southwest will hold a special meeting of its shareholders, referred to as the Southwest special meeting, with respect to the merger. Southwest shareholders will be asked to consider and vote upon (1) a proposal to approve the merger agreement and the merger, and (2) a proposal to adjourn the Southwest special meeting, if necessary or appropriate, to solicit additional proxies in favor of the proposal to approve the merger agreement and the merger.

The Southwest special meeting will be held at 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama 36606, on Tuesday, February 20, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., Central Time, subject to any adjournment or postponement thereof.

The market value of the merger consideration will fluctuate with the market price of First Bancshares common stock and will not be known at the time Southwest shareholders vote on the merger agreement and the merger. First Bancshares common stock is currently quoted on the NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol "FBMS." On October 24, 2017, the last full trading day before the public announcement of the merger agreement, the last reported sale price of First Bancshares common stock was \$30.60 per share, and, on January 5, 2018, the last reported sale price of First Bancshares common stock was \$33.15 per share. We urge you to obtain current market quotations for the price of First Bancshares common stock. There are no current market quotations for Southwest common stock because Southwest is a privately owned corporation and its common stock is not traded on any established public trading market.

Each of First Bancshares and Southwest expects that the merger will qualify as a "reorganization" within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, which we refer to as the Code, with the result that the portion of Southwest common stock exchanged for First Bancshares common stock will generally be tax-free and the portion of the Southwest common stock exchanged for cash will generally be taxable as capital gain.

Your vote is important. Completion of the merger is subject to the approval of the merger agreement and the merger by the shareholders of Southwest. Regardless of whether or not you plan to attend the Southwest special meeting, please take the time to authorize a proxy to vote your shares in accordance with the instructions contained in this proxy statement/prospectus. Submitting a proxy now will not prevent you from being able to vote in person at the Southwest special meeting.

The board of directors of Southwest has determined that the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated thereby, including the merger, are advisable and in the best interests of the shareholders of Southwest, has unanimously approved the merger agreement and the merger and unanimously recommends that the shareholders of Southwest vote "FOR" the proposal to approve the merger agreement and the merger and "FOR" the proposal to adjourn the Southwest special meeting, if necessary or appropriate, to solicit additional proxies in favor of the proposal to approve the merger agreement and the merger.

This proxy statement/prospectus describes the Southwest special meeting, the merger, the documents related to the merger and other related matters. Please carefully read this entire proxy statement/prospectus, including "Risk Factors," beginning on page 35, for a discussion of the risks relating to the proposed merger. You also can obtain information about First Bancshares from documents that it has filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

If you have any questions concerning the merger, please contact Jenny Hunt, President and Chief Executive Officer, at (251) 345-9914. We look forward to seeing you at the meeting.

/s/ Fred K. Granade

Fred K. Granade

Director

Southwest Banc Shares, Inc.

Neither the Securities and Exchange Commission, the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, nor any state securities commission or any other bank regulatory agency has approved or disapproved the securities to be issued in the merger or determined if this proxy statement/prospectus is accurate or adequate. Any representation to the contrary is a criminal offense.

The securities to be issued in the merger are not savings or deposit accounts or other obligations of any bank or non-bank subsidiary of either First Bancshares or Southwest, and they are not insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or any other governmental agency.

The date of this proxy statement/prospectus is January 11, 2018, and it is first being mailed or otherwise delivered to the Southwest shareholders on or about January 18, 2018.

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SOUTHWEST BANC SHARES, INC.

2862 Dauphin Street

Mobile, Alabama 36606

(251) 344-5821

NOTICE OF SPECIAL MEETING OF SHAREHOLDERS

To Be Held on February 20, 2018

To the Shareholders of Southwest Banc Shares, Inc.:

A special meeting of the shareholders of Southwest Banc Shares, Inc., or Southwest, will be held at 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama, 36606, on Tuesday, February 20, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., Central Time, subject to any adjournment or postponement thereof, for the following purposes:

1.

To consider and vote upon a proposal to approve the Agreement and Plan of Merger, which we refer to as the merger agreement, dated as of October 24, 2017, by and between The First Bancshares, Inc., or First Bancshares, and Southwest, pursuant to which Southwest will merge with and into First Bancshares, with First Bancshares as the surviving company, referred to herein as the merger, all on and subject to the terms and conditions contained therein; and

2.

To consider and vote upon any proposal to adjourn the special meeting, referred to herein as the Southwest special meeting, to a later date or dates if the board of directors of Southwest determines such an adjournment is necessary to permit solicitation of additional proxies if there are not sufficient votes at the time of the Southwest special meeting to constitute a quorum or to approve the merger agreement and the merger.

No other business may be conducted at the Southwest special meeting. All holders of shares of common stock of Southwest of record as of 5:00 p.m. on January 5, 2018, will be entitled to notice of and to vote at the Southwest special meeting and any adjournments thereof. The Southwest special meeting may be adjourned from time to time upon approval of holders of Southwest common stock without any notice other than by announcement at the meeting of the adjournment thereof, and any and all business for which notice is hereby given may be transacted at such adjourned meeting.

Holders of Southwest common stock have the right to dissent from the merger agreement and the merger and obtain payment in cash of the appraised fair value of their shares of Southwest common stock under applicable provisions of the Alabama Business Corporation Law, or ABCL. In order for a holder of Southwest common stock to perfect his, her or its right to dissent, such holder must carefully follow the procedure set forth in the ABCL. A copy of the applicable statutory provisions of the ABCL is included as Annex C to the accompanying proxy statement/prospectus and a summary of these provisions can be found under the caption "The Merger — Dissenters' Rights," beginning on page 69 of the proxy statement/ prospectus. The merger may not be completed if the holders of more than 5% of the outstanding shares of Southwest common stock exercise dissenters' rights.

If you have any questions concerning the merger agreement, the merger, the Southwest special meeting or the proxy statement/prospectus, would like additional copies of the proxy statement/prospectus, need a proxy card or need help voting your shares of Southwest common stock, please contact Jenny Hunt, President and Chief Executive Officer, at (251) 345-9914.

By Order of the Board of Directors,

/s/ Fred K. Granade

Fred K. Granade

Director

Mobile, Alabama

January 11, 2018

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The Southwest board of directors unanimously recommends that holders of record of Southwest common stock entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting vote “FOR” the proposal to approve the merger agreement and the merger and “FOR” the adjournment of the Southwest special meeting if such adjournment is necessary to permit solicitation of additional proxies if there are not sufficient votes at the time of the Southwest special meeting to constitute a quorum or to approve the merger agreement and the merger.

**Your Vote is Very Important**

A proxy card is enclosed. Whether or not you plan to attend the Southwest special meeting, if you are a holder of shares of Southwest common stock, please vote by completing, signing and dating the proxy card and promptly mailing it in the enclosed envelope. You may revoke your proxy in the manner described in the proxy statement/prospectus at any time before it is exercised. If you are a holder of shares of Southwest common stock and attend the Southwest special meeting, you may vote in person if you desire, even if you have previously returned your proxy card.

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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

This proxy statement/prospectus incorporates important business and financial information about First Bancshares from documents filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission, or SEC, that are not included in or delivered with this proxy statement/prospectus. You can obtain any of the documents filed with or furnished to the SEC by First Bancshares at no cost from the SEC's website at <http://www.sec.gov>. You may also request copies of these documents, including documents incorporated by reference in this proxy statement/prospectus, at no cost by contacting First Bancshares at the following address:

The First Bancshares, Inc.  
6480 U.S. Hwy, 98 West  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39402  
Attention: Secretary  
Telephone: (601) 268-8998

You will not be charged for any of these documents that you request. To obtain timely delivery of these documents, you must request them no later than five business days before the date of the special meeting, or February 12, 2018. If you are a Southwest shareholder and have any questions about the merger agreement, the merger, the Southwest special meeting or the proxy statement/prospectus, would like additional copies of the proxy statement/prospectus, need a proxy card or need help voting your shares of Southwest common stock, please contact Jenny Hunt, President and Chief Executive Officer, at (251) 345-9914.

You should rely only on the information contained in or incorporated by reference into this document. No one has been authorized to provide you with information that is different from that contained in, or incorporated by reference into, this document. This document is dated January 11, 2018, and you should assume that the information in this document is accurate only as of such date. You should assume that the information incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus from another document is accurate as of the date of such other document. Neither the mailing of this document to Southwest shareholders nor the issuance by First Bancshares of shares of First Bancshares common stock in connection with the merger will create any implication to the contrary.

This document does not constitute an offer to sell, or a solicitation of an offer to buy any securities, or the solicitation of a proxy, in any jurisdiction to or from any person to whom it is unlawful to make any such offer or solicitation in such jurisdiction. Except where the context otherwise indicates, information contained in this document regarding Southwest has been provided by Southwest and information contained in this document regarding First Bancshares has been provided by First Bancshares. See "Where You Can Find More Information" for more details.

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QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following are answers to some questions that Southwest shareholders may have regarding the proposed transaction between First Bancshares and Southwest and the proposals being considered at the Southwest special meeting. First Bancshares and Southwest urge you to read carefully this entire proxy statement/ prospectus, including the Annexes, and the documents incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/ prospectus, because the information in this section does not provide all the information that might be important to you.

Unless the context otherwise requires, references in this proxy statement/prospectus to: (1) “First Bancshares” refer to The First Bancshares, Inc., a Mississippi corporation, and its affiliates; and (2) “Southwest” refer to Southwest Banc Shares, Inc., an Alabama corporation, and its affiliates.

Q:

Why am I receiving this proxy statement/prospectus?

A:

First Bancshares and Southwest have entered into an Agreement and Plan of Merger, dated as of October 24, 2017, which we refer to as the merger agreement. Pursuant to the merger agreement, Southwest will merge with and into First Bancshares, with First Bancshares as the surviving company, which we refer to as the merger. Immediately after the merger, First Community, a wholly owned bank subsidiary of Southwest, will merge with and into First Bancshares’ wholly owned bank subsidiary, The First, A National Banking Association, with The First as the surviving bank, which we refer to as the bank merger. A copy of the merger agreement is included in this proxy statement/prospectus as Annex A.

The merger cannot be completed unless, among other things, the holders of at least two-thirds of the outstanding shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote on the merger vote in favor of the proposal to approve the merger agreement and the merger, which we refer to as the merger proposal.

In addition, Southwest is soliciting proxies from its shareholders with respect to a proposal to approve one or more adjournments of the Southwest special meeting, if necessary or appropriate, to solicit additional proxies if there are insufficient votes at the time of such adjournment to approve the merger proposal, which we refer to as the adjournment proposal. The completion of the merger is not conditioned upon shareholder approval of the adjournment proposal.

This proxy statement/prospectus contains important information about the merger and the proposals being voted on at the Southwest special meeting, and you should read it carefully. This is a proxy statement/prospectus because (1) Southwest is soliciting proxies from the Southwest shareholders and the proxy statement provides important information about the Southwest special meeting to vote on the merger proposal, and (2) First Bancshares will issue shares of First Bancshares common stock to holders of Southwest common stock in connection with the merger, and the prospectus provides important information about such shares. The enclosed materials allow Southwest shareholders to authorize a proxy to vote their shares without attending the Southwest special meeting.

Your vote is important. We encourage you to authorize your proxy as soon as possible.

Q:

What will I receive in the merger?

A:

If the merger is completed, for each share of Southwest common stock that Southwest shareholders hold immediately prior to the merger, Southwest shareholders will receive, without interest, a pro rata portion (which is a ratio equal to one divided by the number of shares of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding as of the closing) of:

(1)

a number of shares of First Bancshares common stock equal to \$36,000,000 divided by the average closing price of First Bancshares’ common stock during the ten trading days preceding the fifth business day prior to the closing date (subject to adjustments as discussed below), which we refer to as the stock consideration, and

(2)

a cash amount equal to \$24,000,000 (subject to downward adjustment in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement in the event that Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000), which we refer to as the cash consideration.

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The stock consideration and the cash consideration are collectively referred to as the merger consideration.

In determining the stock consideration, the average closing price of First Bancshares' common stock pursuant to the formula above may be adjusted to the extent that if (1) the average closing price is at least 20% higher than \$30.45, which we refer to as the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$36.54, and (2) the average closing price is at least 20% lower than the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$24.36. If the average closing price is neither 20% higher nor lower than the signing price, then the average closing price pursuant to the formula above will be used to calculate the stock consideration.

In addition, if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date is less than \$32,000,000, the aggregate amount of the cash consideration will be reduced by an amount equal to (1) \$32,000,000 minus (2) Southwest's actual adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date. Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity will be calculated as Southwest's common equity (as defined in GAAP) less (i) intangible assets (as defined in GAAP), (ii) any anticipated but unaccrued Southwest transaction expenses in connection with the merger, and (iii) the amount of any reduction in Southwest's allowance for loan and lease losses below \$3,425,000 as of the effective time of the merger.

Southwest may terminate the merger if the average closing price of First Bancshares common stock is less than 70% of the signing price, i.e., less than \$21.315; provided, however, if Southwest wishes to exercise its termination right pursuant to this provision, it shall give prompt written notice to First Bancshares, and within the five-day period after its receipt of the termination notice from Southwest, First Bancshares will have the option, but not the obligation, to increase the total merger consideration to be at least \$56,400,000 (subject to downward adjustments if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000), which will nullify and void Southwest's termination, and the merger agreement will remain in full force and effect.

First Bancshares will not issue any fractional shares of First Bancshares common stock in the merger. Southwest shareholders who would otherwise be entitled to a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock upon the completion of the merger will instead receive an amount in cash (without interest and rounded to the nearest whole cent) determined by multiplying the fractional share interest in First Bancshares common stock (rounded to the nearest one hundredth of a share) by the average closing price, as may be adjusted.

Q:

Will the value of the merger consideration change between the date of this proxy statement/prospectus and the time the merger is completed?

A:

Yes. The value of the merger consideration may fluctuate between the date of this proxy statement/ prospectus and the completion of the merger. The value of the stock consideration may fluctuate based upon the market value for First Bancshares common stock. In the merger, Southwest shareholders will receive a number of shares of First Bancshares common stock for each share of Southwest common stock they hold. Any fluctuation in the market price of First Bancshares common stock after the date of this proxy statement/prospectus could change the value of the shares of First Bancshares common stock that Southwest shareholders will receive if such fluctuations result in the average closing price of First Bancshares being higher than \$36.54 or less than \$24.36. In addition, the amount of the cash consideration may be reduced to the extent Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing, calculated as discussed above, is less than \$32,000,000.

Q:

How does Southwest's board of directors recommend that I vote at the special meeting?

A:

Southwest's board of directors unanimously recommends that you vote "FOR" the merger proposal and "FOR" the adjournment proposal.

Q:

When and where is the Southwest special meeting?

A:  
The Southwest special meeting will be held at 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama, 36606, on Tuesday, February 20, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. Central Time.

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Q:

What do I need to do now?

A:

After you have carefully read this proxy statement/prospectus and have decided how you wish to vote your shares, please authorize a proxy to vote your shares by promptly completing and returning the enclosed proxy card so that your shares are represented and voted at the Southwest special meeting. When complete, sign, date and mail your proxy card in the enclosed postage-paid return envelope as soon as possible. Submitting your proxy by mail or directing your bank or broker to vote your shares will ensure that your shares are represented and voted at the Southwest special meeting. Your proxy card must be received prior to the special meeting on February 20, 2018, in order to be counted.

Q:

What constitutes a quorum for the Southwest special meeting?

A:

Holders representing at least a majority of the shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting must be present, in person or represented by proxy, to constitute a quorum. Abstentions and broker non-votes, if any, will be included in determining the number of shares present at the meeting for the purpose of determining the presence of a quorum. If a quorum is not present, the Southwest special meeting will be postponed until the holders of the number of shares of Southwest common stock required to constitute a quorum attend. If you submit a properly executed proxy card, even if you abstain from voting, your shares of Southwest common stock will be counted for purposes of determining whether a quorum is present at the Southwest special meeting. If additional votes must be solicited to approve the merger agreement, it is expected that the Southwest special meeting will be adjourned to solicit additional proxies.

Q:

What is the vote required to approve each proposal?

A:

Approval of the merger proposal requires the affirmative vote of the holders of at least two-thirds of the outstanding shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote on such proposal.

The adjournment proposal will be approved if the votes of Southwest common stock cast in favor of the adjournment proposal exceed the votes cast against the adjournment proposal.

Q:

Why is my vote important?

A:

If you do not submit a proxy or vote in person, it may be more difficult for Southwest to obtain the necessary quorum to hold the special meeting. In addition, your failure to submit a proxy or vote in person, or failure to instruct your bank or broker how to vote, or abstention will have the same effect as a vote against approval of the merger proposal. The merger proposal must be approved by the affirmative vote of the holders of at least two-thirds of the outstanding shares of Southwest's common stock. Southwest's board of directors unanimously recommends that you vote "FOR" the proposal to approve the merger agreement and the merger.

Q:

How many votes do I have?

A:

Southwest shareholders are entitled to one vote on each proposal to be considered at the special meeting for each share of Southwest common stock owned as of the close of business on January 5, 2018, which is the record date for the Southwest special meeting.

Q:  
How do I vote?

A:  
If you are a shareholder of record, you may have your shares of Southwest common stock voted on the matters to be presented at the Southwest special meeting in any of the following ways:

- by completing, signing, dating and returning the enclosed proxy card in the accompanying prepaid reply envelope; or
- by attending the special meeting and casting your vote in person.

If you are a beneficial owner, please refer to the instructions provided by your bank, brokerage firm or other nominee to see which of the above choices are available to you. Your bank, brokerage firm or other nominee cannot vote your shares without instructions from you. Please note that if you are a beneficial owner and wish to vote in person at the special meeting, you must obtain a legal proxy from your bank, brokerage firm or other nominee.

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Q:

Do Southwest directors and executive officers have interests in the merger that are different from, or in addition to, my interests?

A:

Yes. In considering the recommendation of the Southwest's board of directors with respect to the merger agreement, you should be aware that some of Southwest's directors and executive officers have interests in the merger that are different from, or in addition to, the interests of Southwest's shareholders generally. Interests of certain officers and directors that may be different from or in addition to the interests of Southwest's shareholders include but are not limited to, the receipt of continued indemnification and directors' and officers' insurance coverage under the merger agreement, non-competition payments to directors, the payment of change in control and retention payments to certain executives and the entry into employment agreements with First Bancshares.

Q:

What if I abstain from voting, fail to authorize a proxy or vote in person or fail to instruct my bank or broker how to vote?

A:

If you mark "ABSTAIN" on your proxy with respect to the merger proposal, fail to authorize a proxy or vote in person at the Southwest special meeting, or fail to instruct your bank or broker how to vote, it will have the same effect as a vote "AGAINST" the merger proposal and no effect on the adjournment proposal. If you sign your proxy but do not indicate your vote, your proxy will be voted FOR each proposal.

Q:

Can I attend the special meeting and vote my shares in person?

A:

Yes. All Southwest shareholders as of the record date, including shareholders of record and shareholders who hold their shares through banks, brokers, nominees or any other holder of record, are invited to attend the Southwest special meeting. Holders of record of Southwest common stock can vote in person at the Southwest special meeting. If you are not a shareholder of record, you must obtain a proxy, executed in your favor, from the record holder of your shares, such as a broker, bank or other nominee, to be able to vote in person at the Southwest special meeting. If you plan to attend the Southwest special meeting, you must hold your shares in your own name or have a letter from the record holder of your shares confirming your ownership. In addition, you must bring a form of personal photo identification with you in order to be admitted. Southwest reserves the right to refuse admittance to anyone without proper proof of share ownership or without proper photo identification. The use of cameras, sound recording equipment, communications devices or any similar equipment during the Southwest special meeting is prohibited without express written consent. Even if you plan to attend the special meeting, Southwest encourages you to vote by proxy through the mail so your vote will be counted if you later decide not to attend the special meeting.

Q:

Can I change my vote?

A:

Yes. If you are a holder of record of Southwest common stock, you may revoke your proxy at any time prior to the Southwest special meeting by: (1) delivering a written notice of revocation to Jenny Hunt, President and Chief Executive Officer, Southwest Banc Shares, Inc., 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama 36606, (2) by returning a duly executed proxy card bearing a later date than the date with which your original proxy card was dated, or (3) by attending the Southwest special meeting and voting in person. Your attendance at the Southwest special meeting will not constitute automatic revocation of the proxy unless you deliver your ballot in person at the special meeting or



deliver a written revocation to the Southwest Chief Executive Officer prior to the voting of such proxy.

Q:

Will Southwest be required to submit the merger proposal to its shareholders even if Southwest's board of directors has withdrawn, modified or qualified its recommendation?

A:

Yes. Unless the merger agreement is terminated before the Southwest special meeting, Southwest is required to submit the merger proposal to its shareholders even if Southwest's board of directors has withdrawn, modified or qualified its recommendation.

Q:

What are the U.S. federal income tax consequences of the merger to Southwest shareholders?

A:

Each of First Bancshares and Southwest expects that the merger will qualify as a "reorganization" within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code, with the result that the portion of Southwest

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common stock exchanged for First Bancshares shares will generally be tax-free and the portion of the Southwest common stock exchanged for cash will generally be taxable as capital gain.

For further information, see “The Merger — U.S. Federal Income Tax Considerations.”

The U.S. federal income tax consequences described above may not apply to all holders of Southwest common stock. Your particular tax consequences will depend on your individual situation. Accordingly, we strongly urge you to consult your independent tax advisor for a full understanding of the particular tax consequences of the merger to you.

Q:

Are Southwest shareholders entitled to exercise dissenters’ rights?

A:

Yes. Holders of Southwest common stock are entitled, with respect to the merger, to exercise rights of dissenting shareholders provided for under Chapter 2, Article 13 of the Alabama Business Corporation Law, as amended, or the ABCL, any successor statute, or any similar appraisal or dissenters’ rights.

Pursuant to the merger agreement, First Bancshares’ board of directors may terminate the merger agreement and abandon the merger transaction if dissenters’ rights of appraisal are properly asserted with respect to more than 5% of the outstanding shares of Southwest common stock.

For further information, see “The Merger — Dissenters’ Rights.”

Q:

If I am a Southwest shareholder, should I send in my Southwest stock certificates now?

A:

No. Please do not send in your Southwest stock certificates with your proxy. After the merger, an exchange agent designated by First Bancshares will send you instructions for exchanging Southwest stock certificates for the merger consideration.

Q:

What should I do if I hold my shares of Southwest common stock in book-entry form?

A:

You are not required to take any specific actions to exchange your shares of Southwest common stock if your shares are held in book-entry form. After the completion of the merger, shares of Southwest common stock held in book-entry form automatically will be exchanged for the merger consideration, including shares of First Bancshares common stock in book-entry form, the cash consideration and any cash to be paid in lieu of fractional shares in the merger.

Q:

Whom may I contact if I cannot locate my Southwest stock certificate(s)?

A:

If you are unable to locate your original Southwest stock certificate(s), you should contact Jenny Hunt, President and Chief Executive Officer, Southwest Banc Shares, Inc., 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama 36606, or by telephone at (251) 345-9914. Generally, merger consideration for lost certificates cannot be delivered except upon the making of an affidavit claiming such certificate to be lost, stolen or destroyed and the posting of a bond in such amount as First Bancshares or the exchange agent may determine is reasonably necessary as indemnity against any claim that may be made with respect to such lost certificate.

Q:

When do you expect to complete the merger?

A:

First Bancshares and Southwest expect to complete the merger in the first or second quarter of 2018. However, neither First Bancshares nor Southwest can assure you when or if the merger will occur. First Bancshares and Southwest must first obtain the approval of Southwest shareholders for the merger proposal, as well as the necessary regulatory approvals.

Q:

What happens if the merger is not completed?

A:

If the merger is not completed, holders of Southwest common stock will not receive any consideration for their shares of Southwest common stock that otherwise would have been received in connection with the merger. Instead, Southwest will remain an independent private company. If the merger is completed but, for any reason, the bank merger is not completed, it will have no impact on the consideration to be received by holders of Southwest common stock.

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Q:

Whom should I call with questions?

A:

If you have any questions concerning the merger or this proxy statement/prospectus, would like additional copies of this proxy statement/prospectus or need help voting your shares of Southwest common stock, please contact: Jenny Hunt, President and Chief Executive Officer, at (251) 345-9914.

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SUMMARY

This summary highlights selected information from this proxy statement/prospectus. It may not contain all of the information that is important to you. We urge you to read carefully the entire proxy statement/prospectus, including the annexes, and the other documents to which we refer in order to fully understand the merger. See “Where You Can Find More Information.” Each item in this summary refers to the page of this proxy statement/prospectus on which that subject is discussed in more detail.

The Companies (page 92)

The First Bancshares, Inc.

6480 U.S. Hwy, 98 West

Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39402

(601) 268-8998

First Bancshares was incorporated in Mississippi on June 23, 1995 and serves as the bank holding company for The First, A National Banking Association, headquartered in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. First Bancshares is a registered financial holding company. As of September 30, 2017, First Bancshares had consolidated assets of \$1.79 billion, loans of \$1.19 billion, deposits of \$1.51 billion, and shareholders’ equity of \$166.98 million. First Bancshares operates 43 full service branches, one motor branch and four loan production offices in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Florida. The First’s deposits are insured by the FDIC.

Additional information about First Bancshares and its subsidiaries is included in documents incorporated by reference in this proxy statement/prospectus. See “Where You Can Find More Information.”

Southwest Banc Shares, Inc.

2862 Dauphin Street

Mobile, Alabama 36606

(251) 344-5821

Southwest Banc Shares, Inc. was incorporated in Alabama in 1984 and owns all of the outstanding shares of common stock of First Community headquartered in Chatom, Alabama. As of September 30, 2017, Southwest had consolidated assets of \$391.6 million, loans of \$281.6 million, deposits of \$345.1 million, and shareholders’ equity of \$36.8 million. Southwest operates 9 full service branches and one administrative office in Alabama. First Community’s deposits are insured by the FDIC.

Additional information about Southwest and its subsidiaries is included below under “The Companies.”

The Merger

The Merger Agreement (page 74)

First Bancshares and Southwest entered into an Agreement and Plan of Merger, dated as of October 24, 2017, which we refer to as the merger agreement. The merger agreement governs the merger. The merger agreement is included in this proxy statement/prospectus as Annex A. All descriptions in this summary and elsewhere in this proxy statement/prospectus of the terms and conditions of the merger are qualified by reference to the merger agreement. Please read the merger agreement carefully for a more complete understanding of the merger.

The Merger (page 47)

Pursuant to the merger agreement, Southwest will merge with and into First Bancshares, with First Bancshares as the surviving company, which we refer to as the merger. Immediately after the merger, First Community, a wholly owned bank subsidiary of Southwest, will merge with and into First Bancshares’ wholly owned bank subsidiary, The First, with The First as the surviving bank, which we refer to as the bank merger.

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The Merger Consideration (page 75)

If the merger is completed, for each share of Southwest common stock that Southwest shareholders hold immediately prior to the effective time of the merger, Southwest shareholders will receive, without interest, a pro rata portion (which is a ratio equal to one divided by the number of shares of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding as of the closing) of:

(1)

a number of shares of First Bancshares common stock equal to \$36,000,000 divided by the average closing price of First Bancshares' common stock during the ten trading days preceding the fifth business day prior to the closing date (subject to adjustments as discussed below), which we refer to as the stock consideration, and

(2)

a cash amount equal to \$24,000,000 (subject to downward adjustment in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement in the event that Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000), which we refer to as the cash consideration.

The stock consideration and the cash consideration are collectively referred to as the merger consideration.

In determining the stock consideration, the average closing price of First Bancshares' common stock pursuant to the formula above may be adjusted to the extent that if (1) the average closing price is at least 20% higher than \$30.45, which we refer to as the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$36.54, and (2) the average closing price is at least 20% lower than the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$24.36. If the average closing price is neither 20% higher nor lower than the signing price, then the average closing price pursuant to the formula above will be used to calculate the stock consideration.

In addition, if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date is less than \$32,000,000, the aggregate amount of the cash consideration will be reduced by an amount equal to (1) \$32,000,000 minus (2) Southwest's actual adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date. Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity will be calculated as Southwest's common equity (as defined in GAAP) less (i) intangible assets (as defined in GAAP), (ii) any anticipated but unaccrued Southwest transaction expenses in connection with the merger, and (iii) the amount of any reduction in Southwest's allowance for loan and lease losses below \$3,425,000 as of the effective time of the merger.

Southwest may terminate the merger if the average closing price of First Bancshares common stock is less than 70% of the signing price, i.e., less than \$21.315; provided, however, if Southwest wishes to exercise its termination right pursuant to this provision, it shall give prompt written notice to First Bancshares, and within the five-day period after its receipt of the termination notice from Southwest, First Bancshares will have the option, but not the obligation, to increase the total merger consideration to be at least \$56,400,000 (subject to downward adjustments if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000), which will nullify and void Southwest's termination, and the merger agreement will remain in full force and effect.

First Bancshares will not issue any fractional shares of First Bancshares common stock in the merger. Southwest shareholders who would otherwise be entitled to a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock upon the completion of the merger will instead receive an amount in cash (without interest and rounded to the nearest whole cent) determined by multiplying the fractional share interest in First Bancshares common stock (rounded to the nearest one hundredth of a share) by the average closing price, as may be adjusted.

First Bancshares common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol "FBMS." Southwest common stock is not listed on an exchange and is not actively traded. The following table sets forth the closing sale prices of First Bancshares common stock as reported on the NASDAQ Global Market on October 24, 2017, the last full trading day before the public announcement of the merger agreement, and on January 5, 2018, the latest practicable trading date before the date of this proxy statement/prospectus.

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First  
Bancshares  
Common  
Stock

October 24, 2017     \$ 30.60

January 5, 2018     \$ 33.15

Exchange Procedures (page 76)

Promptly after the effective time of the merger, First Bancshares' exchange agent will mail to each holder of record of Southwest common stock that is converted into the right to receive the merger consideration a letter of transmittal and instructions for the surrender of the holder's Southwest stock certificate(s) for the merger consideration (including cash in lieu of any fractional Southwest shares), and any dividends or distributions to which such holder is entitled to pursuant to the merger agreement.

Please do not send in your certificates until you receive these instructions

Ancillary Agreements

Voting Agreements (page 90)

As a condition to First Bancshares entering into the merger agreement, all directors of Southwest and First Community entered into voting agreements in the form attached as Exhibit A to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this document, pursuant to which each such person agreed, among other things, to vote the shares of Southwest common stock held of record by such person (1) to approve the merger agreement and the merger (or any adjournment or postponement necessary to solicit additional proxies to approve the merger agreement and the merger) and (2) against any acquisition proposals or any actions that would result in a breach of any covenant, representation or warranty of Southwest in the merger agreement.

Non-Competition and Non-Disclosure Agreements (page 90)

In addition, as a condition to First Bancshares entering into the merger agreement, each director of Southwest and First Community entered into non-competition and non-disclosure agreements with First Bancshares in the form attached as Exhibit C or D to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this document, pursuant to which each such person agreed to, among other things, (1) not disclose or use any confidential information or trade secrets of Southwest for any purpose for so long as such information remains confidential information or a trade secret, (2) for a period of two years following the closing of the merger, not engage in certain competitive activities with First Bancshares, including not soliciting employees and customers of Southwest, and (3) for a period of one or two years following the closing of the merger (depending on the director), not serve as a director or management official of another financial institution in the counties in Alabama in which First Community operates a banking office as of the closing of the merger and each county contiguous to each of such counties.

Claims Letters (page 91)

At the time of the execution of the merger agreement, each director of Southwest and First Community executed a letter agreement with First Bancshares in the form attached as Exhibit E to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this document, pursuant to which each such director released and discharged, effective upon the consummation of the merger, Southwest and its subsidiaries, their respective directors and officers (in their capacities as such), and their respective successors and assigns (including First Bancshares and The First), from any and all liabilities or claims that the director has or claims to have, with certain exceptions.

Risk Factors Related to the Merger (page 35)

Before voting at the Southwest special meeting, you should carefully consider all the information contained in or incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus in deciding how to vote for the proposals presented in the proxy statement/prospectus.

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### The Southwest Special Meeting (page 42)

The special meeting of Southwest shareholders will be held on Tuesday, February 20, 2018, at 2:30 p.m. Central Time, at 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama 36606. At the special meeting, Southwest shareholders will be asked to:

- approve the merger proposal; and
- approve the adjournment proposal.

Only holders of record at the close of business on January 5, 2018, the Southwest record date, will be entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting. Each share of Southwest common stock is entitled to one vote on each proposal to be considered at the Southwest special meeting. As of the Southwest record date, there were 71,411 shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting. All directors of Southwest and First Community have entered into voting agreements with First Bancshares, pursuant to which they have agreed, solely in their capacity as Southwest shareholders, to vote all of their shares of Southwest common stock in favor of the proposals to be presented at the Southwest special meeting. As of the Southwest record date, the directors who are parties to the voting agreements owned and were entitled to vote an aggregate of approximately 27,549 shares of Southwest common stock, which represented approximately 38.58% of the shares of Southwest common stock outstanding on that date. As of the Southwest record date, the directors and executive officers of Southwest and their affiliates beneficially owned and were entitled to vote 29,471 shares of Southwest common stock, which represented approximately 41.27% of the shares of Southwest common stock outstanding on that date. As of the Southwest record date, First Bancshares and its subsidiaries did not hold any shares of Southwest common stock (other than shares held as fiduciary, custodian or agent), and its directors and executive officers or their affiliates did not hold any shares of Southwest common stock.

To approve the merger proposal, the holders of at least two-thirds of the outstanding shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote on the proposal must vote in favor of the proposal. Your failure to submit a proxy or vote in person at the Southwest special meeting, failure to instruct your bank or broker how to vote, or abstention with respect to the merger proposal will have the same effect as a vote against the proposal.

The adjournment proposal will be approved if the votes of Southwest common stock cast in favor of the adjournment proposal exceed the votes cast against the adjournment proposal

If you mark “ABSTAIN” on your proxy with respect to the merger proposal, fail to authorize a proxy or vote in person at the Southwest special meeting, or fail to instruct your bank or broker how to vote, it will have the same effect as a vote “AGAINST” the merger proposal and no effect on the adjournment proposal. If you sign your proxy but do not indicate your vote, your proxy will be voted FOR each proposal.

### Recommendation of the Southwest Board (page 43)

Southwest’s board of directors has determined that the merger, the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement are advisable and in the best interests of Southwest and its shareholders and has unanimously approved the merger, the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement. Southwest’s board of directors unanimously recommends that Southwest shareholders vote “FOR” the merger proposal and “FOR” the adjournment proposal. For the factors considered by Southwest’s board of directors in reaching its decision to approve the merger, see “The Merger — Southwest’s Reasons for the Merger.”

### Board Composition and Management of First Bancshares after the Merger (page 61)

Each of the officers and directors of First Bancshares immediately prior to the effective time of the merger will be the officers and directors of the surviving company from and after the effective time of the merger, until their respective successors have been duly elected, appointed or qualified or until their earlier death, resignation or removal in accordance with the articles of incorporation and bylaws of First Bancshares.



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Pursuant to the merger agreement, First Bancshares has agreed to consider appointing a representative proposed by Southwest and mutually agreed to by First Bancshares and Southwest to the board of directors of The First, the banking subsidiary of First Bancshares, at the closing date. However, the parties both acknowledge and agree that in no event will First Bancshares or The First be required by the terms of the merger agreement to appoint any director to The First's board of directors.

Interests of Southwest Directors and Executive Officers in the Merger (page 61)

Southwest shareholders should be aware that some of Southwest's directors and executive officers have interests in the merger and have arrangements that are different from, or in addition to, those of Southwest shareholders generally. These interests and arrangements may create potential conflicts of interest. Southwest's board of directors was aware of these interests and considered these interests, among other matters, in adopting and approving the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, including the merger, and in recommending that Southwest shareholders vote in favor of approving the merger agreement and the merger.

These interests include:

- certain executive officers of Southwest have change in control agreements with Southwest that provide for cash payments in the event of a qualifying termination of employment in connection with a change in control and bonus arrangements to stay through closing;
- Mr. Sam Davis has entered into an employment agreement with The First, effective as of the effective date of the merger;
- the right to continued indemnification and directors' and officers' liability insurance coverage; and
- non-competition payments to directors.

For a more complete description of these interests, see "The Merger — Interests of Southwest's Directors and Executive Officers in the Merger" and "The Merger Agreement — Indemnification and Directors' and Officers' Insurance." Dissenters' Rights in the Merger (page 69)

Holders of Southwest common stock are entitled to exercise certain dissenters' rights in relation to the merger, as provided for under Chapter 2, Article 13 of the Alabama Business Corporation Law, as amended, or the ABCL, and any successor statute. To exercise dissenters' rights, Southwest shareholders must strictly follow the procedures established by the ABCL. A shareholder's failure to vote against the merger agreement will constitute a waiver of such shareholder's dissenters' rights. For further information, see "The Merger — Dissenters' Rights."

Conditions to Completion of the Merger (page 87)

Currently, First Bancshares and Southwest expect to complete the merger in the first or second quarter of 2018. As more fully described in this proxy statement/prospectus and in the merger agreement, the completion of the merger depends on a number of conditions being satisfied or, where legally permissible, waived. These conditions include, among others:

- approval of the merger agreement and the merger by the holders of at least two-thirds of the outstanding shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote;
- the receipt of all required regulatory approvals for the merger, without the imposition of any material on-going conditions or restrictions, and the expiration of all regulatory waiting periods;
-

the absence of any legal restraint (such as an injunction or restraining order) that would prevent the consummation of the merger;

•

the effectiveness of the registration statement of which this proxy statement/prospectus forms a part;

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- each party's receipt of a tax opinion from its respective outside legal counsel, dated the closing date of the merger, confirming the tax-free treatment of the merger for U.S. federal income tax purposes;

- the absence of more than five percent of the outstanding shares of Southwest's common stock exercising (or being entitled to exercise) their dissenters' rights;

- the adjusted tangible common equity of Southwest is no less than \$32,000,000; and

- the absence of the occurrence of a material adverse effect on Southwest or First Bancshares.

Neither First Bancshares nor Southwest can be certain when, or if, the conditions to the merger will be satisfied or waived, or that the merger will be completed.

Regulatory Approvals Required for the Merger (page 65)

Both First Bancshares and Southwest have agreed to use their reasonable best efforts to obtain all regulatory approvals required or advisable to complete the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement. These approvals include, among others, approval from the Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System, or the Federal Reserve Board, the Office of the Comptroller of the Currency, or the OCC, and various securities and other regulatory authorities. First Bancshares and Southwest have submitted applications and notifications to obtain the required regulatory approvals and have received all regulatory approvals in connection with the merger and the bank merger as of January 3, 2018.

No Solicitation (page 85)

Under the merger agreement, Southwest has agreed that it will not, and will cause its representatives not to, directly or indirectly, (1) initiate, solicit, induce or knowingly encourage, or take any action to facilitate the making of, any inquiry, offer or proposal which constitutes, or could reasonably be expected to lead to, an acquisition proposal, (2) participate in any discussions or negotiations regarding any acquisition proposal or furnish, or otherwise afford access, to any person (other than First Bancshares) any information or data with respect to Southwest or any of its subsidiaries or otherwise relating to an acquisition proposal, (3) release any person from, waive any provisions of, or fail to enforce any confidentiality agreement or standstill agreement to which Southwest is a party, or (4) enter into any agreement, agreement in principle or letter of intent with respect to any acquisition proposal or approve or resolve to approve any acquisition proposal or any agreement, agreement in principle or letter of intent relating to an acquisition proposal.

However, prior to obtaining Southwest's required shareholder approval, Southwest may, under certain specified circumstances, participate in negotiations or discussions with any third party making an acquisition proposal and provide confidential information to such third party (subject to a confidentiality agreement). Southwest must notify First Bancshares promptly (but in no event later than 24 hours) after the receipt of such acquisition proposal.

Additionally, prior to obtaining Southwest's required shareholder approval, Southwest may, under certain specified circumstances, withdraw its recommendation to its shareholders with respect to the merger and/or terminate the merger agreement in order to enter into an acquisition agreement with respect to a superior acquisition proposal if it determines in good faith, after consultation with outside legal counsel and financial advisors, that such acquisition proposal is a superior proposal and that failure to take such action would be inconsistent with the directors' fiduciary duties under applicable law. However, Southwest cannot take any of those actions in response to a superior proposal unless it provides First Bancshares with a five business day period to negotiate in good faith to enable First Bancshares to adjust the terms and conditions of the merger agreement such that it would cause the superior proposal to no longer constitute a superior proposal.

Termination of the Merger Agreement (page 88)

The merger agreement can be terminated at any time prior to completion of the merger by mutual consent, or by either party in the following circumstances:

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- if the merger is not consummated on or before February 20, 2018, subject to automatic extension to April 21, 2018 if the only outstanding condition to closing is the receipt of regulatory approvals;

- if any regulatory approval required for consummation of the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement has been denied by final non-appealable action by the relevant governmental authority or any application for such regulatory approval shall have been permanently withdrawn at the request of a governmental authority;

- in the event that approval by the shareholders of Southwest is not obtained at a meeting at which a vote was taken; or

- in the event of a material breach by the other party of any representation, warranty or covenant contained in the merger agreement and such breach is not cured within thirty days.

In addition, First Bancshares may terminate the merger agreement in the following circumstances:

- if Southwest withdraws, qualifies, amends, modifies or withholds its recommendation to its shareholders to approve the merger and the merger agreement, or makes any statement, filing or release, in connection with the shareholder meeting or otherwise, inconsistent with its recommendation (it being understood that taking a neutral position or no position with respect to an acquisition proposal shall be considered an adverse modification of its recommendation);

- if Southwest fails to properly call, give notice of, and commence a meeting of shareholders to vote on the merger;

- if Southwest approves or recommends an acquisition proposal;

- if Southwest fails to publicly recommend against a publicly announced acquisition proposal within three (3) business days of being requested to do so by First Bancshares or fails to publicly reconfirm its recommendation to its shareholders within (3) business days of being requested to do so by First Bancshares; and

- if Southwest fails to comply in all material respects with its obligations pursuant to the no-solicitation covenants.

In addition, Southwest may terminate the merger agreement if:

- the average closing price of First Bancshares common stock is less than 70% of the signing price, i.e., less than \$21.315; provided, however, if Southwest wishes to exercise its termination right pursuant to this provision, it shall give prompt written notice to First Bancshares, and within the five-day period after its receipt of the termination notice from Southwest, First Bancshares will have the option, but not the obligation, to increase the total merger consideration to be at least \$56,400,000 (subject to downward adjustments if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000), which will nullify and void Southwest's termination, and the merger agreement will remain in full force and effect; or

- Southwest's board of directors determines to enter into a definitive agreement with respect to a superior proposal in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement but only if Southwest pays to First Bancshares a \$2,250,000

termination fee.

Termination Fee (page 88)

If the merger agreement is terminated under certain circumstances, including circumstances involving a change in recommendation by Southwest's board of directors, Southwest may be required to pay First Bancshares a termination fee of \$2,250,000. The termination fee could discourage other companies from seeking to acquire or merge with Southwest.

Expenses (page 89)

Each party will bear all expenses incurred in connection with the merger and the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, provided, however, if either party terminates the agreement due to a failure to obtain a required regulatory approval and such failure is not primarily related to the financial or

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regulatory condition of Southwest, or due to failure by First Bancshares to satisfy any condition in any such regulatory approval, then First Bancshares will pay Southwest \$635,000 as reimbursement for its transaction-related costs and expenses.

U.S. Federal Income Tax Considerations (page 65)

The merger is expected to qualify as a “reorganization” within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code, and respective outside legal counsel to each of First Bancshares and Southwest has rendered its tax opinion to First Bancshares and Southwest, which is filed as an exhibit to the registration statement of which this proxy statement/prospectus forms a part, that the completion of the merger will qualify as a “reorganization” within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code. In addition, it is a condition to the respective obligations of First Bancshares and Southwest to complete the merger that each of First Bancshares and Southwest receives a tax opinion from its respective outside legal counsel, dated the closing date of the merger, to that effect. Based upon the treatment of the merger as a “reorganization” within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code, a shareholder of Southwest will not recognize gain or loss with respect to the receipt of the stock consideration. As a result of receiving First Bancshares common stock and cash in exchange for Southwest common stock, in general, shareholders of Southwest will recognize gain, but not loss, equal to the lesser of cash received or gain realized in the merger. The amount of gain realized will equal the amount by which the cash plus the fair market value, at the effective time of the merger, of the First Bancshares common stock exceeds the relevant shareholder’s adjusted tax basis in its Southwest common stock to be surrendered in exchange therefor. For further information, see “The Merger — U.S. Federal Income Tax Considerations.”

The U.S. federal income tax consequences described above may not apply to all holders of Southwest common stock. Your particular tax consequences will depend on your individual situation. Accordingly, we strongly urge you to consult your independent tax advisor for a full understanding of the particular tax consequences of the merger to you.

Accounting Treatment of the Merger (page 69)

First Bancshares will account for the merger under the acquisition method of accounting for business combinations under accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

The Rights of Holders of Southwest Common Stock Will Change as a Result of the Merger (see page 123)

The rights of holders of Southwest common stock are governed by Alabama law, as well as Southwest’s Articles of Incorporation, as amended (which we refer to as the Southwest Articles), and Southwest’s Bylaws. After completion of the merger, the rights of former Southwest shareholders will be governed by Mississippi law and by First Bancshares’ Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation (which we refer to as the First Bancshares Articles), and First Bancshares’ Amended and Restated Bylaws (or, the First Bancshares Bylaws).

Material differences between the rights of shareholders of Southwest and shareholders of First Bancshares include the process for determining the size of the board of directors, the process for removing directors, limitations of director liability, indemnification of officers, directors and employees, the ability of shareholders to act by written consent, and shareholder proposals and advance notice requirements. The material differences between the organizational documents and the rights of shareholders of Southwest and shareholders of First Bancshares are explained in more detail under the section “Comparison of Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders and Southwest Shareholders” beginning on page 123.

Opinion of Southwest’s Financial Advisor (page 53 and Annex B)

On October 23, 2017, Hovde Group, LLC, referred to as Hovde, rendered an opinion to the Southwest board of directors to the effect that, as of such date and subject to the procedures followed, assumptions made, matters considered, and qualifications and limitations on the review undertaken by Hovde as set forth in such opinion, the merger consideration to be paid in the proposed transaction was fair, from a financial point of view, to Southwest’s shareholders. The full text of the written opinion of Hovde is

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attached as Annex B to this document. Southwest shareholders should read the entire opinion for a discussion of, among other things, the assumptions made, procedures followed, matters considered and qualifications and limitations on the review undertaken by Hovde in rendering its opinion.

The opinion of Hovde is addressed to the Southwest board of directors, is directed only to the fairness, from a financial point of view, of the merger consideration to be paid to the holders of Southwest stock and does not constitute a recommendation to any Southwest shareholder as to how such shareholder should vote with respect to the merger or any other matter at the Southwest special meeting.

For further information, please see the section entitled “The Merger — Opinion of Southwest’s Financial Advisor” beginning on page 53.

Closing and Effective Time of the Merger (see page 74)

The closing date is currently expected to occur in the first or second quarter of 2018. Simultaneously with the closing of the merger, First Bancshares will file the articles of merger with the Secretary of State of the State of Mississippi and the Secretary of State of the State of Alabama. The merger will become effective at such time as the articles of merger are filed or such other time as may be specified in the articles of merger. Neither First Bancshares nor Southwest can predict, however, the actual date on which the merger will be completed because it is subject to factors beyond each company’s control, including whether or when the Southwest’s shareholder approval will be received.

Pending Acquisition of Sunshine Financial, Inc.

On December 6, 2017, First Bancshares entered into an agreement and plan of merger to acquire Sunshine Financial, Inc., or Sunshine, the holding company of Sunshine Community Bank. Pursuant to the merger agreement, Sunshine will merge with and into First Bancshares, with First Bancshares as the surviving company, a transaction we refer to as the “Sunshine merger.” Immediately after the merger, Sunshine Community Bank, a Florida-state chartered bank and wholly owned subsidiary of Sunshine, will merge with and into The First, with The First as the surviving bank. The transaction was unanimously approved by the boards of directors of each of First Bancshares and Sunshine and is expected to close in the second quarter of 2018. Completion of the transaction is subject to customary closing conditions, including receipt of required regulatory approvals and approval of Sunshine’s shareholders. Under the terms of the agreement, holders of Sunshine common stock will receive, at the election of each Sunshine shareholder, either (i) \$27.00 in cash, or (ii) 0.93 of a share of First Bancshares’ common stock, provided that the total mix of merger consideration is fixed at 75% stock and 25% cash. The aggregate transaction consideration is valued at approximately \$32.1 million. At September 30, 2017, Sunshine had approximately \$194 million in total consolidated assets, \$160 million in total consolidated loans, \$142 million in total consolidated deposits and \$22.2 million in stockholder’s equity.



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### CAUTIONARY STATEMENT CONCERNING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS

Some of the statements contained or incorporated by reference in this proxy statement/prospectus contain forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995, including, but not limited to, statements about the financial condition, results of operations, earnings outlook and business plans, goals, expectations and prospects of First Bancshares, Southwest and the combined company following the proposed merger and statements for the period after the merger. Words such as “anticipate,” “believe,” “feel,” “expect,” “estimate,” “indicate,” “seek,” “strive,” “plan,” “intend,” “outlook,” “forecast,” “project,” “position,” “target,” “mission,” “contemplate,” “achievable,” “potential,” “strategy,” “goal,” “aspiration,” “outcome,” “continue,” “remain,” “maintain,” “trend,” “objective” and such words and similar expressions, or future or conditional verbs such as “will,” “would,” “should,” “could,” “might,” “can,” or similar expressions, as they relate to First Bancshares, Southwest, the proposed merger or the combined company following the merger often identify forward-looking statements, although not all forward-looking statements contain such words.

These forward-looking statements are predicated on the beliefs and assumptions of management based on information known to management as of the date of this proxy statement/prospectus and do not purport to speak as of any other date. Forward-looking statements may include descriptions of the expected benefits and costs of the transaction; forecasts of revenue, earnings or other measures of economic performance, including statements of profitability, business segments and subsidiaries; management plans relating to the merger; the expected timing of the completion of the merger; the ability to complete the merger; the ability to obtain any required regulatory, shareholder or other approvals; any statements of the plans and objectives of management for future or past operations, including the execution of integration plans; any statements of expectation or belief and any statements of assumptions underlying any of the foregoing.

The forward-looking statements contained or incorporated by reference in this proxy statement/ prospectus reflect the view of management as of this date with respect to future events and are subject to risks and uncertainties. Should one or more of these risks materialize or should underlying beliefs or assumptions prove incorrect, actual results could differ materially from those anticipated by the forward-looking statements or historical results. Such risks and uncertainties include, among others, the following possibilities:

- the occurrence of any event, change or other circumstances that could give rise to the termination of the merger agreement, including a termination of the merger agreement under circumstances that could require Southwest to pay a termination fee to First Bancshares;
- the inability to complete the merger contemplated by the merger agreement due to the failure to satisfy conditions necessary to close the merger, including the receipt of the requisite approvals of Southwest shareholders;
- risks associated with the timing of the completion of the merger;
- management time and effort may be diverted to the resolution of merger-related issues, including, with respect to First Bancshares, the time and effort management is directing to its pending merger with Sunshine at the same time as the pending merger of First Bancshares and Southwest;
- the risk that the businesses of First Bancshares, Southwest and Sunshine will not be integrated successfully, or such integration may be more difficult, time-consuming or costly than expected;
- First Bancshares’ ability to achieve the synergies and value creation contemplated by the proposed mergers with Southwest and Sunshine;

- the expected growth opportunities or costs savings from the mergers with Southwest and the Sunshine may not be fully realized or may take longer to realize than expected;
- revenues following the transaction may be lower than expected as a result of losses of customers or other reasons;
- First Bancshares' ability to complete the Sunshine merger during the same time period as the Southwest transaction;

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- potential deposit attrition, higher than expected costs, customer loss and business disruption associated with First Bancshares' integration of Southwest, including, without limitation, potential difficulties in maintaining relationships with key personnel;
- the outcome of any legal proceedings that may be instituted against First Bancshares or Southwest or their respective boards of directors;
- general economic conditions, either globally, nationally, in the States of Mississippi or Alabama, or in the specific markets in which First Bancshares or Southwest operate;
- limitations placed on the ability of First Bancshares and Southwest to operate their respective businesses by the merger agreement;
- the effect of the announcement of the merger on First Bancshares' and Southwest's business relationships, employees, customers, suppliers, vendors, other partners, standing with regulators, operating results and businesses generally;
- customer acceptance of the combined company's products and services;
- the amount of any costs, fees, expenses, impairments and charges related to the merger;
- fluctuations in the market price of First Bancshares common stock and the related effect on the market value of the merger consideration that Southwest shareholders will receive upon completion of the merger;
- the introduction, withdrawal, success and timing of business initiatives;
- significant increases in competition in the banking and financial services industry;
- legislation, regulatory changes or changes in monetary or fiscal policy that adversely affect the businesses in which First Bancshares or Southwest are engaged, including potential changes resulting from currently proposed legislation, including the Financial CHOICE Act of 2017;
- credit risk of borrowers, including any increase in those risks due to changing economic conditions;
- changes in consumer spending, borrowing, and savings habits;
- competition among depository and other financial institutions;

- liquidity risk affecting First Bancshares' or Southwest's banks' ability to meet their obligations when they become due;
- interest rate risk involving the effect of a change in interest rates;
- compliance risk resulting from violations of, or nonconformance with, laws, rules, regulations, prescribed practices or ethical standards;
- strategic risk resulting from adverse business decisions or improper implementation of business decisions;
- reputational risk that adversely affects earnings or capital arising from negative public opinion;
- terrorist activities risk that results in loss of consumer confidence and economic disruptions; and
- other risks and uncertainties detailed from time to time in First Bancshares' SEC filings.

Any forward-looking statements made in this proxy statement/prospectus or in any documents incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus, are subject to the protection of the safe harbor for forward-looking statements contained in the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. You are cautioned not to place undue reliance on these statements, which speak only as of the date of this proxy statement/prospectus or the date of any document incorporated by reference in this proxy statement/ prospectus. First Bancshares and Southwest do not undertake to update forward-looking statements to reflect facts, circumstances, assumptions or events that occur after the date the forward-looking statements are made, unless and only to the extent otherwise required by law. All subsequent written and oral

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forward-looking statements concerning the merger or other matters addressed in this proxy statement/ prospectus and attributable to First Bancshares, Southwest or any person acting on their behalf are expressly qualified in their entirety by the cautionary statements contained or referred to in this proxy statement/prospectus.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS****SELECTED CONSOLIDATED HISTORICAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION OF  
FIRST BANCSHARES**

The following selected consolidated financial information for the fiscal years ended December 31, 2012 through December 31, 2016 is derived from audited consolidated financial statements of First Bancshares. The consolidated financial information as of and for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 and 2016 is derived from unaudited consolidated financial statements and, in the opinion of First Bancshares' management, reflects all adjustments, consisting only of normal recurring adjustments, necessary for a fair presentation of these data for those dates. The selected consolidated income data for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 are not necessarily indicative of the results that may be expected for the entire year ending December 31, 2017. You should not assume the results of operations for any past periods indicate results for any future period. You should read this information in conjunction with First Bancshares' consolidated financial statements and related notes thereto included in First Bancshares' Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, and in First Bancshares' Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the nine months ended September 30, 2017, each of which are incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus. See "Where You Can Find More Information."

	As of and for the Nine Months Ended September 30, 2017		As of and for the Years Ended December 31,				
	2016	2016	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
	(unaudited)						
	(in thousands, except ratios, share and per share data)						
Selected Consolidated Operating Data:							
Interest income	\$ 48,926	\$ 32,736	\$ 44,604	\$ 40,202	\$ 36,371	\$ 31,318	\$ 26,331
Interest expense	4,987	3,139	4,315	3,208	2,973	2,917	4,137
Net interest income	43,939	29,597	40,289	36,994	33,398	28,401	22,194
Provision for loan losses	384	538	625	410	1,418	1,076	1,228
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	43,555	29,059	39,664	36,584	31,980	27,325	20,966
Noninterest income	10,807	8,542	11,247	7,588	7,803	7,083	6,324
Noninterest expense	43,056	26,730	36,862	32,160	30,734	28,165	22,164
Income before income tax expense	11,306	10,871	14,049	12,012	9,049	6,243	5,126
Income tax expense	3,104	3,060	3,930	3,213	2,435	1,604	1,077

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(benefit)

Net income	8,202	7,811	10,119	8,799	6,614	4,639	4,049
Preferred dividends and stock accretion	—	257	453	343	363	424	425
Net income available to common shareholders	8,202	7,554	9,666	8,456	6,251	4,215	3,624
Selected Financial Condition Data:							
Securities available for sale	\$ 353,035	\$ 236,168	\$ 243,206	\$ 239,732	\$ 254,746	\$ 244,051	\$ 214,395
Securities held to maturity	6,000	6,000	6,000	7,092	8,193	8,438	8,470
Loans, net of allowance for loan losses	1,194,606	856,322	865,424	769,742	700,540	577,574	408,975
Total assets	1,787,976	1,266,638	1,277,367	1,145,131	1,093,768	940,890	721,385
Deposits	1,507,991	1,071,789	1,039,191	916,695	892,775	779,971	596,625
Shareholders' equity	166,980	112,658	154,527	103,436	96,216	85,108	65,885
Selected Consolidated Financial Ratios and Other Data:							
Per Share Data:							
Earnings per common share, basic	\$ 0.90	\$ 1.39	\$ 1.78	\$ 1.57	\$ 1.20	\$ 0.98	\$ 1.17
Earnings per common share, diluted	\$ 0.89	\$ 1.38	\$ 1.57	\$ 1.55	\$ 1.19	\$ 0.96	\$ 1.16
Cash dividends paid per common share	\$ 0.1125	\$ 0.1125	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.15	\$ 0.15
Weighted average	9,140,375	5,425,567	5,435,088	5,371,111	5,227,768	4,319,485	3,101,111

common shares outstanding, basic							
Weighted average common shares outstanding, diluted	9,212,182	5,475,785	6,259,333	5,442,050	5,270,669	4,372,930	3,125,
Book value per common share	\$ 18.24	\$ 17.60	\$ 17.19	\$ 16.05	\$ 14.88	\$ 13.34	\$ 15.73
Performance Ratios:							
Return on average assets	0.63%	0.83%	0.79%	0.75%	0.61%	0.45%	0.51%
Return on average equity	6.87	9.41	8.00	8.60	7.10	5.00	5.70
Net interest margin	3.74	3.61	3.63	3.63	3.58	3.31	3.42
Net interest margin, fully tax equivalent basis(1)	3.84	3.69	3.71	3.72	3.70	3.44	3.59

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	As of and for the Nine Months Ended September 30,		As of and for the Years Ended December 31,				
	2017	2016	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
	(unaudited)						
	(in thousands, except ratios, share and per share data)						
Asset Quality Ratios:							
Nonaccrual loans to total loans and other real estate	0.40%	0.67%	0.37%	0.95%	0.85%	0.54%	0.81%
Allowance for loan losses to total loans	0.68	0.87	0.86	0.87	0.86	0.98	1.14
Allowance for loan losses to nonaccrual loans		168.49/29.01	230.1	91.6	100.6	180.1	139.0
Net charge-offs to average total loans	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.03)	0.17	0.01	0.26
Consolidated Capital Ratios:							
Tier 1 leverage ratio	8.6%	8.5%	11.9%	8.7%	8.4%	9.0%	8.6%
Common equity Tier 1 capital ratio	10.3	7.8	13.8	8.1	—	—	—
Tier 1 risk-based capital ratio	11.0	10.5	14.7	11.1	11.5	12.5	12.8
Total risk-based capital ratio	11.6	11.2	15.5	11.9	12.3	13.4	13.8
Total shareholders' equity to total assets	9.3	8.9	12.1	9.0	8.8	9.0	9.1

(1)

We report net interest margin on a fully tax equivalent basis, which calculation is not in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, or GAAP. The tax equivalent adjustment to net interest income recognizes the income tax savings when comparing taxable and tax-exempt assets and assumes a 34% tax rate. Management believes that it is a standard practice in the banking industry to present net interest margin on a fully tax equivalent basis, and believes it enhances the comparability of income and expenses arising from taxable and nontaxable sources. Net interest margin on a fully tax equivalent basis should not be viewed as a substitute for net interest margin provided in accordance with GAAP.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS****SELECTED CONSOLIDATED HISTORICAL FINANCIAL INFORMATION OF SOUTHWEST**

The following selected historical consolidated financial data as of and for the twelve months ended December 31, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013 and 2012 is derived from the audited consolidated financial statements of Southwest. The following selected historical consolidated financial data as of and for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 and 2016, is derived from the unaudited consolidated financial statements of Southwest and has been prepared on the same basis as the selected historical consolidated financial data derived from the audited consolidated financial statements and, in the opinion of Southwest's management, reflects all adjustments, consisting only of normal recurring adjustments, necessary for a fair presentation of this data for those dates.

The results of operations as of and for the nine months ended September 30, 2017, are not necessarily indicative of the results that may be expected for the twelve months ending December 31, 2017, or any future period. You should read the following selected historical consolidated financial data in conjunction with Southwest Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations, audited consolidated financial statements and accompanying notes for the twelve months ended December 31, 2016, 2015 and 2014, and unaudited consolidated financial statements and accompanying notes for the nine months ended September 30, 2017, each of which are included elsewhere in this proxy statement/prospectus.

	As of and for the Nine Months Ended September 30,		As of and for the Years Ended December 31,				
	2017	2016	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
	(Unaudited)						
	(in thousands, except ratios, share and per share data)						
Summary of Operations:							
Total interest income	\$ 11,950	\$ 11,157	\$ 14,979	\$ 14,390	\$ 14,011	\$ 13,889	\$ 14,537
Total interest expense	1,461	1,349	1,822	1,652	1,590	1,701	2,372
Net interest income	10,489	9,808	13,157	12,738	12,421	12,188	12,165
Provision for loan losses	383	303	303	396	100	945	1,625
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	10,106	9,505	12,854	12,342	12,321	11,243	10,540
Noninterest income	2,367	2,417	3,159	2,760	2,326	2,103	2,862
Noninterest expense	9,335	9,183	12,204	11,972	11,648	12,157	11,318
Income before income taxes	3,138	2,739	3,809	3,130	2,999	1,189	2,084
Income tax expense	144	108	164	97	128	62	57
Net income	2,994	2,631	3,645	3,033	2,871	1,127	2,027
Share and per common share							

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data:

Basic net income per share	\$ 41.98	\$ 36.91	\$ 51.13	\$ 42.55	\$ 40.27	\$ 15.81	\$ 28.42
Diluted net income per share	\$ 41.95	\$ 36.88	\$ 51.11	\$ 42.53	\$ 40.27	\$ 15.81	\$ 28.42
Common equity per common share outstanding	\$ 516.27	\$ 497.32	\$ 471.49	\$ 460.70	\$ 423.82	\$ 343.12	\$ 401.06
Dividends per common share	\$ 15.50	\$ 13.00	\$ 17.00	\$ 12.27	\$ 7.00	\$ 3.95	\$ 5.35
Actual common shares outstanding	71,317	71,286	71,317	71,288	71,288	71,286	71,286
Weighted average common shares outstanding	71,317	71,287	71,287	71,288	71,287	71,286	71,324
Diluted weighted average common shares outstanding	71,372	71,338	71,313	71,309	71,287	71,286	71,324

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	Nine Months Ended September 30,		Years Ended December 31,				
	2017	2016	2016	2015	2014	2013	2012
(Unaudited)							
Balance Sheet Data:							
Total assets	\$ 391,595	\$ 369,049	\$ 376,528	\$ 343,160	\$ 320,604	\$ 311,340	\$ 316,552
Cash and cash equivalents	14,390	7,029	16,322	8,518	7,108	6,871	12,002
Securities available for sale	78,956	73,226	67,789	74,091	68,251	75,888	86,009
Loans held for sale	424	1,513	1,299	417	1,345	119	892
Loans	285,068	273,651	277,033	245,617	231,150	212,673	200,040
Allowance for loan losses	3,451	3,156	3,092	2,964	2,872	2,839	2,787
Noninterest-bearing deposits	67,173	56,972	56,934	53,821	52,204	45,922	44,202
Interest-bearing deposits	277,902	257,256	270,745	235,898	216,861	217,802	226,008
Federal funds purchased	—	—	—	—	—	6,150	—
Borrowings	6,858	16,508	12,558	18,258	18,958	14,900	15,600
Total stockholders' equity	36,819	35,453	33,625	32,843	30,212	24,460	28,590
Average total assets	389,596	358,244	360,804	336,792	320,281	314,258	327,077
Average loans	278,625	257,972	261,759	236,020	222,254	201,856	211,536
Average interest earning assets	370,276	336,884	338,792	316,576	304,130	299,167	316,894
Average deposits	342,890	307,831	310,577	284,843	271,100	271,621	283,154
Average interest-bearing deposits	277,858	251,563	254,120	228,335	219,086	225,719	240,230
Average interest-bearing liabilities	287,346	264,998	267,376	247,068	239,180	241,420	256,257
Average total stockholders' equity	34,132	33,239	32,645	29,623	26,478	25,803	27,006
Selected Financial Ratios:							
(ratios are annualized where applicable)							
Return on average assets	1.02%	0.98%	1.01%	0.90%	0.90%	0.36%	0.62%

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Return on average equity	11.70%	10.55%	11.17%	10.24%	10.84%	4.37%	7.51%
Net interest margin(2)	3.78%	3.88%	3.88%	4.02%	4.08%	4.08%	3.83%
Efficiency ratio(1)	72.61%	75.12%	74.80%	77.25%	78.99%	85.07%	75.32%
Asset Quality Ratios:							
(ratios are annualized where applicable)							
Net charge-offs to average loans	0.01%	0.06%	0.07%	0.13%	0.03%	0.44%	0.90%
Allowance to period end loans	1.21%	1.15%	1.12%	1.21%	1.24%	1.33%	1.39%
Allowance for loan losses to non-performing loans	44.15%	34.04%	34.42%	30.67%	33.74%	41.55%	30.88%
Non-performing assets to total assets	2.07%	2.64%	2.51%	3.10%	2.78%	2.63%	3.91%
Capital Ratios(3):							
Tier 1 leverage ratio	9.80%	9.96%	10.08%	10.39%	10.48%	10.29%	9.72%
Common equity tier 1 (CET1) risk-based capital	13.33%	13.13%	13.07%	14.18%	N/A	N/A	N/A
Tier 1 risk-based capital	13.33%	13.13%	13.07%	14.18%	14.81%	14.66%	14.73%
Total risk-based capital	14.53%	14.27%	14.16%	15.36%	16.05%	15.91%	15.98%

(1)  
Efficiency ratio is non-interest expense divided by the sum of net interest income before the provision for loan losses plus non-interest income.

(2)  
Net interest margin is net interest income (annualized for interim periods) divided by total average earning assets.

(3)  
Capital ratios calculated on bank-only data. CET1 was applicable beginning January 1, 2015 under Basel III.

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**UNAUDITED PRO FORMA COMBINED CONSOLIDATED FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

The following unaudited pro forma combined consolidated financial information and accompanying notes show the impact on the historical financial conditions and results of operations of First Bancshares, Southwest and Sunshine and have been prepared to illustrate the effects of the mergers under the acquisition method of accounting. See “The Merger — Accounting Treatment.”

The unaudited pro forma combined consolidated balance sheet as of September 30, 2017 is presented as if the Southwest and the Sunshine mergers had occurred on September 30, 2017. The unaudited pro forma combined consolidated statements of income for the year ended December 31, 2016 and for the nine month period ended September 30, 2017 are presented as if both mergers had occurred on January 1, 2016. The historical consolidated financial information has been adjusted to reflect factually supportable items that are directly attributable to the mergers and, with respect to the income statement only, expected to have a continuing impact on consolidated results of operations, and, as such, First Bancshares’ one-time merger costs for both mergers are not included. The historical results of operations for Iberville Bank, or Iberville, which was acquired on January 1, 2017, are included in our consolidated statement of income for the nine months ended September 30, 2017. The historical results of operations for Iberville for the period of January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2016 are included in the unaudited pro forma combined consolidated statement of income for the year ended December 31, 2016. The unaudited pro forma combined statements of income for the year ended December 31, 2016 and for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 assume the Iberville merger was completed on January 1, 2016. No pro forma adjustments for Iberville are presented for the unaudited pro forma combined consolidated balance sheet since the transaction is already reflected in First Bancshares’ historical financial condition at September 30, 2017.

The unaudited pro forma combined consolidated financial statements are provided for informational purposes only. The unaudited pro forma combined consolidated financial statements are not necessarily, and should not be assumed to be, an indication of the results that would have been achieved had the mergers been completed as of the dates indicated or that may be achieved in the future. The preparation of the unaudited pro forma combined consolidated financial statements and related adjustments required management to make certain assumptions and estimates. The unaudited pro forma combined consolidated financial statements should be read together with:

- The accompanying notes to the unaudited pro forma combined consolidated financial statements;
- First Bancshares’ unaudited consolidated financial statements and accompanying notes as of and for the nine months ended September 30, 2017, included in First Bancshares’ Quarterly Report on Form 10-Q for the nine months ended September 30, 2017, which is incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus;
- First Bancshares’ audited consolidated financial statements and accompanying notes as of and for the year ended December 31, 2016, included in First Bancshares’ Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, which is incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus;
- Southwest’s unaudited consolidated financial statements and accompanying notes as of and for the nine months ended September 30, 2017, beginning on F-2 in this proxy statement/prospectus;
- Southwest’s audited consolidated financial statements and accompanying notes as of the year ended December 31, 2016, beginning on F-29 in this proxy statement/prospectus;
- Sunshine’s unaudited consolidated financial statements and accompanying notes as of and for the nine months ended September 30, 2017, beginning on F-99 in this proxy statement/prospectus; and

- Sunshine's audited consolidated financial statements and accompanying notes as of and for the year ended December 31, 2016, beginning on F-118 in this proxy statement/prospectus.

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THE FIRST BANCSHARES, INC.

PRO FORMA CONDENSED COMBINED BALANCE SHEET

As of September 30, 2017

(in thousands)

(unaudited)

	Historical		Pro Forma Adjustments	First Bancshares Southwest Pro Forma Combined	Historical		Pro Forma Adjustments	Fi Ba So Su Pr Co
	The First Bancshares, Inc.	Southwest Banc Shares, Inc.			Sunshine Financial, Inc.			
Assets								
Cash, due from banks and interest-bearing bank balances and interest-bearing time deposits	\$ 93,317	\$ 14,390	\$ 27,105(4)	\$ 134,812	\$ 9,141	\$ (13,674)(11)	\$	
Securities and Federal Home Loan Bank Stock	368,591	79,897	218(12)	448,706	15,219	(100)(12)		
Loans, net	1,190,018	281,617	(940)(3)(5)(7)	1,470,695	159,541	(1,647)(3)(5)		
Mortgage loans held for sale	4,588	424	—	5,012	—	—		
Other assets	54,629	7,810	(129)(10)	62,310	4,383	372(10)		
Buildings, Furniture & Fixtures and Equipment	46,203	7,235	—	53,438	3,519	—		
Deferred tax asset	5,305	222	494(2)	6,021	2,287	(24)(2)		
Core deposit intangible	4,882	—	3,322(6)	8,204	—	1,763(6)		
Goodwill	20,443	—	26,268(9)	46,711	—	12,235(9)		
Total assets	\$ 1,787,976	\$ 391,595	\$ 56,338	\$ 2,235,909	\$ 194,090	\$ (1,075)	\$	
Liabilities and Stockholders' Equity								
Deposits	\$ 1,507,991	\$ 345,075	\$ 557(1)	\$ 1,853,623	\$ 141,668	\$ —	\$	
Federal Home Loan Bank Advances and other borrowings	104,631	6,858	—	111,489	28,000	—		



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Other liabilities	8,374	2,843	—	11,217	2,193	—
Total liabilities	1,620,996	354,776	557	1,976,329	171,861	—
Stockholders' equity						
Equity	166,980	36,819	55,781(8)	259,580	22,229	(1,075)(8)
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	\$ 1,787,976	\$ 391,595	\$ 56,338	\$ 2,235,909	\$ 194,090	\$ (1,075)

See accompanying Notes to Unaudited Pro Forma Condensed Combined Financial Statements.

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THE FIRST BANCSHARES, INC.

PRO FORMA CONDENSED COMBINED STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

For the year ended December 31, 2016

(in thousands, except per share data)

(unaudited)

	Historical		Pro Forma Adjustments	First Bancshares Iberville Pro Forma Combined	Historical		First Bancshares Iberville Southwest Pro Forma Combined
	The First Bancshares, Inc.	Iberville Bank			Southwest Bancshares, Inc.	Pro Forma Adjustments	
<b>INTEREST INCOME</b>							
Loans	\$ 38,496	\$ 7,873	\$ 153(13)	\$ 46,522	\$ 13,167	\$ 1,317(13)	\$ 61,006
Investment securities and other	6,108	1,714	—	7,822	1,812	(73)	9,561
Total interest income	44,604	9,587	153	54,344	14,979	1,244	70,567
<b>INTEREST EXPENSE</b>							
Deposits	3,443	453	(85)(14)	3,811	1,459	(393)(14)	4,877
Borrowed funds	872	22	—	894	364	—	1,258
Total interest expense	4,315	475	(85)	4,705	1,823	(393)	6,135
Net interest income	40,289	9,112	238	49,639	13,156	1,637	64,432
Provision for loan losses	625	123	—	748	303	—	1,051
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	39,664	8,989	238	48,891	12,853	1,637	63,381
<b>NON-INTEREST INCOME</b>							
Fees and service charges	5,657	813	—	6,470	1,305	—	7,775
Other	5,590	1,401	—	6,991	1,854	—	8,845
Total non-interest income	11,247	2,214	—	13,461	3,159	—	16,620
<b>NON-INTEREST EXPENSE</b>							
Salaries and employee benefits	22,137	6,175	(934)(16)	27,378	6,872	—	34,250

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Occupancy and equipment	4,721	1,553	9(15)	6,283	1,658	—	7,941
Other operating expense	10,004	4,478	—	14,482	3,674	—	18,156
Amortization of core deposit intangible	—	—	319(17)	319	—	332(17)	651
Merger related expense	—	—	(1,281)(16)	(1,281)	—	4,341(16)	3,060
Total non-interest expense	36,862	12,206	(1,887)	47,181	12,204	4,673	64,058
Income before provision for income taxes	14,049	(1,003)	2,125	15,171	3,808	(3,036)	15,943
Provision for income taxes	3,930	—	314(18)	4,244	163	216(18)	4,623
Net Income (loss)	10,119	(1,003)	1,811	10,927	3,645	(3,252)	11,320
Preferred dividends and stock accretion	452	—	—	452	—	—	452
Net income (loss) available to common shareholders	\$ 9,667	\$ (1,003)	\$ 1,811	\$ 10,475	\$ 3,645	\$ (3,252)	\$ 10,868

See accompanying Notes to Unaudited Pro Forma Condensed Combined Financial Statements.

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THE FIRST BANCSHARES, INC.

PRO FORMA CONDENSED COMBINED STATEMENT OF OPERATIONS

For the nine months ended September 30, 2017

(in thousands, except per share data)

(unaudited)

	Historical			Historical			First
	The First	Southwest	Pro Forma	First	Sunshine	Pro Forma	Bancshares
	Bancshares,	Banc	Adjustments	Bancshares	Financial,	Adjustments	Southwest
	Inc.	Shares,		Southwest	Inc.		Sunshine
		Inc.		Pro Forma			Pro Forma
				Combined			Combined
<b>INTEREST INCOME</b>							
Loans	\$ 42,083	\$ 10,498	\$ 988(13)	\$ 53,569	\$ 5,183	\$ 322(13)	\$ 59,074
Investment securities and other	6,843	1,452	(55)	8,240	288	—	8,528
Total interest income	48,926	11,950	933	61,809	5,471	322	67,602
<b>INTEREST EXPENSE</b>							
Deposits	3,836	1,248	(295)(14)	4,789	279	—	5,068
Borrowed funds	1,151	213	—	1,364	138	—	1,502
Total interest expense	4,987	1,461	(295)	6,153	417	—	6,570
Net interest income	43,939	10,489	1,228	55,656	5,054	322	61,032
Provision for loan losses	384	383	—	767	155	—	922
Net interest income after provision for loan losses	43,555	10,106	1,228	54,889	4,899	322	60,110
<b>NON-INTEREST INCOME</b>							
Fees and service charges	2,692	967	—	3,659	1,041	—	4,700
Other	8,115	1,400	—	9,515	281	—	9,796
Total non-interest income	10,807	2,367	—	13,174	1,322	—	14,496
<b>NON-INTEREST EXPENSE</b>							
Salaries and employee benefits	23,070	5,294	—	28,364	2,422	—	30,786

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Occupancy and equipment	4,108	1,258	—	5,366	751	—	6,117
Other operating expense	9,551	2,783	—	12,334	2,355	—	14,689
Amortization of core deposit intangible	—	—	249(17)	249	—	138(17)	387
Merger related expense	6,327	—	4,341(16)	10,668	—	7,639(16)	18,307
Total non-interest expense	43,056	9,335	4,590	56,981	5,528	7,777	70,286
Income before provision for income taxes	11,306	3,138	(3,362)	11,082	693	(7,455)	4,320
Provision for income taxes	3,104	144	(63)(18)	3,185	263	(1,893)(18)	1,555
Net Income (loss)	8,202	2,994	(3,299)	7,897	430	(5,562)	2,765
Preferred dividends and stock accretion	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Net income (loss) available to common shareholders	\$ 8,202	\$ 2,994	\$ (3,299)	\$ 7,897	\$ 430	\$ (5,562)	\$ 2,765

See accompanying Notes to Unaudited Pro Forma Condensed Combined Financial Statements.

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## THE FIRST BANCSHARES, INC.

## NOTES TO UNAUDITED PRO FORMA CONDENSED COMBINED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

## Note 1 — Basis of Presentation

The unaudited pro forma condensed combined financial information included herein has been prepared pursuant to the rules and regulations of the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission. Certain information and certain footnote disclosures normally included in financial statements prepared in accordance with U.S. generally accepted accounting principles have been omitted pursuant to such rules and regulations. However, management believes that the disclosures are adequate to make the information presented not misleading.

## Note 2 — First Bancshares' Acquisition of Iberville Bank

On January 1, 2017, the Company completed a transaction in which it acquired all of the stock of Iberville Bank, Plaquemine, LA ("Iberville") for a total consideration of \$31.1 million pursuant to a previously-announced Stock Purchase Agreement entered into on October 12, 2017 among the Company and A. Wilbert's Sons Lumber & Shingle Co., a Louisiana corporation. The following table summarizes the cash paid and the preliminary estimated fair values of the assets and the liabilities assumed as if the acquisition of Iberville occurred on December 31, 2016 (in thousands):

## Purchase Price:

Cash paid	\$ 31,100
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## Fair Value of assets acquired:

Cash and due from banks	\$ 28,789
Securities, FHLB Stock and FNBB Stock	78,613
Loans, net	148,516
Buildings, Furniture & Fixtures and Equipment	4,603
Goodwill	683
Core Deposit Intangible	2,688
Other Assets	8,647
Total assets acquired	\$ 272,539

## Fair Value of deposits acquired:

Deposits	243,656
FHLB Advances	456
Other liabilities	2,928
Total liabilities assumed	\$ 247,040

Fair Value of net assets acquired	25,499
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Preliminary pro forma goodwill	\$ 5,601
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## Note 3 — First Bancshares' Proposed Acquisition of Southwest Banc Shares, Inc.

On October 24, 2017, First Bancshares entered into an Agreement and Plan of Merger (the "Merger Agreement") with Southwest Banc Shares, Inc. an Alabama corporation ("Southwest"), whereby Southwest will be merged with and into First Bancshares (the "Merger"). Pursuant to the Merger Agreement, each outstanding share of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding immediately prior to the effective time of the Merger will be converted into the right to receive a "Pro Rata Share" (which is a ratio equal to one (1) divided by the number of shares of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding as of the closing) of (i) a number of shares of First Bancshares' common stock equal to \$36 million divided by the average closing price of First Bancshares' common stock during the ten trading days preceding the fifth business day prior to the closing date (subject to a maximum per-share price of First Bancshares' common stock of \$36.54 and a minimum price of \$24.36) and (ii) a cash amount equal to \$24 million (subject to downward adjustment in accordance with the terms of the Merger Agreement in the event that Southwest's



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adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32 million). Each outstanding share of Southwest common stock subject to vesting restrictions shall become vested immediately prior to the effective time of the Merger and will be converted into the right to receive the same merger consideration that other SWBS shareholders are entitled to receive. The following table summarizes the calculation of the purchase price and the preliminary allocation of the purchase price to the estimated fair value of assets and liabilities (in thousands):

## Purchase Price:

Cash paid and value of stock issued	\$ 60,000
-------------------------------------	-----------

## Fair Value of assets acquired:

Cash and due from banks	\$ 10,050
Securities, FHLB Stock and FNBB Stock	80,115
Loans, net	280,677
Buildings, Furniture & Fixtures and Equipment	7,235
Deferred Tax Asset	716
Core Deposit Intangible	3,322
Other Assets	6,950
Total assets acquired	\$ 389,065

## Fair Value of deposits acquired:

Deposits	345,632
FHLB Advances	6,858
Other liabilities	2,843
Total liabilities assumed	\$ 355,333

Fair Value of net assets acquired	33,732
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Preliminary pro forma goodwill	\$ 26,268
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## Note 4 — First Bancshares' Proposed Acquisition of Sunshine Financial, Inc.

On December 6, 2017, First Bancshares entered into an Agreement and Plan of Merger (the "Sunshine Merger Agreement") with Sunshine Financial, Inc., a Florida corporation ("Sunshine"), whereby Sunshine will be merged with and into First Bancshares (the "Sunshine Merger"). Pursuant to the Sunshine Merger Agreement, each outstanding share of Sunshine common stock issued and outstanding immediately prior to the effective time of the Sunshine Merger will be converted into the right to receive, at the election of each Sunshine shareholder, either (i) \$27.00 in cash, or (ii) 0.93 of a share of First Bancshares' common stock, provided that the total mix of merger consideration shall be fixed at 75% stock and 25% cash. Each option to purchase shares of Sunshine common stock shall be cancelled as of the effective time of the Sunshine Merger and converted into the right to receive a cash payment equal to the product of (i) the total number of shares of Sunshine common stock subject to such option times (ii) the excess, if any, of \$27.00 over the exercise price per share of Sunshine common stock subject to such option.

## Note 5 — Pro Forma Adjustments

The following pro forma adjustments have been reflected in the unaudited pro forma condensed combined financial information. All adjustments are based on current assumptions and valuations, which are subject to change:

(1)

Adjustment reflects the preliminary fair value premium on time deposits which was calculated by discounting future contractual payments at a current market interest rate.

(2)

Adjustment reflects the deferred tax impact of fair value adjustments and CDI.



(3)

Adjustment reflects elimination of historical allowance for loan losses.

(4)

Adjustment reflects payment of cash consideration of \$24.0 million and transaction costs of \$4.3 million plus receipt of \$55.4 million from the issuance of 2,012,500 shares.

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(5)

Adjustment reflects estimated fair value discount due to credit worthiness.

(6)

Adjustment reflects estimated fair value of acquired core deposit intangible of \$3.3 million for Southwest and \$1.8 million for Sunshine. The anticipated core deposit intangible will be calculated as the present value of the difference between a market participant's cost of obtaining alternative funds and the cost to maintain the acquired deposit base. Deposit accounts that are evaluated as part of the core deposit intangible include demand deposit, money market and savings accounts.

(7)

Adjustment reflects an estimated fair value premium due to interest rates.

(8)

Adjustment reflects the issuance of 2,012,500 shares for a net of \$55.4 million in October 2017 plus the elimination of historical stockholder's equity.

(9)

Adjustment reflects the excess of the purchase price over the estimated fair value of net assets acquired.

(10)

Adjustment reflects an expected fair value adjustment on other real estate owned as well as anticipated adjustment for employee stock ownership plan termination.

(11)

Adjustment reflects payment of cash consideration of \$6.9 to common shareholders and \$1.3 million to option holders and transaction costs of \$5.5 million.

(12)

Adjustment reflects preliminary fair value of securities.

(13)

Interest income on loans was adjusted to reflect the anticipated difference between the contractual interest rate earned on loans and estimated discount accretion over the remaining life of the acquired loans based on current market yields for similar loans.

(14)

Interest expense on deposits was adjusted to reflect the anticipated amortization of the time deposit fair value premium over the remaining life of the deposits.

(15)

Adjustment to depreciation expense relating to the fair value of buildings over their estimated useful lives.

(16)

Adjustment reflects nonrecurring merger costs.

(17)

Adjustment reflects the anticipated amortization of core deposit intangible over an estimated ten-year useful life and calculated on a straight-line basis.

(18)  
Adjustment reflects the tax impact of the pro forma acquisition accounting adjustments, as well as the tax impact due to the S Corp.

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## UNAUDITED COMPARATIVE PER SHARE INFORMATION

The following table sets forth for First Bancshares, Southwest and Sunshine common stock certain historical, pro forma and pro forma equivalent per share financial information. The pro forma information for First Bancshares and Iberville presented below gives effect to the acquisition of Iberville as if that acquisition by First Bancshares had been effective on January 1, 2016 in the case of net income per common share and dividends declared per common share. Because the Iberville acquisition closed on January 1, 2017, the impact of this acquisition is included in book value per common share amount at September 30, 2017. The information presented below should be read together with the historical consolidated financial statements of First Bancshares, including the related notes, filed by First Bancshares with the SEC and incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus, and the historical consolidated financial statements of Southwest and Sunshine, including the related notes, respectively, included elsewhere in this proxy statement/prospectus.

The pro forma and pro forma equivalent per share information gives effect to the Southwest and Sunshine mergers as if the transactions had been effective on the date presented, in the case of book value data, and as if the transactions had been effective on January 1, 2016, in the case of the income and dividend data. The pro forma information in the table assumes that the mergers are accounted for under the acquisition method of accounting. This information is presented for illustrative purposes only. You should not rely on the pro forma combined or pro forma equivalent amounts as they are not necessarily indicative of the operating results or financial position that would have occurred if the mergers had been completed as of the dates indicated, nor are they necessarily indicative of the future operating results or financial position of the combined company. The pro forma information, although helpful in illustrating the financial characteristics of the combined company under one set of assumptions, does not reflect the benefits of expected cost savings, opportunities to earn additional revenue, the impact of restructuring and merger-related costs or other factors that may result as a consequence of the mergers and, accordingly, does not attempt to predict or suggest future results.

	First Bancshares Historical	First Bancshares Iberville Pro Forma Combined(1)	Southwest Historical	First Bancshares Iberville Southwest Pro Forma Combined(2)	Sunshine Historical	First Bancshares Iberville Southwest Sunshine Pro Forma Combined(3)	Southwest Equivalent Pro Forma(4)
As of and for the year ended December 31, 2016							
Income (loss) from continuing operations attributable to common shareholders per common share, basic	\$ 1.78	\$ 1.41	\$ 51.13	\$ 1.27	\$ 0.12	\$ 0.61	\$ 9.44
Income (loss) from continuing operations attributable to common shareholders per common share,	1.57	1.28	51.11	1.18	0.11	0.57	8.87

diluted

Cash dividends paid per common share	0.15	0.15	17.00	0.15	—	0.15	2.33
Book value per common share	17.19	19.15	471.49	20.44	21.02	20.70	322.15
As of and for the nine months ended September 30, 2017							
Income (loss) from continuing operations attributable to common shareholders per common share, basic	0.90	0.90	41.98	0.65	0.45	0.21	3.32
Income (loss) from continuing operations attributable to common shareholders per common share, diluted	0.89	0.89	41.95	0.65	0.43	0.22	3.46
Cash dividends paid per common share	0.11	0.11	15.50	0.11	—	0.11	1.75
Book value per common share	18.24	18.24	516.27	21.09	21.58	21.55	335.32

(1)

The unaudited pro forma information for First Bancshares and Iberville gives effect to the acquisition of Iberville as if that acquisition had been effective on January 1, 2016 in the case of earnings per share

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and cash dividend data. Because the Iberville acquisition closed on January 1, 2017, the impact of this acquisition is included in book value per common share amounts at September 30, 2017. The unaudited pro forma information also gives effect to the issuance by First Bancshares of 2,012,500 shares common stock for net proceeds of \$55.4 million.

(2)  
Pro forma combined amounts are calculated by adding together First Bancshares and Iberville pro forma combined amounts, together with the historical amounts as reported by Southwest, adjusted for the estimated purchase accounting adjustments to be recorded in connection with the Southwest merger and an estimated 1,085,973 shares of First Bancshares common stock to be issued in connection with the merger with Southwest based on the terms of the merger agreement, assuming that the average closing price of First Bancshares common stock in calculating the stock consideration as of the effective time of the merger will be \$33.15, the closing sale price of First Bancshares common stock on January 5, 2018.

(3)  
Pro forma combined amounts are calculated by adding together First Bancshares and Southwest pro forma combined amounts, which include Iberville as defined in (2) above, together with the historical amounts as reported by Sunshine, adjusted for the estimated purchase accounting adjustments to be recorded in connection with the Sunshine merger and an estimated 716,750 shares of First Bancshares common stock to be issued in connection with the merger with Sunshine based on the terms of the merger agreement.

(4)  
The equivalent pro forma per share data for Southwest is computed by multiplying First Bancshares, Southwest and Sunshine pro forma combined amounts, as defined in (3) above, by 15.21, assuming that the average closing price of First Bancshares common stock in calculating the stock consideration as of the effective time of the merger will be \$33.15, the closing sale price of First Bancshares common stock on January 5, 2018.

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## COMPARATIVE MARKET PRICES AND DIVIDENDS

## First Bancshares

First Bancshares' common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol "FBMS." As of January 5, 2018, the latest practicable date prior to this proxy statement/prospectus, there were approximately 1,971 holders of record of First Bancshares common stock. The following table sets forth the high and low reported intra-day sales prices per share of First Bancshares common stock, and the cash dividends declared per share for the periods indicated.

	First Bancshares Common Stock		
	High	Low	Dividend
2015			
First Quarter	\$ 17.70	\$ 13.80	\$ 0.0375
Second Quarter	16.99	15.50	0.0375
Third Quarter	18.46	16.10	0.0375
Fourth Quarter	18.34	15.58	0.0375
2016			
First Quarter	\$ 18.50	\$ 15.32	\$ 0.0375
Second Quarter	17.72	15.50	0.0375
Third Quarter	19.55	16.99	0.0375
Fourth Quarter	28.50	17.10	0.0375
2017			
First Quarter	\$ 30.80	\$ 26.00	\$ 0.0375
Second Quarter	28.75	26.75	0.0375
Third Quarter	30.85	26.10	0.0375
Fourth Quarter	34.70	27.99	0.0375
2018			
First Quarter (through January 5, 2018)	\$ 35.10	\$ 32.90	\$ —

On October 24, 2017, the last full trading day before the public announcement of the merger agreement, the closing sale price per share of First Bancshares common stock was \$30.60, and on January 5, 2018, the latest practicable date before the date of this proxy statement/prospectus, the closing sale price per share of First Bancshares common stock was \$33.15. Southwest common stock is not publicly traded.

Southwest shareholders are advised to obtain current market quotations for First Bancshares common stock. The market price of First Bancshares common stock will fluctuate between the date of this proxy statement/prospectus and the date of completion of the merger. No assurance can be given concerning the market price of First Bancshares common stock before or after the effective date of the merger. Changes in the market price of First Bancshares common stock prior to the completion of the merger may affect the market value of the merger consideration that Southwest shareholders will receive.

## Southwest

There is no established public trading market for the shares of Southwest common stock, and no market for Southwest common stock is expected to develop if the merger does not occur. No registered broker/dealer makes a market in the Southwest common stock, and no shares of such stock are listed for trading or quoted on any stock exchange or automated quotation system. Southwest acts as the transfer agent and registrar for its own shares. Management of Southwest is not aware of any private sales or purchases of common stock prior to the execution of the merger agreement during 2015, 2016 or 2017.

Southwest's general dividend policy is to pay cash dividends on a quarterly basis. During 2015, Southwest declared dividends of \$12.27 per share and paid dividends of \$12.27 per share. During 2016, Southwest declared dividends of

\$17.00 per share and paid dividends of \$17.00 per share. For the  
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nine months ended September 30, 2017, Southwest declared dividends of \$15.50 per share and paid dividends of \$15.50 per share. Under the terms of the merger agreement, Southwest is permitted to pay quarterly dividends to its shareholders to cover such shareholders' tax liability and an additional per share dividend of \$1.00 per quarter before the effective time of the merger. In addition, if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date is greater than \$32,500,000, then Southwest is permitted to pay a dividend to its shareholders immediately prior to closing in the amount of the excess of Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity over \$32,500,000.

The following table sets forth the Southwest cash dividends declared per share for the periods indicated.

	Southwest Common Stock Dividends
2015	
First Quarter	\$ 4.50
Second Quarter	2.50
Third Quarter	2.77
Fourth Quarter	2.50
2016	
First Quarter	\$ 5.50
Second Quarter	2.50
Third Quarter	5.00
Fourth Quarter	4.00
2017	
First Quarter	\$ 6.80
Second Quarter	4.50
Third Quarter	4.20
Fourth Quarter	5.00

Southwest's shareholders are entitled to receive dividends out of legally available funds when, as and if declared by Southwest's board of directors, in its sole discretion. As an Alabama corporation, Southwest is subject to certain restrictions on dividends under the ABCL. Generally, an Alabama corporation may pay dividends to its shareholders out of its surplus (the excess of its assets over its liabilities and stated capital) unless the corporation is insolvent or the payment of the dividend would render the corporation insolvent, or the corporation is not able to pay its debts as they become due in the usual course of business.

Consistent with its policy that bank holding companies should serve as a source of financial strength for their subsidiary banks, the Federal Reserve Board has stated that, as a matter of prudent banking, a bank holding company generally should not maintain a rate of dividends to shareholders unless its net income available has been sufficient to fully fund the dividends, and the prospective rate of earnings retention appears consistent with the bank holding company's capital needs, asset quality and overall financial condition.

Southwest does not engage in separate business activities of a material nature. As a result, Southwest's ability to pay dividends depends upon the dividends received from its subsidiary, First Community. As an Alabama-chartered banking association, First Community's ability to pay dividends is restricted by certain laws and regulations regulated by the Alabama State Banking Department. Under Alabama law, a state-chartered bank may not pay a dividend in excess of 90% of its net earnings until the bank's surplus is equal to at least 20% of its capital. A bank is also required by Alabama law to obtain the prior approval of the Alabama Superintendent of Banks for its payment of dividends if the total of all dividends declared by a bank in any calendar year will exceed the total of (1) the bank's net earnings (as defined by statute) for that year, plus (2) its retained net earnings for the preceding two years, less any required transfers to surplus. In addition, no dividends, withdrawals or transfers may be made from the bank's surplus without

the prior written approval of the Superintendent.

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In addition to Alabama law restrictions on First Community’s ability to pay dividends, under the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Improvement Act, First Community may not pay any dividend if First Community is “undercapitalized” or if the payment of the dividend would cause First Community to become undercapitalized. The FDIC may further restrict the payment of dividends by requiring that First Community maintain a higher level of capital than would otherwise be required to be “adequately capitalized” for regulatory purposes. Moreover, if, in the opinion of the FDIC, First Community is engaged in an unsound practice (which could include the payment of dividends), the FDIC may require that First Community cease such practice. The federal bank regulatory agencies have indicated that paying dividends that deplete a depository institution’s capital base to an inadequate level would be an unsafe banking practice. Moreover, the federal bank regulatory agencies have issued policy statements providing that insured depository institutions generally should pay dividends only out of current operating earnings. Under regulatory capital guidelines, First Community must maintain a common equity Tier 1 capital to total risk-weighted assets ratio of at least 4.5%, a Tier 1 capital to total risk-weighted assets ratio of 6.0%, a total capital to total risk-weighted assets ratio of 8.0% and a Tier 1 capital to average total assets ratio of 4.0%. As of September 30, 2017, First Community had a ratio of common equity Tier 1 capital to total risk-weighted assets of 13.33%, a ratio of Tier 1 capital to total risk-weighted assets of 13.33%, a ratio of total capital to total risk-weighted assets of 14.53%, and a ratio of Tier 1 capital to average total assets of 9.80%. As of that date, First Community, with regulatory approval, could have paid a dividend of \$15.34 million and still met the above minimum capital requirements; provided, however, that under Alabama law, First Community would only be allowed to pay a dividend of \$4.95 million.

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RISK FACTORS

In addition to general investment risks and the other information contained in or incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus, including the matters addressed under the section “Cautionary Statement Concerning Forward-Looking Statements,” you should carefully consider the following risk factors in deciding how to vote for the proposals presented in this proxy statement/prospectus. You should also consider the other information in this proxy statement/prospectus and the other documents incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus. See “Where You Can Find More Information.”

Risks Related to the Merger

The amount of the cash consideration may decrease following the Southwest special meeting.

Upon completion of the merger, each outstanding share of Southwest common stock will be converted into the right to receive, without interest, a pro rata portion (which is a ratio equal to one divided by the number of shares of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding as of the closing) of a cash amount equal to \$24,000,000 (subject to downward adjustment in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement in the event that Southwest’s adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000), which we refer to as the cash consideration.

Pursuant to the terms of the merger agreement, if Southwest’s adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date is less than \$32,000,000, the aggregate amount of the cash consideration will be reduced by an amount equal to (1) \$32,000,000 minus (2) Southwest’s actual adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date. Southwest’s adjusted tangible common equity will be calculated as Southwest’s common equity (as defined in GAAP) less (i) intangible assets (as defined in GAAP), (ii) any anticipated but unaccrued Southwest transaction expenses in connection with the merger, and (iii) the amount of any reduction in Southwest’s allowance for loan and lease losses below \$3,425,000 as of the effective time of the merger.

As of September 30, 2017, Southwest’s adjusted tangible common equity was greater than \$32,000,000. The calculation date for the adjusted tangible common equity will occur subsequent to the date of the Southwest special meeting, and if the adjusted tangible common equity is less \$32,000,000 on the determination date, the cash consideration to be received by Southwest shareholders will be adjusted downward.

Because the market price of First Bancshares common stock will fluctuate, Southwest shareholders cannot be certain of the market value of the stock consideration they will receive.

In addition to the cash consideration, pursuant to the merger agreement, each outstanding share of Southwest common stock will be converted into the right to receive a pro rata portion of a number of shares of First Bancshares common stock equal to \$36,000,000 divided by the average closing price of First Bancshares’ common stock during the ten trading days preceding the fifth business day prior to the closing date (subject to adjustments as discussed below), which we refer to as the stock consideration. In determining the stock consideration, the average closing price of First Bancshares’ common stock pursuant to the formula above may be adjusted to the extent that if (1) the average closing price is at least 20% higher than \$30.45, which we refer to as the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$36.54, and (2) the average closing price is at least 20% lower than the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$24.36. If the average closing price is neither 20% higher nor lower than the signing price, then the average closing price pursuant to the formula above will be used to calculate the stock consideration.

The market value of the stock consideration may vary from the market value on the date Southwest and First Bancshares announced the merger, on the date that this proxy statement/prospectus is mailed, on the date of the Southwest special meeting and on the date the merger is completed and thereafter due to fluctuations in the market price of First Bancshares common stock. Any fluctuation in the market price of First Bancshares common stock after the date of this proxy statement/prospectus could change the value of the shares of First Bancshares common stock that Southwest shareholders will receive if such fluctuations result in the average closing price of First Bancshares being higher than \$36.54 or less than \$24.36. Stock

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price changes may result from a variety of factors that are beyond the control of First Bancshares and Southwest, including but not limited to general market and economic conditions, changes in their respective businesses, operations and prospects and regulatory considerations. Therefore, at the time of the Southwest special meeting, Southwest shareholders will not know the precise market value of the stock consideration they will receive at the effective time of the merger. Southwest shareholders should obtain current sale prices for shares of First Bancshares common stock before voting their shares at the Southwest special meeting.

The merger and related transactions are subject to approval by Southwest shareholders.

The merger cannot be completed unless the Southwest shareholders approve the merger agreement and the merger by the affirmative vote of the holders of at least two-thirds of the outstanding shares of Southwest's common stock entitled to vote on the merger.

Failure to complete the merger could negatively affect the value of the shares and the future business and financial results of Southwest.

If the merger is not completed, the ongoing business of Southwest could be adversely affected and Southwest will be subject to a variety of risks associated with the failure to complete the merger, including the following:

- Southwest being required, under certain circumstances, to pay to First Bancshares a termination fee equal to \$2,250,000;
- substantial costs incurred by Southwest in connection with the proposed merger, such as legal, accounting, financial advisor, filing, printing and mailing fees;
- the loss of key employees and customers;
- the disruption of operations and business;
- deposit attrition, customer loss and revenue loss;
- possible inconsistencies in standards, control procedures and policies;
- unexpected problems with costs, operations, personnel, technology and credit;
- diversion of management focus and resources from operational matters and other strategic opportunities while working to implement the merger; and
- reputational harm due to the adverse perception of any failure to successfully complete the merger.

If the merger is not completed, these risks could materially affect the business, financial results and the value of Southwest common stock.

Southwest will be subject to business uncertainties and contractual restrictions while the merger is pending.

Uncertainty about the effect of the merger on employees and customers may have an adverse effect on Southwest.

These uncertainties may impair Southwest's ability to attract, retain and motivate key personnel until the merger is completed, and could cause customers and others that deal with Southwest to seek to change existing business

relationships with Southwest. Retention of certain employees by Southwest may be challenging while the merger is pending, as certain employees may experience uncertainty about their future roles with Southwest or First Bancshares. If key employees depart because of issues relating to the uncertainty and difficulty of integration or a desire not to remain with Southwest or First Bancshares, Southwest's business or the business assumed by First Bancshares following the merger could be harmed. In addition, Southwest has agreed to certain contractual restrictions on the operation of its business prior to closing. See "The Merger Agreement — Covenants and Agreements" for a description of the restrictive covenants applicable to Southwest.

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The merger agreement limits Southwest's ability to pursue an alternative acquisition proposal and requires Southwest to pay a termination fee of \$2,250,000 under limited circumstances relating to alternative acquisition proposals. Under the merger agreement, Southwest has agreed not to initiate, solicit, induce or knowingly encourage, or take any action to facilitate any alternative business combination transaction or, subject to certain exceptions, participate in discussions or negotiations regarding, or furnish any non-public information relating to, any alternative business combination transaction. See "The Merger Agreement — No Solicitation" on page 85. The merger agreement also provides for Southwest to pay to First Bancshares a termination fee in the amount of \$2,250,000 in the event that the merger agreement is terminated for certain reasons. See "The Merger Agreement — Termination Fee" on page 88. These provisions could discourage a potential competing acquirer that might have an interest in acquiring Southwest from considering or making a competing acquisition proposal, even if the potential competing acquirer was prepared to pay consideration with a higher per share cash value than the market value proposed to be received or realized in the merger, or might result in a potential competing acquirer proposing to pay a lower price than it might otherwise have proposed to pay because of the added expense of the termination fee that may become payable in certain circumstances under the merger agreement.

The merger agreement contains provisions granting both Southwest and First Bancshares the right to terminate the merger agreement in certain circumstances.

The merger agreement contains certain termination rights, including the right, subject to certain exceptions, of either party to terminate the merger agreement if the merger is not completed on or prior to February 20, 2018 (subject to automatic extension to April 21, 2018 if the only outstanding condition to closing is the receipt of regulatory approvals), and the right of Southwest to terminate the merger agreement, subject to certain conditions, if average closing price of First Bancshares common stock is less than 70% of the signing price, i.e., less than \$21.315, or to accept a business combination transaction deemed to be superior to the merger by the Southwest board of directors. If the merger is not completed, the ongoing business of Southwest could be adversely affected and Southwest will be subject to several risks, including the risks described elsewhere in this "Risk Factors" section

The merger is subject to a number of conditions which, if not satisfied or waived in a timely manner, would delay the merger or adversely impact the companies' ability to complete the transactions.

The completion of the merger is subject to certain conditions, including, among others, the (1) approval of the merger agreement and the merger by the holders of at least two-thirds of the outstanding shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote; (2) the receipt of all required regulatory approvals for the merger, without the imposition of any material on-going conditions or restrictions, and the expiration of all regulatory waiting periods; (3) the absence of any legal restraint (such as an injunction or restraining order) that would prevent the consummation of the merger; (4) the effectiveness of the registration statement of which this proxy statement/prospectus forms a part; (5) each party's receipt of a tax opinion from its respective outside legal counsel, dated the closing date of the merger, confirming the tax-free treatment of the merger for U.S. federal income tax purposes; (6) the absence of more than five percent of the outstanding shares of Southwest's common stock exercising (or being entitled to exercise) their dissenters' rights; (7) the adjusted tangible common equity of Southwest not being less than \$32,000,000; (8) the absence of the occurrence of a material adverse effect on Southwest or First Bancshares; and (9) other customary closing conditions set forth in the merger agreement. See "The Merger Agreement — Conditions to Completion of the Merger" on page 87. While it is currently anticipated that the merger will be completed during the first or second quarter of 2018, there can be no assurance that such conditions will be satisfied in a timely manner or at all, or that an effect, event, development or change will not transpire that could delay or prevent these conditions from being satisfied. Accordingly, there can be no guarantee with respect to the timing of the closing of the merger, whether the merger will be completed at all and when Southwest shareholders would receive the merger consideration, if at all. First Bancshares and Southwest may waive one or more of the conditions to the merger without re-soliciting shareholder approval for the merger.

Each of the conditions to the obligations of First Bancshares and Southwest to complete the merger may be waived, in whole or in part, to the extent permitted by applicable law, by agreement of First

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Bancshares and Southwest, if the condition is a condition to both parties' obligation to complete the merger, or by the party for which such condition is a condition of its obligation to complete the merger. The boards of directors of First Bancshares and Southwest may evaluate the materiality of any such waiver to determine whether amendment of this proxy statement/prospectus and re-solicitation of proxies are necessary. First Bancshares and Southwest, however, generally do not expect any such waiver to be significant enough to require re-solicitation of shareholders. In the event that any such waiver is not determined to be significant enough to require re-solicitation of shareholders, the companies will have the discretion to complete the merger without seeking further shareholder approval.

Some of the directors and executive officers of Southwest have interests in seeing the merger completed that are different from, or in addition to, those of the other Southwest shareholders.

Some of the directors and executive officers of Southwest have arrangements that provide them with interests in the merger that are different from, or in addition to, those of the shareholders of Southwest generally. These interests and arrangements may create potential conflicts of interest and may influence or may have influenced the directors and executive officers of Southwest to support or approve the merger. See "The Merger — Interests of Southwest's Directors and Executive Officers in the Merger" beginning on page 61.

The opinion of Southwest's financial advisor does not reflect changes in circumstances between the date of the signing of the merger agreement and the completion of the merger.

Southwest's board of directors received an opinion from its financial advisor as to the fairness of the merger consideration from a financial point of view as of the date of such opinion. Subsequent changes in the operation and prospects of Southwest or First Bancshares, general market and economic conditions and other factors that may be beyond the control of Southwest or First Bancshares, may significantly alter the value of Southwest or First Bancshares or the price of the shares of First Bancshares common stock by the time the merger is completed. The opinion does not address the fairness of the merger consideration from a financial point of view at the time the merger is completed, or as of any other date other than the date of such opinion. The opinion of Southwest's financial advisor is attached as Annex B to this proxy statement/prospectus. For a description of the opinion, see "The Merger — Opinion of Southwest's Financial Advisor" on page 53.

Litigation in transactions of this type are sometimes filed against the board of directors of either party that could prevent or delay the completion of the merger or result in the payment of damages following completion of the merger.

In connection with the merger, it is possible that Southwest shareholders may file putative class action lawsuits against the boards of directors of First Bancshares and/or Southwest. Among other remedies, these shareholders could seek to enjoin the merger. The outcome of any such litigation would be uncertain. If a dismissal is not granted or a settlement is not reached, such potential lawsuits could prevent or delay completion of the merger and result in substantial costs to First Bancshares and Southwest. The defense or settlement of any lawsuit or claim that remains unresolved at the time the merger is consummated may adversely affect the combined company's business, financial condition, results of operations, cash flows and market price.

**Risks Related to the Combined Company Following the Merger**

The combined company expects to incur substantial expenses related to the merger.

The combined company expects to incur substantial expenses in connection with completing the merger and integrating the business and operations of Southwest and First Bancshares. Although First Bancshares and Southwest have assumed that a certain level of transaction and integration expenses would be incurred, there are a number of factors beyond their control that could affect the total amount or the timing of their integration expenses. Many of the expenses that will be incurred, by their nature, are difficult to estimate accurately at the present time. As a result, the transaction and integration expenses associated with the merger could, particularly in the near term, exceed the savings that the combined company expects to achieve from the integration of the businesses following the completion of the merger.



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Following the merger, the combined company may be unable to integrate Southwest's business with First Bancshares successfully and realize the anticipated synergies and other benefits of the merger or do so within the anticipated timeframe.

The merger involves the combination of two companies that currently operate as independent companies, as well as the companies' subsidiaries. Although the combined company is expected to benefit from certain synergies, including cost savings, the combined company may encounter potential difficulties in the integration process including:

- the inability to successfully combine Southwest's business with First Bancshares in a manner that permits the combined company to achieve the cost savings anticipated to result from the merger, which would result in the anticipated benefits of the merger not being realized in the timeframe currently anticipated or at all;

- the risk of not realizing all of the anticipated operational efficiencies or other anticipated strategic and financial benefits of the merger within the expected timeframe or at all;

- potential unknown liabilities and unforeseen increased expenses, delays or regulatory conditions associated with the merger; and

- performance shortfalls as a result of the diversion of management's attention caused by completing the merger and integrating the companies' operations.

For all these reasons, you should be aware that it is possible that the integration process could result in the distraction of the combined company's management, the disruption of the combined company's ongoing business or inconsistencies in the combined company's operations, any of which could adversely affect the ability of the combined company to maintain relationships with customers and employees or to achieve the anticipated benefits of the merger, or could otherwise adversely affect the business and financial results of the combined company.

Following the merger, the combined company may be unable to retain key employees.

The success of the combined company after the merger will depend in part upon its ability to retain key employees. Simultaneous with the execution of the merger agreement, First Bancshares entered into key employee retention agreements with certain employees of Southwest, the effectiveness of which is conditioned upon the completion of the merger. However, key employees may depart either before or after the merger because of issues relating to the uncertainty and difficulty of integration or a desire not to remain with the combined company following the merger. Accordingly, no assurance can be given that Southwest or First Bancshares or, following the merger, the combined company will be able to retain key employees.

There is no assurance that First Bancshares will complete the Sunshine merger transaction.

Like the merger transaction with Southwest, the Sunshine merger is subject to customary conditions to closing, including the receipt of required regulatory approvals and the approval of Sunshine shareholders. If any conditions to the Sunshine merger are not satisfied or waived, to the extent permitted by law, the merger will not be completed. In addition, First Bancshares and Sunshine may terminate the Sunshine merger agreement under certain circumstances even if the Sunshine merger agreement is approved by Sunshine shareholders. If First Bancshares and Sunshine do not complete the merger, First Bancshares would not realize any of the expected benefits of having completed the merger. Accordingly, there is no assurance that the Sunshine merger will be consummated, or if it is, the timing for its completion.

The voting power of Southwest shareholders will be diluted by the merger.

The merger will result in Southwest shareholders having an ownership stake in the combined company that is smaller than their current stake in Southwest. Assuming that the average closing price of First Bancshares common stock in calculating the stock consideration as of the effective time of the merger will be \$33.15, the closing sale price of First Bancshares common stock on January 5, 2018, (1) upon completion of First Bancshares' merger with Southwest, we

estimate that continuing First Bancshares shareholders will own approximately 91.14% of the issued and outstanding shares of common stock of the

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combined company, and former Southwest shareholders will own approximately 8.86% of the issued and outstanding shares of common stock of the combined company, and (2) upon completion of First Bancshares' subsequent merger with Sunshine, we estimate that Southwest shareholder will own approximately 8.37% of the issued and outstanding shares of common stock of the combined company. Consequently, Southwest shareholders, as a general matter, will have less influence over the management and policies of the combined company after the effective time of the merger than they currently exercise over the management and policies of Southwest.

Future capital needs could result in dilution of shareholder investment.

First Bancshares' board of directors may determine from time to time there is a need to obtain additional capital through the issuance of additional shares of its common stock or other securities. These issuances would dilute the ownership interests of its shareholders and may dilute the per share book value of First Bancshares' common stock. New investors may also have rights, preferences and privileges senior to First Bancshares' shareholders which may adversely impact its shareholders.

The unaudited pro forma combined consolidated financial information included elsewhere in this proxy statement/prospectus may not be representative of the combined company's results after the merger with Southwest and Sunshine, and accordingly, you have limited financial information on which to evaluate the combined company. The unaudited pro forma combined consolidated financial information included elsewhere in this proxy statement/prospectus has been presented for informational purposes only and is not necessarily indicative of the financial position or results of operations that actually would have occurred had the mergers with Southwest and Sunshine been completed as of the date indicated, nor is it indicative of the future operating results or financial position of the combined company. The unaudited pro forma combined consolidated financial information presented elsewhere in this proxy statement/prospectus does not reflect future events that may occur after the mergers. Such information is based in part on certain assumptions regarding the transactions contemplated by (1) the Southwest merger and the transactions relating thereto that First Bancshares believes are reasonable, as well as (2) the Sunshine merger and the transactions relating thereto that First Bancshares believes are reasonable. Therefore, First Bancshares and Southwest cannot assure you that the assumptions will prove to be accurate over time. For more information, see "Unaudited Pro Forma Combined Consolidated Financial Information."

**Risks Related to an Investment in the Combined Company's Common Stock**

The market price of the shares of common stock of the combined company may be affected by factors different from those affecting the price of shares of First Bancshares common stock before the merger.

The results of operations of the combined company, as well as the market price of shares of the common stock of the combined company after the merger, may be affected by factors in addition to those currently affecting First Bancshares' or Southwest's results of operations and the market prices of shares of First Bancshares common stock. Accordingly, the historical financial results of First Bancshares and Southwest and the historical market prices of shares of First Bancshares common stock may not be indicative of these matters for the combined company after the merger. For a discussion of the businesses of First Bancshares and Southwest and certain risks to consider in connection with evaluating the proposals to be considered at the Southwest special meeting, see the documents incorporated by reference by First Bancshares into this proxy statement/prospectus referred to under "Where You Can Find More Information" beginning on page 136 and the information contained in Southwest's historical consolidated financial statements and notes thereto and the section titled "Southwest Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" beginning on page 95.

The market price of the combined company's common stock may decline as a result of the merger.

The market price of the combined company's common stock may decline as a result of the merger if the combined company does not achieve the perceived benefits of the merger or the effect of the merger on the combined company's financial results is not consistent with the expectations of financial or industry analysts. In addition, upon completion of the merger, First Bancshares and Southwest shareholders will

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own interests in a combined company operating an expanded business with a different mix of assets, risks and liabilities. Current First Bancshares and Southwest shareholders may not wish to continue to invest in the combined company, or for other reasons may wish to dispose of some or all of their shares of the combined company. After the merger is completed, Southwest shareholders who receive shares of First Bancshares common stock in the merger will have different rights that may be less favorable than their current rights as Southwest shareholders. After the closing of the merger, Southwest shareholders who receive shares of First Bancshares common stock in the merger will have different rights than they currently have as Southwest shareholders, which may be less favorable than their current rights as Southwest shareholders. For a detailed discussion of the significant differences between the current rights of a shareholder of Southwest and the rights of a shareholder of the combined company following the merger, see “Comparison of Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders and Southwest Shareholders” beginning on page 123.

**Risks Related to Tax**

The merger may have adverse tax consequences.

Each of First Bancshares and Southwest expects that the merger will qualify as a “reorganization” within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code, and they will receive a legal opinion to that effect. The legal opinion represents the judgment of counsel rendering the opinion and is not binding on the IRS or the courts. If the merger were to fail to qualify as a reorganization within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code, the merger would be a fully taxable transaction to both Southwest and the shareholders of Southwest. See “The Merger — U.S. Federal Income Tax Considerations” beginning on page 65.

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### THE SOUTHWEST SPECIAL MEETING

This proxy statement/prospectus is being provided to the holders of Southwest common stock as part of a solicitation of proxies by the Southwest board of directors for use at the Southwest special meeting to be held at the time and place specified below and at any properly convened meeting following an adjournment thereof. This proxy statement/prospectus provides the holders of Southwest common stock with information they need to know to be able to vote or instruct their vote to be cast at the Southwest special meeting.

#### General

Southwest is furnishing this proxy statement/prospectus to the holders of Southwest common stock as of the record date for use at Southwest's special meeting and any adjournment or postponement of its special meeting.

#### Date, Time and Place

The Southwest special meeting will be held at 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama 36606, on Tuesday, February 20, 2018, at 2:30 p.m., Central Time, subject to any adjournment or postponement thereof.

#### Purpose of the Southwest Special Meeting

At the Southwest special meeting, Southwest shareholders will be asked to consider and vote on the following:

- Proposal One: The Merger Proposal — To approve the merger agreement and the merger, which we refer to as the merger proposal; and

- Proposal Two: The Adjournment Proposal — To approve the adjournment of the Southwest special meeting to a later date or dates, if the Southwest board of directors determines it is necessary, among other things, to permit solicitation of additional proxies if there are not sufficient votes at the time of the Southwest special meeting to approve the merger proposal.

Completion of the merger is conditioned on, among other things, the approval of the merger agreement and the merger by the Southwest shareholders.

No other matter can be brought up or voted upon at the Southwest special meeting.

#### Proposal One: Merger Proposal

Southwest is asking its shareholders to approve the merger proposal. After careful consideration, Southwest's board of directors determined that the merger, the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated thereby, including the merger, were advisable and in the best interests of Southwest and Southwest's shareholders.

Southwest shareholders should carefully read this document in its entirety, including the annexes and the documents incorporated by reference, for more detailed information concerning the merger agreement and the merger. For a detailed discussion of the merger, including the terms and conditions of the merger agreement, see "The Merger Agreement," beginning on page 74. In addition, Southwest shareholders are directed to the merger agreement, a copy of which is attached as Annex A to this document and incorporated in this document by reference.

#### Proposal Two: Adjournment Proposal

If, at the Southwest special meeting, the number of shares of Southwest common stock present or represented and voting in favor of the merger proposal is insufficient to approve the merger proposal, Southwest may move to adjourn the Southwest special meeting in order to enable the Southwest board of directors to solicit additional proxies for approval of the merger proposal. In that event, Southwest's shareholders will be asked to vote upon the adjournment proposal and not the merger proposal.

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In the adjournment proposal, Southwest is asking its shareholders to authorize the holder of any proxy solicited by its board of directors to vote in favor of granting discretionary authority to the Southwest board of directors to adjourn the Southwest special meeting to another time and place for the purpose of soliciting additional proxies. If Southwest's shareholders approve the adjournment proposal, Southwest could adjourn the Southwest special meeting and any adjourned session of the Southwest special meeting and use the additional time to solicit additional proxies, including the solicitation of proxies from Southwest shareholders who have previously voted.

Recommendation of the Southwest Board of Directors

On October 23, 2017, the Southwest board of directors unanimously determined that the merger and the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement are in the best interests of Southwest and its shareholders and it approved the merger agreement, the merger and the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement. Accordingly, the Southwest board of directors unanimously recommends that Southwest shareholders vote as follows:

- “FOR” Proposal One approving the merger agreement and the merger; and
- “FOR” Proposal Two approving the adjournment of the Southwest special meeting if necessary to permit solicitation of additional proxies.

Holders of Southwest common stock should carefully read this proxy statement/prospectus, including any documents incorporated by reference, and the annexes in their entirety for more detailed information concerning the merger agreement, merger and the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement.

Record Date; Shareholders Entitled to Vote

The record date for the Southwest special meeting is January 5, 2018, which we refer to herein as the Southwest record date. Only record holders of shares of Southwest common stock as of the close of business (5:00 p.m. Central Time), on the Southwest record date are entitled to notice of, and to vote at, the Southwest special meeting or any adjournment thereof. At the close of business on the Southwest record date, the only outstanding securities of Southwest with a right to vote on the proposals were Southwest common stock, with 71,411 shares of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding. Each share of Southwest common stock outstanding on the Southwest record date is entitled to one vote on each proposal.

Quorum and Adjournment

No business may be transacted at the Southwest special meeting unless a quorum is present. Holders representing at least a majority of the shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting must be present, in person or represented by proxy, to constitute a quorum. However, the affirmative vote of the holders of at least two-thirds of the outstanding Southwest common stock entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting is required to approve the merger agreement and the merger. As a result, if shares representing at least two-thirds of the shares of Southwest common stock outstanding on the close of business on the Southwest record date are not present, in person or represented by proxy, at the Southwest special meeting, the presence of a quorum will still not permit the merger agreement and the merger to be approved at the Southwest special meeting.

To approve the adjournment proposal, the votes of Southwest common stock cast in favor of the adjournment proposal must exceed the votes cast against the adjournment proposal.

If you mark “ABSTAIN” on your proxy with respect to the merger proposal, fail to authorize a proxy or vote in person at the Southwest special meeting, or fail to instruct your bank or broker how to vote, it will have the same effect as a vote “AGAINST” the merger proposal and no effect on the adjournment proposal. If you sign your proxy but do not indicate your vote, your proxy will be voted FOR each proposal.

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No notice of an adjourned Southwest special meeting need be given if the new date, time and place are announced at the special meeting before adjournment, and no new record date is required to be set. If the meeting is adjourned to a date more than 120 days after the date fixed for the original meeting, a new record date must be set and a new notice must be given to the shareholders as of the new record date. At any adjourned Southwest special meeting, all proxies will be voted in the same manner as they would have been voted at the original convening of the Southwest special meeting, except for any proxies that have been effectively revoked or withdrawn prior to the adjourned Southwest special meeting.

All shares of Southwest common stock represented at the Southwest special meeting, including shares that are represented but that vote to abstain and broker non-votes, will be treated as present for purposes of determining the presence or absence of a quorum.

**Vote Required for Approval; Abstentions; Failure to Vote**

The required votes to approve the Southwest proposals are as follows:

**Proposal One: The Merger Proposal** — Approving the merger proposal requires the affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the issued and outstanding shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting. Only shares of Southwest common stock are entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting. Failures to vote, broker non-votes and abstentions will have the same effect as a vote AGAINST this proposal.

**Proposal Two: The Adjournment Proposal** — The adjournment proposal will be approved if the votes of Southwest common stock cast in favor of the adjournment proposal exceed the votes cast against the adjournment proposal. Failures to vote, broker non-votes and abstentions will have no effect on this proposal.

**Voting by Southwest Directors and Executive Officers**

At the close of business on the Southwest record date, Southwest directors and executive officers and their affiliates were entitled to vote 29,471 shares of Southwest common stock, or approximately 41.27% of the shares of Southwest common stock outstanding on that date. Southwest expects that its directors and executive officers and their affiliates will vote their shares in favor of both of the Southwest proposals.

**Southwest Common Stock Subject to Voting Agreements**

All directors of Southwest and First Community, solely in their capacity as shareholders of Southwest, have entered into voting agreements with First Bancshares pursuant to which they have agreed to vote their shares of Southwest common stock in favor of the approval of the merger agreement and the merger and against the approval or adoption of any proposal made in opposition to the merger. As of the Southwest record date, 27,549 shares of Southwest common stock, or approximately 38.58% of the outstanding shares of Southwest common stock entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting, are bound by the voting agreements.

**Voting on Proxies by Holders of Record; Incomplete Proxies**

If you were a record holder of Southwest common stock at the close of business on the Southwest record date, a proxy card is enclosed for your use. Southwest requests that you vote your shares as promptly as possible by submitting your Southwest proxy card by mail using the enclosed return envelope. When the accompanying proxy card is returned properly executed, the shares of Southwest common stock represented by it will be voted at the Southwest special meeting or any adjournment thereof in accordance with the instructions contained in the proxy card.

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If a record holder returns an executed proxy card without an indication as to how the shares of Southwest common stock represented by it are to be voted with regard to a particular proposal, the shares of Southwest common stock represented by the proxy will be voted in accordance with the recommendation of the Southwest board of directors and, therefore, such shares will be voted:

- “FOR” Proposal One approving the merger agreement and the merger; and
- “FOR” Proposal Two approving the adjournment of the Southwest special meeting, if necessary to permit solicitation of additional proxies.

At the date hereof, the Southwest board of directors has no knowledge of any business that will be presented for consideration at the Southwest special meeting and that would be required to be set forth in this proxy statement/prospectus or the related proxy card other than the matters set forth in Southwest’s Notice of Special Meeting of Shareholders.

Your vote is important. Accordingly, if you were a record holder of Southwest common stock on the Southwest record date, please sign and return the enclosed proxy card whether or not you plan to attend the Southwest special meeting in person.

**Shares Held in “Street Name;” Broker Non-Votes**

Banks, brokers and other nominees who hold shares of Southwest common stock in “street name” for a beneficial owner of those shares typically have the authority to vote in their discretion on “routine” proposals when they have not received instructions from beneficial owners. However, banks, brokers and other nominees are not allowed to exercise their voting discretion with respect to the approval of matters determined to be “non-routine,” without specific instructions from the beneficial owner. Broker non-votes are shares held by a broker, bank or other nominee that are represented at the Southwest special meeting, but with respect to which the broker or nominee is not instructed by the beneficial owner of such shares to vote on the particular proposal and the broker does not have discretionary voting power on such proposal. The merger proposal and the adjournment proposal are non-routine matters. Accordingly, if your broker, bank or other nominee holds your shares of Southwest common stock in “street name,” your broker, bank or other nominee will vote your shares of Southwest common stock with respect to the merger proposal and the adjournment proposal only if you provide instructions on how to vote by filling out the voter instruction form sent to you by your broker, bank or other nominee with this proxy statement/prospectus.

**Revocability of Proxies and Changes to a Southwest Shareholder’s Vote**

A Southwest shareholder entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting may revoke a proxy at any time before such time that the proxy card for any such holders of Southwest common stock must be received at the Southwest special meeting by taking any of the following three actions:

- delivering written notice of revocation to Jenny Hunt, President and Chief Executive Officer, Southwest Banc Shares, Inc., 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama 36606;
- delivering a proxy card bearing a later date than the proxy that such shareholder desires to revoke; or
- attending the Southwest special meeting and voting in person.

Merely attending the Southwest special meeting will not, by itself, revoke your proxy; a Southwest shareholder must cast a subsequent vote at the Southwest special meeting using forms provided for that purpose. The last valid vote that Southwest receives before the polls close at the Southwest special meeting is the vote that will be counted.

If you hold your shares in “street name” through a bank, broker or other nominee, you must contact such bank, broker or nominee if you desire to revoke your proxy as described above.



Solicitation of Proxies

The Southwest board of directors is soliciting proxies for the Southwest special meeting from holders of its Southwest common stock entitled to vote at the Southwest special meeting. In accordance with the merger agreement, Southwest will pay its own cost of soliciting proxies from its shareholders, including the

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cost of mailing this proxy statement/prospectus. In addition to solicitation of proxies by mail, proxies may be solicited by Southwest's officers, directors and regular employees, without additional remuneration, by personal interview, telephone or other means of communication.

Southwest will make arrangements with brokerage houses, custodians, nominees and fiduciaries to forward proxy solicitation materials to beneficial owners of Southwest common stock. Southwest may reimburse these brokerage houses, custodians, nominees and fiduciaries for their reasonable expenses incurred in forwarding the proxy materials.

Attending the Southwest Special Meeting; Voting in Person

Only record holders of Southwest common stock on the record date, their duly appointed proxies, and invited guests may attend the Southwest special meeting. However, only holders of Southwest common stock will be entitled to vote. All attendees must present government-issued photo identification (such as a driver's license or passport) for admittance. The additional items, if any that attendees must bring to gain admittance to the Southwest special meeting depend on whether they are shareholders of record or proxy holders. A Southwest shareholder who holds shares of Southwest common stock directly registered in such shareholder's name who desires to attend the Southwest special meeting in person need only bring government-issued photo identification.

A shareholder who holds shares in "street name" through a broker, bank, trustee or other nominee (referred to in this proxy statement/prospectus as a "beneficial owner") who desires to attend the Southwest special meeting in person must bring proof of beneficial ownership as of the record date, such as a letter from the broker, bank, trustee or other nominee that is the record owner of such beneficial owner's shares, a brokerage account statement or the voting instruction form provided by the broker.

A person who holds a validly executed proxy entitling such person to vote on behalf of a record owner of Southwest common stock who desires to attend the Southwest special meeting in person must also bring the validly executed proxy naming such person as the proxy holder, signed by the Southwest shareholder of record, and proof of the signing shareholder's record ownership as of the record date.

No cameras, recording equipment or other electronic devices will be allowed in the meeting room. Failure to provide the requested documents at the door or failure to comply with the procedures for the Southwest special meeting may prevent Southwest shareholders from being admitted to the Southwest special meeting.

Assistance

If you need assistance in completing your proxy card, have questions regarding the Southwest special meeting or would like additional copies of this proxy statement/prospectus, please contact Jenny Hunt, President and Chief Executive Officer, at (251) 345-9914.

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THE MERGER

The following discussion contains certain information about the merger. The discussion is subject, and qualified in its entirety by reference, to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this proxy statement/ prospectus. We urge you to read carefully this entire proxy statement/prospectus, including the merger agreement attached as Annex A, for a more complete understanding of the merger.

General

Each of First Bancshares' and Southwest's respective boards of directors has unanimously approved the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement. The merger agreement provides for the acquisition of Southwest by First Bancshares pursuant which Southwest will be merged with and into First Bancshares, with First Bancshares as the surviving company, which we refer to as the merger. Immediately after the merger, First Community, a wholly owned bank subsidiary of Southwest, will be merged with and into The First, A National Banking Association, a wholly owned bank subsidiary of First Bancshares, with The First as the surviving bank, which we refer to as the bank merger.

Purchase Price and Purchase Price Adjustments

At the effective time of the merger, each share of Southwest common stock, par value \$0.10 per share, issued and outstanding immediately prior to the effective time of the merger, except for specified shares of Southwest common stock held by First Bancshares or Southwest, will be converted into the right to receive, without interest, a pro rata portion (which is a ratio equal to one divided by the number of shares of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding as of the closing) of:

(1)

a number of shares of First Bancshares common stock equal to \$36,000,000 divided by the average closing price of First Bancshares' common stock during the ten trading days preceding the fifth business day prior to the closing date (subject to adjustments as discussed below), which we refer to as the stock consideration, and

(2)

a cash amount equal to \$24,000,000 (subject to downward adjustment in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement in the event that Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000), which we refer to as the cash consideration.

The stock consideration and the cash consideration are collectively referred to as the merger consideration.

In determining the stock consideration, the average closing price of First Bancshares' common stock pursuant to the formula above may be adjusted to the extent that if (1) the average closing price is at least 20% higher than \$30.45, which we refer to as the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$36.54, and (2) the average closing price is at least 20% lower than the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$24.36. If the average closing price is neither 20% higher nor lower than the signing price, then the average closing price pursuant to the formula above will be used to calculate the stock consideration.

In addition, if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date is less than \$32,000,000, the aggregate amount of the cash consideration will be reduced by an amount equal to (1) \$32,000,000 minus (2) Southwest's actual adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date. Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity will be calculated as Southwest's common equity (as defined in GAAP) less (i) intangible assets (as defined in GAAP), (ii) any anticipated but unaccrued Southwest transaction expenses in connection with the merger, and (iii) the amount of any reduction in Southwest's allowance for loan and lease losses below \$3,425,000 as of the effective time of the merger.

First Bancshares will not issue any fractional shares of First Bancshares common stock in the merger. Southwest shareholders who would otherwise be entitled to a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock upon the completion of the merger will instead receive an amount in cash (without interest and rounded to the nearest whole cent) determined by multiplying the fractional share interest in First Bancshares common stock (rounded to the nearest one hundredth of a share) by the average closing price, as may be adjusted.



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Southwest shareholders are being asked to approve the merger agreement and the merger. See “The Merger Agreement” for additional and more detailed information regarding the legal documents that govern the merger, including information about the conditions to the completion of the merger and the provisions for terminating or amending the merger agreement.

Background of the Merger

The board of directors and management of Southwest regularly review Southwest’s future prospects for earnings and asset growth as well as the implementation and viability of Southwest’s strategic initiatives. From time to time, the board of directors and management will review and discuss Southwest’s long-term objectives and consider ways in which it can enhance shareholder value as well as its performance, and to discuss and evaluate, among other things, the economic and regulatory environment in general and for South Alabama.

Over the years, representatives from other banking institutions have told representatives from Southwest that if Southwest were to ever consider a sale, they would have an interest in having substantive discussions with Southwest. During the first quarter of 2017, the unsolicited level of interest increased and became substantive. Taking into consideration the additional level of interest in Southwest, the board of directors began considering the options available to Southwest, including but not limited to, remaining independent or merging Southwest with another company. In order to assist in facilitating the board of directors’ diligence on the viability of Southwest potentially merging with another company, the board of directors of Southwest decided to hire an investment banking firm to advise it.

During March and April 2017, Southwest conducted interviews with three different investment banking firms, and on April 24, 2017 officially engaged Hovde Group, LLC, which we refer to as Hovde, to serve as Southwest’s exclusive financial advisor. Prior to that time, in the third quarter of 2016, William E. Blackmon, the President and CEO of First Community at that time, notified the First Community board and the Southwest board of his decision to retire on December 31, 2017. In early 2017, First Community engaged an executive search firm to assist First Community in selecting a successor President and CEO. First Community and Southwest determined that the executive search process should proceed at the same time as Southwest’s diligence evaluation as to whether a merger with another company was viable.

On April 24, 2017, Hovde met with the board of directors of Southwest in Mobile, Alabama and discussed an appropriate process for identifying a viable merger partner. During this meeting, the board of directors directed its M&A Committee to work with Hovde on the board of directors’ behalf in pursuing Southwest’s interest in considering a possible merger.

On May 12, 2017, Hovde discussed with the M&A Committee the current market for mergers and acquisitions in the banking sector generally, as well as candidates that would have a likely interest in pursuing a merger with Southwest. During these discussions, the M&A Committee also discussed with Hovde the desire for shareholder liquidity, and the ability for Southwest to merge with another institution that would both enhance shareholder value while also providing cash and/or a marketable stock as the form of consideration and continue First Community’s tradition of customer service. Based on these parameters, the M&A Committee directed Hovde to contact five banking institutions on its behalf to discuss their potential interest in pursuing a merger with Southwest. Upon conclusion of the meeting, Hovde promptly contacted the five institutions. During this period of time, other financial institutions contacted one or more directors of Southwest about a possible acquisition transaction and those contacts, which did not develop into substantial discussions, were reported to the M&A Committee.

Of the five institutions contacted, three executed non-disclosure agreements with Hovde and the identity of Southwest was then disclosed to the institutions that had executed non-disclosure agreements. All three institutions reiterated their interest in pursuing a merger transaction with Southwest and Hovde distributed a limited amount of information on Southwest to further assist these parties in their evaluation of Southwest. These three institutions consisted of First Bancshares, Bank A and Bank B.

The First Community Governance Committee proceeded with the executive search process for a successor president and CEO. Applicants were evaluated and interviewed, and the final interviews and evaluations were concluded in July, 2017. The Governance Committee reported to the board of directors of

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Southwest and First Community that it was pleased with the candidates available to succeed Mr. Blackmon, and felt that out of the candidates they had interviewed there were more than one that they would consider to be strong candidates for succeeding Mr. Blackmon as President of First Community.

During late May and June, Hovde worked with First Bancshares, Bank A and Bank B in order to facilitate a formal proposal in writing for Southwest. In June 2017, Bank B was focused on other initiatives and notified Hovde that it would not be able to pursue Southwest at that time.

On June 28, 2017, First Bancshares delivered a non-binding indication of interest, or an IOI, to Hovde outlining the initial terms with which they would propose consummating a merger with Southwest. Included in the IOI were terms outlining total merger consideration equal to \$60 million, which consisted of 60% First Bancshares common stock and 40% cash. Also included in the IOI was an exclusivity period of 90 days whereby Southwest would negotiate exclusively with First Bancshares. Hovde immediately delivered this IOI to the M&A Committee and conducted an initial call to go over the proposed terms of the IOI with the M&A Committee on June 30, 2017. During the call, the M&A Committee directed Hovde to conduct a detailed analysis of the offer, including, but not limited to, its assessment of the offer and terms relative to the market for other banking institutions similar to Southwest as well as to give the M&A Committee a formal update on its discussions with Bank A and Bank B.

On July 6, 2017, Hovde was contacted by representatives of Bank A to request a meeting between the principals of Bank A and Southwest. That meeting was scheduled in Mobile, Alabama between the principals of Bank A and Southwest for July 12, 2017.

On July 11, 2017, Hovde conducted a conference call with the M&A Committee to formally review the IOI from First Bancshares. During this call members of the M&A Committee reviewed the analysis provided by Hovde and discussed the preference for a variable exchange ratio for the stock portion of the merger consideration, a shorter timeframe for exclusive negotiations, and a proposal that the total merger consideration be predicated on Southwest delivering a minimum tangible common equity amount at the closing of a transaction. Shortly after the call, Hovde discussed with First Bancshares the requests of the M&A Committee. First Bancshares then advised Hovde that it would require additional information on Southwest as it considered the requests.

On July 12, 2017, representatives from Southwest and Bank A met in Mobile, Alabama. During this meeting it was determined that the two banking institutions had similar operating characteristics and Bank A reiterated its interest in pursuing a merger with Southwest. During July 2017, Hovde interacted with representatives of Bank A in order to help facilitate an offer in writing that could be delivered to the Southwest board of directors.

In late July, First Community's President and CEO was approached on an unsolicited basis by representatives of three other banking institutions (Bank C, Bank D and Bank E) to express their interest in pursuing a merger with Southwest if Southwest were to consider a merger. After relaying this interest to the M&A Committee, Hovde was directed to contact representatives from Bank C, Bank D and Bank E to execute non-disclosure agreements. Bank C and Bank D promptly executed non-disclosure agreements. Bank E declined to execute a non-disclosure agreement, although a representative from Bank E indicated that it would be interested in a merger with Southwest based upon a merger consideration in the "low-to-mid \$50 million range" consisting of cash and private stock. During late July and the first week in August, Hovde delivered additional information requested by Bank C and Bank D to these institutions.

On August 2, 2017, First Bancshares delivered a revised IOI to Hovde who then promptly delivered the IOI to the M&A Committee. Included in the revised IOI were terms outlining a proposed merger with Southwest. These terms included, but were not limited to, merger consideration equal to \$60 million consisting of 60% stock and 40% cash, an exclusivity period equal to 60 days, and a minimum tangible common equity requirement of \$32 million whereby Southwest would be allowed to pay a one-time dividend at closing of any tangible common equity capital in excess of \$32.5 million.

On August 4, 2017, the Chairman and CEO from Bank A contacted a director of Southwest to propose an offer for Southwest based on a range of between \$50 million and \$55 million in merger consideration consisting of 100% common stock. The director thanked the Chairman and CEO of Bank A for the proposal and told him that if a written offer were received it would promptly be submitted to the M&A Committee for consideration.

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On August 7, 2017, representatives from Bank D met with representatives of Southwest in Mobile, Alabama to discuss the merits of a potential merger between the two companies. Upon leaving the meeting, representatives from Southwest thanked Bank D for its interest and informed it that Hovde would address its proposal.

On August 10, 2017, First Bancshares delivered a revised IOI outlining the proposed terms of transaction with Southwest. These terms consisted of total merger consideration equal to \$60 million consisting of 60% stock and 40% cash. The IOI provided terms for the stock portion of the merger consideration to be fixed based on a movement up or down of 20% in the price of First Bancshares' stock between signing of a definitive agreement and closing of the proposed transaction, along with an exclusivity period of 60 days. In addition, the IOI detailed further terms which called for the right, but not the obligation of First Bancshares to elect a representative of the Southwest board of directors to serve on the board of directors of First Bancshares' banking subsidiary. This IOI was accepted by Southwest's board of directors and executed by Southwest shortly thereafter. At this point, the M&A Committee and Hovde no longer solicited interests from other parties.

On August 21, 2017, representatives of Bank C delivered to Hovde a non-binding indication of interest listing, among other things, a proposed purchase price for Southwest of \$56 million consisting of 100% cash. Hovde promptly delivered Bank C's IOI to the M&A Committee, which convened to consider the letter from Bank C on August 25, 2017. Because the offer was substantially below the offer included in the First Bancshares' IOI in terms of consideration, and because the offer did not contain the appropriate level of structural detail for Southwest, the M&A Committee determined the offer did not merit further consideration.

On August 30, 2017, Bank A delivered a non-binding indication of interest to Southwest outlining the terms from the call a Southwest director had with the Chairman and CEO of Bank A. These terms consisted of total merger consideration of between \$50 million and \$55 million consisting of 100% common stock in Bank A. The M&A Committee convened to consider the proposal from Bank A on September 6, 2017. The total consideration outlined in Bank A's IOI was well below the total consideration from First Bancshares, and the M&A Committee determined that the proposal from Bank A did not merit further consideration.

On September 15, 2017, First Bancshares delivered to Southwest the initial draft of the merger agreement. During the following month, the companies conducted their due diligence reviews of each other, negotiated the terms of the merger agreement and reviewed the disclosure schedules. During this time period, First Bancshares and Southwest had various discussions, including with their respective outside counsel and financial advisors, regarding the status of the merger negotiations, agreement issues, employee issues and related matters.

On October 19, 2017, First Bancshares' board of directors held a special meeting to review and discuss the proposed merger and the merger agreement. At this meeting, First Bancshares' board of directors received presentations from its legal counsel, Alston & Bird LLP and its financial advisor, Performance Trust Capital Partners. Following this discussion, First Bancshares' board of directors unanimously voted to approve the merger agreement and the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, including the merger, and authorized First Bancshares' executives to execute the merger agreement.

On October 23, 2017, the Southwest board of directors met with its legal and financial advisors to discuss the merger agreement which was in substantially final form. Southwest's board of directors heard a presentation from Hovde on the financial aspects of the transaction. At the conclusion of this discussion and after responding to questions from the directors, Hovde rendered to Southwest's board of directors its oral opinion that the aggregate merger consideration to be received from First Bancshares, which consisted of \$36 million in First Bancshares common stock and \$24 million in cash, subject to adjustment as provided in the merger agreement, was fair to the shareholders of Southwest, from a financial point of view. Hovde's oral opinion was subsequently confirmed by delivery of its written opinion on the same date to Southwest's board of directors. Southwest's legal counsel reviewed the terms and conditions of the merger agreement and ancillary legal documents with the board of directors, and discussed in detail the business points, contingencies and timing issues.

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Based upon the board of directors' review and discussion of the merger agreement, the opinion of Hovde and other relevant factors, Southwest's board unanimously authorized and approved the execution of the merger agreement with First Bancshares.

On October 24, 2017, Southwest and First Bancshares executed the merger agreement, and the directors of Southwest and First Community delivered to First Bancshares their respective voting agreements, non-competition and non-disclosure agreements and claims letters. First Bancshares issued a press release announcing the proposed transaction after the close of trading markets on October 24, 2017.

First Bancshares' Reasons for the Merger

In reaching its decision to approve and adopt the merger agreement, the merger and the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, including the issuance of First Bancshares common stock as part of the merger consideration, the First Bancshares board of directors considered a number of factors, including the following material factors:

- each of First Bancshares' and Southwest's business, operations, financial condition, asset quality, earnings and prospects;
- the strategic fit of the businesses of the two companies, including their complementary markets, business lines and loan and deposit profiles;
- the anticipated pro forma impact of the transaction on the combined company, including the expected impact on financial metrics including earnings and tangible book value and regulatory capital levels, as well as the future impact the transaction could have on First Bancshares' earning asset mix to more heavily weight loans and reduce the percentage of the securities portfolio;
- its understanding of the current and prospective environment in which First Bancshares and Southwest operate, including national, state and local economic conditions, the competitive environment for financial institutions generally, and the likely effect of these factors on First Bancshares both with and without the proposed transaction;
- its review and discussions with First Bancshares' management concerning the due diligence investigation of Southwest, including its review of Southwest's financial condition, results of operation, asset quality, market areas, growth potential (projected potential accretion to earnings per share and the projected payback period of the estimated decrease in tangible book value) and quality of senior management;
- the perceived compatibility of the corporate cultures of the two companies, which management believes should facilitate integration and implementation of the transaction;
- the structure of the transaction as a combination in which the combined company would operate under the First Bancshares brand and First Bancshares' board of directors and management would have substantial participation in the combined company;
- the regulatory and other approvals required in connection with the merger and the expectation that such regulatory approvals will be received in a timely manner and without the imposition of unacceptable conditions; and



- the financial and other terms of the merger agreement, including the merger consideration, expected tax treatment, the deal protection and termination fee provisions, and restrictions on the conduct of Southwest's business between the date of the merger agreement and the date of completion of the merger.

First Bancshares' board of directors also considered potential risks relating to the merger including the following:

- First Bancshares management's attention and First Bancshares resources may be diverted from the operation of First Bancshares' business and towards the completion of the merger;

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- First Bancshares may not realize all of the anticipated benefits of the merger, including cost savings, maintenance of existing customer and employee relationships, and minimal disruption in the integration of the Southwest's operations with First Bancshares;

- the nature and amount of payments and other benefits to be received by Southwest management in connection with the merger pursuant to existing Southwest plans and compensation arrangements and the merger agreement;

- the substantial costs that First Bancshares will incur in connection with the merger even if they are not consummated;

- approvals from regulatory authorities could impose conditions that could have the effect of delaying completion of the merger or imposing additional costs; and

- possibility of litigation in connection with the merger.

The foregoing discussion of the factors considered by the First Bancshares board of directors is not intended to be exhaustive, but, rather, includes the material factors considered by the First Bancshares board of directors. In reaching its decision to approve and adopt the merger agreement, the merger and the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, including the issuance of First Bancshares common stock as part of the merger consideration, the First Bancshares board of directors did not quantify or assign any relative weights to the factors considered, and individual directors may have given different weights to different factors. The First Bancshares board of directors considered all these factors as a whole and overall considered the factors to be favorable to, and to support, its determination.

Southwest's Reasons for the Merger

In reaching its decision to adopt and approve the merger agreement, the merger and the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, and to recommend that its shareholders approve the merger agreement at the special meeting, the Southwest board of directors consulted with its management, as well as its financial, accounting and legal advisors, and considered a number of factors, including the following material factors:

- each of Southwest's and First Bancshares' business, operations, financial condition, asset quality, earnings and prospects. In reviewing these factors, the Southwest board of directors considered its view that First Bancshares' business and operations complement those of Southwest and that the merger would result in a combined company with a diversified revenue stream, a well-balanced loan portfolio and an attractive funding base;

- its understanding of the current and prospective environment in which Southwest and First Bancshares operate, including national and local economic conditions, the interest rate environment, the competitive environment for financial institutions generally, the existing bank regulatory climate, including a trend toward consolidation in the banking industry, and the likely effect of these factors on Southwest both with and without the proposed transaction;

- its review and discussions with Southwest's management concerning the due diligence examination of First Bancshares;

the complementary nature of the cultures of the two companies, which management believes should facilitate integration and efficient implementation of the transaction;

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the limited liquidity that Southwest shareholders have with respect to their investment in Southwest, for which there is no active public market, and that shareholders of Southwest will receive part of the merger consideration in shares of First Bancshares common stock, which is publicly traded on NASDAQ, which would be expected to provide such shareholders with increased liquidity of their investment and also a significant cash component to the merger consideration;

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the fact that the merger consideration, a large component which consists of shares of First Bancshares common stock, provides less certainty of value to Southwest shareholders compared to a transaction in which they would receive only cash consideration;

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- the fact that gains from the cash component of the merger consideration would generally be taxable to Southwest's U.S. shareholders for U.S. federal income tax purposes;

- the opinion of Hovde, Southwest's financial advisor, delivered to the Southwest board of directors at a meeting on October 23, 2017, which was subsequently confirmed in a written opinion dated as of the same date, to the effect that, as of that date, and subject to and based on the various assumptions, considerations, qualifications and limitations described at the meeting and set forth in the opinion, the merger consideration pursuant to the merger agreement is fair, from a financial point of view, to the shareholders of Southwest;

- the financial and other terms of the merger agreement, including the merger consideration, tax treatment and protection from a significant drop in First Bancshares stock price before closing, mutual deal protection and expense reimbursement provisions, which it reviewed with its outside financial and legal advisors;

- the potential risks associated with achieving anticipated cost synergies and savings and successfully integrating Southwest's business, operations and workforce with those of First Bancshares;

- the potential risk of diverting management attention and resources from the operation of Southwest's business and towards the completion of the merger;

- the interest of directors and certain officers of Southwest that are different from, and in addition to, the interests of Southwest shareholders generally; and

- the regulatory and other approvals required in connection with the merger and the expectation that such regulatory approvals will be received in a timely manner and without the imposition of unacceptable conditions.

The foregoing discussion of the information and factors considered by the Southwest board of directors is not intended to be exhaustive, but includes the material factors considered by the Southwest board of directors. In reaching its decision to approve the merger agreement, the merger and the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, the Southwest board of directors did not quantify or assign any relative weights to the factors considered, and individual directors may have given different weights to different factors. The Southwest board of directors considered all these factors as a whole, including discussions with, and questioning of, Southwest's management and Southwest's financial and legal advisors, and overall considered the factors to be favorable to, and to support, its determination.

For the reasons set forth above, the Southwest board of directors determined that the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, are advisable and in the best interests of Southwest and its shareholders, and adopted and approved the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated by it. The Southwest board of directors unanimously recommends that the Southwest shareholders vote "FOR" the approval of the merger agreement.

**Opinion of Southwest's Financial Advisor**

The fairness opinion and a summary of the underlying financial analyses of Southwest's financial advisor, Hovde Group, LLC, is described below. The description contains projections, estimates and other forward-looking statements about the future earnings or other measures of the future performance of Southwest. The projections were based on numerous variables and assumptions, which are inherently uncertain, including factors related to general economic

and competitive conditions. Accordingly, actual results could vary significantly from those set forth in the projections. You should not rely on any of these statements as having been made or adopted by Southwest or First Bancshares. You should review the copy of the fairness opinion, which is attached as Annex B .

Hovde has acted as Southwest's financial advisor in connection with the proposed merger. Hovde is a nationally recognized investment banking firm with substantial experience in transactions similar to the merger and is familiar with Southwest and its operations. As part of its investment banking business, Hovde is continually engaged in the valuation of businesses and their securities in connection with, among other things, mergers and acquisitions.

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Hovde reviewed the financial aspects of the proposed merger with Southwest's board of directors and, on October 23, 2017, delivered a written opinion to Southwest's board of directors that the merger consideration to be received by the shareholders of Southwest in connection with the merger is fair to the shareholders of Southwest.

The full text of Hovde's written opinion is included in this proxy statement/prospectus as Annex B and is incorporated herein by reference. You are urged to read the opinion in its entirety for a description of the procedures followed, assumptions made, matters considered and qualifications and limitations on the review undertaken by Hovde. The summary of Hovde's opinion included in this proxy statement/prospectus is qualified in its entirety by reference to the full text of such opinion. Hovde's opinion was directed to Southwest's board of directors and addresses only the fairness of the merger consideration to be paid to Southwest shareholders in connection with the merger. Hovde did not opine on any individual stock, cash, or other components of consideration payable in connection with the merger. Hovde's opinion does not address the underlying business decision to proceed with the merger and does not constitute a recommendation to any of the shareholders as to how such shareholder should vote at the Southwest special meeting on the merger or any related matter.

During the course of its engagement and for the purpose of rendering its opinion, Hovde:

- reviewed a draft of the merger agreement dated October 19, 2017, as provided to Hovde by Southwest;
- reviewed unaudited financial statements for First Bancshares, The First, Southwest and First Community as of and for the six-month period ending June 30, 2017;
- reviewed certain historical annual reports of each of First Bancshares, The First, Southwest and First Community including audited annual reports as of and for the year ending December 31, 2016;
- reviewed certain historical publicly available business and financial information concerning each of First Bancshares, The First, Southwest and First Community;
- reviewed certain internal financial statements and other financial and operating data concerning each of First Bancshares, The First, Southwest and First Community;
- reviewed financial projections prepared by certain members of senior management of Southwest and First Community;
- discussed with certain members of senior management of First Bancshares and Southwest, the business, financial condition, results of operations and future prospects of First Bancshares, The First, Southwest and First Community; the history and past and current operations of First Bancshares, The First, Southwest and First Community; First Bancshares', The First's, Southwest's and First Community's historical financial performance; and their assessment of the rationale for the merger;
- reviewed and analyzed materials detailing the merger prepared by First Bancshares and Southwest and by their respective legal and financial advisors including the estimated amount and timing of the cost savings and related expenses, purchase accounting adjustments and synergies expected to result from the merger (the "synergies");
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assessed general economic, market and financial conditions;

- analyzed the pro forma financial impact of the merger on the combined company's earnings, tangible book value, financial ratios and other such metrics we deemed relevant, giving effect to the merger based on assumptions relating to the synergies;
- evaluated the contribution of assets, deposits, equity and earnings of First Bancshares and Southwest to the combined company;
- reviewed certain S&P CapIQ consensus income and balance sheet estimates for First Bancshares for 2017 and for 2018;

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- reviewed the terms of recent merger, acquisition and control investment transactions, to the extent publicly available, involving financial institutions and financial institution holding companies that we considered relevant;
- reviewed historical market prices and trading volumes of First Bancshares' common stock;
- took into consideration our experience in other similar transactions and securities valuations as well as our knowledge of the banking and financial services industry;
- reviewed certain publicly available financial and stock market data relating to selected public companies that we deemed relevant to our analysis; and
- performed such other analyses and considered such other factors as we have deemed appropriate.

Hovde also conducted meetings and had discussions with members of senior management of Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First for purposes of reviewing the business, financial condition, results of operations and future prospects of Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First; the history and past and current operations of Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First; and Southwest's, First Community's, First Bancshares' and The First's historical financial performance. Hovde discussed with management of Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First their assessment of the rationale for the merger. Hovde also performed such other analyses and considered such other factors as Hovde deemed appropriate, and took into account its experience in other similar transactions and securities valuations, as well as its knowledge of the banking and financial services industry.

Hovde assumed, without independent verification, that the representations as well as the financial and other information provided to Hovde by Southwest and First Bancshares or included in the merger agreement, which has formed a substantial basis for this opinion, are true and complete. Hovde relied upon the management of Southwest and First Community as to the reasonableness and achievability of the financial forecasts and projections (and the assumptions and bases therein) provided to Hovde by Southwest and First Community, and Hovde assumed such forecasts and projections have been reasonably prepared by Southwest and First Community on a basis reflecting the best currently available information and Southwest's and First Community's judgments and estimates. Hovde assumed that such forecasts and projections would be realized in the amounts and at the times contemplated thereby, and Hovde does not in any respect assume any responsibility for the accuracy or reasonableness thereof. Hovde has been authorized by Southwest to rely upon such forecasts and projections and other information and data, including without limitation the projections, and Hovde expresses no view as to any such forecasts, projections or other information or data, or the bases or assumptions on which they were prepared.

In performing its review, Hovde relied upon the accuracy and completeness of all of the financial and other information that was available to Hovde from public sources, that was provided to Hovde by Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First or their respective representatives or that was otherwise reviewed by Hovde and assumed such accuracy and completeness for purposes of rendering its opinion. Hovde has further relied on the assurances of the respective managements of Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First that they are not aware of any facts or circumstances that would make any of such information inaccurate or misleading. Hovde has not been asked to and has not undertaken an independent verification of any of such information and Hovde does not assume any responsibility or liability for the accuracy or completeness thereof. Hovde assumed that each party to the merger agreement would advise them promptly if any information previously provided to them became inaccurate or was required to be updated during the period of Hovde's review. Hovde is not an expert in the evaluation of loan and lease portfolios for purposes of assessing the adequacy of the allowances for losses with respect



thereto. Hovde assumed that such allowances for Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First are, in the aggregate, adequate to cover such losses, and will be adequate on a pro forma basis for the combined entity. Hovde was not requested to make, and did not make, an independent evaluation, physical inspection or appraisal of the assets, properties, facilities, or liabilities (contingent or otherwise) of Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First, the collateral securing any such assets or liabilities, or the collectability of any such assets and, Hovde was not furnished with any such evaluations or appraisals, nor did Hovde review any loan or credit files of Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First.

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Hovde has assumed that the merger will be consummated substantially in accordance with the terms set forth in the merger agreement, without any waiver of material terms or conditions by Southwest or any other party to the merger agreement and that the final merger agreement will not differ materially from the draft Hovde reviewed. Hovde has assumed that the merger will be consummated in compliance with all applicable laws and regulations. Southwest has advised Hovde that Southwest is not aware of any factors that would impede any necessary regulatory or governmental approval of the merger. Hovde has assumed that the necessary regulatory and governmental approvals as granted will not be subject to any conditions that would be unduly burdensome on Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First or would have a material adverse effect on the contemplated benefits of the merger. Southwest engaged Hovde on April 24, 2017, to serve as a financial advisor to Southwest in connection with one or more strategic transactions and to issue a fairness opinion to Southwest's board of directors in connection with any such proposed transaction. Pursuant to the terms of the engagement, at the time the merger is completed, Southwest will pay Hovde a completion fee, which is contingent upon the completion of the merger. Hovde also received a \$35,000 fee upon rendering its fairness opinion to the Southwest board of directors, which opinion fee will be credited towards the completion fee payable to Hovde upon the completion of the merger. Pursuant to the engagement agreement, in addition to its fees and regardless of whether the merger is consummated, Southwest has agreed to reimburse Hovde for certain reasonable out-of-pocket expenses incurred in performing its services and to indemnify Hovde against certain claims, losses and expenses arising out of the merger or Hovde's engagement.

In performing its analyses, Hovde made numerous assumptions with respect to industry performance, general business, economic, market and financial conditions and other matters, many of which are beyond the control of Hovde, Southwest, First Community, First Bancshares and The First. Hovde's opinion was necessarily based on financial, economic, market and other conditions and circumstances as they existed on, and on the information made available to Hovde as of, the dates used in its opinion. Any estimates contained in the analyses performed by Hovde are not necessarily indicative of actual values or future results, which may be significantly more or less favorable than suggested by these analyses. Additionally, estimates of the value of businesses or securities do not purport to be appraisals or to reflect the prices at which such businesses or securities may be sold or the prices at which any securities may trade at any time in the future. Accordingly, these analyses and estimates are inherently subject to substantial uncertainty. Hovde's opinion does not address the relative merits of the merger as compared to any other business combination in which Southwest might engage. In addition, Hovde's fairness opinion was among several factors taken into consideration by Southwest's board of directors in making its determination to approve the merger agreement and the merger. Consequently, the analyses described below should not be viewed as solely determinative of the decision of Southwest's board of directors or Southwest's management with respect to the fairness of the merger consideration to be received by Southwest's shareholders in connection with the merger.

The following is a summary of the material analyses prepared by Hovde and delivered to Southwest's board of directors on October 23, 2017, in connection with the delivery of its fairness opinion. This summary is not a complete description of the analyses underlying the fairness opinion or the presentation prepared by Hovde, but it summarizes the material analyses performed and presented in connection with such opinion. The preparation of a fairness opinion is a complex analytical process involving various determinations as to the most appropriate and relevant methods of financial analysis and the application of those methods to the particular circumstances. Therefore, a fairness opinion is not readily susceptible to partial analysis or summary description. In arriving at its opinion, Hovde did not attribute any particular weight to any analysis or factor that it considered, but rather made qualitative judgments as to the significance and relevance of each analysis and factor. The financial analyses summarized below include information presented in tabular format. The analyses and the summary of the analyses must be considered as a whole and selecting portions of the analyses and factors or focusing on the information presented below in tabular format, without considering all analyses and factors or the full narrative description of the financial analyses, including the methodologies and assumptions underlying the analyses, could create a misleading or incomplete view of the process underlying the analyses and opinion of Hovde. The tables alone are not a complete description of the financial analyses.

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Market Approach — Comparable Transactions. As part of its analysis, Hovde reviewed publicly available information related to two comparable groups (a “Regional Group” and a “Nationwide Group”) of select acquisition transactions of banks. The Regional Group consisted of acquisition transactions of banks in the Southeast Region of the United States (consisting of the states of Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia) announced since January 1, 2015, in which the sellers’ total assets were between \$250 million and \$600 million, last-twelve-months (“LTM”) return on average assets (“ROAA”) was between 0.50% and 1.00%, and nonperforming assets were less than 3.0% of total assets. The Nationwide Group consisted of acquisition transactions of banks in the United States announced since January 1, 2016, in which the sellers’ total assets were between \$300 million and \$600 million, last-twelve-months (“LTM”) return on average assets (“ROAA”) was between 0.50% and 1.00%, nonperforming assets were less than 2.0% of total assets, and tangible equity was between 8.0% and 12.0% of total tangible assets. In each case, for which financial information was available, no transaction that fit the selection criteria was excluded. Information for the target institutions was based on balance sheet data as of, and income statement data for the twelve months preceding the most recent quarter prior to announcement of the transactions. The resulting two groups consisted of the following transactions (17 transactions for the Regional Group and 10 transactions for the Nationwide Group):

## Regional Group:

Buyer (State)	Target (State)
Commerce Union Bancshares, Inc. (TN)	Community First, Inc. (TN)
SmartFinancial, Inc. (TN)	Capstone Bancshares, Inc. (AL)
HCBF Holding Company, Inc. (FL)	Jefferson Bankshares, Inc. (FL)
Little Bank, Inc. (NC)	Union Banc Corp. (NC)
CenterState Banks, Inc.	Platinum Bank Holding Company (FL)
Home BancShares, Inc. (AR)	Giant Holdings, Inc. (FL)
National Commerce Corporation (AL)	Private Bancshares, Inc. (GA)
Summit Financial Group, Inc. (WV)	First Century Bankshares, Inc. (WV)
Simmons First National Corporation (AR)	Citizens National Bank (TN)
Sunshine Bancorp, Inc. (FL)	FBC Bancorp, Inc. (FL)
Seacoast Banking Corporation of Florida (FL)	Floridian Financial Group, Inc. (FL)
Renasant Corporation (MS)	KeyWorth Bank (GA)
National Commerce Corporation (AL)	Reunion Bank of Florida (FL)
Home Bancshares, Inc. (AR)	Florida Business BancGroup, Inc. (FL)
Pinnacle Financial Partners, Inc. (TN)	Magna Bank (TN)
Ameris Bancorp (GA)	Merchants & Southern Banks of Florida, Inc. (FL)
United Community Banks, Inc. (GA)	MoneyTree Corporation (TN)

## Nationwide Group:

Buyer (State)	Target (State)
MutualFirst Financial, Inc. (IN)	Universal Bancorp (IN)
Brookline Bancorp, Inc. (MA)	First Commons Bank, National Association (MA)
SmartFinancial, Inc. (TN)	Capstone Bancshares, Inc. (AL)
Riverview Financial Corporation (PA)	CBT Financial Corporation (PA)
CenterState Banks, Inc. (FL)	Platinum Bank Holding Company (FL)
Standard Financial Corp. (PA)	Allegheny Valley Bancorp, Inc. (PA)
QCR Holdings, Inc. (IL)	Community State Bank (IA)

Simmons First National Corporation (AR)	Citizens National Bank (TN)
Sunshine Bancorp, Inc. (FL)	FBC Bancorp, Inc. (FL)
DNB Financial Corporation (PA)	East River Bank (PA)

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For each precedent transaction, Hovde compared the implied ratio of deal value to certain financial characteristics of Southwest as follows:

- the multiple of the purchase consideration to the acquired company’s tangible common book value (the “Price-to-Tangible Common Book Value Multiple”);
- the multiple of the purchase consideration to the acquired company’s adjusted tangible common book value based upon tangible common book value equivalent to 8% of tangible assets with the purchase consideration being adjusted for any amount excess (shortfall) in tangible common book value (the “Price-to-Adjusted Tangible Common Book Value Multiple”);
- the multiple of the purchase consideration to the acquired company’s LTM net earnings per share (the “Price-to-LTM Earnings Multiple”); and
- the multiple of the difference between the purchase consideration and the acquired company’s tangible book value to the acquired company’s core deposits (the “Premium-to-Core Deposits Multiple”).

The results of the analysis are set forth in the table below. Transaction multiples for the merger were derived from the estimated merger consideration of \$60,000,000 for Southwest and were based on June 30, 2017 financial results of Southwest. All references to earnings, return on average assets or return on average equity for Southwest are presented on an after-tax basis.

Implied Value for Southwest Based On:	Price-to-Tangible Common Book Value Multiple	Price-to-“Adjusted” Tangible Common Book Value Multiple	Price-to-LTM Earnings Multiple	Premium-to-Core Deposits Multiple
Total Deal Value	166%	175%	23.5x	8.1%
Precedent Transactions Regional Group:				
Median	161%	170%	22.1x	8.0%
Minimum	105%	107%	15.7x	0.7%
Maximum	226%	241%	36.4x	16.2%
Precedent Transactions Nationwide Group:				
Median	148%	159%	19.6x	6.7%
Minimum	124%	127%	14.4x	2.8%
Maximum	177%	184%	23.0x	12.3%

Using publicly available information, Hovde compared the financial performance of Southwest with that of the median of the precedent transactions from both the Regional and Nationwide Groups. The performance highlights are based on June 30, 2017 financial results of Southwest.

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	Tangible Equity/ Tangible Assets	Core Deposits	LTM ROAA(1)	LTM ROAE(2)	Efficiency Ratio	NPAs/ Assets(3)	ALLL/ NPLs(4)
Southwest	9.07%	83.5%	0.67%	7.19%	72.5%	1.63%	55.0%
Precedent Transactions Regional Group:							
Median	10.02%	76.9%	0.77%	7.22%	69.1%	1.31%	109.9%
Precedent Transactions Nationwide Group:							
Median	10.10%	81.6%	0.80%	7.52%	67.8%	1.05%	142.3%

(1)  
Last twelve months return on average assets.

(2)  
Last twelve months return on average equity.

(3)  
Non-performing assets as a percent of total assets.

(4)  
Allowance for loan and lease losses as a percentage of non-performing loans.

No company or transaction used as a comparison in the above transaction analyses is identical to Southwest, and no transaction was consummated on terms identical to the terms of the merger agreement. Accordingly, an analysis of these results is not strictly mathematical. Rather, it involves complex considerations and judgments concerning differences in financial and operating characteristics of the companies. The resulting median values of the Precedent Transactions Regional Group indicated an implied aggregate valuation ranging between \$56.3 million and \$59.6 million compared to the proposed merger consideration of \$60.0 million. The resulting median values of the Precedent Transactions Nationwide Group indicated an implied aggregate valuation ranging between \$50.1 million and \$55.9 million compared to the proposed merger consideration of \$60.0 million.

Income Approach — Discounted Cash Flow Analysis. Taking into account various factors including, but not limited to, Southwest's recent performance, the current banking environment and the local economy in which Southwest operates, Hovde determined, in consultation with and based on information provided by management of Southwest, earnings estimates for Southwest over a forward looking five year period, and Southwest management developed the forward-looking projections and key assumptions, which formed the basis for the discounted cash flow analyses. The resulting after-tax projected net income numbers used for the analysis were \$2.9 million for 2017, \$3.2 million for 2018, \$3.7 million for 2019, \$4.3 million for 2020, and \$5.0 million for 2021.

To determine present values of Southwest based on these projections, Hovde utilized two discounted cash flow models, each of which capitalized terminal values using a different methodology: (1) Terminal Price/Earnings Multiple ("DCF Terminal P/E Multiple"); and, (2) Terminal Price/Tangible Book Value Multiple ("DCF Terminal P/TBV Multiple").

In the DCF Terminal P/E Multiple analysis, an estimated value of Southwest's common stock was calculated based on the present value of Southwest's after-tax net income based on Southwest management's forward-looking projections.

Hovde utilized a terminal value at the end of 2021 by applying a range of price-to-earnings multiples of 17.6x to 21.6x, with a midpoint of 19.6x, which is based around the median price-to-earnings multiple derived from transactions in the Nationwide Group. The present value of Southwest's projected dividends, plus the terminal value was then calculated assuming a range of discount rates between 12.50% and 14.50%, with a midpoint of 13.50%. This range of discount rates was chosen to reflect different assumptions regarding the required rates of return of holders or prospective buyers of Southwest's common stock. The resulting aggregate values of Southwest's common stock of the DCF Terminal P/E Multiple ranged between \$51.3 million and \$67.2 million, with a midpoint of \$59.0 million.

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In the DCF Terminal P/TBV Multiple model, the same earnings estimates and projected net income were used; however, in arriving at the terminal value at the end of 2021, Hovde applied a range of price-to-tangible book value multiples of 1.28x to 1.68x with the midpoint being 1.48x, which is based around the median price-to-tangible book value multiple derived from transactions in the Nationwide Group. The present value of projected dividends, plus the terminal value, was then calculated assuming a range of discount rates between 12.50% and 14.50%, with a midpoint of 13.50%. The resulting aggregate values of Southwest's common stock of the DCF Terminal P/TBV Multiple ranged between \$37.8 million and \$52.7 million, with a midpoint of \$45.0 million.

These analyses and their underlying assumptions yielded a range of values for Southwest, which are outlined in the table below:

Implied Value for Southwest Based On:	Price-to-Tangible Book Value Multiple	Price-to-LTM Earnings Multiple	Premium-to-Core Deposits Multiple
Total Deal Value	166%	23.5x	8.1%
DCF Analysis – Terminal P/E Multiple			
Midpoint	163%	23.1x	7.8%
DCF Analysis – Terminal P/TBV Multiple			
Midpoint	125%	17.6x	3.0%

Hovde noted that while the discounted cash flow present value analysis is a widely used valuation methodology, it relies on numerous assumptions, including asset and earnings growth rates, projected dividend payouts, terminal values and discount rates. Hovde's analysis does not purport to be indicative of the actual values or expected values of Southwest's common stock.

**First Bancshares Comparable Companies Analysis:** Hovde used publicly available information to compare selected financial and trading information for First Bancshares and a group of 12 publicly-traded financial institutions selected by Hovde which was based on publicly-traded banks in the Southeast United States with total assets between \$1.25 billion and \$3.00 billion and LTM ROAA between 0.25% and 1.00%:

Capital City Bank Group, Inc.	Paragon Commercial Corporation
Access National Corporation	Southern First Bancshares, Inc.
Atlantic Capital Bancshares, Inc.	Premier Financial Bancorp, Inc.
Southern National Bancorp of Virginia, Inc.	C&F Financial Corporation
Summit Financial Group, Inc.	Entegra Financial Corp.
American National Bankshares, Inc.	Community Bankers Trust Corporation

The analysis compared publicly available financial and market trading information for First Bancshares and the data for the 12 financial institutions identified above as of and for the most recent twelve-month period which was publicly available. The table below compares the data for First Bancshares and the median data for the 12 financial institutions identified above, with pricing data as of October 20, 2017.

	Market Cap (\$M)	Price/Tangible Book Value	Price/LTM EPS	Price/2017E EPS	Dividend Yield	YTD/Price Change	Two Year Total Return
First Bancshares	\$ 281	204.4%	28.1x	16.7x	0.49%	11.5%	85.3%
Comparable Companies:							
Median	\$ 328	190.8%	22.2x	20.3x	1.38%	9.1%	66.7%

First Bancshares fell within the range of pricing metrics of comparable companies. No company used as a comparison in the above analyses is identical to First Bancshares. Accordingly, an analysis of these results is not strictly



mathematical. Rather, it involves complex considerations and judgments concerning differences in financial and operating characteristics of the companies.

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**Accretion/Dilution Analysis:** Hovde performed pro forma merger analyses that combined projected income statement and balance sheet information of Southwest and First Bancshares. Assumptions regarding the accounting treatment, acquisition adjustments and cost savings were used to calculate the financial impact that the merger would have on certain projected financial results of First Bancshares. In the course of this analysis, Hovde used the median S&P CapIQ consensus estimates for earnings estimates for First Bancshares for the years ending December 31, 2017, December 31, 2018, and December 31, 2019 and used earnings estimates provided by Southwest's management for Southwest for the years ending December 31, 2017, December 31, 2018, and December 31, 2019. This analysis indicated that the merger is expected to be accretive by 15 cents per share to First Bancshares' consensus estimated earnings per share of \$2.08 in 2018 and accretive by 42 cents per share to First Bancshares' estimated earnings per share of \$2.33 in 2019. The analysis also indicated that the merger is expected to be dilutive to tangible book value per share for First Bancshares by 52 cents per share in 2018 and by 7 cents per share in 2019 and that First Bancshares. For all of the above analyses, the actual results achieved by Southwest and First Bancshares prior to and following the merger will vary from the projected results, and the variations may be material.

**Other Factors and Analyses.** Hovde took into consideration various other factors and analyses, including but not limited to: current market environment; merger and acquisition environment; movements in the common stock valuations of selected publicly-traded banking companies; and movements in the S&P 500 Index.

**Conclusion.** Based upon the foregoing analyses and other investigations and assumptions set forth in its opinion, without giving specific weightings to any one factor or comparison, Hovde determined that the merger Consideration to be paid in connection with the merger is fair from a financial point of view to Southwest's shareholders. Each shareholder is encouraged to read Hovde's fairness opinion in its entirety. The full text of this fairness opinion is included as Annex B to this proxy statement.

### **Board Composition and Management of First Bancshares after the Merger**

Each of the officers and directors of First Bancshares immediately prior to the effective time of the merger will be the officers and directors of the surviving company from and after the effective time of the merger, until their respective successors have been duly elected, appointed or qualified or until their earlier death, resignation or removal in accordance with the articles of incorporation and bylaws of First Bancshares.

Pursuant to the merger agreement, First Bancshares has agreed to consider appointing a representative proposed by Southwest and mutually agreed to by First Bancshares and Southwest to the board of directors of The First, the banking subsidiary of First Bancshares, at the closing date. However, the parties both acknowledge and agree that in no event will First Bancshares or The First be required by the terms of the merger agreement to appoint any director to The First's board of directors.

### **Interests of Southwest's Directors and Executive Officers in the Merger**

In considering the recommendation of Southwest's board of directors to vote for the proposal to approve the merger agreement and the merger, Southwest shareholders should be aware that certain directors and officers of Southwest have interests in the merger that are in addition to, or different from, their interests as shareholders of Southwest. The Southwest board of directors was aware of these interests and considered them in approving the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, including the merger, and the decision to recommend that the Southwest shareholders approve the merger agreement and the merger. These interests are described below.

### **Change in Control Agreements with Southwest**

Mr. Sam Davis, Ms. Jenny Hunt and Ms. Kristy Hyde currently have change in control agreements with Southwest that provide for cash payments in the event of a qualifying termination of employment in connection with a change in control. The change in control agreements provide for a severance payment equal to 1.5x base salary, plus reimbursement for COBRA premiums for up to 18 months following termination, if the employee is terminated without "cause" or resigns for "good reason" within 12 months

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following a change in control. First Bancshares will assume the change in control agreements with Ms. Hunt and Ms. Hyde, in accordance with their terms. As of the date of this proxy statement/prospectus, the estimated value of the severance payment to Ms. Hunt is \$322,500 and to Ms. Hyde is \$200,850.

Effective as of closing, Mr. Davis' change in control agreement will be terminated in exchange for a lump sum payment of \$180,000, less normal withholdings, subject to Mr. Davis' execution and non-revocation of a termination agreement containing a general release in favor of First Bancshares (and Southwest as the predecessor entity). The termination payment will be paid in cash in a single lump sum within sixty (60) days following closing, subject to Mr. Davis' continued employment through such date.

Mr. Blackmon retired as an officer and a director of Southwest and First Community on December 31, 2017, at which time his change in control agreement terminated and he will not be entitled to any payments pursuant to such agreement at the closing of the merger. It is currently anticipated that Mr. Blackmon will receive a payment of \$245,000, subject to the execution of a written agreement, the merger consideration not falling below \$60 million and the closing of the merger. Mr. Blackmon also received title to his company car upon his retirement. He, like other directors, will receive a fee of \$20,000 from Southwest for executing the non-competition and non-disclosure agreement discussed below.

In connection with Mr. Blackmon's retirement, Ms. Hunt was appointed President and Chief Executive Officer of First Community on January 1, 2018.

**Retention Agreements with First Community Bank**

First Community Bank has entered into a retention agreement with each of Mr. Davis, Ms. Hunt and Ms. Hyde, contingent on the completion of the merger. The retention agreements provide for a single lump sum cash payment of \$35,000, \$35,000 and \$25,000, less normal withholdings, respectively, on the date that the merger is completed, provided that the executive remains employed by First Community Bank on such date, or within thirty (30) days following the executive's termination of employment by First Community Bank without cause.

**Employment Agreement with The First**

First Bancshares has entered into an employment agreement with Mr. Sam Davis, contingent on the completion of the merger. This agreement is intended to incent Mr. Davis to continue his employment with First Bancshares following completion of the merger. Pursuant to the employment agreement, Mr. Davis will be employed as the Senior Vice President and Senior Commercial Lender for Mobile and Baldwin Counties in Alabama for a term of twelve (12) months. During the term, Mr. Davis' salary will be \$175,000 annually with an incentive plan which will allow him an opportunity to earn up to ten percent (10%) of his base salary depending on the attainment of goals established from year to year under such incentive plan. Mr. Davis will further be able to participate in The First's 401(k) and Employee Stock Ownership Plan, with credit granted for his years of service with Southwest. Mr. Davis will also be entitled to standard benefits such as health insurance, dental insurance, vacation/leave and other benefits generally offered from time to time to officers of The First. In addition, Mr. Davis may elect to receive an award of 1,250 restricted shares of First Bancshares common stock which shall be subject to a three-year vesting period, or a single lump sum cash payment of \$18,750, which, in each case, will only be awarded if he remains employed with The First for the full term of his employment agreement. The employment agreement provides that Mr. Davis may be terminated upon death, disability or with or without cause (which includes Mr. Davis' failure to substantially perform his duties, misconduct materially injurious to the Bank, and fraud or embezzlement, among other things) or Mr. Davis may resign his employment at any time. Upon termination, Mr. Davis will be entitled to his accrued base salary and accrued benefits. As part of his employment agreement, Mr. Davis has agreed to a standard non-compete provision pursuant to which he will not, for one year, (i) compete, directly or indirectly, with The First, (ii) solicit any customer, supplier, vendor or other contractual party of The First, (iii) solicit any employee of The First for employment or (iv) interfere with The First and its relationship with customers.

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### Retention Agreements with The First

First Bancshares has entered into a retention agreement with each of Ms. Hunt and Ms. Hyde, contingent on the completion of the merger. The retention agreements provide for a single lump sum cash payment of \$25,000, less normal withholdings, on the date that is sixty (60) days following the date of integration of the operating systems of First Bancshares and Southwest, provided that the executive remains employed by First Bancshares on such date, or within thirty (30) days following the executive's termination of employment by First Bancshares without cause.

### Indemnification of Directors and Officers

First Bancshares has agreed to indemnify Southwest's directors and officers following the effective time of the merger to the same extent as currently provided under Southwest's indemnification agreements, or if not subject to an agreement, to the fullest extent permitted by applicable laws. First Bancshares has also agreed to maintain in effect a directors' and officers' liability insurance policy for a period of six years after the effective time of the merger with respect to claims arising from facts, events or actions which occurred prior to the effective time of the merger and covering persons who are currently covered by such insurance. The insurance policy must contain at least the same coverage and amounts, and contain terms and conditions no less advantageous to the directors and officers as currently provided.

### Voting Agreements

As a condition to First Bancshares entering into the merger agreement, all directors of Southwest and First Community entered into voting agreements in the form attached as Exhibit A to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this document, pursuant to which each such person agreed, among other things, to vote the shares of Southwest common stock held of record by such person (1) to approve the merger agreement and the merger (or any adjournment or postponement necessary to solicit additional proxies to approve the merger agreement and the merger) and (2) against any acquisition proposals or any actions that would result in a breach of any covenant, representation or warranty of Southwest in the merger agreement.

### Non-Competition and Non-Disclosure Agreements

In addition, as a condition to First Bancshares entering into the merger agreement, each director of Southwest and First Community entered into non-competition and non-disclosure agreements with First Bancshares in the form attached as Exhibit C or D to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this document, pursuant to which each such person agreed to, among other things, (1) not disclose or use any confidential information or trade secrets of Southwest for any purpose for so long as such information remains confidential information or a trade secret, (2) for a period of two years following the closing the merger, not engage in certain competitive activities with First Bancshares, including not soliciting employees and customers of Southwest, and (3) for a period of one or two years following the closing the merger (depending on the director), not serve as a director or management official of another financial institution in the counties in Alabama in which First Community operates a banking office as of the closing of the merger and each county contiguous to each of such counties. Each director will be paid by Southwest a fee of \$20,000 for executing such non-competition and non-disclosure agreement.

### Claims Letters

At the time of the execution of the merger agreement, each director of Southwest and First Community executed a letter agreement with First Bancshares in the form attached as Exhibit E to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this document, pursuant to which each such director released and discharged, effective upon the consummation of the merger, Southwest and its subsidiaries, their respective directors and officers (in their capacities as such), and their respective successors and assigns (including First Bancshares and The First), from any and all liabilities or claims that the director has or claims to have, with certain exceptions.

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Beneficial Ownership of Southwest Common Stock by Management and Principal Shareholders of Southwest  
The following table sets forth certain information regarding the beneficial ownership of Southwest common stock as of January 5, 2018, by (1) each director and executive officer of Southwest, (2) each person who is known by Southwest to own beneficially 5% or more of the Southwest common stock, and (3) all directors and executive officers of Southwest as a group. Unless otherwise indicated, based on information furnished by such shareholders, management of Southwest believes that each person has sole voting and dispositive power over the shares indicated as owned by such person.

Name of Beneficial Owner	Number of Shares of Southwest Common Stock	Percentage Beneficially Owned(1)
Principal Shareholders:		
Fred K. Granade	9,518(2)	13.33%
William A. Granade	9,371(3)	13.12%
Stanley G. Moore	10,556(4)	14.78%
James N. Granade, III	7,094	9.93%
Laura Deer Moore	5,530	7.74%
Heather Moore Riser	5,530	7.74%
Directors and Executive Officers:		
Lindsey C. Boney III	2	*
William A. Granade	9,371(3)	13.12%
Fred K. Granade	9,518(2)	13.33%
James Massey	24	*
Stanley G. Moore	10,556(4)	14.78%
Kristy Hyde**	0	*
Jenny Hunt**	0	*
Sam Davis**	0	*
All Directors and Executive Officers as a Group (8 persons)	29,471	41.27%

\*  
Indicates ownership that does not exceed 1.00%.

\*\*  
Executive officers only.

(1)  
Ownership percentage based on 71,411 shares of Southwest common stock outstanding as of January 5, 2018.

(2)  
Includes 2,270 shares owned by Fred Granade, 4,303 shares owned by Fred Granade Irrevocable Trust of which Mr. Granade is trustee and sole beneficiary, and 2,945 shares owned by his wife, Callie V. Granade.

(3)  
Includes 5,067 shares owned by William A. Granade, and 4,304 shares owned by William A. Granade Irrevocable Trust of which Mr. William A. Granade is trustee and sole beneficiary. William A. Granade is the brother of Fred K.

Granade.

(4)

Stanley G. Moore is the father of Laura Deer Moore and Heather Moore Riser.

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### Regulatory Approvals Required for the Merger

Completion of the merger is subject to prior receipt of all approvals required to be obtained from applicable governmental and regulatory authorities. Subject to the terms and conditions of the merger agreement, Southwest and First Bancshares have agreed to use their commercially reasonable efforts and cooperate to prepare and file, as promptly as possible, all necessary documentation and to obtain as promptly as practicable all regulatory approvals required or advisable to complete the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement. These approvals include, among others, approval from the Federal Reserve Board and the OCC. First Bancshares and Southwest have filed applications and notifications to obtain the required regulatory approvals.

#### Federal Reserve Board

The merger of Southwest with First Bancshares must be approved by the Federal Reserve Board under Section 3 of the Bank Holding Company Act of 1956, or the BHC Act, and its implementing regulations. In considering the approval of a transaction such as the merger, the BHC Act and related laws require the Federal Reserve Board to review, with respect to the parent holding companies and the bank concerned: (1) the competitive impact of the transaction; (2) financial, managerial and other supervisory considerations, including capital positions and managerial resources of the subject entities; (3) the record of the insured depository institution subsidiaries of the bank holding companies under the Community Reinvestment Act and fair lending laws; (4) the extent to which the proposal would result in greater or more concentrated risks to the stability of the U.S. banking or financial system; and (5) additional public benefits of the proposal, such as the benefits to the customers of the subject entities. In connection with its review, the Federal Reserve Board will provide an opportunity for public comment on the application and is authorized to hold a public meeting or other proceeding if they determine that would be appropriate.

#### Office of the Comptroller of the Currency

The merger of First Community with and into The First must be approved by the OCC under the National Bank Consolidation and Merger Act, 12 U.S.C. 215, 215a, commonly known as the Bank Merger Act. An application for approval of the bank merger has been filed with the OCC and will be subject to a 30-day comment and review period by the OCC. In evaluating an application filed under the Bank Merger Act, the OCC generally considers: (1) the competitive impact of the transaction; (2) financial and managerial resources of the banks party to the bank merger or merger; (3) the convenience and needs of the community to be served and the record of the banks under the Community Reinvestment Act; (4) the banks' effectiveness in combating money-laundering activities; and (5) the extent to which the bank merger or merger would result in greater or more concentrated risks to the stability of the U.S. banking or financial system. In connection with its review, the OCC will provide an opportunity for public comment on the application for the bank merger, and is authorized to hold a public meeting or other proceeding if they determine that would be appropriate.

The parties have received all regulatory approvals required in connection with the merger and the bank merger as of January 3, 2018.

#### U.S. Federal Income Tax Considerations

The following is a general discussion of material U.S. federal income tax consequences to U.S. holders (as defined below) of Southwest common stock that exchange their shares of Southwest common stock for shares of First Bancshares common stock and cash in the merger. This discussion does not address any tax consequences arising under the laws of any state, local or foreign jurisdiction, or under any U.S. federal laws other than those pertaining to the income tax nor does it address any tax consequences arising under the unearned income Medicare contribution tax pursuant to the Health Care and Education Reconciliation Act of 2010. This discussion is based upon the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended (the "Code"), the Treasury Regulations promulgated under the Code, and court and administrative rulings and decisions, all as in effect on the date of this proxy statement/prospectus, and all of which are subject to change, potentially retroactively, which could affect the accuracy of the statements and conclusions set forth in this discussion.

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This discussion addresses only those U.S. holders of Southwest common stock that hold their shares of Southwest common stock as a “capital asset” within the meaning of Section 1221 of the Code (generally, property held for investment). Importantly, this discussion does not address all aspects of U.S. federal income taxation that may be relevant to a particular U.S. holder in light of that U.S. holder’s individual circumstances or to a U.S. holder that is subject to special treatment under the U.S. federal income tax laws, including, without limitation, a U.S. holder that is:

- a financial institution;
- a tax-exempt organization;
- a regulated investment company;
- a real estate investment trust;
- an S corporation or other pass-through entity (or an investor in an S corporation or other pass-through entity);
- an insurance company;
- a mutual fund;
- a controlled foreign corporation or passive foreign investment company;
- a dealer or broker in stocks and securities, or currencies;
- a trader in securities that elects to use the mark-to-market method of accounting;
- a holder of Southwest common stock subject to the alternative minimum tax provisions of the Code;
- a holder of Southwest common stock that received Southwest common stock through the exercise of an employee stock option, through a tax qualified retirement plan or otherwise as compensation;
- a holder of Southwest common stock that has a functional currency other than the U.S. dollar;
- a holder of Southwest common stock that holds Southwest common stock as part of a hedge, straddle, constructive sale, conversion or other integrated transaction;
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a person that is not a U.S. holder; or

- a U.S. expatriate or certain former citizens or long-term residents of the United States.

For purposes of this discussion, the term “U.S. holder” means a beneficial owner of Southwest common stock that is for U.S. federal income tax purposes: (a) an individual citizen or resident of the United States; (b) a corporation (or any other entity treated as a corporation for U.S. federal income tax purposes) organized in or under the laws of the United States or any state thereof or the District of Columbia; (c) a trust if (1) a court within the United States is able to exercise primary supervision over the administration of the trust and one or more U.S. persons have the authority to control all substantial decisions of the trust or (2) such trust was in existence on August 20, 1996, and has made a valid election to be treated as a U.S. person for U.S. federal income tax purposes; or (d) an estate, the income of which is includible in gross income for U.S. federal income tax purposes regardless of its source.

Determining the actual tax consequences of the merger to a U.S. holder is complex and can depend, in part, on the U.S. holder’s specific situation. Each U.S. holder should consult its own independent tax advisor as to the tax consequences of the merger in its particular circumstance, including the applicability and effect of the alternative minimum tax and any state, local, foreign or other tax laws and of changes in those laws.

#### Tax Consequences of the Southwest Merger Generally

In connection with the filing with the SEC of the registration statement of which this proxy statement/ prospectus forms a part, Alston & Bird LLP has rendered its tax opinion to First Bancshares and Jones Walker LLP has rendered its tax opinion to Southwest addressing the U.S. federal income tax consequences

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of the merger as described below. A copy of each of these tax opinions is attached as Exhibit 8.1 and Exhibit 8.2, respectively, to the registration statement of which this proxy statement/prospectus forms a part. In addition, the obligations of the parties to complete the merger is conditioned on, among other things, the receipt by First Bancshares and Southwest of opinions from Alston & Bird LLP and Jones Walker LLP, respectively, dated the closing date of the merger, to the effect that for U.S. federal income tax purposes the merger will be treated as a reorganization within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code. The conditions relating to receipt of such closing opinions may be waived by both First Bancshares and Southwest. Neither First Bancshares nor Southwest currently intends to waive the conditions related to the receipt of the closing opinions. In addition, the obligation of Alston & Bird LLP and Jones Walker LLP to deliver such closing opinions is conditioned on the merger's satisfying the continuity of proprietary interest requirement. That requirement generally will be satisfied if First Bancshares common stock constitutes at least 40% of the value of the total merger consideration.

These opinions are and will be subject to customary qualifications and assumptions, including assumptions regarding the absence of changes in existing facts and the completion of the merger strictly in accordance with the merger agreement and the registration statement of which this proxy statement/ prospectus forms a part. In rendering their legal opinions, Alston & Bird LLP and Jones Walker LLP relied and will rely upon representations and covenants, including those contained in certificates of officers of First Bancshares and Southwest, reasonably satisfactory in form and substance to each such counsel, and will assume that these representations are true, correct and complete without regard to any knowledge limitation, and that these covenants will be complied with. If any of these assumptions or representations are inaccurate in any way, or any of the covenants are not complied with, these opinions could be adversely affected. The opinions represent each counsel's best legal judgment, but have no binding effect or official status of any kind, and no assurance can be given that contrary positions will not be taken by the Internal Revenue Service or a court considering the issues. In addition, neither Southwest nor First Bancshares has requested nor does either of them intend to request a ruling from the Internal Revenue Service as to the U.S. federal income tax consequences of the merger. Accordingly, there can be no assurances that the Internal Revenue Service will not assert, or that a court will not sustain, a position contrary to any of the tax consequences set forth below or any of the tax consequences described in the tax opinions.

Except as otherwise indicated, the following discussion assumes that the merger qualifies as a "reorganization" within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code.

#### U.S. Holders that Receive a Combination of First Bancshares Common Stock and Cash

If a U.S. holder's adjusted tax basis in the Southwest common stock surrendered is less than the sum of the fair market value of the shares of First Bancshares common stock and the amount of cash (other than cash received in lieu of a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock) received by the U.S. holder pursuant to the merger, then the U.S. holder will recognize gain in an amount equal to the lesser of (a) the sum of the amount of cash (other than cash received in lieu of a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock) and the fair market value of the First Bancshares common stock received, minus the U.S. holder's adjusted tax basis in the shares of Southwest common stock surrendered in exchange therefor, and (b) the amount of cash received by the U.S. holder (other than cash received in lieu of a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock). However, if a U.S. holder's adjusted tax basis in the shares of Southwest common stock surrendered is greater than the sum of the amount of cash (other than cash received in lieu of a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock) and the fair market value of the First Bancshares common stock received, the U.S. holder's loss will not be currently allowed or recognized for U.S. federal income tax purposes. If a U.S. holder of shares of Southwest common stock acquired different blocks of shares of Southwest common stock at different times or different prices, the U.S. holder should consult the U.S. holder's independent tax advisor regarding the manner in which gain or loss should be determined for each identifiable block of Southwest shares. Any recognized gain generally will be long-term capital gain if, as of the effective date of the merger, the U.S. holder's holding period with respect to the Shares of Southwest common stock surrendered exceeds one year.

The aggregate tax basis of the First Bancshares common stock received (including any fractional share interests deemed received and redeemed for cash as described below under "Cash In Lieu of a Fractional Share") by a U.S. holder that exchanges its shares of Southwest common stock for a combination of First



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Bancshares common stock and cash as a result of the merger will be the same as the aggregate tax basis of the shares of Southwest common stock surrendered in exchange therefor, reduced by the amount of cash received on the exchange (excluding cash received in lieu of a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock) plus the amount of any gain recognized upon the exchange (excluding any gain recognized as a result of any cash received in lieu of a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock). The holding period of the First Bancshares common stock received (including any fractional share deemed received and redeemed) will include the holding period of the shares of Southwest common stock surrendered therefor. A U.S. holder receiving a combination of First Bancshares common stock and cash should consult its own independent tax advisor regarding the manner in which cash and First Bancshares common stock should be allocated among the U.S. holder's shares of Southwest common stock and the manner in which the above rules would apply in the holder's particular circumstance.

### Cash In Lieu of a Fractional Share

If a U.S. holder receives cash in lieu of a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock, the U.S. holder will be treated as having received a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock pursuant to the merger and then as having exchanged the fractional share of First Bancshares common stock for cash in a redemption by First Bancshares. As a result, the U.S. holder generally will recognize gain or loss equal to the difference between the amount of cash received and the portion of the U.S. holder's aggregate tax basis (calculated in the manner as set forth above under "U.S. Holders that Receive a Combination of First Bancshares Common Stock and Cash") allocable to the fractional share of First Bancshares common stock. This gain or loss generally will be capital gain or loss, and will be long-term capital gain or loss if, as of the effective date of the merger, the U.S. holder's holding period with respect to the fractional share (including the holding period of the Southwest common stock surrendered therefor) exceeds one year. The deductibility of capital losses is subject to limitations.

### Dissenters

Upon its exercise of dissenters' rights, a U.S. holder of Southwest common stock will exchange all of its Southwest common stock for cash. Such a dissenting U.S. holder will recognize gain or loss equal to the difference between the amount of cash received and such U.S. holder's aggregate tax basis in its Southwest common stock. This gain or loss generally will be capital gain or loss, and will be long-term capital gain or loss if the U.S. holder's holding period with respect to the Southwest common stock surrendered therefor exceeds one year. The deductibility of capital losses is subject to limitations. If a U.S. holder of Southwest shares acquired different blocks of Southwest shares at different times or different prices, the U.S. holder should consult the U.S. holder's independent tax advisor regarding the manner in which gain or loss should be determined for each identifiable block of Southwest shares.

### Material U.S. Federal Income Tax Consequences if the Southwest Merger Fails to Qualify as a Reorganization

If the merger fails to qualify as a reorganization within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code, the merger will be a fully taxable transaction to both Southwest and the U.S. holders of Southwest common stock. Initially, Southwest will be deemed to have sold all of its assets to First Bancshares in a taxable sale in which gain or loss is recognized for U.S. federal income tax purposes in an amount equal to the difference between (1) the full value of the merger consideration plus the sum of the liabilities of Southwest, and (2) the basis of the assets of Southwest. Gain or loss is computed separately for each of Southwest's assets based upon their relative fair market values. Southwest is an S corporation and, as a result, this gain or loss will pass through and be taxable to the U.S. holders of Southwest stock. Because some of Southwest's assets may not be capital assets, the gain or loss may be a combination of ordinary gain or loss and capital gain or loss. After the U.S. holders of Southwest stock have taken into account any income, gain or loss from the deemed sale of assets by Southwest and determined the basis of their Southwest stock, each such holder will recognize gain or loss on a deemed liquidation of its Southwest common stock in an amount equal to the difference between the total consideration received in the merger and such holder's tax basis in the shares of Southwest common stock surrendered in the merger, as adjusted. This gain or loss will be a capital gain or loss. The aggregate tax basis in the shares of First Bancshares common stock received

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pursuant to the merger will be equal to the fair market value of such shares of First Bancshares common stock as of the effective time of the merger. The holding period of such shares of First Bancshares common stock will begin on the date immediately following the effective date of the merger.

### Backup Withholding

If a U.S. holder is a non-corporate holder of Southwest common stock, the U.S. holder may be subject, under certain circumstances, to information reporting and backup withholding on any cash payments that the U.S. holder receives. A U.S. holder generally will not be subject to backup withholding, however, if the U.S. holder:

- furnishes a correct taxpayer identification number, certifying that it is not subject to backup withholding on IRS Form W-9 or successor form included in the letter of transmittal that the U.S. holder will receive and otherwise complies with all the applicable requirements of the backup withholding rules; or

- provides proof that it is otherwise exempt from backup withholding.

Any amounts withheld under the backup withholding rules are not an additional tax and will generally be allowed as a refund or credit against the U.S. holder's U.S. federal income tax liability, if the U.S. holder timely furnishes the required information to the Internal Revenue Service.

### Certain Reporting Requirements

If a U.S. holder that receives First Bancshares common stock in the merger is considered a "significant holder," such U.S. holder will be required (a) to file a statement with its U.S. federal income tax return providing certain facts pertinent to the merger, including such U.S. holder's tax basis in, and the fair market value of, the Southwest common stock surrendered by such U.S. holder, and (b) to retain permanent records of these facts relating to the merger. A "significant holder" is any Southwest shareholder that, immediately before the merger, (y) owned at least 1% (by vote or value) of the outstanding stock of Southwest or (z) owned Southwest securities with a tax basis of \$1.0 million or more.

This discussion of U.S. federal income tax considerations is for general information only and is not intended to be tax advice. Holders of Southwest common stock are urged to consult their independent tax advisors with respect to the application of U.S. federal income tax laws to their particular situations as well as any tax consequences arising under the U.S. federal estate or gift tax rules, or under the laws of any state, local, foreign or other taxing jurisdiction or under any applicable tax treaty.

### Accounting Treatment

The merger will be accounted for under the acquisition method of accounting for business combinations under accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America. Under this method, Southwest's assets and liabilities as of the date of the merger will be recorded at their respective fair values. Any difference between the purchase price for Southwest and the fair value of the identifiable net assets acquired (including core deposit intangibles) will be recorded as goodwill. In accordance with ASC Topic 805, "Business Combinations," the goodwill resulting from the merger will not be amortized to expense, but instead will be reviewed for impairment at least annually and to the extent goodwill is impaired, its carrying value will be written down to its implied fair value and a charge will be made to earnings. Core deposit and other intangibles with definite useful lives recorded by First Bancshares in connection with the merger will be amortized to expense in accordance with such rules. The consolidated financial statements of First Bancshares issued after the merger will reflect the results attributable to the acquired operations of Southwest beginning on the date of completion of the merger.

### Dissenters' Rights

#### General

If the merger is consummated, holders of record of Southwest common stock who follow the procedures specified by Article 13 of Title 10A, Chapter 2 of the Alabama Business Corporation Law ("ABCL") will be entitled to determination and payment in cash of the "fair value" of their stock (as

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determined immediately before the effective time of the merger), excluding any appreciation or depreciation resulting from the anticipation of the merger, unless such exclusion would be inequitable, but including interest from the effective date of the merger until the date of payment. Shareholders who elect to follow these procedures are referred to as dissenting shareholders.

A vote in favor of the merger agreement by a holder of Southwest common stock will result in a waiver of such shareholder's right to demand payment for his or her shares.

The following summary of the provisions of Article 13 of the ABCL is not intended to be a complete statement of such provisions, the full text of which is attached as Annex C to this proxy statement/ prospectus, and is qualified in its entirety by reference thereto.

### How to Exercise and Perfect Your Right to Dissent

A holder of Southwest common stock electing to exercise dissenters' rights (1) must deliver to Southwest at 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama 36606, Attention: Jenny Hunt, President and Chief Executive Officer, before the vote at the Southwest special meeting, written notice of his or her intent to demand payment for his or her shares if the merger is effectuated, and (2) must not vote in favor of the merger agreement. The requirement of this written notice is in addition to and separate from the requirement that such shares not be voted in favor of the merger agreement, and the requirement of written notice is not satisfied by voting against the merger agreement either in person or by proxy. The requirement that shares not be voted in favor of the merger agreement will be satisfied if no proxy is returned and the shares are not voted in person. Because a properly executed and delivered proxy which is left blank will, unless revoked, be voted "FOR" approval of the merger agreement, in order to be assured that his, her or its shares are not voted in favor of the merger agreement, dissenting shareholders who vote by proxy must not leave the proxy blank but must (1) vote "AGAINST" the approval of the merger agreement or (2) affirmatively abstain from voting by checking the "ABSTAIN" box on the proxy card. Neither a vote against approval of the merger agreement nor an abstention will satisfy the requirement that a written notice of intent to demand payment be delivered to Southwest before the vote on the merger agreement.

A record shareholder may assert dissenters' rights as to fewer than all of the shares registered in his or her name only if he or she dissents with respect to all shares beneficially owned by any one person and notifies Southwest, as appropriate, in writing of the name and address of each person on whose behalf he or she asserts dissenters' rights. A beneficial shareholder may assert dissenters' rights as to shares held on his or her behalf only if he or she submits to Southwest, as appropriate, the record shareholder's written consent to the dissent prior to or contemporaneously with such assertion and he or she does so with respect to all shares of which he, she or it is the beneficial shareholder or over which he, she or it has the power to vote. Where no number of shares is expressly mentioned, the notice of intent to demand payment will be presumed to cover all shares held in the name of the record holder.

### First Bancshares' Actions Following the Merger

No later than ten days after the merger, First Bancshares, as the continuing corporation of the merger, will send a written dissenters' notice to each dissenting shareholder of Southwest who did not vote in favor of the merger and who duly filed a written notice of intent to demand payment in accordance with the foregoing. The dissenters' notice will specify, among other things, the deadline by which time First Bancshares must receive a payment demand from such dissenting shareholders and will include a form for demanding payment. The deadline will be no fewer than 30 days and no more than 60 days after the date the dissenters' notice is delivered. It is the obligation of any dissenting shareholder to initiate all necessary action to perfect his or her dissenters' rights within the time periods prescribed in Article 13 of the ABCL and the dissenters' notice. If no payment demand is timely received from a dissenting shareholder, all dissenters' rights of said dissenting shareholder will be lost, notwithstanding any previously submitted written notice of intent to demand payment. Each dissenting shareholder who demands payment retains all other rights of a shareholder unless and until those rights are cancelled or modified by the merger. A dissenting shareholder who demands payment in accordance with the foregoing may not thereafter withdraw that demand and accept the terms offered under the merger agreement unless First Bancshares consents thereto.

Within 20 days of a formal payment demand, a dissenting shareholder who has made a demand must submit his or her share certificate or certificates to First Bancshares so that a notation to that effect may be

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placed on such certificate or certificates and the shares may be returned to the dissenting shareholder with the notation thereon. A shareholder's failure to submit shares for notation will, at First Bancshares' option, terminate the holder's rights as a dissenter, unless a court of competent jurisdiction determines otherwise.

Promptly after the merger, or upon receipt of a payment demand, First Bancshares shall offer to pay each dissenting shareholder who complied with Article 13 of the ABCL the amount First Bancshares estimates to be the fair value of such dissenting shareholder's shares plus accrued interest. Each dissenting shareholder who agrees to accept the offer of payment in full satisfaction of his or her demand must surrender to First Bancshares the certificate or certificates representing his or her shares in accordance with the terms of the dissenters' notice. Upon receiving the certificate or certificates, First Bancshares will pay each dissenting shareholder the fair value of his or her shares, plus accrued interest. Upon receiving payment, each dissenting shareholder ceases to have any interest in the shares.

Each dissenting shareholder who has made a payment demand may notify First Bancshares in writing of his or her own estimate of the fair value of his or her shares and the amount of interest due, and demand payment of his or her estimate, or reject the offer made to such shareholder as described above and demand payment of the fair value of his or her shares and interest due, if: (1) the dissenting shareholder believes that the amount offered is less than the fair value of the shares or that the interest due is incorrectly calculated; or (2) First Bancshares fails to make an offer as required by Article 13 of the ABCL within 60 days after the date set for demanding payment; provided, however, that a dissenting shareholder waives the right to demand payment different from that offered unless he or she notifies First Bancshares of his or her demand in writing within 30 days after First Bancshares offered payment for the shares.

If a demand for payment remains unsettled, First Bancshares will commence a proceeding in the Circuit Court of Washington County, Alabama within 60 days after receiving the payment demand and petition the court to determine the fair value of the shares and accrued interest. If the proceeding is not commenced within the 60-day period, each dissenting shareholder whose demand remains unsettled shall be entitled to receive the amount demanded in the Circuit Court of Washington County, Alabama. Each dissenting shareholder made a party to the proceeding is entitled to judgment for the amount the court finds to be the fair value of the shares, plus accrued interest. The court's finding may set a value above or below the value the shareholder believes is appropriate. Upon payment of the judgment and surrender to First Bancshares of the certificate or certificates representing the judicially appraised shares, a dissenting shareholder will cease to have any interest in the shares. The Court may assess costs incurred in such a proceeding against First Bancshares or may assess the costs against all or some of the dissenting shareholders, in amounts the court finds equitable, to the extent the Court finds that such dissenting shareholders acted arbitrarily, vexatiously or not in good faith in demanding payment different from that initially offered by First Bancshares. The Court may also assess the reasonable fees and expenses of counsel and experts against First Bancshares, if the Court finds that it did not substantially comply with its requirements regarding providing notice of dissenters' rights and the procedures associated therewith under Article 13 of the ABCL or against either First Bancshares or all or some of the dissenting shareholders if the Court finds that the party against whom the fees and expenses are assessed acted arbitrarily, vexatiously or not in good faith with respect to the rights provided in Article 13 of the ABCL. If the Court finds that services of counsel for any dissenter were of substantial benefit to other similarly situated dissenters, and that fees for such services should not be assessed against First Bancshares, then the Court may award reasonable fees to such counsel that will be paid out of the amounts awarded to dissenters who benefited from such services.

**Rights as a Shareholder**

If you exercise your right to dissent you may not challenge the merger unless the merger is unlawful or fraudulent with respect to the shareholders or Southwest. A shareholder who exercises appraisal rights retains all other rights as a shareholder of Southwest until the merger is complete.

**Withdrawal of Demand.**

If you have made a written demand on Southwest for payment of the fair value of your Southwest common stock, you may not withdraw such demand unless Southwest, or following the merger, First Bancshares consents to such withdrawal. If you withdraw your demand, you will be bound by the merger

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and you will have the same rights to receive the merger consideration with respect to your shares of Southwest common stock as you would have had if you had not made a demand for payment as to those shares, as well as the right to participate to the appropriate extent in any dividends or distributions on the shares of Southwest common stock that may have been paid to First Bancshares shareholders after the effective date of the merger. Such rights will, however, be subject to any change in or adjustment to those shares made because of an action taken after the date of your demand for payment.

### Beneficial Owners

Persons who beneficially own shares of Southwest common stock that are held of record in the name of another person, such as a broker, bank, trustee or other nominee, and who wish to have the right of dissent exercised as to those shares, may do so only if such shareholder (i) submits to Southwest the record shareholder's written consent to the assertion of dissenters' rights no later than the time the beneficial owner asserts dissenters' rights and (ii) does so with respect to all shares of the class or series that are beneficially owned by you, as the beneficial shareholder.

### U.S. Federal Income Tax Consequences

See "U.S. Federal Income Tax Considerations — Dissenters" beginning on page 68 for a discussion on how the federal income tax consequences of your action will change if you elect to dissent from the merger.

You should remember that if you return a signed proxy card, but fail to provide instructions as to how your shares of Southwest common stock are to be voted, you will be considered to have voted in favor of the merger and you will not be able to assert dissenters' rights. You should also remember that if you otherwise vote at the special meeting in favor of the merger, you will not be able to assert dissenters' rights.

### Exchange of Shares in the Merger

The conversion of Southwest common stock into the right to receive the merger consideration will occur automatically at the effective time of the merger. After completion of the merger, the exchange agent will exchange certificates representing shares of Southwest common stock for the merger consideration to be received pursuant to the terms of the merger agreement.

### Letter of Transmittal

As soon as reasonably practicable after the effective time of the merger, but no later than three business days after the effective time (provided that Southwest had delivered to the exchange agent all information that is necessary for the exchange agent to perform its obligations pursuant to the merger agreement), the exchange agent will mail appropriate transmittal materials and instructions to those persons who were holders of Southwest common stock immediately prior to the completion of the merger. These materials will contain instructions on how to surrender shares of Southwest common stock in exchange for the merger consideration the holder is entitled to receive under the merger agreement.

If a certificate for Southwest common stock has been lost, stolen or destroyed, the exchange agent will issue the merger consideration upon receipt of an appropriate affidavit of loss and indemnity agreement and/or a bond in such amount as First Bancshares or the exchange agent may determine is necessary as indemnity against any claim that may be made against it with respect to such lost, stolen or destroyed certificate.

After completion of the merger, there will be no further transfers on the stock transfer books of Southwest other than to settle transfers of Southwest common stock that occurred prior to the effective time of the merger.

### Withholding

First Bancshares and the exchange agent will be entitled to deduct and withhold from the consideration otherwise payable to any Southwest shareholder the amounts they are required to deduct and withhold under any applicable federal, state, local or foreign tax law. If any such amounts are withheld, these amounts will be treated for all purposes of the merger agreement as having been paid to the shareholders from whom they were withheld.



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Dividends and Other Distributions

Whenever a dividend or other distribution is declared by First Bancshares on First Bancshares common stock, the record date for which is after the effective time of the merger, the declaration will include dividends or other distributions on all shares of First Bancshares common stock issuable under the merger agreement, but such dividends or other distributions will not be paid to the holder thereof until such holder has duly surrendered his, her or its Southwest stock certificates.

Listing of First Bancshares Common Stock

It is a condition to the completion of the merger that the shares of First Bancshares common stock issuable in connection with the merger be approved for listing on the NASDAQ Global Market, subject to official notice of issuance.

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THE MERGER AGREEMENT

The following describes certain aspects of the merger, including certain material provisions of the merger agreement. The following description of the merger agreement is subject to, and qualified in its entirety by reference to, the merger agreement, which is attached to this proxy statement/prospectus as Annex A and is incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus. We urge you to read the merger agreement carefully and in its entirety, as it is the legal document governing the merger.

Structure of the Merger

The boards of directors of First Bancshares and Southwest have each unanimously approved the merger agreement, which provides for the merger of Southwest with and into First Bancshares, with First Bancshares as the surviving company in the merger.

The merger agreement also provides that immediately after the effective time of the merger but in effect simultaneously on the date the merger closes, First Community, which is an Alabama state-chartered bank and a direct wholly owned subsidiary of Southwest, will merge with and into The First, A National Banking Association, a national banking association and a direct wholly owned subsidiary of First Bancshares, with The First as the surviving bank of such merger. The terms and conditions of the merger of The First and First Community are set forth in a separate merger agreement and plan of merger, referred to as the bank merger agreement, the form of which is attached as Exhibit B to the merger agreement. As provided in the bank merger agreement, the merger of The First and First Community may be abandoned at the election of The First at any time, whether before or after filings are made for regulatory approval of such merger. We refer to the merger of The First and First Community as the bank merger.

The merger agreement allows First Bancshares to change the structure of the merger at any time and without the approval of Southwest if and to the extent that First Bancshares reasonably deems such a change to be necessary; provided, however, that no such change shall (i) alter the amount or kind of merger consideration to be provided under the merger agreement, (ii) materially impede or delay consummation of the merger, (iii) adversely affect the federal or state income tax treatment of Southwest shareholders in connection with the merger, (iv) require submission or the approval of Southwest shareholders after the merger agreement and the merger has already been approved by Southwest's shareholders, or (v) result in the merger failing to be a reorganization described in Section 368(a) of the Code.

Closing and Effective Time of the Merger

The closing will take place immediately prior to the effective time. The effective time of the merger will be the later of (i) the date and time of filing of the articles of merger with the Secretary of State of the State of Mississippi and the Secretary of State of the State of Alabama by First Bancshares or (ii) the date and time when the merger becomes effective as set forth in such articles of merger, which will be no later than three business days after all of the conditions to the closing of the merger have been satisfied or waived in accordance with their terms.

We currently expect that the merger will be completed in the first or second quarter of 2018, subject to obtaining the requisite approvals from the shareholders of Southwest and the expiration of all regulatory waiting periods and other conditions. However, completion of the merger could be delayed if there is a delay in satisfying any other conditions to the merger. See "The Merger Agreement — Conditions to Completion of the Merger."

Organizational Documents of the Surviving Company

At the effective time of the merger, the amended and restated articles of incorporation and bylaws of First Bancshares in effect immediately prior to the effective time of the merger will be the articles of incorporation and bylaws of the surviving company until thereafter amended in accordance with their respective terms and applicable laws.

Officers of the Surviving Company

Each of the officers of First Bancshares immediately prior to the effective time of the merger will be the officers of the surviving company from and after the effective time of the merger, until their respective

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successors have been duly elected, appointed or qualified or until their earlier death, resignation or removal in accordance with the articles of incorporation and bylaws of First Bancshares.

**Board of Directors of the Surviving Company**

Each of the directors of First Bancshares immediately prior to the effective time of the merger will be the directors of the surviving company from and after the effective time of the merger, until their respective successors have been duly elected, appointed or qualified or until their earlier death, resignation or removal in accordance with the articles of incorporation and bylaws of First Bancshares.

Pursuant to the merger agreement, First Bancshares has agreed to consider appointing a representative proposed by Southwest and mutually agreed to by First Bancshares and Southwest to the board of directors of The First, the banking subsidiary of First Bancshares, at the closing date. However, the parties both acknowledge and agree that in no event will First Bancshares or The First be required by the terms of the merger agreement to appoint any director to The First's board of directors.

**Merger Consideration**

Under the terms of the merger agreement, each outstanding share of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding immediately prior to the effective time of the merger will be converted into the right to receive a pro rata portion (which is a ratio equal to one divided by the number of shares of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding as of the closing) of (i) a number of shares of First Bancshares common stock equal to \$36,000,000 divided by the average closing price of First Bancshares' common stock during the ten trading days preceding the fifth business day prior to the closing date (subject to adjustments as discussed below), which we refer to as the stock consideration, and (ii) a cash amount equal to \$24,000,000 (subject to downward adjustment in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement in the event that Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000), which we refer to as the cash consideration. The stock consideration and the cash consideration are collectively referred to as the merger consideration.

In determining the stock consideration, the average closing price of First Bancshares' common stock pursuant to the formula above may be adjusted to the extent that if (1) the average closing price is at least 20% higher than \$30.45, which we refer to as the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$36.54, and (2) the average closing price is at least 20% lower than the signing price, then the average closing price for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration will be adjusted to \$24.36. If the average closing price is neither 20% higher nor lower than the signing price, then the average closing price pursuant to the formula above will be used to calculate the stock consideration.

In addition, if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date is less than \$32,000,000, the aggregate amount of the cash consideration will be reduced by an amount equal to (1) \$32,000,000 minus (2) Southwest's actual adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date. Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity will be calculated as Southwest's common equity (as defined in GAAP) less (i) intangible assets (as defined in GAAP), (ii) any anticipated but unaccrued Southwest transaction expenses in connection with the merger, and (iii) the amount of any reduction in Southwest's allowance for loan and lease losses below \$3,425,000 as of the effective time of the merger.

First Bancshares will not issue any fractional shares of First Bancshares common stock in the merger. Southwest shareholders who would otherwise be entitled to a fractional share of First Bancshares common stock upon the completion of the merger will instead receive an amount in cash (without interest and rounded to the nearest whole cent) determined by multiplying the fractional share interest in First Bancshares common stock (rounded to the nearest one hundredth of a share) by the average closing price, as may be adjusted.

If First Bancshares or Southwest change the number of shares of First Bancshares common stock or Southwest common stock outstanding prior to the effective time of the merger as a result of a stock split, reverse stock split, stock combination, stock dividend, recapitalization, reclassification, reorganization or similar transaction with respect to First Bancshares common stock or Southwest common stock and the

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record date for such corporate action is prior to the effective time of the merger, then the merger consideration shall be appropriately and proportionately adjusted to give Southwest shareholders the same economic effect as contemplated by the merger agreement prior to any such event.

Southwest may terminate the merger agreement if the average closing price of First Bancshares common stock over a specified period prior to completion of the merger decreases below certain specified thresholds unless First Bancshares elects to increase the merger consideration through an adjustment to the merger consideration, as discussed in further detail on page 88.

The value of the shares of First Bancshares common stock to be issued to Southwest shareholders in the merger will fluctuate between now and the closing date of the merger. We make no assurances as to whether or when the merger will be completed, and you are advised to obtain current sale prices for the First Bancshares common stock.

Procedures for Converting Shares of Southwest Common Stock into Merger Consideration

Exchange Agent

First Bancshares will designate a third party to act as the exchange agent in connection with the merger. The exchange agent shall also act as the agent for Southwest shareholders for the purpose of receiving their Southwest stock certificates and book-entry shares and shall obtain no rights or interests in the shares represented thereby. Prior to the effective time of the merger, First Bancshares will deposit, or cause to be deposited, with the exchange agent the aggregate stock consideration and the aggregate cash consideration and, to the extent then determinable, any cash payable in lieu of fractional shares, necessary to satisfy the aggregate merger consideration payable.

Transmittal Materials and Procedures

Promptly (but not more than three business days, provided that the exchange agent has received all necessary information from Southwest) after the effective time of the merger, First Bancshares will cause the exchange agent to send transmittal materials, which will include the appropriate form of letter of transmittal, to holders of record of shares of Southwest common stock (other than excluded shares) providing instructions on how to effect the delivery of certificates or book-entry shares of Southwest common stock in exchange for the merger consideration. After the effective time of the merger, when a Southwest shareholder surrenders his or her stock certificates or book-entry shares, accompanied by a properly executed letter of transmittal and any other documents as may reasonably be required by the exchange agent, the holder of shares of Southwest common stock will be entitled to receive, (i) his or her pro rata portion of the merger consideration and (ii) any cash in lieu of fractional shares to which the holder is entitled.

No interest will be paid or accrued on any amount payable upon cancellation of shares of Southwest common stock. The shares of First Bancshares common stock issued and cash amount paid in accordance with the merger agreement upon conversion of the shares of Southwest common stock (including any cash paid in lieu of fractional shares) will be deemed to have been issued and paid in full satisfaction of all rights pertaining to the shares of Southwest common stock.

If any portion of the merger consideration is to be delivered to a person or entity other than the holder in whose name any surrendered certificate is registered, it will be a condition of such exchange that (i) the certificate surrendered must be properly endorsed or must be otherwise in proper form for transfer and (ii) the person or entity requesting such payment pays any transfer or other similar taxes required by reason of the payment of the merger consideration to a person or entity other than the registered holder of the certificate surrendered or will establish to the satisfaction of First Bancshares that such tax has been paid or is not required to be paid. Payment of the applicable merger consideration with respect to book-entry shares will only be made to the person or entity in whose name such book-entry shares are registered. The shares of First Bancshares common stock may be in uncertificated book-entry form, unless a physical certificate is otherwise required by any applicable law.

Surrender of Southwest Stock Certificates

The exchange agent will mail to each holder of record of Southwest common stock the letter of transmittal along with instructions for completing the letter of transmittal and delivering to the exchange

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agent the completed letter of transmittal along with the stock certificates or book-entry shares representing the shares of Southwest common stock held by the shareholder.

Upon surrender to the exchange agent of the certificate(s) or book-entry shares representing his or her shares of Southwest common stock, accompanied by a properly completed letter of transmittal, a Southwest shareholder will be entitled to receive the merger consideration promptly after the effective time of the merger (including any cash in lieu of fractional shares). Until surrendered, each such certificate or book-entry share will represent after the effective time of the merger, for all purposes, only the right to receive the merger consideration, without interest (including any cash in lieu of fractional shares), and any dividends to which such holder is entitled pursuant to the merger agreement.

No dividends or other distributions with respect to First Bancshares common stock after completion of the merger will be paid to the holder of any unsurrendered Southwest stock certificates or book-entry shares with respect to the shares of Southwest common stock represented by those certificates until those certificates or book-entry shares have been properly surrendered. Subject to applicable abandoned property, escheat or similar laws, following the proper surrender of any such previously unsurrendered Southwest stock certificate or book-entry shares, the holder of the certificate or book-entry shares will be entitled to receive, without interest: (i) the amount of unpaid dividends or other distributions with a record date after the effective time of the merger payable with respect to the whole shares of First Bancshares common stock represented by that certificate or the book-entry shares; and (ii) at the appropriate payment date, the amount of dividends or other distributions payable with respect to shares of First Bancshares common stock represented by that certificate or the book-entry shares with a record date after the effective time of the merger (but before the date on which the certificate or book-entry shares are surrendered) and with a payment date subsequent to the issuance of the shares of First Bancshares common stock issuable in exchange for that certificate or book-entry shares.

None of First Bancshares, the exchange agent or any other person will be liable to any former Southwest shareholder for any amount delivered in good faith to a public official pursuant to applicable abandoned property, escheat or similar laws.

In the event any Southwest stock certificate is lost, stolen or destroyed, in order to receive the merger consideration (including cash in lieu of any fractional shares), the holder of that certificate must provide an affidavit of that fact and, if reasonably required by First Bancshares or the exchange agent, post a bond in such amount as First Bancshares or the exchange agent determines is reasonably necessary to indemnify it against any claim that may be made against it with respect to that certificate.

**Representations and Warranties**

The merger agreement contains customary representations and warranties of First Bancshares and Southwest relating to their respective businesses that are made as of the date of the merger agreement and as of the closing date of the merger. The representations and warranties of each of First Bancshares and Southwest have been made solely for the benefit of the other party, and these representations and warranties should not be relied on by any other person. In addition, these representations and warranties:

- have been qualified by information set forth in confidential disclosure schedules in connection with signing the merger agreement — the information contained in these schedules modifies, qualifies and creates exceptions to the representations and warranties in the merger agreement;
- will not survive consummation of the merger;
- may be intended not as statements of fact, but rather as a way of allocating the risk to one of the parties to the merger agreement if those statements turn out to be inaccurate;
- are in some cases subject to a materiality standard described in the merger agreement which may differ from what may be viewed as material by you; and

- were made only as of the date of the merger agreement or such other date as is specified in the merger agreement.

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The representations and warranties made by First Bancshares and Southwest to each other primarily relate to:

- corporate organization, existence, power and authority;
- capitalization;
- corporate authorization to enter into the merger agreement and to consummate the merger;
- regulatory approvals and consents required in connection with the merger and the bank merger;
- reports filed with governmental entities, including, in the case of First Bancshares, the SEC;
- absence of material adverse effect on each party since December 31, 2016;
- compliance with laws and the absence of regulatory agreements;
- tax matters;
- loan portfolio;
- litigation and legal proceedings;
- fees paid to financial advisors; and
- accuracy of the information supplied by each party for inclusion or incorporation by reference in this proxy statement/prospectus.

Southwest has also made representations and warranties to First Bancshares with respect to:

- labor and employee relations;
- employee benefits plans;
- investment portfolio;
- material contracts;

- intellectual properties;
- environmental matters;
- receipt of fairness opinion;
- insurance policies;
- derivative transactions;
- financial statements;
- adequacy of allowances for loan losses;
- absence of state takeover laws applicability;
- real and personal property matters; and
- transactions with affiliates.

Definition of “Material Adverse Effect”

Certain representations and warranties of First Bancshares and Southwest are qualified as to “materiality” or “material adverse effect.” For purposes of the merger agreement, a “material adverse effect,” when used in reference to either First Bancshares or Southwest, means (i) any change, development or effect that individually or in the aggregate is, or is reasonably likely to be, material and adverse to the condition (financial or otherwise), results of operations, liquidity, assets or deposit liabilities, properties, or business of such party and its subsidiaries, taken as a whole, or (ii) any change, development or effect that individually or in the aggregate would, or would be reasonably likely to, materially impair the ability of such

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party to perform its obligations under the merger agreement or otherwise materially impairs, or is reasonably likely to materially impair, the ability of such party to consummate the merger and the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement. For purposes of clause (i) only, the definition of "material adverse effect" excludes the following:

- changes in banking and similar laws of general applicability or interpretations thereof by any governmental authority;
- changes in GAAP or regulatory accounting requirements applicable to banks or bank holding companies generally;
- changes in global, national or regional political conditions (including the outbreak of war or acts of terrorism) or in economic or market (including equity, credit and debt markets, as well as changes in interest rates) conditions affecting the financial services industry generally;
- public disclosure of the transactions contemplated or actions expressly required by the merger agreement or actions or omissions that are taken with the prior written consent of the other party, or as otherwise expressly permitted or contemplated by the merger agreement;
- any failure by Southwest or First Bancshares to meet any internal or published industry analyst projections or forecasts or estimates of revenues or earnings for any period (it being understood and agreed that the facts and circumstances giving rise to such failure that are not otherwise excluded from the definition of material adverse effect may be taken into account in determining whether there has been a material adverse effect);
- changes in the trading price or trading volume of First Bancshares common stock; and
- the impact of this merger agreement and the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement on relationships with customers or employees, including the loss of personnel;

except, with respect to the first three bullets, if the effects of such change disproportionately affect such party and its subsidiaries, taken as a whole, as compared to other companies in the industry in which such party and its subsidiaries operate.

Covenants and Agreements

Pursuant to the merger agreement, First Bancshares and Southwest have agreed to certain restrictions on their activities until the effective time of the merger. First Bancshares has agreed that it will carry on its business consistent with prudent banking practices and in compliance in all material respects with applicable laws. Southwest has agreed to carry on its business, including the business of each of its subsidiaries, in the ordinary course of business and consistent with prudent banking practice. In addition, Southwest has agreed that it will use commercially reasonable efforts to:

- preserve its business organization and assets intact;
- keep available to itself and First Bancshares the present services of the current officers and employees of Southwest and its subsidiaries;
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preserve for itself and First Bancshares the goodwill of its customers, employees, lessors and others with whom business relationships exists; and

- continue diligent collection efforts with respect to any delinquent loans and, to the extent within its control, not allow any material increase in delinquent loans.

First Bancshares has also agreed that until the effective time of the merger, it and its subsidiaries will not take any or knowingly fail to take any action that is intended or is reasonably likely to:

- prevent, delay or impair First Bancshares' ability to consummate the merger or the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement; or
- agree to take, commit to take, or adopt any resolution of its board of directors in support of, any of the actions prohibited by the merger agreement.

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Southwest has also agreed that it will not, and will not permit its subsidiaries to do any of the following without the prior written consent of First Bancshares, except as previously agreed to by the parties:

- except as previously disclosed to First Bancshares, (i) issue, sell, grant, pledge, dispose of, encumber, or otherwise permit to become outstanding, or authorize the creation of, any additional shares of its stock, any rights, any new award or grant under the Southwest stock plans or otherwise, or any other securities (including units of beneficial ownership interest in any partnership or limited liability company), or enter into any agreement with respect to the foregoing, (ii) except as permitted in the merger agreement, accelerate the vesting of any existing rights, or (iii) except as permitted in the merger agreement, directly or indirectly change (or establish a record date for changing), adjust, split, combine, redeem, reclassify, exchange, purchase or otherwise acquire any shares of its capital stock, or any other securities (including units of beneficial ownership interest in any partnership or limited liability company) convertible into or exchangeable for any additional shares of stock, any rights issued and outstanding prior to the effective time;
- make, declare, pay or set aside for payment of dividends payable in cash, stock or property on or in respect of, or declare or make any distribution on, any shares of its capital stock, except (i) dividends from wholly owned subsidiaries to Southwest, (ii) dividends paid to Southwest shareholders in accordance with Southwest's dividend policy (which provides for a quarterly dividend to shareholders to cover such shareholders' tax liability and an additional per share dividend of \$1.00 per quarter), and (iii) only if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity as of the closing date is greater than \$32,500,000, Southwest may pay a dividend to its shareholders immediately prior to closing in the amount of the excess of Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity over \$32,500,000;
- enter into or amend or renew any employment, consulting, compensatory, severance, retention or similar agreements or arrangements with any director, officer or employee of Southwest or its subsidiaries, or grant any salary, wage or fee increase or increase any employee benefit or pay any incentive or bonus payments, except (i) normal increases in base salary to employees in the ordinary course of business and pursuant to policies currently in effect, provided that, such increases shall not result in an annual adjustment in base compensation (which includes base salary and any other compensation other than bonus payments) of more than 5% for any individual or 3% in the aggregate for all employees of Southwest or its subsidiaries, except as previously disclosed to First Bancshares and (ii) as may be required by law, (iii) to satisfy contractual obligations, or (iv) as previously disclosed to First Bancshares;
- hire any person as an employee of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries, except for (i) at-will employees at an annual rate of salary not to exceed \$120,000, or (ii) at-will senior executive officers to fill vacancies that currently exist or may arise from time to time in the ordinary course of business;
- enter into, establish, adopt, amend, modify or terminate (except (i) as may be required by or to make consistent with applicable law, subject to the provision of prior written notice to and consultation with First Bancshares, (ii) to satisfy contractual obligations existing as of the date of the merger agreement and as previously disclosed to First Bancshares, (iii) as previously disclosed to First Bancshares, or (iv) as may be required pursuant to the terms of the merger agreement) any Southwest benefit plan or other pension, retirement, stock option, stock purchase, savings, profit sharing, deferred compensation, consulting, bonus, group insurance or other employee benefit, incentive or welfare contract, plan or arrangement, or any trust agreement (or similar arrangement) related thereto, in respect of any current or former director, officer or employee of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries;
- except pursuant to agreements or arrangements in effect on the date of the merger agreement and previously disclosed to First Bancshares and loans to directors, officers, and their immediate family members, affiliates, or associates that

are below certain thresholds and which are in compliance with Regulation O, pay, loan or advance any amount to, or sell, transfer or lease any

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properties or assets (real, personal or mixed, tangible or intangible) to, or enter into any agreement or arrangement with, any of its officers or directors or any of their immediate family members or any affiliates or associates of any of its officers or directors other than compensation or business expense advancements or reimbursements in the ordinary course of business;

- except as previously disclosed to First Bancshares or in the ordinary course of business, sell, license, lease, transfer, mortgage, pledge, encumber or otherwise dispose of or discontinue any of its rights, assets, deposits, business or properties or cancel or release any indebtedness owed to Southwest or any of its subsidiaries;
- acquire (other than by way of foreclosures or acquisitions of control in a bona fide fiduciary capacity or in satisfaction of debts previously contracted in good faith, in each case in the ordinary course of business) all or any portion of the assets, debt, business, deposits or properties of any other entity or person, except for purchases specifically approved by First Bancshares;
- make any capital expenditures in amounts exceeding \$50,000 individually, or \$250,000 in the aggregate;
- amend Southwest's articles of incorporation or bylaws or any equivalent documents of Southwest's subsidiaries;
- implement or adopt any change in its accounting principles, practices or methods, other than as may be required by applicable laws, GAAP or applicable accounting requirements of any governmental authority, in each case, including changes in the interpretation or enforcement thereof;
- except as previously disclosed to First Bancshares, enter into, amend, modify, terminate, extend, or waive any material provision of, any Southwest material contract, lease or insurance policy, or make any change in any instrument or agreement governing the terms of any of its securities, or material lease, license or contract, other than normal renewals of contracts, licenses and leases without material adverse changes of terms with respect to Southwest or any of its subsidiaries, or enter into any contract that would constitute a Southwest material contract if it were in effect on the date of the merger agreement, except for any amendments, modifications or terminations requested by First Bancshares;
- other than settlement of foreclosure actions in the ordinary course of business, (i) enter into any settlement or similar agreement with respect to any action, suit, proceeding, order or investigation to which Southwest or any of its subsidiaries is or becomes a party after the date of the merger agreement, which settlement or agreement involves payment by Southwest or any of its subsidiaries of an amount which exceeds \$100,000 individually or \$200,000 in the aggregate and/or would impose any material restriction on the business of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries or (ii) waive or release any material rights or claims, or agree or consent to the issuance of any injunction, decree, order or judgment restricting or otherwise affecting its business or operations;
- (i) enter into any material new line of business, introduce any material new products or services, any material marketing campaigns or any material new sales compensation or incentive programs or arrangements; (ii) change in any material respect its lending, investment, underwriting, risk and asset liability management and other banking and operating policies, except as required by applicable law, regulation or policies imposed by any governmental authority; (iii) make any material changes in its policies and practices with respect to underwriting, pricing,

originating, acquiring, selling, servicing, or buying or selling rights to service loans, its hedging practices and policies, and (iv) incur any material liability or obligation relating to retail banking and branch merchandising, marketing and advertising activities and initiatives except in the ordinary course of business;

- enter into any derivative transaction;

- except as previously disclosed to First Bancshares, incur any indebtedness for borrowed money other than in the ordinary course of business consistent with past practice with a term not in

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excess of 12 months (other than creation of deposit liabilities or sales of certificates of deposit in the ordinary course of business), or incur, assume or become subject to, whether directly or by way of any guarantee or otherwise, any obligations or liabilities (whether absolute, accrued, contingent or otherwise) of any other person, other than the issuance of letters of credit in the ordinary course of business and in accordance with restrictions on making or extending loans as set forth in the merger agreement;

- (i) other than in accordance with Southwest's investment guidelines, acquire, sell or otherwise dispose of any debt security or equity investment or any certificates of deposits issued by other banks, or (ii) change the classification method for any of the Southwest investment securities from "held to maturity" to "available for sale" or from "available for sale" to "held to maturity," as those terms are used in ASC 320;

- make any changes to deposit pricing other than such changes that may be made in the ordinary course of business;

- except for loans or extensions of credit approved and/or committed as of the date of the merger agreement and disclosed to First Bancshares, (i) make or increase any (A) unsecured loan, if the amount of such unsecured loan, together with any other outstanding unsecured loans made by Southwest or any of its subsidiaries to such borrower or its affiliates would be in excess of \$250,000, in the aggregate, (B) loan secured by other than a first lien in excess of \$500,000, (C) loan in excess of FFIEC regulatory guidelines relating to loan to value ratios in excess of \$500,000, (D) loan secured by a first lien residential mortgage and with no loan policy exceptions in excess of \$750,000, (E) secured loan over \$1,750,000, (F) any loan that is not made in conformity with Southwest's ordinary course lending policies and guidelines in effect as of the date hereof in excess of \$500,000, or (G) loan, whether secured or unsecured, if the amount of such loan, together with any other outstanding loans (without regard to whether such other loans have been advanced or remain to be advanced), would result in the aggregate outstanding loans to any borrower of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries (without regard to whether such other loans have been advanced or remain to be advanced) to exceed \$1,750,000, (ii) renew, renegotiate, extend or modify any existing loan in which the aggregate amount of all loans to the borrower exceeds \$1,750,000 (other than credits in which the total outstanding loans to the borrower is no more than \$3,500,000 and no new money is extended and which do not have any material deteriorating change in the credit relationship, including, but not limited to, a downgrade in the risk rating of the credit, declining financial trends, or any other change that would substantially alter the facts supporting the original approval), (iii) sell any loan or loan pools in excess of \$1,000,000 in principal amount or sale price (other than residential mortgage loan pools sold in the ordinary course of business), or (iv) acquire any servicing rights, or sell or otherwise transfer any loan where Southwest or any of its subsidiaries retains any servicing rights. Any loan in excess of the foregoing limits will require the prior written approval of the President or Chief Credit Officer or Credit Administrator of The First;

- except as previously disclosed to First Bancshares, make any investment or commitment to invest in real estate or in any real estate development project other than by way of foreclosure or deed in lieu thereof or make any investment or commitment to develop, or otherwise take any actions to develop any real estate owned by Southwest or its subsidiaries;

- except as required by applicable law or in the ordinary course of business, make or change any material tax election, file any material amended tax return, enter into any material closing agreement with respect to taxes, settle or compromise any material liability with respect to taxes, agree to any material adjustment of any tax attribute, or consent to any extension or waiver of the limitation period applicable to any material tax claim or assessment, provided that, for purposes of the foregoing, "material" means affecting or relating to \$100,000 or more in taxes or \$200,000 or more of taxable income;

- take any action or knowingly fail to take any action not contemplated by the merger agreement that is intended or is reasonably likely to (i) prevent, delay or impair Southwest's ability to



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consummate the merger or the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, or (ii) agree to take, make any commitment to take, or adopt any resolutions of its board of directors in support of any actions prohibited by the merger agreement;

- except as previously disclosed to First Bancshares, directly or indirectly repurchase, redeem or otherwise acquire any shares of Southwest capital stock or any securities convertible into or exercisable for any shares of Southwest capital stock;

- except as previously disclosed to First Bancshares or required by law, file any application or make any contract or commitment for the opening, relocation or closing of any, or open, relocate or close any, branch office, loan production or servicing facility or automated banking facility, except for any change that may be requested by First Bancshares;

- merge or consolidate itself or any of its subsidiaries with any other person, or restructure, reorganize or completely or partially liquidate or dissolve it or any of its subsidiaries; or

- (i) enter into any contract with respect to, or otherwise agree or commit to do, or adopt any resolutions of its board of directors or similar governing body in support of, any of the foregoing or (ii) take any action that is intended or expected to result in any of its representations and warranties set forth in the merger agreement being or becoming untrue in any material respect at any time prior to the effective time, or in any of the conditions to the merger not being satisfied or in a violation of any provision of the merger agreement, except, in every case, as may be required by applicable law.

Regulatory Matters

First Bancshares and Southwest agreed to use their respective commercially reasonable efforts to cause the registration statement to be declared effective by the SEC as promptly as reasonably practicable after filing. First Bancshares has also agreed to use its commercially reasonable efforts to obtain all necessary state securities law or “blue sky” permits and approvals required to carry out the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement. First Bancshares and Southwest and their respective subsidiaries have agreed to cooperate with each other and use their reasonable best efforts to prepare and file all necessary documentation, to effect all filings, to obtain as promptly as practicable all permits, consents, approvals and authorizations of all third parties and regulatory and governmental entities that are necessary to consummate the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, and to comply with the terms and conditions of all such permits, consents, approvals and authorizations; provided, however, that nothing contained in the merger agreement will require First Bancshares or any of its subsidiaries or Southwest or any of its subsidiaries to take any action, or commit to take any action, or agree to any condition or restriction, in connection with obtaining the foregoing permits, consents, approvals and authorizations of any governmental authority that would reasonably be likely to have a material and adverse effect (measured on a scale relative to Southwest) on the condition (financial or otherwise), results of operations, liquidity, assets or deposit liabilities, properties or business of First Bancshares, Southwest, the surviving entity or the surviving bank, after giving effect to the merger.

First Bancshares and Southwest will furnish each other and each other’s counsel with all information as may be necessary or advisable in connection with any application, petition or any other statement or application made by or on behalf of First Bancshares or Southwest to any governmental authority in connection with the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement. Each party has the right to review and approve in advance all characterizations of the information relating to such party and any of its subsidiaries that appear in any filing with a governmental authority made in connection with the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement. In addition, First Bancshares and Southwest agreed to provide to the other party for review a copy of each filing with a governmental authority made in connection with the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement prior to its

filing.

NASDAQ Listing

First Bancshares has agreed to use its commercially reasonable efforts to cause the shares of its common stock to be issued in connection with the merger to be approved for listing on NASDAQ, subject to official notice of issuance, prior to the effective time of the merger.

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Employee Matters

General

Following the effective time of the merger, First Bancshares must maintain employee benefit plans and compensation opportunities for those persons who are full-time employees of Southwest and its subsidiaries on the closing date of the merger (referred to below as “covered employees”) that provide employee benefits and compensation opportunities which, in the aggregate, are substantially comparable to the employee benefits and compensation opportunities that are made available on a uniform and non-discriminatory basis to similarly situated employees of First Bancshares or its subsidiaries (except that no covered employee may participate in any closed or frozen plan of First Bancshares or its subsidiaries). First Bancshares shall give the covered employees full credit for their prior service with Southwest and its subsidiaries for purposes of eligibility and vesting under any qualified or non-qualified employee benefit plan maintained by First Bancshares in which covered employees may be eligible to participate and for all purposes under any welfare benefit plans, vacation plans and similar arrangements maintained by First Bancshares.

With respect to any First Bancshares health, dental, vision or other welfare plan in which any covered employee is eligible to participate, for the first plan year in which the covered employee is eligible to participate, First Bancshares or its applicable subsidiary must use its commercially reasonable best efforts to: (i) cause any pre-existing condition limitations or eligibility waiting periods under such plan to be waived with respect to the covered employee and his or her covered dependents to the extent the condition was, or would have been, covered under the Southwest benefit plan in which the covered employee participated immediately prior to the effective time of the merger; and (ii) recognize any health, dental, vision or other welfare expenses incurred by the covered employee and his or her covered dependents in the year that includes the closing date of the merger (or, if later, the year and which the covered employee is first eligible to participate) for purposes of any applicable copayment, deductible and annual out-of-pocket expense requirements.

If, within one year after the effective time of the merger, any covered employee is terminated by First Bancshares or its subsidiaries (other than for cause, death, disability, normal retirement or voluntarily resignation), then First Bancshares will pay severance to the covered employee in an amount equal to one week of base salary for each year of such covered employee’s employment (including employment with Southwest or First Community); provided, however, that in no event will the total amount of severance for any current employee be greater than 12 weeks of such base salary.

Prior to the effective time of the merger, Southwest will effectuate the termination or discontinuation of certain benefits plans maintained by Southwest, as requested by First Bancshares.

Indemnification and Directors’ and Officers’ Insurance

For a period of six years after the effective time of the merger, First Bancshares shall indemnify and hold harmless the present and former directors and officers of Southwest and its subsidiaries against all costs or expenses, judgements, fines, losses, claims, damages or other liabilities incurred in connection with any claim, action, suit, proceeding or investigation arising out of actions or omissions of such persons in the course of performing their duties for Southwest or its subsidiaries occurring at or before the effective time of the merger (including the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement), to the same extent as such persons have the right to be indemnified pursuant to the indemnification agreements between Southwest and such officer or director and to the extent permitted by applicable law.

For a period of six years after the effective time of the merger, First Bancshares will provide director’s and officer’s liability insurance that serves to reimburse the present and former officers and directors of Southwest or its subsidiaries with respect to claims against them arising from facts or events occurring before the effective time of the merger (including the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement). The directors’ and officers’ liability insurance will contain at least the same coverage and amounts, and contain terms and conditions no less advantageous to the indemnified person as the coverage currently provided by Southwest; provided, however, that: (i) if First Bancshares is unable to obtain or maintain the

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directors' and officers' liability insurance, then First Bancshares will provide as much comparable insurance as is reasonably available, and (ii) officers and directors of Southwest or its subsidiaries may be required to make application and provide customary representations and warranties to the carrier of the insurance.

First Bancshares has agreed that if it, or any of its successors and assigns, consolidates with or merges with any other corporation or entity where it is not the continuing or surviving corporation, or transfers all or substantially all of its property or assets, it will make proper provision so that the successors and assigns of First Bancshares and its subsidiaries will assume the obligations of indemnification under the merger agreement.

### No Solicitation

Southwest has agreed that, from the date of the merger agreement it will not, and will cause its subsidiaries and each of their respective officers, directors and employees not to, and will not authorize any investment bankers, financial advisors, attorneys, accountants, consultants, affiliates or other agents of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries to, directly or indirectly, (i) initiate, solicit, induce or knowingly encourage or take any action to facilitate an inquiry, offer or proposal which constitutes, or could reasonably be expected to lead to, an acquisition proposal; (ii) participate in any discussions or negotiations regarding any acquisition proposal or furnish, or otherwise afford access to, any person (other than First Bancshares) any information or data with respect to Southwest or any of its subsidiaries or otherwise relating to an acquisition proposal; (iii) release any person from, waive any provision of, or fail to enforce any confidentiality agreement or standstill agreement to which Southwest is a party; or (iv) enter into any agreement, agreement in principle or letter of intent with respect to any acquisition proposal or approve or resolve to approve any acquisition proposal or any agreement, agreement in principle or letter of intent relating to an acquisition proposal. For purposes of the merger agreement, an "acquisition proposal" means any inquiry, offer or proposal that could reasonably be expected to lead to: (A) any transaction or series of transactions involving any merger, consolidation, recapitalization, share exchange, liquidation, dissolution or similar transaction involving Southwest or any of its subsidiaries; (B) any transaction pursuant to which any third party or group acquires or would acquire (whether through sale, lease or other disposition), directly or indirectly, a significant portion of the assets of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries; (C) any issuance, sale or other disposition of (including by way of merger, consolidation, share exchange or any similar transaction) securities (or options, rights or warrants to purchase or securities convertible into, such securities) representing 20% or more of the votes attached to the outstanding securities of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries; (D) any tender offer or exchange offer that, if consummated, would result in any third party or group beneficially owning 20% or more of any class of equity securities of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries; or (E) any transaction which is similar in form, substance or purpose to any of the foregoing transactions, or any combination of the foregoing.

However, at any time prior to the Southwest special meeting, Southwest may take any of the actions described in the first paragraph of this "— No Solicitation" section if, but only if (i) Southwest receives a bona fide unsolicited acquisition proposal that did not result from a breach of the first paragraph of this section, (ii) the Southwest board of directors reasonably determines in good faith, after consultation with and having considered the advice of its outside financial advisor and outside legal counsel, that such acquisition proposal constitutes or is reasonably likely to lead to a superior proposal and it is reasonably necessary to take such actions to comply with its fiduciary duties to Southwest's shareholders under applicable law, (iii) Southwest has provided First Bancshares with at least three business days' prior notice of such determination, and (iv) prior to furnishing or affording access to any information or data with respect to Southwest or any of its subsidiaries or otherwise relating to an acquisition proposal, Southwest receives from such person a confidentiality agreement with terms no less favorable to Southwest than those contained in the confidentiality agreement with First Bancshares. Southwest must promptly provide to First Bancshares any non-public information regarding Southwest or any of its subsidiaries provided to any other person which was not previously provided to First Bancshares, and such additional information must be provided no later than the date of provision of such information to such other party.

A "superior proposal" means a bona fide, unsolicited acquisition proposal (i) that if consummated would result in a third party (or in the case of a direct merger between such third party and Southwest or

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any of its subsidiaries, the shareholders of such third party) acquiring, directly or indirectly, more than 50% of the outstanding Southwest common stock or more than 50% of the assets of Southwest and its subsidiaries, taken as a whole, for consideration consisting of cash and/or securities and (ii) that the board of directors of Southwest reasonably determines in good faith, after consultation with its outside financial advisor and outside legal counsel, (a) is reasonably capable of being completed, taking into account all financial, legal, regulatory and other aspects of such proposal, including all conditions contained therein and the person making such acquisition proposal, and (b) taking into account any changes to the merger agreement proposed by First Bancshares in response to such acquisition proposal, taking into account all financial, legal, regulatory and other aspects of such proposal, including all conditions contained therein and the person making such acquisition proposal, such proposal is more favorable to the shareholders of Southwest from a financial point of view than the merger.

Southwest must promptly (and in any event within 24 hours) notify First Bancshares in writing if any proposals or offers are received by, any information is requested from, or any negotiations or discussions are sought to be initiated or continued with, Southwest or its representatives, in each case in connection with any acquisition proposal, and such notice must indicate the name of the person initiating such discussions or negotiations or making such proposal, offer or information request and the material terms and conditions of any proposals or offers (and, in the case of written materials relating to such proposal, offer, information request, negotiations or discussion, providing copies of such materials (including e-mails or other electronic communications), except to the extent that such materials constitute confidential information of the party making such offer or proposal under an effective confidentiality agreement). Southwest has agreed that it will keep First Bancshares informed, on a reasonably current basis, of the status and terms of any such proposal, offer, information request, negotiations or discussions (including any amendments or modifications to such proposal, offer or request).

Except as provided below, neither the board of directors of Southwest nor any committee thereof shall (i) withdraw, qualify, amend or modify, or propose to withdraw, qualify, amend or modify, in a manner adverse to First Bancshares in connection with the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement (including the merger), the Southwest recommendation, fail to reaffirm the Southwest recommendation within three business days following a request by First Bancshares, or make any statement, filing or release, in connection with the Southwest special meeting or otherwise, inconsistent with the Southwest recommendation (it being understood that taking a neutral position or no position with respect to an acquisition proposal will be considered an adverse modification of the Southwest recommendation); (ii) approve or recommend, or propose to approve or recommend, any acquisition proposal; or (iii) enter into (or cause Southwest or any of its subsidiaries to enter into) any letter of intent, agreement in principle, acquisition agreement or other agreement (a) related to any acquisition transaction (other than a confidentiality agreement entered into in accordance with the foregoing) or (b) requiring Southwest to abandon, terminate or fail to consummate the merger or any other transaction contemplated by the merger agreement.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, prior to the date of the Southwest special meeting, the board of directors of Southwest may withdraw, qualify, amend or modify the Southwest recommendation (“Southwest subsequent determination”) after the fifth business day following First Bancshares’ receipt of a notice (the “notice of superior proposal”) from Southwest advising First Bancshares that the board of directors of Southwest has decided that a bona fide unsolicited written acquisition proposal that it received (that did not result from a breach of the merger agreement) constitutes a superior proposal if, but only if, (i) the board of directors of Southwest has determined in good faith, after consultation with and having considered the advice of outside legal counsel and its financial advisor, that it is reasonably necessary to take such actions to comply with its fiduciary duties to Southwest’s shareholders under applicable law, (ii) during the five business day period after receipt of the notice of superior proposal by First Bancshares (the “notice period”), Southwest and the board of directors of Southwest shall have cooperated and negotiated in good faith with First Bancshares to make such adjustments, modifications or amendments to the terms and conditions of the merger agreement as would enable Southwest to proceed with the Southwest recommendation in favor of the merger with First Bancshares without a Southwest subsequent determination; provided, however, that First Bancshares does not have any obligation to propose any adjustments, modifications or amendments to the terms and conditions of the merger agreement and (iii) at the end of the notice period, after taking into account any such adjusted, modified or amended terms as



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may have been proposed by First Bancshares since its receipt of such notice of superior proposal, the board of directors of Southwest has again in good faith made the determination that such acquisition proposal constitutes a superior proposal. In the event of any material revisions to the superior proposal, Southwest is required to deliver a new notice of superior proposal to First Bancshares and again comply with the foregoing requirements, except that the notice period will be reduced to three business days.

Notwithstanding any Southwest subsequent determination, the merger agreement will be submitted to Southwest's shareholders at the Southwest special meeting for the purpose of voting on the approval of the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated thereby (including the merger) and nothing contained in the merger agreement will be deemed to relieve Southwest of such obligation; provided, however, that if the board of directors of Southwest makes a Southwest subsequent determination with respect to a superior proposal, then the board of directors of Southwest may recommend approval of such superior proposal by the shareholders of Southwest and may submit the merger agreement to Southwest's shareholders without recommendation, in which event the board of directors of Southwest will communicate the basis for its recommendation of such superior proposal and the basis for its lack of a recommendation with respect to the merger agreement and the transactions contemplated thereby to Southwest's shareholders in an appropriate amendment or supplement to this proxy statement/prospectus.

**Conditions to Completion of the Merger**

The completion of the merger depends on a number of conditions being satisfied or, where permitted, waived, including:

- the required approval by the shareholders of Southwest;
- the receipt of all regulatory approvals, or expiration or termination of all statutory waiting periods in respect thereof, required to consummate the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement, without any burdensome conditions;
- the absence of any judgement, order, injunction or decree issued by any court or agency of competent jurisdiction or other law preventing or making illegal the consummation of the merger, the bank merger or the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement;
- the effectiveness of the registration statement on Form S-4, of which this proxy statement/ prospectus is a part, under the Securities Act;
- the receipt by First Bancshares and Southwest from their respective tax counsel of a U.S. federal income tax opinion, dated the closing date of the merger, that the merger will qualify as a "reorganization" within the meaning of Section 368(a) of the Code;
- the accuracy, subject to varying degrees of materiality, of First Bancshares' and Southwest's respective representations and warranties in the merger agreement on the date of the merger agreement and as of the effective time of the merger (or such other date specified in the merger agreement);
- performance in all material respects by First Bancshares and Southwest of their respective obligations under the merger agreement;
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less than 5% of the outstanding shares of Southwest common stock validly exercise, or remain entitled to exercise, their appraisal rights;

- Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity is no less than \$32,000,000; and

- the absence of any event which has resulted in a material adverse effect on the other party, and the absence of any condition, event, fact, circumstance or other occurrence that is reasonably expected to have a material adverse effect on the other party.

No assurance is given as to when, or if, the conditions to the merger will be satisfied or waived, or that the merger will be completed.

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Termination

The merger agreement may be terminated at any time prior to the effective time of the merger:

- by mutual written consent of First Bancshares and Southwest;
- by First Bancshares or Southwest if any regulatory approval required for consummation of the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement has been denied by final non-appealable action by the relevant governmental authority or any application for such regulatory approval shall have been permanently withdrawn at the request of a governmental authority;
- by First Bancshares or Southwest if the approval of the shareholders of Southwest is not obtained;
- by First Bancshares or Southwest in the event of a material breach by the other party of any representation, warranty or covenant contained in the merger agreement and such breach is not cured within thirty days;
- by First Bancshares or Southwest if the merger is not consummated on or before February 20, 2018, subject to automatic extension to April 21, 2018 if the only outstanding condition to closing is the receipt of regulatory approvals;
- by First Bancshares if Southwest materially breaches its no-solicitation covenants;
- by First Bancshares if Southwest withdraws, qualifies, amends, modifies or withholds its recommendation to its shareholders to approve the merger and the merger agreement, or makes any statement, filing or release, in connection with the shareholder meeting or otherwise, inconsistent with its recommendation (it being understood that taking a neutral position or no position with respect to an acquisition proposal shall be considered an adverse modification of its recommendation);
- by First Bancshares if Southwest fails to properly call, give notice of, and commence a meeting of shareholders to vote on the merger;
- by First Bancshares if Southwest approves or recommends an acquisition proposal;
- by First Bancshares if Southwest fails to publicly recommend against a publicly announced acquisition proposal within three (3) business days of being requested to do so by First Bancshares or fails to publicly reconfirm its recommendation to its shareholders within (3) business days of being requested to do so by First Bancshares;
- by Southwest, if the average closing price of First Bancshares common stock for the purposes of calculating the stock consideration is less than 70% of the signing price, i.e., less than \$21.315; provided, however, if Southwest wishes to exercise its termination right pursuant to this provision, it shall give prompt written notice to First Bancshares, and within the five-day period after its receipt of the termination notice from Southwest, First Bancshares will have the

option, but not the obligation, to increase the total merger consideration to be at least \$56,400,000 (subject to downward adjustments if Southwest's adjusted tangible common equity at closing is less than \$32,000,000 at closing), which will nullify and void Southwest's termination, and the merger agreement will remain in full force and effect; or

- by Southwest if Southwest's board of directors determines to enter into a definitive agreement with respect to a superior proposal in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement, but only if Southwest pays to First Bancshares the \$2,250,000 termination fee.

#### Termination Fee

Southwest will pay First Bancshares a termination fee equal to \$2,250,000 in the event of any of the following:

- First Bancshares terminated the merger agreement because: (i) Southwest materially breached its no-solicitation covenants; (ii) Southwest withdrew, qualified, amended, modified or withheld its recommendation to its shareholders to approve the merger and the merger agreement to its

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shareholders, or made any statement, filing or release, in connection with the shareholder meeting or otherwise, inconsistent with its recommendation (it being understood that taking a neutral position or no position with respect to an acquisition proposal shall be considered an adverse modification of its recommendation); (iii) Southwest failed to properly call, give notice of, and commence a meeting of shareholders to vote on the merger; (iv) Southwest approved or recommended an acquisition proposal; (v) Southwest failed to publicly recommend against a publicly announced acquisition proposal within three (3) business days of being requested to do so by First Bancshares or failed to publicly reconfirm its recommendation to its shareholders within (3) business days of being requested to do so by First Bancshares; or (vi) Southwest resolved or otherwise determined to take, or announced an intention to take, any of the foregoing actions; or

- in the event that after the date of the merger agreement and prior to the termination of this merger agreement, an acquisition proposal was made known to senior management of Southwest or has been made directly to Southwest's shareholders generally or the acquisition proposal shall have been publicly announced (and not withdrawn), and (i) the merger agreement is terminated (A) by either First Bancshares or Southwest because the requisite Southwest shareholder approval was not obtained or (B) by First Bancshares because of Southwest's material breach of its representations and warranties or covenants in the merger agreement, and (ii) prior to the date within 12 months of such termination, Southwest enters into any agreement or consummates a transaction with respect to an acquisition proposal (whether or not it's the same acquisition proposal as that referred to above).

### Effect of Termination

A termination of the merger agreement will not relieve a breaching party from liability for any breach of any covenant, agreement, representation or warranty of the merger agreement giving rise to such termination or resulting from fraud or any willful and material breach. Notwithstanding the foregoing, the parties have agreed that if Southwest pays or causes to be paid to First Bancshares the termination fee in accordance with the merger agreement, Southwest (or any successor in interest of Southwest) will not have any further obligations or liabilities to First Bancshares with respect to the merger agreement or the transactions contemplated by it.

### Amendment; Waiver

Prior to the effective time of the merger and to the extent permitted by applicable law, any provision of the merger agreement may be (a) waived by the party benefitted by the provision, provided the waiver is in writing and signed by such party, or (b) amended or modified at any time, by an agreement in writing between the parties, except that after the Southwest special meeting no amendment may be made which by law requires further approval by the shareholders of First Bancshares or Southwest without obtaining such approval.

### Expenses

All expenses incurred in connection with the merger, the bank merger, the merger agreement and other transactions contemplated thereby, including fees and expenses of financial consultants, accountants and counsel, will be paid by the party incurring the expenses. However, if either party terminates the agreement due to a failure to obtain a required regulatory approval (provided that such failure is not primarily related to the financial regulatory condition of Southwest) or due to failure by First Bancshares to satisfy any conditions contained in any such regulatory approval, then First Bancshares will pay Southwest \$635,000 as reimbursement for its transaction-related costs and expenses. Nothing in the merger agreement limits either party's rights to recover any liabilities or damages arising out of the other party's willful breach of any provision of the merger agreement.

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ANCILLARY AGREEMENTS

Voting Agreements

In connection with, and as a condition to, entering into the merger agreement, each of the directors of Southwest and First Community entered into a voting agreement with First Bancshares. The following summary of the voting agreements is subject to, and qualified in its entirety by reference to, the form voting agreement attached as Exhibit A to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this document.

Pursuant to the voting agreements, each party to a voting agreement has agreed to appear at the Southwest special meeting (in person or by proxy) and to vote his or her shares of Southwest common stock:

- in favor of adoption and approval of the merger agreement and the approval of the merger and the other transactions contemplated by the merger agreement;
- in favor of any proposal to adjourn or postpone such meeting, if necessary, to solicit additional proxies to approve the merger agreement and the merger;
- against any action or agreement that would result in a breach of any covenant, representation or warranty or any other obligation or agreement of Southwest contained in the merger agreement;
- against any acquisition proposal other than the merger; and
- against any other action, agreement or transaction that is intended, or could reasonably be expected, to impede, interfere or be inconsistent with, delay, postpone, discourage or materially and adversely affect consummation of the transactions contemplated by the merger agreement.

In addition, the voting agreements provide that each shareholder party to a voting agreement will not:

- directly or indirectly sell, transfer, pledge, assign or otherwise dispose of, or enter into any contract, option, commitment or other arrangement or understanding with respect to the sale, transfer, pledge, assignment or other disposition of, any of such shareholder's shares of Southwest common stock; and
- (i) initiate, solicit, induce or knowingly encourage, or take any action to facilitate the making of, any inquiry, offer or proposal which constitutes, or could reasonably be expected to lead to, an acquisition proposal, (ii) participate in any discussions or negotiations regarding any acquisition proposal or furnish, or otherwise afford access, to any person (other than First Bancshares) any information or data with respect to Southwest or any of its subsidiaries or otherwise relating to an acquisition proposal, (iii) enter into any agreement, agreement in principle or letter of intent with respect to any acquisition proposal or approve or resolve to approve any acquisition proposal or any agreement, agreement in principle or letter of intent relating to an acquisition proposal, (iv) solicit proxies with respect to an acquisition proposal or otherwise encourage or assist any party in taking or planning any action that would compete with, restrain or otherwise serve to interfere with or inhibit the timely consummation of the merger in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement, or (v) initiate a shareholders' vote or action by consent of Southwest's shareholders with respect to an acquisition proposal.

The voting agreements will automatically terminate upon the earlier of (i) the effective date of the merger, (ii) the amendment of the merger agreement in any manner that materially and adversely affects any of the shareholder's rights set forth in the merger agreement, (iii) termination of the merger agreement, or (iv) three (3) years from the date the

voting agreements are executed.

As of the record date, shareholders who are party to the voting agreements beneficially owned and were entitled to vote an aggregate of approximately 27,549 shares of Southwest common stock, which represented approximately 38.58% of the shares of Southwest common stock outstanding on that date.

#### Non-Competition and Non-Disclosure Agreements

In addition to the voting agreements, as a condition to First Bancshares entering into the merger agreement, each of the directors of Southwest and First Community entered into a non-competition and non-disclosure agreements with First Bancshares. The following summary of the non-competition and

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non-disclosure agreements is subject to, and qualified in its entirety by reference to, the form non-competition and non-disclosure agreement attached as Exhibit C or Exhibit D to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this document.

Pursuant to the non-competition and non-disclosure agreements, each party to a non-competition and non-disclosure agreement has agreed to, among other things:

- from and after the effective time of the merger, not disclose or use any confidential information or trade secrets of Southwest for any purpose for so long as such information remains confidential information or a trade secret, except as required by law; and
- for a period of two years following the closing the merger:
- not solicit or attempt to solicit any customers of First Bancshares, The First, Southwest or First Community, including actively sought prospective customers of First Community as of the effective time of the merger; and
- on such director's own behalf or on behalf of others, not solicit or recruit or attempt to solicit or recruit any employee (full-time or temporary) of First Bancshares, The First, Southwest or First Community;
- for a period of one year or two years after the effective time of the merger (depending on the director), directly on the director's own behalf or on behalf any other person, not act as a director, manager, officer, or employee of any banking business that is the same or essentially the same as the banking business conducted by First Bancshares, The First or Southwest or First Community and that has a banking office located within any county in Alabama where First Community operates a banking office as of the closing of the merger and each county contiguous to each of such counties.

The restrictions in the non-competition and non-disclosure agreements will automatically terminate upon the earlier of (i) the termination of the merger agreement, (ii) two years after the effective date of the merger, or (iii) upon a change in control of First Bancshares.

Claims Letters

At the time of the execution of the merger agreement, and effective upon the closing of the merger, each director of Southwest and First Community executed a claims letter with First Bancshares. The following summary of the claims letters is subject to, and qualified in its entirety by reference to, the claims letter attached as Exhibit E to the merger agreement attached as Annex A to this document.

Pursuant to the claims letter, each director of Southwest and First Community released and discharged, effective upon the consummation of the merger, Southwest and its subsidiaries, their respective directors and officers (in their capacities as such), and their respective successors and assigns (including First Bancshares and The First), of and from any and all liabilities or claims that such director has or claims to have, or previously had or claimed to have, solely in his or her capacity as an officer, director or employee of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries, as of the effective time of the merger. The release does not apply to (i) compensation for services that has accrued but not yet been paid in the ordinary course of business consistent with past practice; (ii) claims that the director may have in any capacity other than as an officer, director or employee of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries, such as claims as a borrower under loan commitments and agreements, claims as a depositor under any deposit account with or as the holder of any certificate of deposit issued by First Community, claims on account of any services rendered by the director in a capacity other than as an officer, director or employee of Southwest or any of its subsidiaries, claims in his or her capacity of a shareholder of Southwest and claims as a holder of any check issued by any other depositor of First Community; (iii) any claims that the director may have under the merger agreement, including with respect to the

indemnification provisions of the merger agreement; or (iv) any right to indemnification that the director may have under the articles of incorporation or bylaws of Southwest or similar documents or any of its subsidiaries, or the merger agreement.

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THE COMPANIES

The First Bancshares, Inc.

First Bancshares was incorporated in Mississippi on June 23, 1995 and serves as the bank holding company for The First, A National Banking Association, headquartered in Hattiesburg, Mississippi. First Bancshares is a registered financial holding company. As of September 30, 2017, First Bancshares had consolidated assets of \$1.79 billion, loans of \$1.19 billion, deposits of \$1.51 billion, and shareholders' equity of \$167.0 million. First Bancshares operates 43 full service branches, one motor branch and four loan production offices in Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana and Florida. The First's deposits are insured by the FDIC.

First Bancshares is a community-focused financial institution that offers a full range of financial services to individuals, businesses, municipal entities, and nonprofit organizations in the communities that it serves. These services include consumer and commercial loans, deposit accounts, trust services, safe deposit services and brokerage services.

First Bancshares and its subsidiaries are subject to comprehensive regulation, examination and supervision by the Federal Reserve Board, the OCC and the Mississippi Department of Banking and Consumer Finance, and are subject to numerous laws and regulations relating to their operations, including, among other things, permissible activities, capital adequacy, reserve requirements, standards for safety and soundness, internal controls, consumer protection, anti-money laundering, and privacy and data security.

On December 6, 2017, First Bancshares entered into an agreement and plan of merger to acquire Sunshine Financial, Inc. ("Sunshine"), the holding company of Sunshine Community Bank. Pursuant to the merger agreement, Sunshine will merge with and into First Bancshares, with First Bancshares as the surviving company, a transaction we refer to as the "Sunshine merger." Immediately after the merger, Sunshine Community Bank, a Florida-state chartered bank and wholly owned subsidiary of Sunshine, will merge with and into The First, A National Banking Association and wholly owned subsidiary of First Bancshares, with The First as the surviving bank. The transaction was unanimously approved by the boards of directors of each of First Bancshares and Sunshine and is expected to close in the second quarter of 2018. Completion of the transaction is subject to customary closing conditions, including receipt of required regulatory approvals and approval of Sunshine's shareholders. Under the terms of the agreement, holders of Sunshine common stock will receive, at the election of each Sunshine shareholder, either (i) \$27.00 in cash, or (ii) 0.93 of a share of First Bancshares' common stock, provided that the total mix of merger consideration is fixed at 75% stock and 25% cash. The aggregate transaction consideration is valued at approximately \$32.1 million. At September 30, 2017, Sunshine had approximately \$194 million in total consolidated assets, \$160 million in total consolidated loans, \$142 million in total consolidated deposits and \$22.2 million in stockholder's equity.

First Bancshares' headquarters are located at 6480 U.S. Hwy, 98 West, Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39402, and its telephone number is (601) 268-8998. First Bancshares' website can be found at [www.thefirstbank.com](http://www.thefirstbank.com). The contents of First Bancshares' website are not incorporated into this proxy statement/prospectus.

For more information about First Bancshares' business, see "Where You Can Find More Information" below.

Southwest Banc Shares, Inc.

General

Southwest is a bank holding company headquartered in Chatom, Alabama. Southwest's primary business is serving as the sole shareholder for its wholly-owned subsidiary, First Community, an Alabama banking corporation headquartered in Chatom, Alabama. As of September 30, 2017, Southwest had consolidated assets of \$391.6 million, loans of \$281.6 million, deposits of \$345.1 million, and shareholders' equity of \$36.8 million. First Community operates 9 full service branches and one administrative office in

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Alabama. First Community's deposits are insured by the FDIC. Southwest was formed in 1984. First Community was formed in 1909. First Community provides commercial banking services through nine full-service banking offices located in Washington, Mobile and Baldwin Counties, Alabama.

The principal executive offices of Southwest and First Community are located at 2862 Dauphin Street, Mobile, Alabama 36606, and the telephone number is (251) 344-5821.

### Market

First Community provides a full range of traditional banking services throughout the Mobile, Baldwin, and Washington County area (the "market area"). First Community primarily markets its services to small businesses and residents of its market area through its main office and branches. It employs seasoned banking professionals with experience in the market area and who are active in their communities.

The total population of the market area is approximately 640,000.

### Products and Services

First Community is a full-service community bank. Its principal business is banking and consists of lending and deposit gathering (as well as other banking-related products and services) to businesses and individuals of the communities it serves, and the operational support to deliver, fund and manage such banking services. First Community provides a wide range of commercial banking services for businesses and individuals, including checking, savings, and money market deposit accounts, certificates of deposit and loans for consumer, commercial and real estate purposes. Services include mobile, electronic and online banking.

First Community's profitability is dependent on responsible lending with strong focus on lending standards to help ensure long-term growth in assets, loans, deposits and net income in a manner consistent with safe, sound and prudent banking practices. To achieve this goal, First Community's strategy is to: (1) expand loans and deposits through organic market share growth; (2) provide customers with a breadth of products and financial services; (3) employ, empower and motivate management to provide personalized customer service, consistent with the best traditions of community banking, while maximizing profits; and (4) maintain asset quality and control overhead expense.

First Community provides a variety of loans, deposits and related services to its business customers. Such services include but are not limited to business checking, deposit products and services, business loans, and lines of credit.

First Community offers similar services to its consumers, including but not limited to personal loans, checking, residential mortgage loans and mortgage refinancing, safe deposit boxes, debit cards, direct deposit, and official bank checks.

### Competition

First Community faces substantial competition in attracting and retaining deposits and making loans to its customers in all of its principal markets. Competition involves efforts to retain current customers, obtain new loans and deposits, increase types of services offered, and offer competitive interest rates on deposits and loans. The primary factors in competing for deposits are the range and quality of financial services offered, the ability to offer attractive rates and the availability of convenient office locations.

Based on the FDIC's Market Share Report, in the market area, First Community competes with commercial banks and numerous credit unions. The Report further provides that First Community's deposit market share in Mobile County is 2.43%, in Baldwin County it is 1.30% and in Washington County it is 72.06%. The total number of commercial banks doing business in Mobile and Baldwin counties is 30, and in Washington County two. Additional competition for deposits comes from investment alternatives, such as money market mutual funds and corporate and government securities. The primary factors in competing for loans are the range and quality of the lending services offered, interest rates, and loan origination fees. Competition for the origination of loans normally comes from other financial institutions, commercial banks, credit unions, insurance companies and other financial services companies. First Community believes that it has successfully competed with larger banks and other smaller community banks in the market area by focusing on personal service and financial products to meet the needs of the community.

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## Employees

As of September 30, 2017, Southwest and First Community employed approximately 90 persons on a full time or part time basis.

## Properties

The main office of both Southwest and First Community is located at 34 Court Street, Chatom, Alabama, a facility owned by First Community. In addition to its main office, First Community owns and operates branches as follows:

Location	Type	Leased/Owned
27555 US Highway 98 Daphne, Alabama 36526	Full Service	Owned
84 Plantation Pointe Road Fairhope, Alabama 36532	Full Service	Owned
10021 Hwy 31 Spanish Fort, Alabama 36527	Full Service	Owned
19495 North Third Street Citronelle, Alabama 36522	Full Service	Owned
2862 Dauphin Street Mobile, Alabama 36606	Principal Executive Office Administrative Only	Owned
720 Schillinger Road North Mobile, Alabama 36608	Full Service	Owned
6241 Cottage Hill Road Mobile, Alabama 36609	Full Service	Owned
1063 Industrial Parkway Saraland, Alabama 36571	Full Service	Owned
34 Court Street Chatom, Alabama 36518	Full Service	Owned
30122 Hwy 17 South Millry, Alabama 36558	Full Service	Owned

## Legal Proceedings

Both Southwest and First Community may from time to time be involved in litigation during the ordinary course of business; however, neither Southwest nor First Community is currently involved in any material pending litigation.

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### SOUTHWEST MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS OF FINANCIAL CONDITION AND RESULTS OF OPERATIONS

As used in this section, the words "we," "us," "our," and "Southwest" and similar terms when used in this section refer to Southwest Banc Shares, Inc. and First Community on a consolidated basis unless the context indicates otherwise. The term "Bank" refers to First Community on a stand-alone basis.

#### Introduction

The following discussion and analysis is intended to provide an overview of the significant factors affecting the financial condition and results of operations of Southwest for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 and 2016, and the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015. This discussion and analysis should be read in conjunction with the sections entitled "Cautionary Statement Concerning Forward-Looking Statements," "Selected Consolidated Historical Financial Information of Southwest," and the consolidated financial statements and the notes thereto, included elsewhere in this proxy statement/ prospectus.

#### Critical Accounting Policies and Accounting Estimates

Southwest's consolidated financial statements are prepared based on the application of certain accounting policies, the most significant of which are described in Southwest's notes to the consolidated financial statements. Certain of these policies require numerous estimates and strategic or economic assumptions that may prove inaccurate or subject to variation and may significantly affect Southwest's reported results and financial position for the current period or future periods. The use of estimates, assumptions, and judgment is necessary when financial assets and liabilities are required to be recorded at, or adjusted to reflect fair value. Assets carried at fair value inherently result in more financial statement volatility. Fair values and information used to record valuation adjustments for certain assets and liabilities, such as investment securities, are based on quoted market prices or are provided by other independent third-party sources, when available. When such information is not available, management estimates valuation adjustments. Changes in underlying factors, assumptions or estimates in any of these areas could have a material impact on Southwest's future financial condition and results of operations.

The following briefly describes the more complex policies involving a significant amount of judgments about valuation and the application of complex accounting standards and interpretations. For a more complete discussion of the methodology employed to calculate these estimates, see Note 1 to Southwest's consolidated financial statements included in this proxy statement/prospectus.

#### Allowance for Loan Losses

Southwest records estimated probable inherent credit losses in the loan portfolio as an allowance for loan losses. The methodologies and assumptions for determining the adequacy of the overall allowance for loan losses involve significant judgments to be made by management. Some of the more critical judgments supporting the allowance for loan losses include judgments about: creditworthiness of borrowers, estimated value of underlying collateral, assumptions about cash flow, determination of loss factors for estimated credit losses, and the impact of current events, conditions, and other factors impacting the level of inherent losses. Under different conditions or using different assumptions, the actual or estimated credit losses ultimately realized may be different than management's estimates provided in Southwest's consolidated financial statements included elsewhere in this proxy statement/prospectus.

#### Comparison of Results of Operations for the Nine Months Ended September 30, 2017 and 2016 and Years Ended December 31, 2016 and 2015

#### Overview

The following discussion describes Southwest's results of operations for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 and 2016, and for the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015. Like most community banks, Southwest derives most of its income from interest Southwest receives on its loans and investments. Southwest's primary source of funds for making these loans and investments is noninterest and interest bearing deposits. Consequently, one of the key measures of Southwest's success is the amount of net

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interest income, or the difference between the income on Southwest's interest-earning assets, such as loans and investments, and the expense on Southwest's interest-bearing liabilities, such as deposits. Another key measure is the spread between the yield Southwest earns on these interest-earning assets and the rate Southwest pays on its interest-bearing liabilities.

Results of Operations for the Nine Months Ended September 30, 2017 and 2016

Southwest had earnings of \$3.00 million for the first nine months of 2017, or \$41.95 diluted earnings per share, compared to earnings of \$2.63 million or \$36.88 diluted earnings per share for the same period of 2016.

During the first nine months of 2017, there were a number of variances when compared with the first nine months of 2016, but the most significant variances occurred in income from net interest income which increased \$681 thousand, fees on mortgage originations in non-interest income, which increased \$151 thousand, a decrease in gain on sales of securities of \$201 thousand, and employee salaries and benefits in non-interest expense, which increased \$156 thousand. These variances and other information about our results of operations for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 and 2016 are discussed below and on the pages that follow.

#### Net Interest Income

Net interest income represents the amount by which interest earned on various earning assets exceeds interest paid on deposits and other interest-bearing liabilities and is the most significant component of Southwest's earnings. Total interest income for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 was \$11.95 million and total interest expense was \$1.46 million, resulting in net interest income for the first nine months of 2017 totaling \$10.49 million. For the same period in 2016 total interest income was \$11.16 million and total interest expense was \$1.35 million, which resulted in net interest income of \$9.81 million. This represents a 7.11% increase in total interest income, an 8.30% increase in total interest expense and a 6.94% increase in net interest income when comparing the same periods from 2017 and 2016. When comparing the variances related to interest income and interest expense for the first nine months of 2017 and the first nine months of 2016, the increase and decrease, respectively, were attributed to the following: (1) the increase in interest income is due primarily to the increase in overall loan demand and an increase in interest rates, and (2) the increase in interest expense is primarily due to the rates on interest-bearing liabilities as rates continue to rise. Based upon recent comments from the Federal Reserve, management understands that additional increases to short-term interest rates could possibly occur during the fourth quarter of 2017 if general economic conditions continue to show improvement. If interest rates are increased, management believes that Southwest's net interest margin should continue to remain relatively stable over the remainder of 2017 due to the stability of Southwest's loan and deposit portfolios and Southwest's interest rate risk management policies.

The following table presents yields and rates on Southwest's average earning assets and average interest-bearing liabilities and the change in interest income and expense due to changes in volume and rates for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 and 2016.

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**TABLE OF CONTENTS**Yields on Average Earning Assets and Rates  
on Average Interest-Bearing Liabilities

(dollars in thousands) (unaudited)

	September 30, 2017			September 30, 2016			Change	
	Average Balance	Interest Rate	Income/ Expense*	Average Balance	Interest Rate	Income/ Expense*	Due to Volume	Due to Rate
Loans, net of unearned interest	\$ 278,625	5.02%	\$ 10,498	\$ 257,972	5.05%	\$ 9,765	795	(62)
Investment securities – taxable	43,160	2.14	694	46,888	2.30	808	(62)	(52)
Investment securities – tax-exempt(3)	32,106	2.66	640	26,800	2.82	567	107	(34)
Total investment securities	75,266	2.36	1,334	73,688	2.49	1,375	45	(86)
Interest-bearing balances with banks and federal funds sold	16,385	0.96	118	5,224	0.43	17	64	37
Total earning assets	370,276	4.30	11,950	336,884	4.42	11,157	904	(111)
Cash and due from banks	6,143			5,878				
Premises and equipment	7,330			7,474				
Other assets	5,847			8,008				
Total assets	\$ 389,596			\$ 358,244				
Deposits:								
Interest-bearing checking accounts	\$ 61,816	0.26%	\$ 122	\$ 57,332	0.29%	\$ 127	10	(14)
Money market demand accounts	36,493	0.07	20	33,632	0.06	16	1	3
Savings deposits	80,055	0.45	272	69,701	0.39	201	33	38
Time deposits	99,494	1.12	834	90,898	1.07	729	71	33
Total interest-bearing deposits	277,858	0.60	1,248	251,563	0.57	1,073	115	60
Federal funds purchased	10	1.40	—	54	8.03	3	(2)	(1)
Other borrowings	9,478	2.99	213	13,381	2.72	273	(86)	26
Total interest-bearing liabilities	287,346	0.68	1,461	264,998	0.68	1,349	27	85
Noninterest-bearing deposits	65,031			56,268				

Other liabilities	3,087	3,739
Stockholders' equity	34,132	33,239
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	\$ 389,596	\$ 358,244
Net interest income	\$ 10,489	\$ 9,808
Net interest spread(1)	3.63%	3.74%
Net interest margin(2)	3.78%	3.88%

\*

Annualized

(1)

Yield on earning assets less cost of funds interest bearing liabilities.

(2)

Net interest income divided by average interest earning assets.

(3)

Yields have not been presented on a tax equivalent basis.

#### Provision for Loan Losses

The provision for loan losses represents a charge to earnings necessary to establish an allowance for loan losses that, in management's evaluation, is adequate to provide coverage for estimated losses on outstanding loans and to provide for uncertainties in the economy. As a result of evaluating the allowance for loan losses at September 30, 2017, management recorded a provision for loan losses of \$383 thousand for the first nine months of 2017. There was a \$303 thousand provision for loan losses recorded during the first nine months of 2016. The increase in the period over period provision for loan losses is due to the continuing growth in Southwest's loan portfolio.

The total allowance for loan losses was \$3.45 million or 1.21% of loans at September 30, 2017, and \$3.09 million or 1.12% of loans at December 31, 2016. The level of the allowance maintained by Southwest includes an evaluation of uncertainties and matters of judgment. Management believes the allowance for loan losses at September 30, 2017 and December 31, 2016 to be adequate.

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## Non-Interest Income

Southwest's non-interest income consists of fees on mortgage originations, service charges and other fees on deposit accounts, gain on sales of securities available for sale and other operating income. Total non-interest income for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 was \$2.37 million compared with \$2.42 million for the same period in 2016, a decrease of \$50 thousand, or 2.07%. The primary decrease was in gains on sale of securities which decreased \$201 thousand, or 99.01%, when comparing the first nine months of 2017 with the same period in 2016. This decrease was offset by increases in mortgage loan origination income which increased \$151 thousand or 42.78% from 2016 to 2017 related to increases in mortgage loan origination volume.

Management believes that non-interest income will continue to supplement net interest income for Southwest. However, management does anticipate a decrease in mortgage origination fee with the departure of Southwest's mortgage originator.

## Non-Interest Income

	September 30,	
	2017	2016
	(dollars in thousands)	
	(unaudited)	
Service charges on deposit accounts	\$ 967	\$ 963
Net realized gains on sales of securities	2	203
Mortgage loan origination income	504	353
ATM fees	611	587
Increase in cash surrender value of life insurance	138	123
Other income	145	188
Total	\$ 2,367	\$ 2,417

## Non-Interest Expense

Non-interest expenses consist primarily of salaries and employee benefits, occupancy and equipment expenses, and other operating expenses. Non-interest expense for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 was \$9.34 million compared to \$9.18 million for the same period in 2016, an increase of \$152 thousand, or 1.66%. The primary reasons for this increase when comparing the first nine months of 2017 to the first nine months of 2016 was due to an increase of \$156 thousand, or 3.04%, in employee salaries and benefits. The increase in salaries and employee benefits is due to an increase in employee benefit expense.

## Non-Interest Expense

	September 30,	
	2017	2016
	(dollars in thousands)	
	(unaudited)	
Salaries and employee benefits	\$ 5,294	\$ 5,138
Occupancy and equipment expenses	1,258	1,234
Advertising	62	85
ATM processing	284	284
Data processing	353	351
Directors fees and expense	166	208
Software licensing and maintenance	246	232
Professional fees	293	269

Regulatory assessments	180	215
Other expenses	1,199	1,167
Total	\$ 9,335	\$ 9,183

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## Income Taxes

Southwest has elected to be taxed as an S corporation for federal income tax purposes. Under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, an S corporation generally is not subject to federal income tax because its taxable income or loss accrues to the individual stockholder. Consequently, Southwest does not recognize income tax expense or any deferred income taxes for federal purposes. However, Southwest continues to be subject to state income tax in the form of financial institution excise tax in the State of Alabama, as this state does not recognize financial institutions as S corporations for income tax purposes. As a result, income tax expense consists of state income taxes. The statutory tax rate for the State of Alabama is 6.5%.

Southwest recorded income tax expense for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 and 2016 of \$144 thousand and \$108 thousand, respectively. Southwest's income tax expense for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 reflects an effective state income tax rate of 4.59% compared to 3.94% for the nine months ended September 30, 2016. The increase in the effective tax rate is related to increases in taxable income over the prior period.

## Results of Operations for the Years Ended December 31, 2016 and 2015

Southwest had earnings of \$3.65 million for the year ended December 31, 2016, or \$51.11 diluted earnings per share, compared to earnings of \$3.03 million or \$42.53 diluted earnings per share for the same period of 2015.

During 2016, there were a number of variances when compared to 2015, but the most significant year to year variances occurred in income from net interest income, which increased \$419 thousand, gains on sales of securities available for sale as non-interest income, which increased \$87 thousand, mortgage loan origination income, which increased \$210 thousand, and employee salaries and benefits expense in non-interest expenses, which increased \$377 thousand. These four variances as well as other information about the 2016 and 2015 results of operations are discussed below and on the pages that follow.

## Net Interest Income

Net interest income represents the amount by which interest earned on various earning assets exceeds interest paid on deposits and other interest-bearing liabilities and is the most significant component of Southwest's earnings. Total interest income for the year ended December 31, 2016 was \$14.98 million and total interest expense was \$1.82 million, resulting in net interest income for 2016 totaling \$13.16 million. For the same period in 2015 total interest income was \$14.39 million and total interest expense was \$1.65 million, which resulted in net interest income of \$12.74 million. This represents a 4.09% increase in total interest income, a 10.29% increase in total interest expense and a 3.29% increase in net interest income when comparing the same periods from 2016 and 2015. When comparing the variances related to interest income and interest expense for 2016 and 2015, the increases were attributed to the following: (1) the increase in interest income is due to the increase in loan demand, partially offset by a decrease in loan rates related to the competitive lending landscape of Southwest's market areas and (2) the increase in interest expense is primarily due to rising rates on interest-bearing liabilities over the past year particularly with Southwest's variable rate other borrowings, increasing the cost of these borrowings from 2.03% for 2015 to 2.71% for 2016.

The following table presents yields and rates on Southwest's average earning assets and average interest-bearing liabilities and the change in interest income and expense due to changes in volume and rates for the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015.

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Yields on Average Earning Assets and Rates  
on Average Interest-Bearing Liabilities  
(dollars in thousands)

	December 31, 2016			December 31, 2015			Change	
	Average Balance	Interest Rate	Income/ Expense	Average Balance	Interest Rate	Income/ Expense	Due to Volume	Due to Rate
Loans, net of unearned interest	\$ 261,759	5.03%	\$ 13,167	\$ 236,020	5.27%	\$ 12,444	1,313	(590)
Investment securities – taxable	44,047	2.29	1,010	47,881	2.50	1,195	(92)	(93)
Investment securities – tax-exempt(3)	27,951	2.79	780	24,586	2.99	735	96	(51)
Total investment securities	71,998	2.49	1,790	72,467	2.66	1,930	4	(144)
Interest-bearing balances with banks and federal funds sold	5,035	0.44	22	8,089	0.20	16	(8)	14
Total earning assets	338,792	4.42	\$ 14,979	316,576	4.55	\$ 14,390	1,309	(720)
Cash and due from banks	5,933			6,041				
Premises and equipment	7,496			7,450				
Other assets	8,583			6,725				
Total assets	\$ 360,804			\$ 336,792				
Deposits:								
Interest-bearing checking accounts	\$ 57,405	0.29%	\$ 165	\$ 52,298	0.32%	\$ 167	16	(18)
Money market demand accounts	33,943	0.06	21	29,712	0.05	16	3	2
Savings deposits	69,659	0.39	271	60,393	0.35	209	34	28
Time deposits	93,113	1.08	1,002	85,932	1.02	878	75	49
Total interest-bearing deposits	254,120	0.57	1,459	228,335	0.56	1,270	128	61
Federal funds purchased	80	7.49	6	8	13.18	1	5	—
Other borrowings	13,176	2.71	357	18,725	2.03	381	(130)	106
Total interest-bearing liabilities	267,376	0.68	1,822	247,068	0.67	1,652	3	167
Noninterest-bearing deposits	56,457			56,508				

Other liabilities	4,326	3,593
Stockholders' equity	32,645	29,623
Total liabilities and stockholders' equity	\$ 360,804	\$ 336,792
Net interest income	\$ 13,157	\$ 12,738
Net yield on earning assets(1)	3.74%	3.88%
Net interest margin(2)	3.88%	4.02%

(1)  
Yield on earning assets less cost of funds of interest bearing liabilities.

(2)  
Net interest income divided by average interest earning assets.

(3)  
Yields have not been presented on a tax equivalent basis.

#### Provision for Loan Losses

The provision for loan losses represents a charge to earnings necessary to establish an allowance for loan losses that, in management's evaluation, is adequate to provide coverage for estimated losses on outstanding loans and to provide for uncertainties in the economy. As a result of evaluating the allowance for loan losses during the course of 2016, management recorded a provision for loan losses of \$303 thousand for the year ended December 31, 2016. There was a \$396 thousand provision for loan losses recorded for 2015. The decrease in the provision for loan losses is due to the continuing decrease in Southwest's non-performing loan portfolio.

The total allowance for loan losses was \$3.09 million or 1.12% of loans at December 31, 2016, and \$2.96 million or 1.21% of loans at December 31, 2015. The level of the allowance maintained by Southwest includes an evaluation of uncertainties and matters of judgment. Management believes the allowance for loan losses at December 31, 2016 and December 31, 2015 to be adequate.

#### Non-Interest Income

Southwest's non-interest income consists of fees on mortgage originations, service charges and other fees on deposit accounts, gains on sale of securities available for sale and other operating income. Total non-interest income for the year ended December 31, 2016 was \$3.16 million compared with \$2.76 million

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for the same period in 2015, an increase of \$399 thousand or 14.46%. The primary factor in the increase of non-interest income was an increase in mortgage loan origination income in the amount of \$210 thousand, or 75.54%, which is primarily related to an increase in mortgage banking activity in 2016.

Management believes that non-interest income will continue to supplement net interest income for Southwest. Management also believes that with the departure of the mortgage originator and if the Federal Reserve increases interest rates, this could slow the demand for one-to-four family mortgage loans which could decrease Southwest's mortgage loan origination fees.

## Non-Interest Income

	December 31,	
	2016	2015
	(dollars in thousands)	
Service charges on deposit accounts	\$ 1,305	\$ 1,334
Net realized gains on sale of securities	205	118
Mortgage loan origination income	488	278
ATM fees	779	751
Increase in cash surrender value of life insurance	163	159
Other income	219	120
Total	\$ 3,159	\$ 2,760

## Non-Interest Expense

Non-interest expenses consist primarily of salaries and employee benefits, occupancy and equipment expenses, and other operating expenses. Non-interest expense for the year ended December 31, 2016 was \$12.20 million, compared to \$11.97 million for the same period in 2015, an increase of \$232 thousand, or 1.94%. The most significant change noted when comparing 2016 to 2015 was an increase of \$377 thousand, or 5.80%, in salaries and employee benefits due in large part to Southwest's increase in employee benefits expense which increased salaries in 2016 over 2015.

## Non-Interest Expense

	December 31,	
	2016	2015
	(dollars in thousands)	
Salaries and employee benefits	\$ 6,872	\$ 6,495
Occupancy and equipment expense	1,658	1,693
Advertising	98	231
ATM processing	385	380
Data processing	467	551
Directors fees and expense	270	286
Software licensing and maintenance	315	277
Professional fees	319	312
Regulatory assessments	265	285
Net other real estate owned losses and expenses	157	145
Other expenses	1,398	1,317
Total	\$ 12,204	\$ 11,972

## Income Taxes

Southwest has elected to be taxed as an S corporation for federal income tax purposes. Under the provisions of the Internal Revenue Code, an S corporation generally is not subject to federal income tax because its taxable income or loss accrues to the individual stockholder. Consequently, Southwest does not

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recognize income tax expense or any deferred income taxes for federal purposes. However, Southwest continues to be subject to state income tax in the form of financial institution excise tax in the State of Alabama, as this state does not recognize financial institutions as S corporations for income tax purposes. As a result, income tax expense consists of state income taxes. The statutory tax rate for the State of Alabama is 6.5%.

Southwest recorded income tax expense for the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015 of \$164 thousand and \$97 thousand, respectively. Income tax expense for the year ended December 31, 2016 reflects an effective income tax rate of 4.31%, compared to 3.10% for the year ended December 31, 2015. The increase in the effective income tax rate is the result of increased taxable income over items of tax-free income such as bank-owned life insurance income.

Comparison of Financial Condition as of September 30, 2017, December 31, 2016 and December 31, 2015  
Balance Sheet Summary

Southwest's total assets were \$391.60 million at September 30, 2017, \$376.53 million at December 31, 2016 and \$343.16 million at December 31, 2015. Loans, net of allowance for loan losses, totaled \$281.62 million at September 30, 2017, \$273.94 million at December 31, 2016 and \$242.65 million at December 31, 2015. Investment securities, all of which are carried as available for sale, totaled \$78.96 million at September 30, 2017, \$67.79 million at December 31, 2016 and \$74.09 million at December 31, 2015. The percentage changes for these categories from December 31, 2015 to December 31, 2016 were a 8.86% increase in total assets, a 11.42% increase in loans, net of allowance for loan losses, and a 9.30% decrease in investment securities. The percentage changes for these categories from December 31, 2016 to September 30, 2017 were a 3.85% increase in total assets, a 2.73% increase in loans, net of allowance for loan losses, and a 14.14% increase in investment securities. The percentage changes illustrate a core element of our profit strategy of redeploying our funding sources into higher yielding loans from lower yielding investment securities while maintaining a stable base of liquidity.

Total liabilities increased by 3.46% to \$354.78 million at September 30, 2017 from \$342.90 million at December 31, 2016 primarily as a result of increases in deposits, primarily noninterest bearing demand accounts and money market accounts. Total liabilities increased by 9.50% to \$342.90 million at December 31, 2016 from \$310.32 million at December 31, 2015 primarily as a result of increases in deposits, primarily noninterest bearing demand accounts and money market accounts. These increases were partially offset by decreases in other borrowings primarily related to Southwest's borrowings from the Federal Home Loan Bank of Atlanta. Stockholders' equity increased 8.67% to \$36.82 million at September 30, 2017 from \$33.63 million at December 31, 2016, and 2.33% to \$33.63 million at December 31, 2016 from \$32.84 million at December 31, 2015, primarily due to earnings and the change in net unrealized gains on available-for-sale securities. A more detailed discussion of assets, liabilities and capital follows.

Securities

Southwest uses its investment securities portfolio primarily to enhance the overall yield on interest earning assets and as a source of liquidity, as a tool to manage balance sheet sensitivity to changing interest rates, and as a base from which to pledge assets for public deposits, when needed. When Southwest's liquidity position exceeds current needs and expected loan demand, this excess liquidity is deployed into investment securities as a secondary earnings alternative. As investments mature, they are used to meet current cash needs or they are reinvested to maintain Southwest's desired liquidity position. Southwest has designated all of its securities as available for sale to provide flexibility in case an immediate need for liquidity arises and believe that the composition of the portfolio offers needed flexibility in managing Southwest's liquidity position and interest rate sensitivity without adversely impacting Southwest's regulatory capital levels. Securities available for sale are reported at fair value with unrealized gains or losses reported as a separate component of other comprehensive income, net of related deferred income taxes.

Purchase premiums and discounts are recognized in income using the interest method over the terms of the securities.

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The following table summarizes the amortized cost and fair value of securities available for sale as of September 30, 2017, and December 31, 2016 and 2015.

	September 30, 2017 (unaudited)			December 31, 2016			December 31, 2015	
	Amortized Cost	Fair Value	Percent of Total	Amortized Cost	Fair Value	Percent of Total	Amortized Cost	Fair Value
(dollars in thousands)								
Securities Available for Sale:								
U.S. Government sponsored agencies	\$ 19,629	\$ 19,441	24.7%	\$ 17,880	\$ 17,450	25.8%	\$ 22,318	\$ 22,125
State and municipal securities	38,293	38,562	48.8%	35,807	35,143	51.8%	32,672	33,431
Mortgage-backed securities	20,989	20,953	26.5%	15,452	15,196	22.4%	17,672	17,548
Corporate bonds	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,000	987
Total securities available for sale	\$ 78,911	\$ 78,956	100.0%	\$ 69,139	\$ 67,789	100.0%	\$ 73,662	\$ 74,091

Securities totaled \$78.96 million at September 30, 2017 which represents a 16.47% increase from the December 31, 2016 total of \$67.79 million. The increase in securities relates to the investment of excess funds from the growth in deposits.

The investment securities portfolio is the second largest component of Southwest's earning assets and represented 20.2% of total assets at September 30, 2017. Southwest has invested a significant portion of its securities portfolio into state and municipal securities to take advantage of the yields offered by this class of securities. Prior to purchase, each investment in municipal securities undergoes a careful evaluation of the credit quality of the issuer. The average yield on the investment securities portfolio for the first nine months of 2017 and for the years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015 was 2.36%, 2.49% and 2.66%, respectively. As of September 30, 2017, Southwest did not have any securities within its securities portfolio from any one issuer with an aggregate book value or market value in excess of 10% of stockholders equity.

The following table shows Southwest's investments' gross unrealized losses and fair value, aggregated by investment category and length of time that individual securities have been in a continuous unrealized loss position, at September 30, 2017:

	Less Than 12 Months			12 Months or More			Total	
	Fair Value	Unrealized Losses	Number of Securities Included	Fair Value	Unrealized Losses	Number of Securities Included	Fair Value	Unrealized Losses
(dollars in thousands)								
(unaudited)								
September 30, 2017								
U.S. government sponsored	\$ 12,924	\$ (235)	8	\$ 974	\$ (8)	1	\$ 13,898	\$ (243)

agencies								
State and municipal securities	2,550	(13)	5	5,907	(283)	12	8,457	(296)
Mortgage-backed securities	7,151	(46)	8	2,515	(52)	3	9,666	(98)
Total temporarily impaired securities	\$ 22,625	\$ (294)	21	\$ 9,396	\$ (343)	16	\$ 32,021	\$ (637)

The following table shows Southwest's investments' gross unrealized losses and fair value, aggregated by investment category and length of time that individual securities have been in a continuous unrealized loss position, at December 31, 2016:

	Less Than 12 Months		Number of Securities Included	12 Months or More		Number of Securities Included	Total	
	Fair Value	Unrealized Losses		Fair Value	Unrealized Losses		Fair Value	Unrealized Losses
(dollars in thousands)								
December 31, 2016								
U.S. government sponsored agencies	\$ 15,654	\$ (415)	10	\$ 992	\$ (23)	1	\$ 16,646	\$ (438)
State and municipal securities	20,862	(854)	41	—	—	—	20,862	(854)
Mortgage-backed securities	10,823	(303)	10	1,724	(1)	1	12,547	(304)
Total temporarily impaired securities	\$ 47,339	\$ (1,572)	61	\$ 2,716	\$ (24)	2	\$ 50,055	\$ (1,596)



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The following table shows Southwest's investments' gross unrealized losses and fair value, aggregated by investment category and length of time that individual securities have been in a continuous unrealized loss position, at December 31, 2015:

	Less Than 12 Months			12 Months or More			Total	
	Fair Value	Unrealized Losses	Number of Securities Included	Fair Value	Unrealized Losses	Number of Securities Included	Fair Value	Unrealized Losses
(dollars in thousands)								
December 31, 2015								
U.S. government sponsored agencies	\$ 4,418	\$ (76)	3	\$ 10,747	\$ (175)	6	\$ 15,165	\$ (251)
State and municipal securities	497	(7)	1	—	—	—	497	(7)
Mortgage-backed securities	10,422	(97)	6	3,679	(100)	3	14,101	(197)
Corporate securities	987	(13)	1	—	—	—	987	(13)
Total temporarily impaired securities	\$ 16,324	\$ (193)	11	\$ 14,426	\$ (275)	9	\$ 30,750	\$ (468)

Southwest's investment securities are considered high quality investments in line with normal industry investing practices. The unrealized losses are primarily the result of changes in the interest rate and sector environments. Consistent with the original classification as available-for-sale securities, Southwest does not intend to sell any of the debt securities with unrealized losses and Southwest does not believe that it is more likely than not that Southwest will be required to sell a security in an unrealized loss position prior to a recovery in its value. Accordingly, Southwest has not recognized any other-than-temporary impairment in its consolidated statements of income. Southwest may sell the above or other securities in the ordinary course of business in response to unexpected and significant changes in liquidity needs, unexpected and significant increases in interest rates and/or sector spreads that significantly extend the security's holding period.

The following table presents the amortized cost, fair value and weighted average yield for each major category of the investment portfolio by contractual maturity range as of September 30, 2017.

	Contractual Maturities								
	Less Than 1 Year			After 1 Year Through 5 Years			After 5 Years Through 10 Years		
	Amortized Cost	Fair Value	Weighted Average Yield	Amortized Cost	Fair Value	Weighted Average Yield	Amortized Cost	Fair Value	Weighted Average Yield
(dollars in thousands)									
(unaudited)									
Securities available for sale	\$ —	\$ —	—	\$ 2,107	\$ 2,092	2.25%	\$ 6,147	\$ 6,038	2.31%

U.S. Government sponsored agencies									
State and municipal securities(1)	—	—	—	6,031	6,077	3.59%	8,473	8,597	2.93%
Mortgage backed securities	—	—	—	—	—	—	1,667	1,656	3.00%
Total securities available for sale	\$ —	\$ —	—	\$ 8,138	\$ 8,169	3.25%	\$ 16,287	\$ 16,291	2.71%

## Contractual Maturities

## After 10 Years

## Totals

	Amortized Cost	Fair Value	Weighted Average Yield	Amortized Cost	Fair Value	Weighted Average Yield
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(dollars in thousands)  
(unaudited)

Securities available for sale						
U.S. Government sponsored agencies	\$ 11,375	\$ 11,311	2.84%	\$ 19,629	\$ 19,441	2.61%
State and municipal securities(1)	23,789	23,888	3.8%	38,293	38,562	3.57%
Mortgage-backed securities	19,322	19,297	2.90%	20,989	20,953	2.91%
Total securities available for sale	\$ 54,486	\$ 54,496	3.28%	\$ 78,911	\$ 78,956	3.16%

(1)  
Yields are not presented on a fully taxable equivalent basis.

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## Loans

Essentially all of Southwest's loans originate from the Southwestern portion of Alabama. Southwest seeks to exercise prudent risk management in lending, including diversification by loan category and industry segment, as well as by identification of credit risks. Management is also sensitive, despite this diversification by loan category and industry segment, to the risks associated with Southwest's geographic loan concentration in the southwest Alabama region. Southwest has targeted commercial business lending, commercial and residential real estate lending and consumer lending. Southwest seeks to build a loan portfolio which is capable of adjusting to swings in the interest rate market, and it is Southwest's policy to maintain a diverse loan portfolio not dependent on any particular market or industry segment. At September 30, 2017, December 31, 2016 and December 31, 2015, Southwest's loan-to-deposit ratio was 82.61%, 84.54% and 84.78%, respectively.

Loans are the largest component of Southwest's assets and are the primary source of income. The loan portfolio is composed of three primary segments: real estate mortgage loans, non-real estate commercial loans and non-real estate consumer loans. Within the real estate loan segment, Southwest further segregates by loan classes of construction and land development, 1-4 family residential real estate, home equity lines of credit, commercial real estate and other real estate. The table below sets forth the loan categories and the relative percentages of these loan categories in the portfolio at September 30, 2017 and December 31, 2016 and 2015.

## Portfolio Segments and Classes

The composition of loans, excluding loans held for sale, is summarized as follows:

	September 30, 2017		December 31, 2016		December 31, 2015	
	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent	Amount	Percent
	(unaudited)					
	(dollars in thousands)					
Real estate mortgages:						
Construction and land development	\$ 33,936	11.9%	\$ 29,724	10.7%	\$ 24,032	9.8%
1 – 4 family residential	50,036	17.6%	48,792	17.6%	47,228	19.2%
Home equity lines of credit	14,974	5.3%	14,690	5.3%	13,607	5.5%
Commercial	105,714	37.1%	104,459	37.7%	96,585	39.3%
Other	17,537	6.1%	12,902	4.7%	13,749	5.6%
Commercial	50,058	17.6%	53,615	19.4%	39,227	16.0%
Consumer and other	12,813	4.4%	12,851	4.6%	11,189	4.6%
	285,068	100.00%	277,033	100.00%	245,617	100.00%
Deferred loan fees	—		—		—	
Allowance for loan losses	(3,451)		(3,092)		(2,964)	
Loans, net	\$ 281,617		\$ 273,941		\$ 242,653	

As represented in the table, gross loans increased by approximately 2.9% during the first nine months of 2017. Southwest experienced growth in real estate loans, with increases in commercial real estate loans (1.2%), construction and land development loans (14.2%), residential real estate loans (2.5%), and other real estate loans, which are loans primarily secured by multi-family housing (35.9%).

At September 30, 2017, real estate loans accounted for 78.0% of total loans. Accordingly, Southwest has a significant concentration of credit that is dependent on the continuing strength of the local real estate market. Management is focused on making loans in an orderly fashion to maintain quality, especially considering the economic impact of the recession several years ago.

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The repayment of loans is a source of additional liquidity for Southwest. The following table sets forth the loans maturing within specific intervals at September 30, 2017.

	One Year or Less	One to Five Years	Over Five Years	Total
	(dollars in thousands)			
	(unaudited)			
Real estate mortgages:				
Construction and land development	\$ 15,584	\$ 14,013	\$ 4,339	\$ 33,936
1 – 4 family residential	7,661	32,354	10,021	50,036
Home equity lines of credit	3,987	1,127	9,860	14,974
Commercial	13,218	55,313	37,183	105,714
Other	2,868	10,698	3,971	17,537
Commercial	8,304	19,296	22,458	50,058
Consumer and other	1,686	8,374	2,753	12,813
Total	\$ 53,308	\$ 141,175	90,585	\$ 285,068

The information presented in the above table is based upon the contractual maturities of the individual loans, including loans which may be subject to renewal at their contractual maturity. Renewal of such loans is subject to review and credit approval, as well as modification of terms upon their maturity.

As of September 30, 2017, Southwest has loans due after one year with predetermined interest rates totaling \$190.98 million and loans due after one year with floating or adjustable interest rates totaling \$40.78 million.

Allowance for Loan Losses

There are risks inherent in all loans, so Southwest maintains an allowance for loan losses to absorb probable losses on existing loans that may become uncollectible. Southwest establishes and maintains this allowance by charging a provision for loan losses against its operating earnings. In the following section, Southwest has included a discussion of this process, as well as several tables describing Southwest's allowance for loan losses and the allocation of this allowance among Southwest's various categories of loans.

Southwest follows the provisions of ASC 310-10 and ASC 310-40 related to impaired loans. A loan is impaired when it is probable that Southwest will be unable to collect the scheduled payments of principal and interest due under the contractual terms of the loan agreement. Impaired loans are measured at the present value of expected future cash flows discounted at the loan's effective interest rate, at the loan's observable market price, or the fair value of the collateral if the loan is collateral dependent. If the measure of the impaired loan is less than the recorded investment in the loan, Southwest shall recognize an impairment by creating a valuation allowance with a corresponding charge to the provision for loan losses or by adjusting an existing valuation allowance for the impaired loan with a corresponding charge or credit to the provision for loan losses.

Southwest considers all loans subject to the provisions of ASC 310-10 and ASC 310-40 that are on nonaccrual status to be impaired. Loans are placed on nonaccrual status when in doubt as to timely collection of principal or interest exists, or when principal or interest is past due 90 days or more unless such loans are well-secured and in the process of collection. Delays or shortfalls in loan payments are evaluated with various other factors to determine if a loan is impaired. Generally, delinquencies under 90 days are considered insignificant unless certain other factors are present which indicate impairment is probable. The decision to place a loan on nonaccrual status is also based on an evaluation of the borrower's financial condition, collateral, liquidation value, and other factors that affect the borrower's ability to pay.

Generally, at the time a loan is placed on nonaccrual status, all interest accrued and uncollected on the loan in the current fiscal year is reversed from income, and all interest accrued and uncollected from the prior year is charged off against the allowance for loan losses. Thereafter, interest on nonaccrual loans is recognized as interest income only to the extent that cash is received and future collection of principal is not



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in doubt. If the collectability of outstanding principal is doubtful, such interest received is applied as a reduction of principal. A nonaccrual loan may be restored to accruing status when principal and interest is no longer past due and unpaid and future collection of principal and interest on a timely basis is not in doubt. At September 30, 2017, there were 16 non-accrual loans totaling \$4.47 million, and there were 23 non-accrual loans totaling \$5.73 million at December 31, 2016.

Other loans may be classified as impaired when the current net worth and financial capacity of the borrower or the collateral pledged, if any, is viewed as inadequate. In those cases, such loans have a well-defined weakness or weaknesses that jeopardize the liquidation of the debt, and if such deficiencies are not corrected, there is a probability that Southwest will sustain some loss. In such cases, interest income continues to accrue as long as the loan does not meet Southwest's criteria for nonaccrual status.

Generally, Southwest also classifies as impaired any loans that the terms of which have been modified in a troubled debt restructuring. Interest is accrued on such loans that continue to meet the modified terms of their loan agreements. As of September 30, 2017, Southwest had 15 loans that have had their terms modified in a troubled debt restructuring, and at December 31, 2016, Southwest had 13 such loans. Troubled debt restructurings are discussed in more detail later in under the heading "Troubled Debt Restructurings".

Southwest Bank's charge-off policy for impaired loans is similar to its charge-off policy for all loans in that loans are charged-off in the month when they are considered uncollectible.

The average recorded investment in impaired loans for September 30, 2017 and December 31, 2016 was \$7.27 million and \$8.16 million, respectively. The related total amount of interest income recognized for the period that such loans were impaired was \$109 thousand for the first nine months of 2017, which compares with \$104 thousand for the same period in 2016. Southwest's level of impaired loans decreased over the nine months, from \$8.16 million at December 31, 2016 to \$7.03 million at September 30, 2017, the majority of the change is a result of pay downs on existing impaired loans in 2017 and the payoff or improvement of and subsequent removal of impaired loans greater than \$250 thousand of approximately \$1.00 million. Southwest's management believes that existing loan loss reserves are adequate to absorb potential losses that may occur in these segments of the portfolio.

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The following table details activity in the allowance for loan losses for the nine months ended September 30, 2017 and 2016 and years ended December 31, 2016 and 2015.

	Nine Months Ended		Years Ended	
	September 30, 2017	September 30, 2016	December 31, 2016	December 31, 2015
	(unaudited)			
	(dollars in thousands)			
Allowance for loan losses at beginning of period	\$ 3,092	\$ 2,964	\$ 2,964	\$ 2,872
Charge-offs:				
Real estate mortgages:				
Construction and land development	—	—	—	—
1 – 4 family residential	—	—	—	35
Home equity lines of credit	13	42	42	73
Commercial	33	—	60	—
Other	—	—	—	244
Total real estate mortgages	46	42	102	352
Commercial	—	71	71	12
Consumer and other	52	61	82	79
Total	98	174	255	443
Recoveries:				
Real estate mortgages:				
Construction and land development	14	19	25	28
1 – 4 family residential	—	1	1	—
Home equity lines of credit	—	5	5	—
Commercial	40	22	23	22
Other	—	—	—	1
Total real estate mortgages	54	47	54	51
Commercial	—	—	—	59
Consumer and other	20	16	26	29
Total	74	63	80	139
Net Charge-offs (recoveries)	24	111	175	304
Provision for loan losses	383	303	303	396
Allowance for loan losses at end of period	\$ 3,451	\$ 3,156	\$ 3,092	\$ 2,964
Ratio of net charge-offs during the period to average loans outstanding (annualized)	0.01%	0.06%	0.07%	0.13%

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The following table details the allocation of the allowance for loan losses to each portfolio segment and class of loans as of September 30, 2017, December 31, 2016 and 2015. Allocation of a portion of the allowance to one category of loans does not preclude its availability to absorb losses in other categories.

	September 30, 2017		December 31, 2016		December 31, 2015	
	Amount	Percent of loans in each category to total loans	Amount	Percent of loans in each category to total loans	Amount	Percent of loans in each category to total loans
(unaudited)						
(dollars in thousands)						
Real estate mortgages:						
Construction and land development	\$ 183	11.9%	\$ 129	10.7%	\$ 552	9.8%
1 – 4 family residential	288	17.6%	321	17.6%	331	19.2%
Home equity lines of credit	127	5.3%	153	5.3%	164	5.5%
Commercial	1,502	37.1%	1,083	37.7%	690	39.3%
Other	327	6.1%	173	4.7%	122	5.6%
Total real estate mortgages	2,427	78.0%	1,859	76.0%	1,859	79.4%
Commercial	897	17.6%	1,036	19.4%	1,023	16.0%
Consumer and other	127	4.4%	197	4.6%	82	4.6%
Total	\$ 3,451	100.0%	\$ 3,092	100.0%	\$ 2,964	100.0%

**Credit Risk Management**

Credit administration and the special assets manager are both involved in the credit risk management process and assess the accuracy of risk ratings, the quality of the portfolio and the estimation of inherent credit losses in the loan portfolio. This comprehensive process also assists in the prompt identification of problem credits. Southwest has taken a number of measures to manage the portfolios and reduce risk, particularly in the more problematic portfolios.

Southwest employs a credit risk management process with defined policies, accountability and routine reporting to manage credit risk in the loan portfolio segments. Credit risk management is guided by a comprehensive loan policy that provides for a consistent and prudent approach to underwriting and approval of credit. Within the board approved Loan Policy, procedures exist that elevate the approval requirements as credits become larger and more complex. All loans are individually underwritten, risk-rated, approved, and monitored.

Responsibility and accountability for adherence to underwriting policies and accurate risk ratings lies in each portfolio segment. For the consumer portfolio segment, the risk management process focuses on managing customers who become delinquent in their payments. For the commercial and real estate portfolio segments, the risk management process focuses on underwriting new business and, on an ongoing basis, monitoring the credit of the portfolios. Loan review and credit administration establish a timely schedule and scope for loan reviews. These reviews ensure such loans have proper risk ratings and accrual status, and if necessary, ensure loans are transferred to the special assets manager.

Credit quality and trends in the loan portfolio segments are measured and monitored regularly. Detailed reports, by product, collateral, accrual status, etc., are reviewed, on a quarterly basis, by the chief credit officer, the officers loan committee, and the directors loan committee.

The following categories are utilized by management to analyze and manage the credit quality and risk of the loan portfolio:

- Pass — includes obligations where the probability of default is considered low.



- Special Mention — includes obligations that exhibit potential credit weaknesses or downward trends deserving management's close attention. If left uncorrected, these potential weaknesses may

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result in the deterioration of the repayment prospects or credit position at a future date. These loans are not adversely classified and do not expose Southwest to sufficient risk to warrant adverse classification.

- Substandard — includes obligations with defined weaknesses that jeopardize the orderly liquidation of debt. A substandard loan is inadequately protected by the current sound worth and paying capacity of the borrower or by the collateral pledged, if any. Normal repayment from the borrower is in jeopardy although no loss of principal is envisioned. There is a distinct possibility that a partial loss of interest and/or principal will occur if the deficiencies are not corrected. Loss potential, while existing in the aggregate amount of substandard loans, does not have to exist in individual loans classified substandard.

- Doubtful — includes obligations with all the weaknesses found in substandard loans with the added provision that the weaknesses make collection of debt in full, based on currently existing facts, conditions, and values, highly questionable and improbable. Serious problems exist to the point where partial loss of principal is likely. The possibility of loss is extremely high, but because of certain important, reasonably specific pending factors that may work to strengthen the loan, the loans' classification as loss is deferred until a more exact status may be determined.

- Loss — includes obligations incapable of repayment. Such loans are considered uncollectible and of such little value, that continuance as an active asset is not warranted. Loans determined to be a loss are charged-off at the date of loss determination. Consequently, there are no loans with a loss rating in Southwest's portfolio as of September 30, 2017, December 31, 2016 and 2015 as all such loans have been charged-off.

At September 30, 2017 and December 31, 2016, there were \$14.61 million and \$17.58 million, respectively, in loans included on Southwest's internal "watch" list, or loans graded special mention, substandard or doubtful. Loans are identified for inclusion on the watch list when information obtained about changes or uncertainties that may affect a borrower's financial condition have prompted management to more closely monitor the ability of the borrower to comply with the agreed upon repayment terms of the loan agreement. The resulting loan classifications could represent trends or uncertainties which management expects may impact future operating results, liquidity or capital resources.

The following table breaks down Southwest's credit quality indicators by type of loan as of September 30, 2017:

	Pass	Special Mention	Substandard	Doubtful	Total
	(dollars in thousands)				
	(unaudited)				
September 30, 2017					
Real estate mortgages:					
Construction and land development	\$ 32,336	\$ 727	\$ 873	\$ —	\$ 33,936
1 – 4 family residential	48,331	1,055	650	—	50,036
Home equity lines of credit	14,237	416	321	—	14,974
Commercial	101,985	811	2,918	—	105,714
Other	17,130	267	140	—	17,537
Commercial	43,941	3,393	2,724	—	50,058
Consumer and other	12,495	21	297	—	12,813
Total:	\$ 270,455	\$ 6,690	\$ 7,923	\$ —	\$ 285,068



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The following table breaks down Southwest's credit quality indicators by type of loan as of December 31, 2016:

	Pass	Special Mention	Substandard	Doubtful	Total
(dollars in thousands)					
December 31, 2016					
Real estate mortgages:					
Construction and land development	\$ 28,388	\$ 271	\$ 1,065	\$ —	\$ 29,724
1 – 4 family residential	46,155	1,547	1,090	—	48,792
Home equity lines of credit	13,755	473	402	60	14,690
Commercial	98,815	2,313	3,331	—	104,459
Other	12,834	—	68	—	12,902
Commercial	46,981	4,392	2,242	—	53,615
Consumer and other	12,521	8	322	—	12,851
Total:	\$ 259,449	\$ 9,004	\$ 8,520	\$ 60	\$ 277,033

The following table breaks down Southwest's credit quality indicators by type of loan as of December 31, 2015:

	Pass	Special Mention	Substandard	Doubtful	Total
(dollars in thousands)					
December 31, 2015					
Real estate mortgages:					
Construction and land development	\$ 22,439	\$ 92	\$ 1,501	\$ —	\$ 24,032
1 – 4 family residential	44,245	1,573	1,410	—	47,228
Home equity lines of credit	12,938	327	279	63	13,607
Commercial	90,473	2,994	3,118	—	96,585
Other	13,506	156	87	—	13,749
Commercial	33,682	33	5,512	—	39,227
Consumer and other	10,778	49	362	—	11,189
Total:	\$ 228,061	\$ 5,224	\$ 12,269	\$ 63	\$ 245,617

**Past Due Loans**

A loan is considered past due if any required principal and interest payments have not been received as of the date such payments were required to be made under the terms of the loan agreement. Generally, management places loans on non-accrual when there is a clear indication that the borrower's cash flow may not be sufficient to meet payments as they become due, which is generally when a loan is 90 days past due. As of September 30, 2017, December 31, 2016 and December 31, 2015, Southwest's past due loans, including loans on nonaccrual status, were 1.72%, 2.20% and 2.86%, of total loans outstanding for each respective period. Management pursues all avenues of collection regarding its past due loans and loan officers review the status of past due loans weekly and report to the board monthly.

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The following table provides an aging analysis of Southwest's past due loans as of September 30, 2017:

Past Due Status (Accruing Loans)							
	Current	30 – 59 Days	60 – 89 Days	90+ Days	Total Past Due	Nonaccrual	Total
(dollars in thousands) (unaudited)							
September 30, 2017							
Real estate mortgages:							
Construction and land development	\$ 33,747	\$ 189	\$ —	\$ —	\$ 189	\$ —	\$ 33,936
1 – 4 family residential	49,420	38	—	—	38	578	50,036
Home equity lines of credit	14,768	—	—	—	—	206	14,974
Commercial	104,236	54	—	34	88	1,390	105,714
Other	17,516	—	—	—	—	21	17,537
Commercial	47,957	96	—	—	96	2,005	50,058
Consumer and other	12,509	—	35	—	35	269	12,813
Total:	\$ 280,153	\$ 377	\$ 35	\$ 34	\$ 446	\$ 4,469	\$ 285,068

The following table provides an aging analysis of Southwest's past due loans as of December 31, 2016:

Past Due Status (Accruing Loans)							
	Current	30 – 59 Days	60 – 89 Days	90+ Days	Total Past Due	Nonaccrual	Total
(dollars in thousands)							
December 31, 2016							
Real estate mortgages:							
Construction and land development	\$ 29,724	\$ —	\$ —	\$ —	\$ —	\$ —	\$ 29,724
1 – 4 family residential	47,739	159	28	—	187	866	48,792
Home equity lines of credit	14,345	—	—	—	—	345	14,690
Commercial	102,385	—	—	53	53	2,021	104,459
Other	12,863	—	—	—	—	39	12,902
Commercial	51,368	65	20	—	85	2,162	53,615
Consumer and other	12,526	27	—	6	33	292	12,851
Total:	\$ 270,950	\$ 251	\$ 48	\$ 59	\$ 358	\$ 5,725	\$ 277,033

The following table provides an aging analysis of Southwest's past due loans as of December 31, 2015:

Past Due Status (Accruing Loans)							
	Current	30 – 59 Days	60 – 89 Days	90+ Days	Total Past Due	Nonaccrual	Total

(dollars in thousands)

December 31, 2015

Real estate mortgages:

Construction and land development	\$ 23,661	\$ 111	\$ —	\$ 33	\$ 144	\$ 227	\$ 24,032
1 – 4 family residential	45,705	433	153	37	623	900	47,228
Home equity lines of credit	13,318	37	—	—	37	252	13,607
Commercial	94,845	—	47	—	47	1,693	96,585
Other	13,662	—	31	—	31	56	13,749
Commercial	36,661	24	—	53	77	2,489	39,227
Consumer and other	10,743	110	3	—	113	333	11,189
Total:	\$ 238,595	\$ 715	\$ 234	\$ 123	\$ 1,072	\$ 5,950	\$ 245,617

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## Troubled Debt Restructurings

Southwest's loan portfolio includes certain loans that have been modified in a troubled debt restructuring (TDR), where economic concessions have been granted to borrowers who have experienced, or are expected to experience, financial difficulties. These concessions typically result from Southwest's loss mitigation activities and could include reductions in the interest rate, payment extensions, forgiveness of principal, forbearance or other actions. Certain TDRs are classified as nonperforming at the time of restructure and may only be returned to performing status after considering the borrower's sustained repayment performance for a reasonable period, generally six months. Some loan modifications classified as TDRs may not ultimately result in the full collection of principal and interest, as modified, and result in potential incremental losses. These potential incremental losses have been factored into the overall allowance for loan losses estimate. The level of any re-defaults will likely be affected by future economic conditions. Once a loan becomes a TDR, it will continue to be reported as a TDR until it is repaid in full, reclassified to loans held for sale, foreclosed, charged off, sold, or it meets both of the following criteria to be removed from TDR status: (1) the restructuring agreement specifies an interest rate equal to or greater than the rate that the borrower was willing to accept at the time of the restructuring for a new loan with comparable risk; and (2) the loan is not impaired based on the terms specified by the restructuring agreement. During the nine months ended September 30, 2017, there were three loans totaling \$654 thousand added to Southwest's list of TDRs. During the year ended December 31, 2016, there was one loan totaling \$73 thousand added to Southwest's list of TDRs. During the year ended December 31, 2015, there were three loans totaling \$456 thousand added to Southwest's list of TDRs. The following table summarizes the carrying balances of TDRs at September 30, 2017 and 2016 and December 31, 2016 and 2015:

	September 30, 2017	September 30, 2016	December 31, 2016	December 31, 2015
	(unaudited)			
	(dollars in thousands)			
Performing TDRs	\$ 1,345	\$ 1,117	\$ 1,072	\$ 1,188
Nonperforming TDRs(1)	1,969	2,154	2,126	2,403
Total TDRs	\$ 3,314	\$ 3,271	\$ 3,198	\$ 3,591

(1)

Included in nonaccrual loan totals in the nonperforming asset table below.

## Nonperforming Assets

	September 30, 2017	September 30, 2016	December 31, 2016	December 31, 2015
	(unaudited)			
	(dollars in thousands)			
Nonaccrual loans	\$ 4,469	\$ 5,895	\$ 5,725	\$ 5,950
Restructured loans	3,314	3,271	3,198	3,591
Accruing loans past due 90 days or more	34	105	59	123
Total nonperforming loans	7,817	9,271	8,982	9,664
Other real estate owned	298	404	485	972
Total nonperforming assets	\$ 8,115	\$ 9,675	\$ 9,467	\$ 10,636
Allowance for loan losses to period end loans	1.21%	1.15%	1.12%	1.21%
	44.15%	34.04%	34.42%	30.67%

Allowance for loan losses to period end nonperforming  
loans

Nonperforming assets to period end loans and other real estate owned	2.84%	3.53%	3.41%	4.31%
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Nonperforming loans to period end loans	2.74%	3.39%	3.24%	3.93%
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## Deposits

Deposits are the principal source of funds for Southwest. Total deposits were \$345.08 million and \$327.68 million at September 30, 2017 and December 31, 2016, respectively, representing an increase of 5.31%. Historically, Southwest has targeted local consumers, professionals and commercial businesses as its central customers; therefore, deposit instruments in the form of demand deposits, savings accounts, money market demand accounts, certificates of deposit and individual retirement accounts are offered to customers. Management believes Mobile County and the surrounding area is a stable economic market offering growth opportunities for Southwest; however, Southwest competes with several of the larger bank holding companies that have bank offices in this area, as well as other community banks, and therefore, no assurances of market growth can be given. Even though Southwest is in a very competitive market, management currently believes that its market share will be expanded.

Noninterest-bearing demand deposits increased 17.98% from \$56.93 million at December 31, 2016 to \$67.17 million at September 30, 2017. Total interest-bearing deposits increased 2.64% from \$270.75 million at December 31, 2016 to \$277.90 million at September 30, 2017 primarily as a result from an increase in money market accounts. These increases reflect management's ongoing efforts to emphasize growth in the core deposit base.

The table below sets forth the total balances of deposits by type as of September 30, 2017, and December 31, 2016 and 2015, and the percent change in balances over the intervening period:

	September 30, 2017			December 31, 2016			December 31, 2015		
	Amount	Percent of Total	Average Rate Paid	Amount	Percent of Total	Average Rate Paid	Amount	Percent of Total	Average Rate Paid
	(unaudited)								
	(dollars in thousands)								
Non-interest bearing demand	\$ 67,173	19.5%	0.00%	\$ 56,934	17.4%	0.00%	\$ 53,821	18.6%	
Interest bearing demand	62,619	18.1%	0.26%	64,730	19.8%	0.29%	51,728	17.9%	
Money market accounts	84,531	24.5%	0.45%	71,656	21.9%	0.39%	66,313	22.9%	
Savings deposits	37,394	10.8%	0.07%	34,895	10.6%	0.06%	31,414	10.8%	
Time certificates of \$250 or more	21,204	6.2%	1.15%	20,118	6.1%	1.11%	11,608	4.0%	
Other time certificates	72,154	20.9%	1.09%	79,346	24.2%	0.87%	74,836	25.8%	
Total	\$ 345,075	100.0%	0.60%	\$ 327,679	100.0%	0.57%	\$ 289,720	100.0%	

The following table presents time certificates of deposits of \$100 thousand, or more, by various maturities as of September 30, 2017 (dollars in thousands).

Three months or less	\$ 4,306
Three through six months	4,651
Six through twelve months	16,517

Over twelve months	27,186
Total	\$ 52,660

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## Return on Equity and Assets

The following table presents certain performance ratios for each reported period.

	As of and for the Nine Months Ended September 30,		As of and for the Year Ended December 31,	
	2017	2016	2016	2015
	(unaudited)			
Return on assets (net income divided by average total assets)(1)	1.02%	0.98%	1.01%	0.90%
Return on equity (net income divided by average equity)(1)	11.70%	10.55%	11.17%	10.24%
Dividend payout ratio (dividends declared per share divided by net income per share)	36.91%	37.10%	33.25%	28.85%
Equity to assets ratio (average equity divided by average total assets)	8.76%	9.28%	9.05%	8.80%

(1)

Ratios have been annualized for interim reporting periods.

## Liquidity

Southwest's management seeks to maximize net interest income by managing Southwest's assets and liabilities within appropriate constraints on capital, liquidity and interest rate risk. Liquidity is the ability to maintain sufficient cash levels necessary to fund operations, meet the requirements of depositors and borrowers, and fund attractive investment opportunities. Southwest's primary source of liquidity is expected to be a stable core deposit base. In addition, short-term investments, loan payments and investment security maturities provide a secondary source. Higher levels of liquidity bear corresponding costs, measured in terms of lower yields on short-term more liquid earning assets and higher interest expense involved in extending liability maturities.

Southwest maintains a formal asset and liability management process to quantify, monitor and control interest rate risk and to assist management in maintaining stability in the net interest margin under varying interest rate environments. Southwest accomplishes this process through the development and implementation of lending, funding and pricing strategies designed to maximize net interest income under varying interest rate environments subject to specific liquidity and interest rate risk guidelines.

Southwest's securities portfolio consists of earning assets that provide interest income. Securities classified as available-for-sale include securities intended to be used as part of Southwest's asset/liability strategy and/or securities that may be sold in response to changes in interest rate, prepayment risk, the need or desire to increase capital and similar economic factors. Securities totaling \$0 mature within the next 12 months.

A secondary source of liquidity is Southwest's loan portfolio. At September 30, 2017, loans of approximately \$53.31 million will become due within 12 months.

As for liabilities, certificates of deposit of \$100 thousand or greater of approximately \$25.47 million either will become due or will be subject to rate adjustments during the next 12 months. Management does not anticipate that there will be significant reductions from deposit accounts that allow withdrawals, such as negotiable order of withdrawal accounts, money market demand accounts, demand deposits and regular savings accounts in the future.

## Off-Balance Sheet Risk

Southwest is a party to financial instruments with off-balance sheet risk in the normal course of business to meet the financing needs of its customers. These financial instruments include commitments to extend credit and letters of credit. They involve, to varying degrees, elements of credit risk and interest rate risk in excess of the amount recognized in the balance sheets. The majority of all commitments to extend credit are variable rate instruments.

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Southwest's exposure to credit loss in the event of nonperformance by the other party to the financial instrument for commitments to extend credit is represented by the contractual amount of those instruments. Southwest uses the same credit policies in making commitments as it does for on-balance sheet instruments. A summary of commitments is as follows for each period end:

	September 30, 2017	December 31, 2016	December 31, 2015
	(unaudited)		
	(dollars in thousands)		
Commitments to extend credit	\$ 43,911	\$ 40,280	\$ 38,503
Letters of credit	1,167	1,270	749
	\$ 45,078	\$ 41,550	\$ 39,252

Available Funding

If needed to fund these outstanding commitments, in addition to its available cash, Southwest has the ability to liquidate securities available-for-sale or borrow additional funds from the Federal Home Loan Bank or purchase Federal funds from other financial institutions. Additionally, Southwest could sell participations in these or other loans to correspondent banks. As mentioned above, Southwest has been able to fund its ongoing liquidity needs through its stable core deposit base, loan payments, its investment security maturities and short-term borrowings. As of September 30, 2017, Southwest has accommodations with the Federal Home Loan Bank and other financial institutions that would allow the borrowing of an additional \$46.56 million of funding under these arrangements.

Contractual Obligations

While Southwest's liquidity monitoring and management considers both present and future demands for and sources of liquidity, the following table of contractual commitments focuses only on future obligations as of September 30, 2017.

	Due in 1 Year or Less	Due After 1 Through 3 Years	Due After 3 Through 5 Years	Due After 5 Years	Total
	(dollars in thousands)				
	(unaudited)				
Other borrowings	\$ 5,000	\$ 1,858	\$ —	\$ —	\$ 6,858
Certificates of deposit of less than \$100	22,092	13,136	5,469	—	40,697
Certificates of deposit of \$100 or more	25,474	16,945	10,241	—	52,660
Commitment to acquire property	2,390	—	—	—	2,390
Operating leases	19	9			28
Total contractual obligations	\$ 54,975	\$ 31,948	\$ 15,710	\$ 0	\$ 102,633

Capital Position and Dividends

At September 30, 2017, December 31, 2016 and December 31, 2015, total stockholders' equity was \$36.82 million and \$33.63 million and \$32.84 million or 9.40%, 8.93% and 9.57%, respectively, of total assets. The increases in stockholder's equity each year primarily relate to earnings, less dividends paid, and changes in accumulated other comprehensive income which is composed of changes in net unrealized gains and losses on Southwest's available for sale securities portfolio. During the year ended December 31, 2016 and 2015, dividends were paid at a rate of \$17.00 and \$12.27 per common share, respectively. During the nine months ended September 30, 2017 and 2016, dividends were paid at a rate of \$15.50 and \$13.00 per common share, respectively.

Because Southwest qualifies as a Small Bank Holding Company under the Federal Reserve Board's Small Bank Holding Company Policy Statement, the capital position of the Bank, and not the consolidated company, is measured for regulatory capital adequacy.



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The Bank is subject to various regulatory capital requirements administered by the federal banking agencies. Failure to meet minimum capital requirements can initiate certain mandatory, and possibly additional discretionary actions by regulators that, if undertaken, could have a direct material effect on the financial statements. Under capital adequacy guidelines and the regulatory framework for prompt corrective action, the Bank must meet specific capital guidelines that involve quantitative measures of the Bank's assets, liabilities and certain off-balance sheet items as calculated under regulatory accounting practices. Capital amounts and classification are also subject to qualitative judgments by the regulators about components, risk weightings and other factors.

The Bank is considered well-capitalized based on its regulatory capital ratios. The Bank's capital ratios have been enhanced as capital has been raised through earnings and as a result of repositioning the balance sheet. As the Bank's assets increase, its capital ratios can be expected to decline, but not below the well-capitalized level established by the regulatory agencies.

The table below sets forth the Bank's capital ratios as of the periods indicated.

	Actual		For Capital Adequacy Purposes(1)		To Be Well Capitalized Under Prompt Corrective Action Provisions	
	Amount	Ratio	Amount	Ratio	Amount	Ratio
(dollars in thousands)						
September 30, 2017 (unaudited):						
Total Capital to Risk Weighted Assets	\$ 41,786	14.534%	\$ 26,593	9.250%	\$ 28,750	10.000%
Tier I Capital to Risk Weighted Assets	\$ 38,336	13.334%	\$ 20,844	7.250%	\$ 23,000	8.000%
Common Equity Tier 1 to Risk Weighted Assets	\$ 38,336	13.334%	\$ 16,531	5.750%	\$ 18,687	6.500%
Tier I Capital to Average Total Assets	\$ 38,336	9.798%	\$ 15,651	4.000%	\$ 19,564	5.000%
December 31, 2016:						
Total Capital to Risk Weighted Assets	\$ 40,234	14.159%	\$ 24,509	8.625%	\$ 28,416	10.000%
Tier I Capital to Risk Weighted Assets	\$ 37,143	13.071%	\$ 18,826	6.625%	\$ 22,733	8.000%
Common Equity Tier 1 to Risk Weighted Assets	\$ 37,143	13.071%	\$ 14,563	5.125%	\$ 18,470	6.500%
Tier I Capital to Average Total Assets	\$ 37,143	10.080%	\$ 14,739	4.000%	\$ 18,424	5.000%
December 31, 2015:						
Total Capital to Risk Weighted Assets	\$ 38,389	15.360%	\$ 19,991	8.000%	\$ 24,988	10.000%
Tier I Capital to Risk Weighted Assets	\$ 35,426	14.180%	\$ 14,993	6.000%	\$ 19,991	8.000%
Common Equity Tier 1 to Risk Weighted Assets	\$ 35,426	14.180%	\$ 11,245	4.500%	\$ 16,242	6.500%
Tier I Capital to Average Total Assets	\$ 35,426	10.390%	\$ 13,643	4.000%	\$ 17,054	5.000%

(1)

Includes the phase-in of the capital conservation buffer under Basel III.

In December 2010, the Basel Committee on Bank Supervision (“BCBS”) finalized a set of international guidelines for determining regulatory capital known as “Basel III.” In July 2015, the federal bank regulators approved final regulatory capital rules implementing BCBS’s December 2010 capital framework as well as certain provisions of the Dodd-Frank Act. The new capital rules under Basel III also substantially revise the risk-based capital requirements applicable to banking institutions as compared to the general risk-based capital rules now in effect. The new capital rules revise the components of capital and address other issues affecting the numerator in regulatory capital ratios. The new capital rules also address asset risk weights and other issues affecting the denominator in regulatory capital ratios and replace the existing general risk-weighting approach. The new capital rules were effective for the Bank on January 1, 2015 (subject to a phase-in period).

The new capital rules, among other things, (i) introduced a new capital measure called “Common Equity Tier 1” (CET1), (ii) specify that Tier 1 capital consists of CET1 and “Additional Tier 1 capital” instruments meeting certain revised requirements, (iii) define CET1 narrowly by requiring that most

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deductions/adjustments to regulatory capital measures be made to CET1 and not to the other components of capital, and (iv) expand the scope of the deductions/adjustments to capital as compared to existing regulations. The Bank's CET1 consists of its common stock, capital surplus and retained earnings.

The new capital rules also introduced a new capital conservation buffer designed to absorb losses during periods of economic stress. The capital conservation buffer is composed entirely of CET1 on top of the minimum risk-weighted asset ratios and will be subject to phase-in through January 1, 2019. Banking institutions with a ratio of CET1 to risk-weighted assets above the minimum but below the capital conservation buffer will face constraints on dividends, equity repurchases and compensation based on the amount of the shortfall. When fully phased-in on January 1, 2019, the new capital rules will require the Bank to maintain such additional capital conservation buffer of 2.5% of CET1, effectively resulting in minimum ratios of (i) CET1 to risk-weighted assets of at least 7%, (ii) Tier 1 capital to risk-weighted assets of at least 8.5%, and (iii) Total capital to risk-weighted assets of at least 10.5%.

There are statutory, regulatory and prudential limitations on the payment of dividends. Alabama law restricts the amount of dividends that may be paid by the Bank to its holding company, Southwest Banc Shares, Inc. In no event is an Alabama-chartered bank permitted to pay dividends in any calendar year that exceeds the total of its net earnings (as defined by state banking regulations) of that year combined with its retained net earnings of the preceding two years without the prior approval of the Alabama State Banking Department. Prior regulatory approval must be obtained before declaring any dividends if the amount of the Bank's capital and surplus is below certain statutory limits.

Dividends can also be restricted under federal law, and under state safety and soundness considerations, as a result of a declining or inadequate capital level. Future dividends may be paid at the discretion of the board of directors consistent with the regulatory, legal and prudent considerations discussed elsewhere in this document.

**Interest Sensitivity and Market Risk**

Management monitors and manages the pricing and maturity of Southwest's assets and liabilities in order to diminish the potential adverse impact that changes in interest rates could have on net interest income. The principal monitoring technique employed by Southwest is simulation analysis.

In simulation analysis, Southwest reviews each asset and liability category and its projected behavior in various different interest rate environments. These projected behaviors are based on management's past experience and on current competitive environments, including the various environments in the different markets in which Southwest competes. Using projected behavior and differing rate scenarios as inputs, the simulation analysis generates projections of net interest income. Southwest also periodically verifies the validity of this approach by comparing actual results with those that were projected in previous models.

Southwest evaluates interest rate sensitivity risk and then formulates guidelines regarding asset generation and repricing, and sources and prices of off-balance sheet commitments in order to maintain interest sensitivity risk at levels deemed prudent by management. Southwest uses computer simulations to measure the net income effect of various rate scenarios. The modeling reflects interest rate changes and the related impact on net income over specified periods of time.

Southwest's earnings are dependent, to a large degree, on its net interest income, which is the difference between interest income earned on all interest earning assets, primarily loans and securities, and interest paid on all interest bearing liabilities, primarily deposits. Market risk is the risk of loss from adverse changes in market prices and interest rates. Southwest's market risk arises primarily from inherent interest rate risk in its lending, investing and deposit gathering activities. Southwest seeks to reduce its exposure to market risk through actively monitoring and managing interest rate risk. Management relies on simulation analysis to evaluate the impact of varying levels of prevailing interest rates and the sensitivity of specific earning assets and interest bearing liabilities to changes in those prevailing rates. Simulation analysis consists of evaluating the impact on net interest income given changes from 100 basis points below the current prevailing rates to 400 basis points above current prevailing interest rates. Management makes certain assumptions as to the effect varying levels of interest rates have on certain interest earning assets and interest bearing liabilities, which assumptions consider both historical experience and consensus estimates of outside sources.



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The following table illustrates the results of Southwest's simulation analysis to determine the extent to which market risk would change net interest income (by percentage) for the next twelve months if prevailing interest rates increased or decreased by the specified amounts from current rates. However, to isolate the market risk inherent in the balance sheet, the model assumes that no growth in the balance sheet occurs during the projection period. This model also assumes an immediate and parallel shift in interest rates, which would result in no change in the shape or slope of the interest rate yield curve. Because of the inherent use of the estimates and assumptions in the simulation model to derive this market risk information, the actual results of the future impact of market risk on net interest income may differ from that found in the table. All other simulated prevailing interest rates changes modeled indicate a level of sensitivity of net interest income to those changes that is acceptable to management and within established policy limits.

	As of September 30, 2017
Change in prevailing interest rates:	
+400 basis points	1.80%
+300 basis points	2.23%
+200 basis points	2.37%
+100 basis points	1.54%
0 basis points	—
-100 basis points	(3.17)%
-200 basis points	(7.71)%
-300 basis points	(10.44)%
-400 basis points	(12.91)%

**Effects of Inflation and Changing Prices**

The accompanying consolidated financial statements have been prepared in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles, which require the measurement of financial position and operating results in terms of historical dollars without considering the change in the relative purchasing power of money over time due to inflation. Unlike most industrial companies, virtually all of the assets and liabilities of a financial institution are monetary in nature. As a result, interest rates generally have a more significant impact on the performance of a financial institution than the effects of general levels of inflation. Although interest rates do not necessarily move in the same direction or to the same extent as the prices of goods and services, increases in inflation generally have resulted in increased interest rates. In addition, inflation affects financial institutions' increased cost of goods and services purchased, the cost of salaries and benefits, occupancy expense, and similar items. Inflation and related increases in interest rates generally decrease the market value of investments and loans held and may adversely affect liquidity, earnings, and stockholders' equity. Commercial and other loan originations and refinancings tend to slow as interest rates increase, and could reduce earnings from such activities.

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**DESCRIPTION OF CAPITAL STOCK**

As a result of the merger, Southwest shareholders who receive shares of First Bancshares common stock in the merger will become shareholders of First Bancshares. Your rights as shareholders of First Bancshares will be governed by Mississippi law and the amended and restated articles of incorporation and bylaws of First Bancshares. The following briefly summarizes the material terms of First Bancshares common stock. We urge you to read the applicable provisions of the Mississippi Business Corporation Act, or the MBCA, First Bancshares' amended and restated articles of incorporation and bylaws and federal laws governing bank holding companies carefully and in their entirety. Copies of First Bancshares' governing documents have been filed with the SEC. To obtain copies of these documents, see "Where You Can Find More Information." First Bancshares common stock is listed on the NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol "FBMS."

**Common Stock**

**Authorized.** First Bancshares has 20,000,000 shares of authorized common stock, \$1.00 par value. As of January 5, 2018 there were 11,165,907 shares of common stock issued and outstanding.

**Voting Rights; Cumulative Voting.** Pursuant to the MBCA and the First Bancshares' bylaws, each outstanding share of the First Bancshares' common stock is entitled to one vote on each matter submitted to a vote. Holders of the First Bancshares' common stock do not have cumulative voting rights. Article 2.6 of First Bancshares' bylaws provides that unless otherwise required by the MBCA or the articles of incorporation, all classes or series of First Bancshares shares entitled to vote generally on a matter shall for that purpose be considered a single voting group.

**Classified Board of Directors.** Under Article 10 of the First Bancshares' articles of incorporation, the board of directors of First Bancshares is divided into three classes — Class I, Class II, and Class III as nearly equal in numbers of directors as possible. Article 3.2 of the bylaws establishes a minimum of 9 directors, and a maximum of 25 directors. At present there are a total of 10 directors divided as follows: 3 Class I directors, 4 Class II directors, and 3 Class III directors. The terms of the Class I directors will expire at the 2020 Annual Shareholders' Meeting. The terms of the Class II directors will expire at the 2018 Annual Shareholders' Meeting. The terms of the Class III directors will expire at the 2019 Annual Shareholders' Meeting.

**Dividends.** First Bancshares is a legal entity separate and distinct from The First. There are various restrictions that limit the ability of The First to finance, pay dividends or otherwise supply funds to First Bancshares or other affiliates. In addition, subsidiary banks of holding companies are subject to certain restrictions under Sections 23A and 23B of the Federal Reserve Act on any extension of credit to the bank holding company or any of its subsidiaries, on investments in the stock or other securities thereof and on the taking of such stock or securities as collateral for loans to any borrower. Further, a bank holding company and its subsidiaries are prohibited from engaging in certain tie-in arrangements in connection with extensions of credit, leases or sales of property, or furnishing of services.

The principal source of funds from which First Bancshares pay cash dividends are the dividends received from its bank subsidiary, The First. Consequently, dividends are dependent upon The First's earnings, capital needs, and regulatory policies, as well as statutory and regulatory limitations. Federal and state banking laws and regulations restrict the amount of dividends and loans a bank may make to its parent company. Approval by First Bancshares' regulators is required if the total of all dividends declared in any calendar year exceeds the total of its net income for that year combined with its retained net income of the preceding two years.

Under certain conditions, dividends paid to First Bancshares by The First are subject to approval by the OCC. A national bank may not pay dividends from its capital. All dividends must be paid out of undivided profits then on hand, after deducting expenses, including reserves for losses and bad debts. In addition, a national bank is prohibited from declaring a dividend on its shares of common stock until its surplus equals its stated capital, unless the bank has transferred to surplus no less than one-tenth of its net profits of the preceding two consecutive half-year periods (in the case of an annual dividend). The approval of the OCC is required if the total of all dividends declared by a national bank in any calendar year exceeds

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the total of its net profits for that year combined with its retained net profits for the preceding two years, less any required transfers to surplus. In addition, under the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation Improvement Act, banks may not pay a dividend if, after paying the dividend, the bank would be undercapitalized.

**Preemptive Rights; Liquidation.** First Bancshares common stock does not carry any preemptive rights enabling a holder to subscribe for or receive shares of First Bancshares common stock. In the event of liquidation, holders of First Bancshares common stock are entitled to share in the distribution of assets remaining after payment of debts and expenses and after required payments to holders of First Bancshares preferred stock, if any such shares are outstanding. There are no redemption or sinking fund provisions applicable to First Bancshares common stock.

**Preferred Stock**

Under the terms of First Bancshares articles of incorporation, First Bancshares has authorized the issuance of up to 10,000,000 shares of preferred stock, par value \$1.00 per share, any part or all of which shares may be established and designated from time to time by the First Bancshares board of directors by filing an amendment to the articles of incorporation, which is effective without shareholder action, in accordance with the appropriate provisions of the MBCA. First Bancshares articles of incorporation authorize First Bancshares' board of directors to establish one or more series of preferred stock, and to establish such preferences, limitations and relative rights as may be applicable to each series of preferred stock. The issuance of preferred stock and the determination of the terms of preferred stock by the board, while providing flexibility in connection with possible acquisitions and other corporate purposes, could, among other things, adversely affect the voting power of the holders of First Bancshares common stock.

**Anti-Takeover Provisions**

**Supermajority Voting Requirements; Business Combinations or Control Share Acquisition.** The MBCA states that in the absence of a greater requirement in the articles of incorporation, a sale, lease, exchange, or other disposition of all, or substantially all, of a corporation's property requires approval by a majority of the shares entitled to vote on the transaction. First Bancshares' articles of incorporation do not provide for a greater than majority vote on such a transaction.

First Bancshares' articles of incorporation include a "control share acquisition" provision requiring any person who plans to acquire a control block of stock (generally defined as 10%) to obtain approval by the majority vote of disinterested shareholders or the affirmative vote of 75% of eligible members of the board of directors (excluding any director who is proposing or who is a member of a group proposing a control share acquisition) in order to vote the control shares. If a control share acquisition is made without first obtaining this approval, all stock beneficially owned by the acquiring person in excess of 10% will be considered "excess stock" and will not be entitled to vote.

Any person who proposes to make or has made a control share acquisition may deliver a statement to First Bancshares describing the person's background and the control share acquisition and requesting a special meeting of shareholders of First Bancshares to decide whether to grant voting rights to the shares acquired in the control share acquisition. The acquiring person must pay the expenses of this meeting. If no request is made, the voting rights to be accorded the shares acquired in the control share acquisition shall be presented to the next special or annual meeting of the shareholders. If the acquiring person does not deliver his or her statement to First Bancshares, it may elect to repurchase the acquiring person's shares at fair market value. Control shares acquired in a control share acquisition are not subject to redemption after an acquiring person's statement has been filed unless the shares are not accorded full voting rights by the shareholders.

**Removal of Directors.** Article 11 of the First Bancshares' articles of incorporation provides that no director of First Bancshares may be removed except by the shareholders for cause; provided that directors elected by a particular voting group may be removed only by the shareholders in that voting group for cause. Article 3.3 of the First Bancshares' bylaws provide further that removal action may only be taken at a shareholders' meeting for which notice of the removal action has been given. A removed director's successor may be elected at the same meeting to serve the unexpired term.

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**Vacancies in the Board of Directors.** Under First Bancshares' bylaws, any vacancy may be filled for the unexpired term by the affirmative vote of a majority of the remaining directors, provided that, if the vacant office was held by a director elected by a particular voting group, only the shares of that voting group or the remaining directors elected by that voting group shall be entitled to fill the vacancy; provided further, that if the vacant office was held by a director elected by a particular voting group, the other remaining directors or director (elected by another voting group or groups) may fill the vacancy during an interim period before the shareholders of the vacated director's voting group act to fill the vacancy.

**Amendment of the Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws.** Under the MBCA, the board of directors has the power to amend or repeal the bylaws of a Mississippi corporation such as First Bancshares, unless such power is expressly reserved for the shareholders. Article 10 of the First Bancshares' bylaws provides that the bylaws may be amended, altered, or repealed by the board of directors, except with regard to the provisions establishing the number of directors and process for removal of directors, which may only be amended by the affirmative vote of holders of outstanding shares entitled to more than 80% of the votes eligible to be cast on the alteration, amendment, or repeal.

Under the MBCA, amendments to the articles of incorporation that result in dissenters' rights require the affirmative vote of a majority of the outstanding shares entitled to vote on the amendment. Otherwise, the articles of incorporation may be amended by a majority vote of the shares present at a meeting where a quorum is present.

**Special Meetings of Shareholders.** Under the First Bancshares' bylaws, special meetings of the shareholders, for any purpose or purposes, may be called by the chairman of the board of directors, the chief executive officer, or the board of directors, or within 75 days of a written request of shareholders holding in the aggregate 10% or more of the total voting power entitled to vote on an issue. Such a request must state the purpose or purposes of the proposed special meeting.

**Shareholder Proposals and Nominations.** First Bancshares' bylaws provide procedures that must be followed to properly nominate candidates for election as directors. Director nominations, other than those made by or at the direction of the board of directors, may be made by any shareholder by delivering written notice to the corporate secretary of First Bancshares not less than 50 nor more than 90 days prior to the meeting at which directors are to be elected, provided that First Bancshares has mailed the first notice of the meeting at least 60 days prior to the meeting date. If First Bancshares has not given such notice, shareholder nominations must be submitted within 10 days following the earlier of (i) the date that notice of the date of the meeting was first mailed to the shareholders or (ii) the day on which public disclosure of such date was made. The bylaws also require information to be supplied about both the shareholder making such nomination or proposal and the person nominated.

**Limitations on Directors' and Officers' Liability.** Article 7 of First Bancshares' articles of incorporation provide that no director of First Bancshares shall be personally liable to First Bancshares or its shareholders for monetary damages for breach of fiduciary duty as a director, except for any appropriation in violation of fiduciary duties of any business opportunity; for acts or omissions not in good faith or involving intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law; under Section 79-4-8.33 of the MBCA; or for any transaction from which the director derived an improper personal benefit. Article 8 of First Bancshares' bylaws also provide for indemnification of directors and officers.

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**COMPARISON OF RIGHTS OF FIRST BANCSHARES SHAREHOLDERS AND SOUTHWEST SHAREHOLDERS**

If the merger is completed, shareholders of Southwest will become shareholders of First Bancshares. The rights of Southwest shareholders are currently governed by and subject to the provisions of the Alabama Business Corporation Law, as amended, or the ABCL, and the articles of incorporation and bylaws of Southwest. Upon completion of the merger, the rights of the former Southwest shareholders who receive shares of First Bancshares common stock will be governed by the MBCA and the First Bancshares amended and restated articles of incorporation and First Bancshares amended and restated bylaws, rather than the articles of incorporation and bylaws of Southwest.

The following is a summary of the material differences between the rights of holders of First Bancshares common stock and holders of Southwest common stock, but it does not purport to be a complete description of those differences, the specific rights of such holders or the terms of the First Bancshares common stock subject to issuance in connection with the merger. The following summary is qualified in its entirety by reference to the relevant provisions of: (1) Mississippi and Alabama law; (2) the First Bancshares amended and restated articles of incorporation; (3) the Southwest articles of incorporation; (4) the First Bancshares amended and restated bylaws; and (5) the Southwest bylaws.

The identification of some of the differences in the rights of such holders as material is not intended to indicate that other differences that may be equally important do not exist. You are urged to read carefully the relevant provisions of Mississippi law, as well as the governing corporate instruments of each of First Bancshares and Southwest, copies of which are available, without charge, to any person, including any beneficial owner to whom this proxy statement/prospectus is delivered, by following the instructions listed under “Where You Can Find More Information.”

	Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger)	Rights of Southwest Shareholders
Corporate Governance	<p>First Bancshares is a Mississippi corporation. The rights of First Bancshares shareholders are governed by the MBCA, the First Bancshares articles and the First Bancshares bylaws.</p>	<p>Southwest is an Alabama corporation. The rights of the Southwest shareholders are governed by the ABCL, the Southwest articles and the Southwest bylaws.</p>
Authorized Capital Stock	<p>First Bancshares’ authorized capital stock consists of 20,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$1.00 per share, and 10,000,000 shares of preferred stock, par value \$1.00 per share. The First Bancshares articles authorize First Bancshares’ board of directors to issue shares of preferred stock in one or more series and to fix the designations, preferences, rights, qualifications, limitations or restrictions of the shares of First Bancshares preferred stock in each series. As of January 5, 2018, there were 11,165,907 shares of First Bancshares common stock</p>	<p>Southwest is authorized to issue up to 3,000,000 shares of common stock, par value \$0.10 per share. As of January 5, 2018, there were 71,411 shares of Southwest common stock issued and outstanding.</p>

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	Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger) outstanding and no shares of First Bancshares preferred stock outstanding.	Rights of Southwest Shareholders
Preemptive Rights	First Bancshares' articles provides that shareholders shall not have preemptive rights.	Southwest's articles provide that shareholders shall not have preemptive rights. Each share of Southwest common stock has one vote for each matter properly brought before the shareholders. Southwest directors are elected by a majority of the votes cast by the shares entitled to vote in the election of directors at a meeting of the shareholders at which a quorum is present. Other matters (other than the election of directors or a matter for which the affirmative vote of the holders of a specified portion of the shares entitled to vote is required by Alabama law or the articles of incorporation) are approved if the votes cast for an action exceed the votes cast opposing an action at a shareholders' meeting at which a quorum is present. The ABCL allows for shareholders to act by written consent if all of the shareholders entitled to vote on the matter consent to such action in writing. Southwest's bylaws permit shareholder action to be taken without a meeting by written consent of all shares entitled to vote.
Voting Rights	Each holder of shares of First Bancshares common stock is entitled to one vote for each share held on all questions submitted to holders of shares of First Bancshares common stock. Election of First Bancshares directors requires the approval by a plurality of the votes cast by the holders of shares entitled to vote in the election of directors at a shareholder meeting at which a quorum is present. Other matters (other than the election of directors or a matter for which the affirmative vote of the holders of a specified portion of the shares entitled to vote is required by Mississippi law or the articles) require the votes cast within a voting group (defined as all classes or series of the First Bancshares' shares entitled to vote generally on a matter shall for that purpose be considered a single voting group) in favor of the action to exceed the votes cast opposing the action, where the vote on the matter occurred at a shareholder meeting at which a quorum is present.	
Cumulative Voting	Holders of shares of First Bancshares common stock do not have cumulative voting rights at elections of directors. Article 2.6 of First Bancshares' bylaws provides that unless otherwise required by the MBCA or the articles, all classes or series of First Bancshares shares entitled to vote generally	Holders of shares of Southwest common stock do not have cumulative voting rights at elections of directors.

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	<p>Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger) on a matter shall for that purpose be considered a single voting group.</p>	<p>Rights of Southwest Shareholders</p>
<p>Size of the Board of Directors</p>	<p>The First Bancshares Bylaws provide for a board of directors consisting of between 9 and 25 directors as fixed from time to time by First Bancshares' board. Currently, there are 10 directors on First Bancshares' board of directors.</p>	<p>The Southwest Board consists of 6 directors. The Southwest bylaws provide that the number of directors may be determined by the Southwest board from time to time, but no decrease in the number of directors will have the effect of shortening the term of any incumbent director.</p>
<p>Independent Directors</p>	<p>A majority of the First Bancshares board of directors must be comprised of independent directors as defined in the listing rules of NASDAQ.</p>	<p>Neither the Southwest articles or bylaws contain provisions concerning the independence of the board.</p>
<p>Term of Directors and Classified Board</p>	<p>First Bancshares' articles provides for the election of directors to three classes, as nearly equal in number as possible, to hold office for staggered terms. Directors elected to each class shall hold office until the expiration of the three-year term applicable to the class of directorship to which the respective director is elected and until their successors are elected and qualified, or they shall hold office until death or retirement or until resignation or removal in the manner provided in First Bancshares' bylaws.</p>	<p>The Southwest bylaws provide that, with the exception of board vacancies, directors shall be elected at the annual meeting of the shareholders and shall serve until the next succeeding annual meeting and until a successor is</p>

Election of  
Directors

First Bancshares directors are elected by a plurality of the votes cast by the holders of shares entitled to vote in the election of directors at a shareholder meeting at which a quorum is present.

elected and qualified.  
Southwest directors are elected by a majority of the votes cast by the shares entitled to vote in the election of directors at a shareholder meeting at which a quorum is present.

Removal of  
Directors

The First Bancshares bylaws provide that a director may only be removed for cause at a meeting of the shareholders for which notice of the removal action has been given.

The Southwest bylaws provide that any director, or the entire board of directors, may be removed, with or without cause, at any meeting of the shareholders called expressly for that purpose, by the affirmative vote of the holders of a majority of the shares entitled to vote for the election of directors.



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Filling Vacancies of Directors	<p>Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger)</p> <p>Under First Bancshares bylaws, if during the year a vacancy in the board of directors should occur, the remaining directors on First Bancshares' board may appoint a First Bancshares shareholder to serve until the next annual meeting of shareholders; provided however, that if the vacant director was elected by a particular voting group, then only the remaining directors elected by the voting group, or if none, the voting group, may elect the new director.</p>	<p>Rights of Southwest Shareholders</p> <p>Any vacancy occurring in the board of directors (by death, resignation, removal, or otherwise) may be filled by the affirmative vote of a majority of the remaining directors though less than a quorum of the board of directors. A director elected to fill a vacancy shall be elected to serve until the next annual meeting of shareholders. In case of any increase in the number of directors constituting the entire board of directors, the additional directors shall be elected at a meeting of shareholders.</p>
Amendments to Articles	<p>The MBCA provides that a corporation's articles of incorporation may be amended by the board of directors without shareholder approval: (1) if the corporation has only one class of shares outstanding, (a) to change each issued and unissued authorized share of the class into a greater number of whole shares of that class or (b) increase the number of authorized shares of the class to the extent necessary to permit the issuance of shares as a share dividend; or (2) to accomplish certain ministerial tasks.</p>	<p>The ABCL provides that the board of directors may amend the articles of incorporation without shareholder action to extend the duration of the corporation, to delete the names and addresses of initial directors, to delete the name and address of the initial registered agent or office, to change each issued and unissued authorized share outstanding class into a greater number of whole shares, or to immaterially change the corporate name. Otherwise, the board of directors may propose amendments to the articles of incorporation for submission to the shareholders, and shareholders entitled to vote on the amendment must approve the amendment by a majority vote.</p>
Bylaw Amendments	<p>Under the MBCA, the board of directors has the power to amend or repeal the bylaws of a Mississippi corporation such as First Bancshares, unless such power is expressly reserved for the shareholders. Article 10 of First Bancshares' bylaws provide that the bylaws may be amended, altered, or repealed by the board of directors, except with regard to the provisions establishing the number of directors and process for</p>	<p>The Southwest board of directors may alter, amend, or replace the bylaws or may adopt new bylaws, subject to the shareholders' concurrent right to alter, amend, or repeal the bylaws or to adopt new bylaws; provided, however, that the board of directors may not alter, amend or repeal any bylaws establishing what constitutes a quorum at shareholders' meetings. The shareholders may provide that any or all bylaws altered, amended,</p>

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<p>Merger, Consolidations or Sales of Substantially All Assets; Anti-Takeover Provisions</p>	<p>Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger)</p> <p>removal of directors, which may only be amended by the affirmative vote of holders of outstanding shares entitled to more than 80% of the votes entitled to be cast on the alteration, amendment, or repeal.</p> <p>Under the MBCA, a merger, share exchange, sale, lease, exchange or other disposal of all or substantially all of a Mississippi corporation’s assets, or its dissolution, is approved if the votes cast in favor of the transaction exceed the votes cast against the transaction at a meeting of the shareholders of the corporation where a quorum is present and acting throughout, except approval of a merger by shareholders of the surviving corporation is not required in the instances specified in the MBCA.</p> <p>The First Bancshares articles do include a control share acquisition provision requiring any person who plans to acquire a control block of stock (generally defined as 10%) to obtain approval by the majority vote of disinterested shareholders or the affirmative vote of 75% of eligible members of the board of directors in order to vote the control shares. If a control share is made without first obtaining this approval, all stock beneficially owned by the acquiring person in excess of 10% will be considered “excess stock” and will not be entitled to vote.</p> <p>Any person who proposes to make or has made a control share acquisition may deliver a statement to First Bancshares describing the person’s background and the control share acquisition and requesting</p>	<p>Rights of Southwest Shareholders</p> <p>repealed, or adopted by the shareholders shall not be altered, amended, re-enacted, or repealed by the board of directors of the corporation.</p> <p>Under the ABCL, a sale or other disposition of all or substantially all of the corporation’s assets, a merger of the corporation with and into another corporation, or a share exchange involving one or more classes or series of the corporation’s shares or a dissolution of the corporation must be approved by the board of directors, and in certain circumstances shareholders entitled to vote, by two-thirds of all votes entitled to be cast on the plan. In no case may the vote required for shareholder approval be set at less than a majority. Southwest’s articles do not contain provisions addressing extraordinary transactions.</p>
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	<p>Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger)</p>	<p>Rights of Southwest Shareholders</p>
	<p>a special meeting of shareholders of First Bancshares to decide whether to grant voting rights to the shares acquired in the control share acquisition. The acquiring person must pay the expenses of this meeting. If no request is made, the voting rights to be accorded the shares acquired in the control share acquisition shall be presented to the next special or annual meeting of the shareholders. If the acquiring person does not deliver his or her statement to First Bancshares, it may elect to repurchase the acquiring person’s shares at fair market value. Control shares acquired in a control share acquisition are not subject to redemption after an acquiring person’s statement has been filed unless the shares are not accorded full voting rights by the shareholders.</p>	
<p>Annual Meetings of the Shareholders</p>	<p>First Bancshares holds an annual meeting of shareholders, at a time determined by the board of directors, to elect directors and to transact any business that properly may come before the meeting. The annual meeting may be combined with any other meeting of shareholders, whether annual or special.</p>	<p>The Southwest bylaws provide that the annual meeting of shareholders for the election of Southwest directors and such other business as may properly be brought before the meeting shall be held at such time and place as designated by the Southwest board.</p>
<p>Special Meetings of the Shareholders</p>	<p>Under First Bancshares’ bylaws, special meetings of the shareholders, for any purpose or purposes, may be called by the Chairman of the Board, the Chief Executive Officer, or the board of directors, or within 75 days of a written request of shareholders holding in the aggregate 10% or more of the total voting power entitled to vote on an issue. Such a request must state the purpose or purposes of the proposed special meeting.</p>	<p>Special meetings of the shareholders may be called by Southwest’s President, Southwest’s board of directors, or at the request of the holders of not less than</p>

10% of all of  
the shares  
entitled to vote  
at the meeting.  
Business  
transacted at a  
special meeting  
shall be limited  
to the purposes  
stated in the  
notice of such  
meeting.

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<p>Advance Notice Provisions for Shareholder Nominations and Shareholder Business Proposals at Annual Meetings</p>	<p>Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger)</p> <p>Rule 14a-8 promulgated by the SEC under the Exchange Act establishes the rules for shareholder proposals intended to be included in a public company’s proxy statement. Rule 14a-8 applies to First Bancshares. Under the rule, a shareholder proposal must be received by the subject company at least 120 days before the anniversary of the date on which the company first mailed the previous year’s proxy statement to shareholders. If, however, the annual meeting date has been changed by more than 30 days from the date of the prior year’s meeting, or for special meetings, the proposal must be submitted within a reasonable time before the subject company begins to print and mail its proxy materials. The First Bancshares bylaws set forth advance notice procedures for the nomination, other than by First Bancshares’ board of directors or one of its committees, of candidates for election as directors and for other shareholder proposals. The bylaws provide that, for any shareholder proposal to be presented in connection with an annual meeting, the shareholder must give timely written notice thereof to First Bancshares’ Secretary in compliance with the advance notice and eligibility requirements contained in First Bancshares Bylaws. To be timely, a shareholder’s notice must be delivered to or mailed to and received by the Secretary at First Bancshares’ corporate headquarters on or before the later to occur of (i) 60 days prior to the annual meeting or (ii) 10 days after notice of the meeting is provided to the shareholders pursuant to First Bancshares’ bylaws.</p>	<p>Rights of Southwest Shareholders</p> <p>Under the Southwest bylaws, nominations by any Southwest shareholder must be made in writing and must be mailed by certified mail to the Southwest Secretary and received not less than 20 days nor more than 60 days prior to any meeting of shareholders called for the election of directors, provided, however, if less than 30 days’ notice of the meeting is given to shareholders (based on the date it is mailed or transmitted to shareholders), such nomination must be mailed by certified mail and received by the Secretary no later than the close of business on the tenth calendar day after the date of the notice of the meeting. The notice must contain the following information: (1) the name and address of each proposed nominee; (2) the principal occupation of each proposed nominee; (3) the total number of shares of common stock of Southwest that will be voted by the shareholder for each proposed nominee; (4) the name and residence address of the notifying shareholder; (5) the number of shares of Southwest common stock owned by the notifying shareholder and the length of time the shareholder has owned such shares; and (6) the information required by items (1) through (5) must also be provided for any person deemed to be “acting in concert” with such shareholder within the meaning of federal banking regulations. The Southwest bylaws also allow any Southwest shareholder of record who has been the beneficial owner of shares entitled to vote at an annual meeting for at least six months to transact other proper corporate business at the annual meeting, provided that such</p>
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Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger)

Rights of Southwest Shareholders

The notice must contain the detailed information specified in First Bancshares Bylaws about the shareholder making the nomination or proposal and, as applicable, each nominee or the proposed business. Nominations that are not made in accordance with the foregoing provisions may be ruled out of order by the presiding officer or the chairman of the meeting.

business is set forth in a written notice and mailed by certified mail to Southwest’s Secretary and received not less than 20 days nor more than 60 days prior to the annual meeting, provided that, however, if less than 30 days’ notice of the meeting is given to shareholders (based on the date it is mailed or transmitted to shareholders), such written notice shall be mailed by certified mail and received by the Secretary no later than the close of business on the tenth calendar day after the date of the notice of the meeting. The written notice must describe the other business the shareholder wishes to present and the reasons therefor. The written notice must also contain the applicable information called for by items (1) through (6) above for shareholder nominations and, in addition, a description of any financial interest of the shareholder in such proposal.

Notice of Shareholder Meetings

First Bancshares must give written notice of the date, time, and place of each annual and special shareholders’ meeting no fewer than 10 days nor more than 60 days before the meeting date to each shareholder of record entitled to vote at the meeting. The notice of an annual meeting need not state the purpose of the meeting unless otherwise required by the bylaws. The notice of a special meeting, however, must state the purpose for which the meeting is called.

The Southwest bylaws provide that written notice stating the place, day and hour of a shareholders’ meeting and, in the case of a special meeting, the purpose for which the meeting is called, shall be delivered not less than 10 nor more than 50 days before the date of the meeting, by or at the direction of the President, the Secretary, or the officer or persons calling the meeting, to each shareholder of record entitled to vote at such meeting.

Liability and Indemnification of Directors and Officers

The First Bancshares bylaws require First Bancshares to indemnify its directors (referred to in this subsection as the indemnitees) against liability and reasonable expenses (including attorneys’ fees) incurred in connection with any proceeding an indemnitee is made a party to

Under the ABCL, a corporation may indemnify an individual against liability if the individual acted in good faith, the individual reasonably believed that the conduct was in the corporation’s best interest or was not opposed to its best interest, and the individual had no reasonable

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shareholders of the combined company  
following the merger)

if he or she met the required standard of conduct. To meet the standard of  
conduct, the indemnitee must have conducted himself or herself in good faith,  
and he or she must have reasonably believed that any conduct was in First  
Bancshares' best interests, or in any criminal proceeding, the indemnitee had  
no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. Unless  
otherwise ordered by a court, First Bancshares is not obligated to indemnify  
an indemnitee in connection with (1) any appropriation, in violation of his  
duties, of any business opportunity of First Bancshares, (b) acts or omissions  
not in good faith or which involve intentional misconduct or a knowing  
violation of law, (c) under Section 79-4-8.33 of the MBCA, or (d) any  
transaction from which the director derived an improper personal benefit.  
First Bancshares is allowed to extend its indemnification rights to any other  
officer, employee, or agent of the company upon a resolution of the board of  
directors to that effect.

An indemnitee may apply to the court conducting the proceeding, or to  
another court, for indemnification or advance for expenses. The court shall  
(1) order indemnification if the court determines that the indemnitee is  
entitled to mandatory indemnification under applicable provisions of the  
MBCA or (2) order indemnification or advance for expenses if the court  
determines that (a) the indemnitee is entitled to indemnification or advance  
for expenses under First Bancshares bylaws or (b) in view of all relevant  
circumstances it is

Rights of Southwest  
Shareholders

cause to believe the conduct  
was unlawful. The corporation  
may also advance expenses if  
the director follows the  
requirements proscribed in the  
ABCL Section 10A-2-8.53.  
The ABCL also allows a  
corporation to maintain  
insurance or furnish other  
protections against liability on  
behalf of its directors, officers,  
employees, or agents.  
The Southwest articles and  
bylaws do not address  
indemnification of officers and  
directors.



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	Rights of First Bancshares Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger)	Rights of Southwest Shareholders
	fair and reasonable to indemnify or advance expenses to such indemnitee even if he or she has not met the standard of conduct described above. First Bancshares must indemnify an indemnitee who is wholly successful, on the merits or otherwise, in the defense of any proceeding to which the indemnitee was a party against reasonable expenses incurred in the proceeding. First Bancshares generally must advance funds to pay for or reimburse the reasonable expenses incurred by an indemnitee who is a party to a proceeding.	
Limitation of Director Liability	The First Bancshares articles provide that no director of First Bancshares will be personally liable to First Bancshares or its shareholders for monetary damages for breach of fiduciary duty as a director, unless he or she has (i) appropriated any business opportunity that rightly belonged to First Bancshares, (ii) acted or omitted to act not in good faith or which involves the intentional misconduct or a knowing violation of law, (iii) provided under Section 79-4-8.33 of the MBCA, or (iv) derived an improper personal benefit for any transaction. Under Miss. Code Ann. § 81-5-105(1), the duties of a director or officer of a bank or bank holding company to the bank or bank holding company and its shareholders are to discharge the director’s or officer’s duties in good faith and with the diligence, care, judgment and skill as provided in subsection (2). Under Miss. Code Ann. § 81-5-105(2), a director or officer of a bank or bank holding company cannot be held personally liable for	The ABCL permits, and Southwest’s articles provide, that a director of the corporation shall not be liable for money damages for any action taken, or any failure to take action, as a director, except for: (i) any financial benefit received that any such director was not entitled to; (ii) an intentional infliction of harm by such director; (iii) a violation under the ABCL Section 10A-2-8.33 regarding unlawful distributions; (iv) an intentional violation of criminal law; (v) a breach of such director’s duty of loyalty to the corporation or its shareholders. A director’s liability shall be limited to the fullest extent permitted by the ABCL. Southwest’s articles provide that any amendment to this provision shall be prospective only and shall not adversely affect the limitation of the personal liability of any director of the company with respect to actions or omissions occurring prior to the effective date of such amendment.

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Rights of  
Southwest  
Shareholders

money damages to a corporation or its shareholder unless the officer or director acts in a grossly negligent manner or engages in conduct that demonstrates a greater disregard of the duty of care than gross negligence. In addition, Miss. Code Ann. § 81-5-105(4) provides that the provisions of Miss. Code Ann. § 81-5-105 are the sole and exclusive law governing the relation and liability of directors and officers to their bank or bank holding company, or their successor, or to the shareholders thereof, or to any other person or entity.

If the MBCA were applicable in defining the fiduciary duties of officers and directors, Miss. Code Ann. § 79-4-8.31 provides that a director is not liable to a corporation or its shareholders for any decision to take or not take action, or any failure to take any action, as a director, unless the party asserting liability proves certain matters. The party must show that (1) the director was a party to or had a direct or indirect financial interest in a transaction, which transaction was not otherwise approved in accordance with the MBCA, and (2) the challenged conduct consisted or was a result of (a) action not in good faith; (b) a decision which the director did not reasonably believe to be in the best interests of the corporation or as to which the director was not appropriately informed; (c) a lack of objectivity, due to familial, financial or business relationships, or a lack of independence, due to the director's domination or control by another interested person, where such relationship, domination or control could

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Rights of First Bancshares

Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger)

reasonably be expected to have affected the director's judgment respecting the challenged conduct in a manner adverse to the corporation, and after a reasonable expectation to such effect has been established, the director cannot demonstrate that he reasonably believed the challenged conduct to be in the best interests of the corporation; (d) the director's sustained failure to stay informed about the corporation's business and affairs or otherwise discharge his oversight functions; or (e) receipt of a financial benefit to which the director was not entitled or any other breach of the director's duty to deal fairly with the corporation and its shareholders that is actionable under law.

Rights of Southwest Shareholders

Under the ABCL, a corporation may not make any distribution to its shareholders if, after giving effect to the distribution (1) the corporation would not be able to pay its debts as they become due in the usual course of business or (2) the corporation's total assets would be less than the sum of its total liabilities plus the amount that would be needed, if the corporation were to be dissolved at the time of distribution, to satisfy the preferential rights upon dissolution of shareholders whose preferential rights are superior to those receiving the distribution. Southwest's board of directors may, at any meeting, declare, at its discretion, dividends payable in cash, property or shares of Southwest, subject to Southwest's articles and to the extent permitted by applicable law and regulatory requirements.

Under the ABCL, a shareholder of a corporation is entitled to (1) dissent from a plan of merger,

The MBCA prohibits a Mississippi corporation from making any distributions to its shareholders, including the payment of cash dividends that would render the corporation unable to pay its debts as they become due in the usual course of business. Also prohibited is any distribution that would result in the corporation's total assets being less than the sum of its total liabilities plus the amount that would be needed, if it were to be dissolved at the time of the distribution, to satisfy the preferential rights upon dissolution of shareholders whose preferential rights are superior to those receiving the distribution.

Dividends

Appraisal/Dissenters' Rights

Under Section 79-4-13.02 of the MBCA, appraisal rights are available only in connection with

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Rights of First Bancshares

Shareholders (which will be the rights of shareholders of the combined company following the merger)

specific transactions. However, appraisal rights are not available for shareholders if the shares are (i) listed on the New York Stock Exchange or designated as a national market system security on an interdealer quotation system by the National Association of Securities Dealers, Inc.; or (ii) not so listed or designated, but has at least two thousand (2,000) shareholders and the outstanding shares of such class or series has a market value of at least Twenty Million Dollars (\$20,000,000.00) (exclusive of the value of such shares held by its subsidiaries, senior executives, directors and beneficial shareholders owning more than ten percent (10%) of such shares).

First Bancshares' articles and bylaws do not contain any provision(s) that relate to appraisal rights.

Rights of Southwest Shareholders

conversion, share exchange or exchange or a sale of all or substantially all of the assets of the corporation and (2) subject to compliance with the procedures set forth in the ABCL, obtain the fair value of the shareholder's ownership interest through an appraisal.

Southwest's articles and bylaws do not contain any provision(s) that relate to appraisal rights.

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**LEGAL MATTERS**

The validity of the First Bancshares common stock to be issued in connection with the merger will be passed upon for First Bancshares by Alston & Bird LLP (Atlanta, Georgia). Certain U.S. federal income tax consequences relating to the merger will also be passed upon for First Bancshares and Southwest by Alston & Bird LLP (Atlanta, Georgia) and Jones Walker LLP (Mobile, Alabama), respectively.

**EXPERTS**

**First Bancshares**

The consolidated financial statements of First Bancshares and its subsidiary as of December 31, 2016 and 2015, and for each of the years in the three-year period ended December 31, 2016, and management's assessment of the effectiveness of internal control over financial reporting as of December 31, 2016, included in First Bancshares' Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, incorporated by reference herein, have been incorporated by reference herein in reliance upon the reports of T.E. Lott & Company, an independent registered public accounting firm, included in First Bancshares' Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, incorporated by reference herein, and upon the authority of said firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

**Southwest**

The consolidated balance sheets of Southwest as of December 31, 2016 and December 31, 2015 and the related consolidated statements of income, comprehensive income, stockholders' equity and cash flows for the years then ended and the consolidated balance sheets as of December 31, 2015 and December 31, 2014 and the related consolidated statements of income, comprehensive income, stockholders' equity and cash flows for the years then ended have been audited by Mauldin & Jenkins, LLC, independent public accountants, as set forth in their report, which has been incorporated herein. Such consolidated financial statements have been so incorporated in reliance upon the report of such firm given upon their authority as experts in accounting and auditing.

**Sunshine**

The consolidated financial statements of Sunshine as of December 31, 2016 and 2015 for each of the two years in the period ended December 31, 2016, have been audited by Hacker, Johnson & Smith, P.A., an independent registered public accounting firm, as set forth in their report, included herein. Such consolidated financial statements are incorporated herein by reference in reliance upon such report given on the authority of such firm as experts in accounting and auditing.

**WHERE YOU CAN FIND MORE INFORMATION**

First Bancshares has filed a registration statement on Form S-4 under the Securities Act of 1933 with the SEC with respect to the First Bancshares common stock to be issued to shareholders of Southwest in the merger. This proxy statement/prospectus constitutes the prospectus of First Bancshares filed as part of the registration statement. This proxy statement/prospectus does not contain all of the information set forth in the registration statement because certain parts of the registration statement are omitted in accordance with the rules and regulations of the SEC. The registration statement and its exhibits are available for inspection and copying as set forth below.

In addition, First Bancshares (File No. 000-22507) files annual, quarterly and special reports, proxy statements and other business and financial information with the SEC. You may read and copy any materials that First Bancshares files with the SEC at the SEC's Public Reference Room at 100 F Street, N.E., Washington, D.C. 20549, at prescribed rates. Please call the SEC at (800) SEC-0330 for further information on the public reference room. In addition, First Bancshares files reports and other business and financial information with the SEC electronically, and the SEC maintains a website that contains First Bancshares' SEC filings as well as reports, proxy and information statements, and other information issuers file electronically with the SEC at [www.sec.gov](http://www.sec.gov). You will also be able to obtain these documents, free of charge, from First Bancshares' website at [www.thefirstbank.com](http://www.thefirstbank.com) under the "Investor Relations" link and

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then under the “SEC Filings” heading. The website addresses for the SEC and First Bancshares are inactive textual references and except as specifically incorporated by reference into this proxy statement/prospectus, information on those websites is not part of this proxy statement/prospectus.

The SEC allows First Bancshares to “incorporate by reference” information in this proxy statement/ prospectus. This means that First Bancshares can disclose important business and financial information to you by referring you to another document filed separately with the SEC. The information that First Bancshares incorporates by reference is considered to be part of this proxy statement/prospectus, and later information that First Bancshares files with the SEC will automatically update and supersede the information First Bancshares included in this proxy statement/prospectus. This document incorporates by reference the documents that are listed below that First Bancshares has previously filed with the SEC, except to the extent that any information contained in such filings is deemed “furnished” in connection with SEC rules.

- Annual Report on Form 10-K for the year ended December 31, 2016, filed on March 16, 2017;

- Definitive Proxy Statement on Schedule 14A for the 2017 Annual Meeting, filed on April 12, 2017;

- Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q for the quarters ended March 31, 2017, June 30, 2017 and September 30, 2017, filed on May 10, 2017, August 9, 2017 and November 9, 2017, respectively;

- Current Reports on Form 8-K or Form 8-K/A, as applicable, filed on January 4, 2017, February 6, 2017, March 16, 2017, May 4, 2017, May 30, 2017, October 24, 2017, October 31, 2017 and December 6, 2017; and

- The description of our common stock contained in our Registration Statement filed with the SEC pursuant to Section 12 of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, or the Exchange Act, including any amendment or report filed for purposes of updating such description.

First Bancshares also incorporates by reference any future filings they make with the SEC under Sections 13(a), 13(c), 14 or 15(d) of the Exchange Act after the date of this proxy statement/prospectus and the date of the Southwest special meeting. Any statement contained in this proxy statement/prospectus or in a document incorporated or deemed to be incorporated by reference in this proxy statement/prospectus is deemed to be modified or superseded to the extent that a statement contained herein or in any subsequently filed document that also is, or is deemed to be, incorporated by reference herein modified or superseded such statement. Any statement so modified or superseded will not be deemed, except as so modified or superseded, to constitute a part of this proxy statement/prospectus.

Documents incorporated by reference are available from First Bancshares without charge (except for exhibits to the documents unless the exhibits are specifically incorporated in the document by reference). You may obtain documents incorporated by reference in this document by requesting them in writing or by telephone from First Bancshares at the following address:

The First Bancshares, Inc.  
6480 U.S. Highway 98 West  
Hattiesburg, Mississippi 39402  
Attention: Secretary  
Telephone: (601) 268-8998

To obtain timely delivery, you must make a written or oral request for a copy of such information by February 12, 2018. You will not be charged for any of these documents that you request. If you request any incorporated documents from First Bancshares, First Bancshares will mail them to you by first class mail, or another equally prompt means, within one business day after receiving your request.

You should rely only on the information contained in this proxy statement/prospectus. Neither First Bancshares nor Southwest has authorized anyone to provide you with different information. Therefore, if anyone gives you different or additional information, you should not rely on it. The information contained in this proxy statement/prospectus is correct as of its date. It may not continue to be correct after this date.

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Southwest has supplied all of the information about Southwest and its subsidiaries contained in this proxy statement/prospectus and First Bancshares has supplied all of the information contained in this proxy statement/prospectus about First Bancshares and its subsidiaries. Each of us is relying on the correctness of the information supplied by the other.

This proxy statement/prospectus does not constitute an offer to sell, or a solicitation of an offer to purchase, the securities offered by this proxy statement/prospectus, or the solicitation of a proxy, in any jurisdiction to or from any person to whom or from whom it is unlawful to make such offer, solicitation of an offer or proxy solicitation in such jurisdiction.

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