

Approved Minutes
Workshop – Progress of Departments
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
January 15, 2026 – 4:00 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 1
Daniel Wood, District 2
Jamie Storey, District 4, Vice Chairman
David Osteen, District 5 -

STAFF

John Jenkins, 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.

OVERVIEW

The 2026-01-15 workshop focused on committee assignments and discussed various issues, including the high garbage costs at the Lucky Charms campground, which amounts to \$18,000 annually. The need for better garbage cost tracking and enforcement for commercial properties, including Airbnb rentals, was emphasized. The discussion also covered the challenges of managing community center equipment and facilities, the need for better communication and coordination with state officials, and the importance of fair treatment of all properties. The meeting concluded with a plan to address these issues and improve county services.

DISCUSSION

Commissioner Wood thanked Ms. Angie Crowley for her work preparing the materials, noting they are well organized. It was reported that staff are working to obtain the insurance declaration sheets showing coverage levels for all items, which has proven challenging, but once received it will be used to verify that all coverage levels are appropriate and in order.

Commissioner Storey:

1. Cross City workshop attendance

Commissioner Storey reported having already begun work on his assigned items and noted that Mr. John Jenkins is working diligently and that related materials have been distributed (including an item sent by Mr. Lander via Ms. Chana). The commissioner announced that a Cross City workshop to be held on the 26th at 7:00 p.m., stated an intention to attend (arriving early to observe the full meeting), and asked whether there would be any issue with multiple Board members attending since it is a workshop.

2. Campground assessments (Lucky Charms and others)

Commissioner Storey and the Board discussed garbage assessments for campgrounds, using Lucky Charms (approximately 100 sites) as an example. It was noted that while campgrounds may appropriately pay a single assessment for Fire and Mosquito Control as one location, each site produces garbage, and at \$180 per site per year this could total about \$18,000 annually. Commissioner Storey questioned whether current payments match actual occupancy and stated an intention to review records and compare them with observed usage, recognizing that the County is presently relying on an “honor system” for reported site counts and capacity, which is not considered an adequate system.

3. Condo association / commercial hauling issue

Commissioner Storey reported a call from Mr. Reed of Gainesville, Georgia, who is an owner and association representative for a 44-unit condo property in Horseshoe Beach. The association has been using Kirby Roberts to haul 30–40 cans of garbage at a time to the County dump. The commissioner stated that, because Kirby is paid to haul this garbage, this constitutes commercial activity, and the County is moving to charge \$50 per ton at Cross City for such loads. After Kirby was informed and indicated he would increase his rates accordingly, Mr. Reed objected, arguing that as an owner paying the \$180 annual assessment he should not be charged more. The commissioner noted that many of the units are being rented out, raising the question of whether appropriate licenses are in place for that rental activity.

The Board continued discussion of garbage assessments and short-term rentals (Airbnb). Commissioner Storey clarified that the \$180 annual solid waste assessment is intended to provide county residents with a place to haul their own household garbage. When a resident then hires a hauler such as Kirby Roberts or Waste Pro to collect that garbage for a fee, that hauling activity is considered commercial under existing ordinances and may be charged at the commercial rate

(e.g., \$50/ton). The commissioner anticipated that condo owners from Horseshoe may attend a future meeting to contest these changes.

Mrs. Kay McCallister and the Commissioners debated how to treat second homes and Airbnbs. Questions were raised about whether an owner personally hauling garbage from a rented second home should be treated differently than a commercial campground like Lucky Charms. It was noted that visitors and renters generally generate significantly more garbage than full-time residents, contributing to system overload without corresponding revenue. Existing ordinance language regarding loads over 10 pounds and exemptions for residents and small visitor loads was read into the record to highlight how commercial thresholds are defined.

The Board also revisited the previously adopted \$200 per-year county license fee for Airbnbs/short-term rentals, Mrs. McCallister stated that fewer than five positive responses were received out of over 100 notices mailed, and compliance and enforcement have been difficult. Mrs. Sarah Ross was present and stated she was willing to pay more than \$200 per year to help cover garbage and other county service costs. Commissioners discussed possibly increasing this license fee, reviewing how other jurisdiction's structure similar charges, and exploring mechanisms to allocate or layer fees (including tourist development and discretionary sales surtax revenues) while acknowledging that enforcement capacity remains a major challenge.

The Board further discussed enforcement and funding mechanisms for solid waste related to Airbnbs and RV parks. Mrs. McCallister noted that the Airbnb license previously adopted has been difficult to enforce, and other counties often maintain accountability by requiring all waste to go through a main facility, where residents receive a set amount of disposal and pay extra for additional bags or bulky items. A suggestion was made by Mr. Joey Landers to explore adding a small per-night surcharge on Airbnb stays, collected and remitted by Airbnb in the same way as the tourism development (bed) tax, to help fund garbage, EMS, and other county services. It was explained by Mrs. McCallister that the County already has the necessary agreements in place for the 3% tourist development tax and the 1% discretionary sales surtax, and that state law may require 40% of TDT revenues to go to marketing, although Dixie County has historically directed a portion to parks and facilities. Commissioners emphasized that any policy must treat RV parks and small-scale RV/Airbnb rentals consistently, and Commissioner Stephenson stated he would not support singling out RV parks while leaving other rental operations uncharged. It was acknowledged that while reallocating existing bed-tax revenues could be considered, any diversion away from solid waste would not help meet the actual costs of garbage operations, and materials previously mailed regarding these taxes may need to be revisited and redefined.

Commissioner David Osteen:

Commissioner Osteen reported that the County will soon move campground reservations online, allowing campers to book and complete the process without coming to the office, and that a similar online/access-code system is being considered for community center rentals in place of physical keys. The Board briefly discussed park host arrangements, including the idea of asking hosts, who currently stay at parks at no charge while performing cleanup and maintenance, to contribute approximately \$100 per month toward electricity, subject to review of existing agreements and benefits (including whether the County still provides a 911 phone for attendants).

Commissioner Osteen publicly thanked Paul Greenwell for his extensive volunteer work at DTRAC (DTRAC), including improvements to the walking trail and other projects supported by volunteers from within and outside the county, which have enhanced recreational opportunities for local residents and children. A request from Mr. Greenwell for one additional load of asphalt millings for the DTRAC driveway entrance was presented for Board consideration.

Commissioners discussed community center rental policies and facility management. Commissioner Hatch suggested that, since the centers are rented to the public, the County should provide a locked dumpster at each community center for renter use, with access managed through the same key or code system used for the building. Concerns were raised that an unlocked dumpster could attract unauthorized dumping and that keys could be copied.

Commissioner Osteen and the Board also discussed HVAC and utility control, proposing the use of programmable thermostats and better monitoring to prevent renters from leaving air conditioning too low, as current rental fees do not cover operating costs. Members recommended creating a written checklist for renters (trash removal, resetting thermostats, counting and returning tables and chairs, etc.) and strengthening deposit and inspection procedures, noting that while deposits are taken, follow-up inspections are inconsistent.

Commissioner Hatch referenced an existing ordinance prohibiting loaning tables and chairs outside the facilities and emphasized the need to secure this equipment due to replacement costs. Ms. Royal made comparisons to other local facilities that charge higher rental and deposit amounts and rigorously inspect after events. The consensus was that community center fees, deposits, and enforcement practices should be revisited, and that additional staff or procedures may be needed to protect County assets and ensure facilities are properly maintained between rentals.

Commissioner Jody Stephenson:

Commissioner Stephenson briefly updated the Board on personal health, noting issues with a leaking heart valve and related complications following a recent illness.

Commissioner Mark Hatch:

Commissioner Hatch reported that in December he established a standing weekly meeting (every Thursday at 9:00 a.m.) with EOC to work on FEMA and related project issues. Several sessions were missed due to mandatory training for staff, holidays, and most recently because Chief Scott Garner canceled to teach a FEMA class for another county. The commissioner expressed concern that this conflicted with the standing established schedule set between him and the EOC Directors and stated that County business should remain the priority, while still recognizing the value of Chief Garner's expertise and the outside funding for his time.

Chief Darian Brown and Commissioners noted that despite schedule disruptions, progress is being made on projects such as the Bowlegs work, and that hiring a consultant should significantly help manage the workload and deadlines. They discussed the need to adjust

upcoming meeting dates due to travel and conferences over the next two weeks so that work can continue without losing time. Commissioner Hatch then yielded to Chief Brown.

Chief Darian Brown stated that when the State requests training or assistance, the County typically agrees, which helps ensure continued support when the County asks for help, and that very few people are qualified to teach the classes Chief Garner provides. He recommended adjusting the FEMA/project meeting schedule over the next two weeks because Commissioners will be out of town next week and he and Chief Garner have a conference the following week, suggesting meeting on a different day next week since he will be unavailable Thursday.

Chief Brown further reported that the County has received permission to apply for an extension on certain station projects (including Station 6 in Horseshoe Beach), and that similar extensions may apply to other stations and dredging projects, but that each request must be submitted through an individual application process.

Commissioner Hatch reiterated concern over Chief Garner's decision to prioritize teaching a FEMA class for another county over the Board's standing meeting, stating that the situation was not presented well and appeared to place another county ahead of Dixie County's Chairman, Manager, and Supervisor. Commissioner Hatch stated that there are significant funds at stake and that the County is working under tight deadlines. Commissioner Hatch emphasized that Dixie County must always come first in his view and that this position will not change.

Commissioner Stephenson added expressed concern that too much of the ongoing project work is dependent on Chief Garner and stated that someone else in the office needs to be able to step in and cover his responsibilities if he is unavailable. Commissioners agreed that they need to schedule another coordination meeting soon, even if it must be held at a different time (such as Friday at 5:00 p.m.), to ensure continuity of operations.

Commissioner Daniel Wood:

Commissioner Wood commented that the First District facility grounds look significantly improved following the removal of several trees, including two ash trees in front of the building, and noted that additional tree removal is planned.

Attorney Chana Watson:

Attorney Watson stated the Code Enforcement Officer reported that fines have now begun on current cases. The Jimmy Crown property has been cleaned up; accordingly, those violations and related fines were dismissed, though a demolition permit remains active for removal of the home, with six months allowed for completion.

Regarding the tires and RVs in Old Town in Commissioner Woods District, fines are accruing and moving forward. Staff intends to serve a notice of abatement and apply to abate the nuisance so the County can remove the RVs and tires if DEP efforts do not proceed, contingent on Board approval of the abatement action at the upcoming meeting.

In closing Commissioner Hatch thanked Mr. Jenkins for organizing the Board's work into specific assignments, noting that commissioners had previously been stretched thin trying to cover the entire county at once. Commissioner Hatch expressed appreciation that each Board member is now able to focus more deeply on major problem areas while still keeping county-wide responsibilities in view and publicly thanked the other Commissioners for their efforts.

Commissioner Stephenson reported concerns about the condition of the First District community building/volunteer fire station, stating that the front door had been found open and the interior was dirty, with cobwebs and the air conditioning running, and that the state of the facility was unacceptable.

Chief Brown explained that this is a volunteer station with only three remaining volunteers, who are no longer very active, which is one reason the department is working toward closing the station and shifting responsibility to on-duty crews who can better maintain it. Staff noted that while the exterior has been cleaned up, the interior has not been kept to standard, and similar maintenance and security issues are being addressed at other stations (such as Jena), including necessary lock repairs and ongoing equipment checks.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

No items discussed at this time.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Nothing from the public at this time.

ACTION ITEMS

1. Community center garbage access – Coordinate with Tim, Jamie, John, and David to provide a locked dumpster at community centers for renters' garbage and develop a plan for placement, access, and key/code control.
2. Campground account audit – Audit campground accounts (e.g., Lucky Charms) to compare paid garbage assessments against observed occupancy/use and identify any underpayment.
3. Campground reporting system – Redesign the campground site/rental reporting system to improve the accuracy of billing and capacity information.
4. Online campsite booking – Implement online campsite booking with individual access codes so campers can book and enter without coming to the office.
5. Short-term rental/Airbnb policy research – Research other counties' fee and enforcement models and state rules on short-term rentals/Airbnbs, and compile examples to inform local policy.
6. Tourist/bed tax notice materials – Locate and distribute copies of last year's tourist/bed tax notices and related materials for group review and possible redefinition of use.

7. Declaration sheets for insurance coverage levels – Obtain insurance declaration sheets showing coverage levels for all services so coverage can be reviewed and verified.
8. Community building rental procedures – Create a renter checklist and procedures for community building rentals (cleaning, trash removal, thermostat settings, tables/chairs inventory) and recommend enforcement and deposit-handling practices.
9. DTRAC asphalt millings – Coordinate delivery of one additional load of asphalt millings to the DTRAC driveway entrance as requested by Paul Greenwell.
10. Old Town abatement (tires/RVs) – Serve notice of abatement for the Old Town tires and RVs Commissioner Woods District and bring the abatement action and request for Board approval to the next meeting.
11. Station and dredging project extensions – Prepare and submit extension applications/requests for station funding (including Station 6) and dredging projects, following the required individual application processes.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Osteen made a motion to adjourn. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. 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.