

Regular Meeting
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
January 15, 2026 – 6:00 PM

The Board meetings are audio recorded. The public can hear and participate in the meeting via conference call by dialing 1 469-551-3616 and enter code 908-825-494#

COMMISSIONERS

Mark Hatch, District 3, Chairman
Jody Stephenson, District
Daniel Wood, District 2
Jamie Storey, District 4, Vice Chairman
David Osteen, District 5

STAFF

John Jenkins, County Manager
Roy Bass, Assistant County Manager
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator
Chana Watson, County Attorney
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Brenda Royal, Chief Financial Officer
Christie Zander, Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Hatch called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

Commissioner Storey led the Invocation and Commissioner Wood led the Pledge to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

01/08/2025 Regular BOCC Minutes

Motion to approve the 01/08/2026 Meeting Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen.

Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

VOUCHER APPROVAL

Motion to approve the vouchers made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

Supervisor of Elections Darbi Chaires– Student “I Voted” Sticker Contest

- Report given on a student “I Voted” sticker contest held at the end of last year.
- Participation was limited, but one entry was received and selected as the winner.
- The winner Jade Strout was previously recognized at the School Board meeting with a gift sponsored by At Your Realty; a plaque will also be presented if she attends this BOCC meeting.
- Board members were provided copies of the winning sticker design. The design encourages voters to be proud and make independent decisions “like an alligator or crocodile,” with a breaking bridge symbolizing a new beginning in 2026 and the upcoming gubernatorial transition.
- The special stickers will be used for the 2026 general election; traditional stickers will continue to be used for the primary.
- Additional outreach is planned for the next school year to increase student participation.
-

Town of Cross City – Mayor’s Report (Sewer and Infrastructure)

- Mayor Ryan Fulford reported that Cross City and Dixie County “won big” on infrastructure funding.
- Announced approximately \$76.1 million awarded for a new sewer plant and related infrastructure, including:
 - New piping
 - Expanded stormwater drainage
 - Increased water capacity
 - Generators and related support systems
- Funding will allow extension of sewer service to the industrial park area, described as a major generational improvement for the city and county.
- Mayor Fulford thanked the BOCC and the economic development team for their support and long-term work (about six years) on the project.
- Mayor Fulford noted other ongoing community projects, including the library, sports facilities, and industrial park base work, and expressed commitment to continue these efforts.

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

- **Fire Station Funding / Apparatus:** Reported leftover funds from fire station appropriations. County Manager is working to reallocate these funds so a new truck can be purchased; a suitable truck has been identified. Some equipment funds will remain after this purchase.
- Upcoming Meetings / Conferences:
 - EMS and emergency management meetings scheduled for late January (week of the 26th).
 - Attending a FACT Risk Management Conference in St. Augustine in early February (dates referenced as 2nd–4th or 4th–5th) for legal/personnel and EMS topics.

- Rural Health / Community Paramedicine Funding:
 - Updated the Board on a major federal bill for rural medical care and hospitals that includes significant funding for community paramedicine.
 - Florida Rural EMS group (of which Dixie is a founding member) is organizing an initiative to secure a share of these funds for rural counties.
 - Hundreds of millions of dollars are anticipated nationwide; Florida's share and details are not yet known (program to run through AHCA).
- Lieutenant Governor Visit:
 - Announced that Lt. Governor Collins will visit the EOC on February 12, 2026, for a “lunch and learn” and tour of the new building. Formal invitations will be sent from Tallahassee.
- Community Paramedicine Billing Program (No Cost):
 - Described a potential billing/software program for community paramedics, offered at no cost to the County.
 - Company would handle billing; County would receive a set amount per trip and a portion of savings negotiated with insurers.
 - Program is in early stages in four or five states, including Florida; Dixie participated in the first call and is exploring the opportunity with no current commitment.
- Station 6 (Horseshoe Beach) – Timeline Extension:
 - Reported a likely 6-month time extension for the new Station 6 in Horseshoe; application is being submitted and no major hurdles are expected.
 - Notice to proceed was previously approved; land clearing is planned to start Monday, January 19, 2026.
- Station 3 Construction / Sinkhole:
 - Station 3 building was delivered and erection started this week; frame and skin expected to be up within ~10 days.
 - A sinkhole appeared at Station 3 following well drilling; Commissioner Storey discovered it after driving into it. The sinkhole has been filled and is holding well, with no threat to the building at the rear of the property.
- Emergency Management – Cold Weather Update / Preparations
 - Reported a significant cold event expected overnight, with lows in the mid-20s and wind chills near 15°F, with 15 mph winds.
 - Light warming is expected the next day (highs around 65°F), with rain Saturday evening and another, colder front on Sunday; one model shows a low potential for wintry conditions, but not likely as severe as last year.
 - State conference call held; another call scheduled for the following day. Any major changes will be relayed to the County Manager for distribution.
 - Advised attention to county parks and facilities with exposed PVC faucets to prevent freezing; fire stations have heaters on and are being prepped through the weekend.

SONJA REED-DISCUSSION REGARDING RIGHT-OF-WAY

Ms. Sonja Reed addressed the Board regarding access to her property on SE 189th Avenue. She stated that three separate surveys (Delta, JW Crews, and Raker) and county mapping all show a county road/right-of-way along SE 189th Ave, but nearby landowners believe she is encroaching on their land and have placed a gate and obstacles in the roadway. As a result, she and her 88-year-old husband must cross multiple private parcels (Donovan and Harper properties) to reach their 13 acres and have experienced harassment when attempting to use the road.

Commissioners noted that if a road has been maintained by the County for five years or more, it is deemed a county road, and that a gate should not be allowed across a public road.

The Board directed County Attorney Watson to review the surveys, deeds, and maintenance history to confirm the legal status and alignment of the road. If confirmed as a county road, it is to be returned to its proper surveyed location and reopened. Chana was given about one month to research and Mr. John Jenkins will contact Ms. Reed with the findings.

KATRINA VANAERNAM AND SHEILA FRIERSON, DIXIE COUNTY ANTI-DRUG COALITION

Not present

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Tourism / Economic Development – Rural County Days & Events

- Ms. McCallister confirmed preparations are in order for Rural County Days in Tallahassee next week. January 21-22, 2026.
- Ms. McCallister noted strong county-city coordination:
 - County Tourism tent and Town of Cross City tent will be set up adjacent in a shared large space.
 - County and City will assist each other with setup and breakdown; plan to arrive around 7:30–8:00 a.m. for setup.
- Ms. McCallister reported that the Atlanta Camping & RV Show begins the same day as Rural County Days; Dixie County will have a presence there to promote tourism and attract visitors.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Not present

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

Engineer / Consultant– Horseshoe Beach & Purchasing Policy

- Mr. Locklear reported that the final required approval for the Horseshoe Beach dredging project has been received. Advertising is complete, and 16

contractors have requested bid documents; all are in order and the project is ready to proceed once a contractor is selected. Mr. Roy Bass was thanked for his efforts in securing the final approval.

- Mr. Locklear presented the revised Purchasing Policy Manual, noting minor changes based on Board direction at the last meeting (including clarifying department head authority on page 26). The Board was asked to review and consider adoption at the next meeting, as an updated manual is required for pending reimbursement requests.
- It was also noted that Mr. Locklear's new Dixie County Office will be open starting Monday.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Not present

RAELYN BROWNELL, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER

Suwannee Water & Sewer District – General Manager Report

- Ms. Brownell reported that the district has SRF (State Revolving Fund) grant funding for Hurricane Helene; the engineering bid period is closed, and bids will be opened and selected at upcoming public board meetings as the first step in the project.
- Ms. Brownell raised a concern regarding the road to the district office: milling was placed as part of a long-planned project tied to work on SR 349, but it has not yet been rolled/compacted.
- Ms. Brownell noted that loose rock is a safety concern, especially for residents driving side-by-sides and similar vehicles and asked whether the surface will be properly rolled and packed. Commissioners and County staff responded they are currently having an issue with a roller, but her concern has been noted and will be addressed as soon as the equipment is available.

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Code Enforcement / DEP – Crown & Methodist Church Properties; Tire Dump Site

- Code Enforcement Hearings:
 - Second round of hearings held regarding Crown property and the property behind the Methodist Church.
 - Mr. Crown has cleaned his property to the judge's satisfaction and holds a demolition permit with six months to remove structures.
 - Property behind the Methodist Church remains in poor condition; the judge will issue an order imposing substantial daily fines until compliance.
- Tire Cleanup / DEP Involvement:
 - Large volume of waste tires on the Methodist Church-area property and adjacent frontage drive near Dollar General.
 - DEP has visited the site multiple times, promised estimates and potential cleanup approval, but has not followed through; situation has persisted for years.
 - Some tires have reportedly been moved onto an easement to avoid responsibility; witnesses observed flatbed trucks dumping tires there.

- Board Direction:
 - Board acknowledged that if property owners fail to clean up, the County may need to step in, at a cost.
 - Attorney Watson noted any County cleanup will require Board approval and coordination with Solid Waste (Commissioner Storey, Mr. Tim Johnson) due to the volume and disposal cost of tires.
 - Commissioner Hatch directed staff (Mr. Jenkins to coordinate with Ethan Merchant of Liberty Partners) to set up a face-to-face meeting with DEP in Tallahassee to address their inaction and seek assistance and/or reimbursement.
- Public Safety Note:
 - Mr. Barry Johnson's reiterated repeated calls to DEP and involvement of the Sheriff due to threats at the site; some cleanup has occurred, but tires remain a major problem.
 - Commissioners noted that conditions around a house on SW 820th St (Rocky Creek cut off) have worsened since the last visit, with more people having moved in. However, residents have responded positively to recent enforcement efforts and signs; many have called to thank the County, and staff expressed appreciation to Steve for his work on the issue.

Next Code Enforcement Meeting is scheduled for February 5, 2026

MICHAEL GAINY, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

County Road Super / Rock Crushing & Equipment Discussion

- Board revisited discussion from the last meeting regarding rock crushing at the County pit.
- Estimated 80–100 loads of material available to crush; rough pricing discussed (approx. \$10/ton; \$16–18/load; estimate around \$2,500 for 250 loads), with recognition that exact totals are uncertain.
- County Attorney Watson cautioned that if total projected cost approaches \$50,000, formal procurement procedures (bid/advertisement) must be followed and cannot be avoided by splitting into multiple \$5,000 authorizations.
- Commissioner Hatch emphasized the need to have crushed material on hand before storms to avoid shortages as experienced previously.
- Original concept of crushing with County equipment and under-utilized personnel is no longer feasible due to loss of staff.
- Motion: Commissioner Storey moved to authorize up to \$5,000 for rock crushing; second by Commissioner Osteen. Motion carried.

Dozer / Heavy Equipment Parts

- Brief update that the County dozer repair is still pending; parts expected by the end of the month.
- Several commissioners questioned the extended delay and availability of track pads.

- Action: Mr. Tim Johnson and Commissioner Stephenson were directed to contact the dealer/manufacturer for status and part numbers; Commissioner Hatch will also check alternative sources for track components.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

Solid Waste / Roll-Off Sites – Operating Hours & Staffing

- Proposed adjustments to Solid Waste site hours:
 - SR 349 North: Hours adjusted from 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. opening; closing unchanged.
 - Site 2 (Rock Pit): Operating 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.; closed Thursdays (to stagger with another site closed Wednesdays).
 - Pole Gap: Operating 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.; Sunday hours 1:00 p.m.–6:00 p.m. (reverting to previous schedule).
 - Site 4 (CR 317): Operating 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m.; closed Wednesdays and Sundays (unchanged).
 - 55A Site: Operating 9:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m., closed Thursday; Sunday 1:00 p.m.–5:00 p.m.
 - Site 8 (Jack Roberts Curve/coastline sites): Operating 8:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m.; coastal hours kept the same due to heavy use by out-of-town visitors.
- Changes are targeted to begin March 1, 2026, with:
 - Public notice in the newspaper for three weeks, and
 - New signage installed at each site.
- Budget / Staffing Discussion:
 - Current solid waste budget at approximately 57% year-to-date; need to reduce overtime/part-time costs.
 - Noted that one hour reduced per site per day results in over \$1,000/year per site in savings.
 - Nine staffed sites with 22–23 part-time attendants; staff are exploring whether converting a portion (e.g., 10) to full-time with benefits would be more economical.
 - HR- Ms. Angie Crowley clarified there is no “magic number” of hours; any employee on a set schedule is considered full-time for benefits, and many roll-off attendants are already receiving benefits.
- Transfer Station / Equipment:
 - Saturday closure of the transfer station was noted; no significant complaints reported.
 - Additional compactor has been ordered and will be here in four to six weeks; garbage truck is operating well.
 - Insurance representative located a leased truck-wash option through the County’s carrier (~\$7,900 minimum for four weeks) with no County out-of-pocket if approved by insurance.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

APPLICATIONS for SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

20260084 A petition by **Smilee Stacey L Duncan Paul W** requesting a Special Exception to be granted, as provided in Section 4.7.5 SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations to permit one recreational vehicle (RSF/MH), in accordance with the petition dated 12/15/2025 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel #19-13-12-2994- 0002-2240 355 SE 241 ST, Old Town (Suwannee), FL 32680; .28 Acres. (Commission District 3 Mark Hatch)

20260091 A petition by **Janice Burton** requesting a Special Exception to be granted, as provided in Section 4.7.5 SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations to permit one recreational vehicle (RSF/MH), in accordance with the petition dated 11/20/2025 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel #26-09-09-0045-0000-1342 428 SW 911 ST, Steinhatchee, FL 32359; .27 Acres. (Commission District 5 David Osteen)

LPA Recommended Denial (5-0) Oppositions noted

Motion to deny Special Exception for Janice Burton made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved. (4-0) Commissioner Osteen recused himself

Discussion:

Public Hearing – RV Special Exception (Burton/Wigglesworth)

- Application: Special exception request by Janice Burton (represented by Dennis Wigglesworth) to allow an RV on a residential lot that is currently for sale.
- Applicant explanation:
 - Ms. Burton is elderly and in poor health; she had loaned money to family to buy a house later destroyed by a hurricane.
 - The lot was deeded back to her so she would have some value; applicant installed septic, water, and power pole to prepare the lot, intending to sell it.
 - They stated they misunderstood that having a “For Sale” sign would cause automatic denial and said they were not trying to circumvent the rules, only to reduce future buyer legwork.
- **Board discussion:**
 - Board reiterated its long-standing policy to deny RV special exceptions on lots that are for sale, due to public opposition to permanent RV use and the desire to promote site-built or manufactured homes.
 - Concern expressed that approving this request would effectively create an RV lot for resale, setting precedent for others.
 - County Attorney confirmed RV special exceptions are for owner use, and a property actively being marketed for sale is inconsistent with that intent.

Motion to deny Special Exception for Janice Burton made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved. (4-0) Commissioner Osteen recused himself

- 20260093 A petition by **APC Towers / Mattaniah Jahn PA** requesting a Special Exception to be granted, as provided in Section 4.3.5 subparagraph (5) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations to permit a WIRELESS TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOWER IN AN ESA (ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVE AREA), in accordance with the petition dated 12/11/2025 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel #26-09-13-0000-4465-0000 2410 NE 389 AVE, Old Town, FL 32680; 50.37 Acres. (Commission District 2 Daniel Wood)

LPA Recommended Approval (5-0) No recorded opposition

Motion to approve Special Exception for APC Towers / Mattaniah Jahn PA made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved. (5-0)

APPLICATIONS FOR VARIANCES

NA

Additional Code Enforcement – Property Behind Methodist Church (Abatement Option)

- Staff reported continued non-compliance and tire accumulation at the property behind the Methodist Church, ongoing since 2019.
- Explained option to abate the property using existing code enforcement project funds:
 - County would remove campers and tires, fully clean the site, then record a lien for cleanup costs.
 - After fines begin (order starting Dec. 21, 2025, at \$450/day; already over \$11,000), County could foreclose the lien like a mortgage foreclosure.
 - At sale, County may either:
 - Recover its costs if a third party outbids the lien amount, or
 - Acquire the property and later resell it.
- County Attorney Watson clarified that County liens attach to all real property the owner holds in the county, not just this parcel.

Motion to authorize staff to proceed with the abatement/foreclosure approach as outlined made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved. (5-0)

Campground Denial – Request for FLUEDRA

(Florida Land Use and Environmental Dispute Resolution Act) Mediation

- Attorney Watson reported receiving a Florida Land Use and Environmental Dispute Resolution Act (FLUEDRA) request from counsel for Susan Boell regarding the previously denied campground special exception.
- FLUEDRA request seeks mediation to attempt resolution without filing a lawsuit.

- Attorney Watson advised the County is on solid ground: denial was based on subjective land-use criteria (campground not fitting the neighborhood's character), which are permissible standards.
- Building Official expressed concern about exposure to litigation over a \$300 application (with about \$160 in County advertising/posting costs), given that both the LPA and BOCC had already voted to deny.
- Board Direction: Consensus not to participate in mediation and to stand by the prior denial; attorney instructed to decline the FLUEDRA mediation request.

Summary – Attorney Watson reported that Susan Boell (campground denial) has requested mediation under Florida's Land Use and Environmental Dispute Resolution Act (FLUEDRA) rather than filing suit. The denial was based on the project not meeting the character of the neighborhood. After discussion of costs and prior denials (LPA and BOCC), the Board declined to pursue mediation.

RV Special Exceptions – Board Action & Public Comment

The Board held an extended discussion on eliminating RV special exceptions from the Land Development Regulations.

- Board/Staff Points:
 - Commissioner Story moved to do away with RV special exceptions, noting disaster-related temporary housing is already allowed under state law and that RV exceptions consume significant staff time while generating less revenue than even a single-wide home on one acre.
 - Mr. Wright stated only about 25% of RV exception holders stay current on renewals and that most LPA and BOCC quasi-judicial items now involve single-RV special exceptions, creating repeated neighborhood conflicts.
 - Other counties (e.g., Lafayette, Levy) were cited as having already restricted or eliminated similar RV provisions.
- Commissioner Concerns:
 - Commissioner Stephenson opposed full elimination, arguing that many owners start with an RV and later build homes, and that RV users spend money at local businesses; he stressed that most complaints involve illegal, unpermitted campers, not those with valid exceptions.
 - It was clarified that temporary RV use during active home construction remains allowed under separate building provisions and is not affected by this change.
- Public / LPA Comments:
 - Ms. Kay McAllister (Suwannee) favored keeping RV exceptions for coastal residents displaced by storms and noted they still pay full taxes and follow regulations.
 - Mrs. Sarah Ross (LPA member, Jena/Rocky Creek) stated many locals in coastal areas do not want any RVs in their neighborhoods due to rising property values

and second-home buyers; she suggested, if RVs remained, raising fees substantially and enforcing renewals more strictly.

- Mr. McGinnis emphasized both the economic benefit of visitors with RVs (fuel, restaurants, local businesses) and the negative impacts of dense RV use and party-type activity in residential/coastal areas.

Following additional public comment questioning whether RV exceptions could instead be tied to active home construction, Mr. Wright clarified that:

- Temporary RV use during home construction is already allowed under existing building provisions and is not affected by this change.
- The current RV special exception program is permanent, not 12–18 months as one commenter believed and is separate from construction-related temporary use.

After discussion, the Board confirmed the intent is to remove RV special exceptions from the Land Development Regulations, not amend them. A motion by Commissioner Story, seconded by Commissioner Osteen, to initiate the process for the Ordinance and amend the Land Development Code (with state-law disaster/temporary housing provisions remaining in place) was approved, with one Commissioner voting no.

Motion to initiate the process for the Ordinance and amend the Land Development Code to eliminate RV special exceptions (with state-law disaster/temporary housing provisions remaining in place) from the Land Development Regulations **Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved. (4-1) Commissioner Stephenson voted to Deny**

SCOTT PENDARVIS, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Nothing to present at this time.

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Nothing to present at this time.

HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Not present

ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

Human Resources – FSA Card Update (Angie Crowley)

- Reported that FSA (Flexible Spending Account) cards have been distributed to all full-time employees.
- Cards were funded effective 1/1/2026.
- Program resulted in an estimated County savings of \$91,400.00 for the year.

JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER

Action Items:

1. Request Board approval for the placement of two Charlie Kirk signs, to be located at NE 410th Ave. and NE 516th Ave.

Motion to approve the placement of Charlie Kirk signs made by Commissioner Stephenson. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved 5/0

2. Request Board approval of the 3W011 Sheriff's Evidence Office Building Time Extension from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027.

Motion to approve the 3W011 Sheriff's Evidence Office Building Time Extension from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027, made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved 5/0

3. Request Board approval of the MK005 Sheriff's Evidence Office Building Time Extension from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027.

Motion to approve the of the MK005 Sheriff's Evidence Office Building Time Extension from June 30, 2026, to June 30, 2027.made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved 5/0

4. Request to open a Capital City Bank account for FSA funds, with tracking done through the General Fund.

Motion to approve opening accounts at Capital City Bank for FSA made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved 5/0

5. Request Board approval to place all county property leases in general fund, except for Holly Hill Tower site.

Motion to place all county property leases in general fund, except for Holly Hill Tower site made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved 5/0

6. Request Board approval to install rumble strips at the intersection of NE Hwy 351 and NE 210th Ave.

Motion to install rumble strips at the intersection of NE Hwy 351 and NE 210th Ave made by Commissioner Stephenson. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved 5/0

7. Request Board approval to install rumble strips at the intersection of NE Hwy 340 and NE 910th Ave.

Motion to install rumble strips at the intersection of NE Hwy 340 and NE 910th Ave made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved 5/0

8. Request Board approval of \$200.00 from Ms. Elsie Carter of Cross City on the Move for the MLK Event on Monday, January 19, 2026.

Motion to donate \$200.00 to Cross City on the Move MLK Event. Ave made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved 5/0

Information Items:

1. Reminder County Offices will be closed Monday, January 19, 2026, in observance of the MLK Day.
2. Reminder of the Rural County days in Tallahassee on Wednesday, January 21 and Thursday, January 22, 2026.

CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

County Attorney / Manager Items (1:47:40–2:10:44)

- Audit Engagement – James Moore & Co.:
County Attorney Chana Watson presented a letter of commitment/engagement from James Moore & Co. for audit services and advised it would need Board approval and signature. (Discussion only; no detailed action recorded in this segment.)
- Horseshoe Beach – Suwanee Seawall Easement & Memorial Benches (Black Eye Point):
The Attorney reviewed a long-standing issue at Black Eye Point in Suwannee involving memorial benches placed on property now owned by Teresa Schefstad.
 - In 2009–2010, the County swapped part of its large right-of-way along SR 351 for Ms. Schefstad's parcel near the public boat ramp, retaining only a maintenance easement for the seawall, not for public seating.
 - The benches are located on Ms. Schefstad's private property within that deeded area; the County's only recorded right is to maintain the seawall, so continued public use via benches places visitors on private land without proper authorization.
 - After on-site review, staff recommended relocating the four memorial benches to County-owned property (e.g., near the County park/boat ramp or other suitable public areas in Horseshoe), in a respectful manner.
 - The Board approved a motion to remove and relocate the benches, with staff to contact each donor/family and let them choose new locations on County property, and for the County to bear associated costs.

Motion to remove and relocate the benches. made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved 5/0

- Mullet Road (SE 218 Street - Suwannee) – Paving Proposal & Financing Concept:
Attorney Watson reported that a private vendor had informally approached the County about paving Mullet Road (a county road in Suwannee serving roughly 38 rooftops) and carrying the financing, with the County making annual payments (example discussed: roughly \$6,000/year over 20 years for a hypothetical \$120,000 project).

- Attorney Watson explained that formal acceptance as an unsolicited proposal would require a lengthy public notice period (up to 120 days), while a standard request for bids/RFP could be advertised for 30 days and is more transparent and cost-effective.
- Commissioners discussed costs vs. benefits, the absence of DOT funding for small interior roads, the heavy current maintenance burden and FEMA's likely denial due to inadequate road-maintenance records, and precedent for similar vendor-financed paving arrangements in prior years.
- There is an understanding that any final paving and financing agreement would come back to the Board for separate approval.

Motion to proceed with the process to solicit/receive proposals for paving Mullet Road, including developing a scope of work, cost and interest-rate terms, and advertising as needed made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved. (5-0)

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

Mrs. Higginbotham reported 11 boxes of records have met statutory retention requirements and requested authorization for disposal.

Motion to proceed with records disposal made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved. (5-0)

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner / Board Comments

- **Commissioner Wood:** Asked everyone to keep the Swails family in their thoughts and prayers during a difficult time (loss involving Faye, Martin, Barbara's granddaughter, and Ben).
- **Commissioner Storey:**
 - Commissioner Storey advised residents to protect pipes and pets during upcoming cold weather (let faucets drip, leave some lights on).
 - Commissioner Storey requested continued prayers for Lyndell Howell, who is battling cancer, and for his family.
- **Commissioner Stephenson:**
 - Commissioner Stephenson noted he has been absent due to personal health issues and has lost his county phone over the holidays, he thanked the Board for stepping up to the plate in his absence.
 - Commissioner Stephenson expressed concern that most complaints relate to illegal RVs, while compliant RV owners bring tax revenue and business to the County.

- **Commissioner Osteen:** Joined in asking prayers for the families mentioned by Commissioners Wood & Storey.
- **Commissioner Hatch:**
 - Commissioner Hatch thanked all fellow commissioners for taking their assigned tasks seriously and acknowledged progress on difficult issues, even when positions may be politically unpopular.
 - Commissioner Hatch reminded Board of upcoming County–City joint meeting at the library on February 10, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. and encouraged attendance at Rural County Days in Tallahassee.
 - Commissioner Hatch urged everyone to keep pets warm during the cold weather.
 - Commissioner Hatch opened the floor for public comments and concerns.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Barry Johnson (Old Town) – Potential 40-Acre Development

- Mr. Johnson, 197 NE 297th Ave (Old Town), expressed concern about potential development on a nearby 40-acre tract (20 acres on each side of Old T Road).
- Reported:
 - Recent survey activity created a 60-ft easement (30 ft each side) along his road.
 - Mr. Johnson's sister-in-law received notice from Mossy Oak Properties about surveying with drones.
 - A neighbor's research indicated a possible plan for 20 homes on 40 acres, which Mr. Johnson believes conflicts with his understanding of 5-acre minimum lots.
 - Area has no central water or sewer and lies within the BMAP/hammock area, raising additional concern.
- Commissioners/Mr. Wright:
 - Confirmed no applications, plans, or permits have been submitted to the County at this time.
 - Advised the Board cannot act until a formal application is filed and reviewed under the Land Development Regulations (LDRs).
 - Assured that if/when an application is submitted, neighbors will receive notice through the Planning/Building Department and standard public hearing procedures.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Storey made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

PLEASE BE ADVISED that if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearings, he/ she will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose, he/ she will need to ensure that a verbatim

record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

“Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact (352) 486-4931 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service at (800) 955-8771.” The Board meets the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM and the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. Individuals that would like to be placed on the agenda should call Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court, by 4:00 PM on the Friday Preceding the Board meeting, at (352) 498-1200.