

Regular Meeting Draft Minutes
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
December 04, 2025 – 10:00 AM

The Board meetings are audio recorded. The public can hear and participate in the meeting via conference call by dialing 1(917)900-1022 and enter code 32628.

COMMISSIONERS

Mark Hatch, District 3, Chairman
Jody Stephenson, District 1
Daniel Wood, District 2
Jamie Storey, District 4, Vice Chairman
David Osteen, District 5 (Not present)

STAFF

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 Stephenson led the Pledge to the American Flag.

OVERVIEW

The Board of County Commissioners Meeting (Morning) covered several key updates and initiatives. The Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition emphasized their role in prevention, education, and recovery resources, highlighting a 2012 survey showing reduced substance abuse in active coalition communities. Updates included the progress of Fire Station Number 6, the completion of pipe work on County Road 349, and the delivery of stormwater pipes to the airport. The meeting also discussed the hiring of James Moore as the county auditor, the need for a permanent space for the Right to Redemption program, and the opening of a new safe house by the Power to Change.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

11/13/2025 LPA Meeting

Motion to approve 11/03/2025 LPA Meeting Minutes made by Commissioner Stephenson. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved.

11/18/2025 Organizational Meeting

Motion to approve 11/18/2025 BOCC Organizational Meeting Minutes made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

11/20/2025 Regular BOCC Minutes

Motion to approve 11/20/2025 BOCC Regular Meeting Minutes made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

VOUCHER APPROVAL

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

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS

Not present.

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

Mrs. VanAernam thanked the board and explained that the coalition's two core functions are prevention education and recovery resources, noting research showing active coalitions can reduce youth substance use.

- Mrs. VanAernam described the gift bags they provided to the meeting attendees and Commissioners contain weatherproof medication bag, wipes, chip clip, pen, and informational materials.
- She promoted a Friday 6:00 p.m. parade with golf carts/ATVs, Santa, and a business decorating contest.
- The Governor's Faith and Family Initiative and its "red phone" resource line, with Faith Baptist serving as the local liaison was promoted, and she stressed local churches as key community partners, including a new single moms' group at Priscilla Baptist in Bell.
- The online mental health resources for students and teachers and local recovery meetings were mentioned

Mrs. VanAernam thanked the board and wished them happy holidays, Commissioner Hatch briefly responded, thanking her and mentioning he would participate in the parade with his UTV.

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Mrs. McCallister reported that the Firehouse Bazaar in Suwannee was a success and thanked everyone who attended.

Mrs. McCallister shared upcoming local events:

- Christmas Shopping Under the Barn in Old Town on Friday night, December 5, from 6–9 p.m. following the lighting at the Hill Heritage, featuring local arts and crafts vendors, and the address is available on The Hill Heritage Facebook page.
- The Third Annual Cracker House Winery "Christmas on the Farm" on Saturday, December 13 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The speaker encouraged everyone to attend and support local businesses and vendors.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Mr. Kellan Bailey provided the following updates:

- **Fire Station #3**
 - Foundation was poured this morning.
 - Work on the slab will be finished today.
 - Vertical construction will begin soon to move the project further along.
- **Fire Station #6 – Water Line Grant**
 - The board has tabled the bids for this project for about two meetings.
 - The next step in the grant process is an award letter to be sent to the Town of Horseshoe Beach (the utility owner).
 - The award letter is expected within about 30 days and hopefully before year-end.
 - Once the award letter is received, an application can be submitted and the project can move forward.
 - Because of timing and the grant structure, the current bids will no longer be valid and must be re-bid under the Town of Horseshoe Beach once funds are available.
 - A pre-construction meeting for Station #6 is scheduled for this week.
 - The contractor plans to start work after the New Year, following the holidays.

Motion to reject the current bids for Station #6 Waterline due to the Grant structure timeline made by Commissioner Stephenson. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved.

- **County Road 351 Project** (brief note in this segment)
 - Contractor is working through the holiday period, with the project expected to be wrapped up soon.
- **Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront Projects – Site Plan**
 - A site plan for the HBWWF projects was passed out to each board member.
 - A request direction from the board to move forward was made so they can keep things moving and submit permits.
 - Board members expressed support.

Motion to approve the Site Plan for Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront Projects made by Commissioner Stephenson. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved.

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

Mr. Locklear provided the following updates:

- County Road 349 All pipe work on CR349 is complete, with four 12" mitered ends to be installed early next week, after which guardrail installation will begin.
- Cross City Airport - County ordered the stormwater pipes and they will be delivered on Monday.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Mrs. Bellot was not present but requested a motion to close the library at 12:00 p.m. on Monday December 8th for the Annual Library Safety Meeting. Keeping everyone on straight time.

Motion to approve the library closure at 12 p.m. on Monday, December 8th for the Annual Library Safety Meeting made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

On Thursday, December 11 at 3 p.m. the Three Rivers Regional Library will be holding their Quarterly Board Meeting at the Cross City Library.

DIANN JONES, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER

Mrs. Jones is no longer with Suwannee Water and Sewer; a replacement name will be provided shortly.

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Mr. Fremen stated that Code Enforcement proceedings are starting today in Court Room B, at this time he has no additional items to present

MICHAEL GAINNEY, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Mr. Gainey was not present.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

Mr. Johnson continued a discussion from the last board meeting about solid waste containers/cans:

- Mr. Johnson stated that Mr. Tom Packer had already sold the specific unit they wanted, but that 35-yard self-contained units are available, and he requested Board approval to move forward with an alternative.
- The proposed units are self-contained and mobile, so if a smaller unit is bought and later proves inadequate, it can be replaced with a larger one in the future.
- An evaluation done the previous day showed that, out of 190 cans county-wide, 60 something had the bottoms falling out, so replacement is urgent, and that previous bottom-replacement work has been costly and inefficient.
- Mr. Johnson referenced prior issues with paying over \$400 per container (roughly \$400 per four-yard can).
- Mr. Johnson stated that the Solid Waste staff will need to work on December 26 because they cannot go five days without garbage service.
- Ms. Brenda Royal, Finance Director and Mr. Johnson will begin meeting once a month starting in the new year (department head plus finance) to review his budget, bills, and coding to ensure proper coding, cash flow, and expense tracking.
- Any other department heads who want similar review meetings can be scheduled as well, in small groups with finance.
- Ms. Royal notes that this additional coordination is already uncovering items that will save the county money.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

See applications on the back page.

**SCOTT PENDARVIS, 911 COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR
& I.T. ADMINISTRATOR**

Mr. Pendarvis had nothing to present at this meeting.

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Chief Scott Garner reported that staff have been in contact with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, Division of Forestry (DOS) regarding the possibility of a countywide burn ban. He stated that a burn ban is being considered if the County does not receive rain, and that, if issued, it would apply to the entire County, including rural sites. Chief Garner

advised that, to the extent possible, existing burn piles should be burned down prior to any burn ban taking effect.

Chief Garner further noted that there is an upcoming Safety Dinner on Friday, December 12, at 6:00 p.m., and asked if the Board needed anything from his department in connection with that event. Chief Garner stated that he would coordinate with Ms. Lisa to verify any needs and would contact the Board if assistance is required.

Finally, he reported that, consistent with earlier updates on Fire Station #3, the slab was poured that morning, with work beginning at approximately 4:00 a.m. and being finished later that morning.

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Mrs. Carter encouraged everyone who has elderly family members or knows individuals who live alone to be especially mindful of them during the holiday season. Mrs. Carter noted that medical issues among these vulnerable populations tend to increase during the holidays, and urged residents to call, visit, and otherwise check on such individuals to ensure they are safe and doing well.

HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Ms. Houghton had nothing to present at this meeting.

ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

Ms. Crowley was not present at this meeting.

JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER

Action Items:

1. Request Board approval of the Airport Terminal Generator TWO for Locklear in the amount of \$16,000.00.

Motion to approve Airport Terminal Generator TWO for Locklear in the amount of \$16,000.00 made by Commissioner Stephenson. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

2. Request Board approval to place a dumpster at Glen Dyals Park for the Christmas event on December 6, 2025.

Motion to approve placement of a dumpster at Glen Dyals Park for the Christmas event on December 6, 2025 made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

3. Request Board approval to reallocate \$4,130.00 to the Nutrien Ag Solutions Canal Spraying Invoice 56422249 from overruns in funds for B/Z \$3,765.90 and Clerk of Court \$364.10.

Motion to approve reallocation of \$4,130.00 to the Nutrien Ag Solutions Canal Spraying Invoice 56422249 from overruns in funds for B/Z \$3,765.90 and Clerk of Court \$364.10. made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

4. Request Board approval of Supplemental Agreement # 8 for NE 592 St from US 19 to NE 272 Ave in the amount of \$2,399.00.

Motion to approve Supplemental Agreement # 8 for NE 592 St from US 19 to NE 272 Ave in the amount of \$2,399.00 made by Commissioner Stephenson. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

5. Request Board approval to pay for a new chiller at the jail from the Sheriff Department Impact Fee Fund, noting the cost as \$120,027.55.

Motion to approve paying for the chiller at the jail from the Sheriff Department Impact Fee Fund in the amount of \$120,027.55 made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

(6.) Mr. Jenkins informed the Board that Cross City Mulch and Soil Company had demolished several old buildings and had a contractor haul the resulting materials to the County transfer station, resulting in a solid waste bill that the company felt was high. Mulch-Soil requested that the County negotiate or adjust the billing. Mr. Jenkins noted that Mulch and Soil employs over 100 local employees and contributes significantly to the community, and he recommended granting some relief as a one-time accommodation, emphasizing that any such adjustment must be approved by the Board.

Motion to adjust the solid waste fees for soil and mulch associated with the Cross City Mulch and Soil Company billing (one time accommodation) made by Commissioner Storey. Second by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

Information Items:

1. Reminder the County Annual Safety meeting will be held on Thursday, Dec 18, 2025, 12:00 pm – 3:00 pm at Trail Riders Club.
2. Reminder County Offices will be closed Wednesday, Dec 24, 2025, and Thursday, Dec 25, 2025, in observance of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.
3. Request to close County Offices for a Goal Day – Friday, December 26, 2025.

Motion to approve closing County Offices for a Goal Day Friday, December 26, 2025. made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

Updates by County Attorney Chana Watson on:

Suwannee Post Office / Glen Dyals Park Commission Agreement

1. **Suwannee Post Office relocation project at Glen Dyals Park**, located behind the library/fire station in Suwannee. Attorney Watson stated that the brokerage handling the lease has submitted a commission agreement and is requesting that the Chairman sign it.

Attorney Watson explained that under the agreement, the lessee (the County) will be responsible for paying a total commission of \$2,520 for the term of the lease, with payment due within 30 days of the execution of the lease.

The broker has requested certain documentation, including:

- A copy of the deed to the property. [Speaker] noted that this is an older deed, reflecting that the County was granted several sections of property (originally from a cellulose company/BOCC predecessor). He stated he is not certain whether this deed will fully satisfy the broker's requirements, but it must be provided for their review.
- A completed W-9, which the BOCC office is in the process of preparing.

In response to questions, it was clarified that the County is not conveying the property; this transaction involves a long-term lease only, and the deed copy is requested solely for documentation purposes.

Attorney Watson further explained that the new post office facility is intended to replace the prior facility that was flooded during a hurricane. The Postal Service is currently operating out of a truck, and concept plans for the new building indicate it will be a significant improvement.

Motion to approve the commission agreement with the brokerage for the Suwannee Post Office relocation at Glen Dyals Park and to authorize the Chairman to sign the agreement made by Commissioner Storey. Second by Commissioner Wood.

County Auditor Bids:

Bids for County Auditor services were opened on Monday. Attorney Watson stated that the process went smoothly, despite the difficulty of scheduling a meeting time for the selection committee.

Attorney Watson advised that two firms submitted proposals:

- Mauldin & Jenkins – \$127,000
- James Moore & Company – \$130,000

Attorney Watson explained that the proposals were evaluated and scored by the selection committee, with the following results:

- James Moore & Company – score of 99
- Mauldin & Jenkins – score of 81.57

He noted that both firms appeared to be well-qualified, and the committee did not identify any significant deficiencies in either proposal. However, the selection committee concluded that James Moore & Company was the better fit for the County and recommended them as their first choice.

In response to questions, it was confirmed that:

- All statutory requirements for the solicitation and opening of bids were met, including the reconvening of the meeting after lunch.
- The engagement was properly advertised under the County's new procurement procedures, which establish a selection/review committee.
- Under these procedures, the Board is not required to select the lowest bidder but may select the firm determined to be most qualified, based on the established scoring criteria.

Motion to select James Moore & Company as the County's Auditor in accordance with the selection committee's recommendation made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood.

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

Mrs. Higginbotham announced that the annual “Pay It Forward” breakfast will be held on Saturday, December 13 beginning at 8:00 a.m. Mrs. Higginbotham explained that, as in prior years, participants will visit several local restaurants around town during the event, including The Diner, The Cypress, the Cottage Café in Old Town, and Hardee’s, making a circuit of these establishments as part of the breakfast tradition.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner Wood thanked Mr. Tim Johnson for keeping County operations running smoothly over the long holiday period, noting that everything went well. He further reported that he had spoken with Mr. Michael Gainey to thank him for his work and stated that Mr. Gainey is doing a good job cleaning up roads in District 2, which is looking good.

Commissioner Story echoed earlier comments by Commissioner. Wood, stating that Mr. Gainey is working hard cleaning up roads and that Mr. Johnson is also “on it,” working diligently and providing supporting paperwork for his proposals. Commissioner Story said that the Board would review this information in detail during the workshop later that day and anticipated that several related items would be brought back for consideration at the next Board meeting. He thanked the staff for their efforts.

Commissioner Stephenson stated that everyone is tightening their belts and working to make County operations more efficient, to keep staff on task, and to remain within budget. He then requested prayers for the attendants at Gornto Springs who had been involved in a car accident, noting that one suffered a broken hip and back injury, and that the individual had already previously lost a leg. He emphasized that they are in need of support and prayers.

Commissioner Hatch

Chairman Hatch asked Mrs. Karen VanAernam to come forward and recognized her for receiving a “Volunteer of the Year” award at a conference in Ocala, selected from among approximately 13–14 rural counties in her region. He stated that the award was well deserved, noting that she works extremely hard for the County as a volunteer.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Mrs. Karen VanAernam thanked the Board and provided background on the award. She explained that it was presented at a Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO) conference, which includes 31 designated rural counties divided into three regions, with a Volunteer of the Year selected for each region. She emphasized that the recognition was not about one person, but represented the efforts of many groups and volunteers, including the Restore/City Reform & Renew team, the anti-drug coalition, and numerous local businesses and supporters. She thanked members of the Board and others who wrote letters on her behalf, noting that she had not known about the nomination in advance. She stated that she views herself as a cheerleader for the community, but that the award truly belongs to Dixie County as a whole.

Mrs. VanAernam also reported on several community events and projects. She noted the continued growth of the Turkey Trot event, stating that there were approximately 250 participants in the first year, about 100 the second year, and that they were estimating around 250 participants again this year. She thanked volunteers and sponsors, including Commissioner Osteen, who runs the entire 3.1-mile route each year, and Commissioner Jody Stephenson for providing gift cards and other support that are especially appreciated by the women participants.

She further described the County's Christmas decorations and lighting events. She stated that the original community Christmas tree, purchased with assistance from the anti-drug coalition, has been placed in front of the City Fire Station and remains a very nice tree. A new tree, approximately 18 feet tall with a 3-foot star and pre-lit and decorated, has been installed at City Hall, which she described as "fantastic" and "fabulous." She invited everyone to attend the Christmas events scheduled for the following evening, including:

- A golf cart parade (second year), beginning near Depot Road, looping around the City Hall block, and returning to City Hall; and
- A lighting walk, proceeding from City Hall to:
- The Courthouse, where the courthouse will be lit with participation from County officials,
- The Post Office, where she intends to have the Restore and New team perform the lighting this year, and
- The City Fire Station, with participation by first responders and City and County representatives, culminating in a major tree and building lighting at City Hall at approximately 6:30 p.m. She noted that they are "rolling out the red carpet" and encouraged families to bring children and grandchildren.

Mrs. VanAernam concluded by thanking the Board for providing a Christmas tree for their office and stated that they plan to add more decorations each year. She expressed appreciation to the Board for supporting and encouraging these community efforts, saying that the work could not be done without the Board's backing.

Mrs. Nikki Waits founder and operator of Road to Redemption, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, addressed the Board. She explained that Road to Redemption provides supportive services focused on recovery and re-entry, primarily for individuals facing incarceration, reentry from prison or jail, and transition from rehabilitation programs. Mrs. Waits stated that gaps in services for these individuals often lead to re-offense, and that the core of the program is about hope, helping people change when they are given the right tools, guidance, and support.

Mrs. Waits noted that across Florida, diversion programs and treatment-based court programs significantly reduce rearrest rates compared to traditional sentencing, and that intensive outpatient participants are more likely to remain sober, gain employment, and reunite with their families. She shared that her own recovery and success began through an opportunity for treatment and rehabilitation through the court system, which fuels her passion for providing similar opportunities to others.

Mrs. Waits advised that Road to Redemption is currently operating meetings and sessions in borrowed spaces, including at her father's church, which, while appreciated, do not provide the privacy, consistency, or sense of belonging needed. She stated that the organization's greatest current need is a safe, stable, and permanent space to expand and continue its work. She asked the Board to consider partnering with Road to Redemption by helping identify or provide County space that could be used for program operations, whether as a dedicated site or a shared facility. Mrs. Waits described a vision for a center that would host counseling, life-skills workshops, peer recovery meetings, and family reunification services, serving as a hub where "hope has an address" in Dixie County. She also mentioned intentions to expand services to Department of Juvenile Justice clients and dependency cases, which could help alleviate strain on the foster care system.

Chairman Hatch thanked Nikki for her presentation and expressed support for the program's mission. He stated that the County would look into available space options and indicated that the Board was interested in partnering with Road to Redemption.

Mrs. Higginbotham suggested that there may be a room in the back of the Tax Deed office in the Courthouse, which is a secured location, that could potentially serve as meeting space, subject to schedule coordination with the Tax Deed office.

Commissioner Stephenson noted that, in District 1, once the new fire station is completed, the existing building next to the current fire station will likely become available, and that this facility includes bathrooms and a larger area that could be set up with tables and used for meetings and program activities.

Commissioner Hatch stated that the County would explore these and other options and reiterated the Board's appreciation for Nikki's work and the services Road to Redemption is providing to the community.

Mr. J. D. Noble from Horseshoe Beach addressed the Board and requested updates on several items related to the county park. He first asked whether the permit drawings for the park improvements had been completed. Chairman Hatch advised Mr. Noble to attend the workshop scheduled later that day, where additional details would be discussed, and stated that if further clarification was needed, staff would follow up with him afterward.

Mr. Noble next inquired about the status of the catwalks at the county park and whether the County was at the point of going out to bid for that work. Chairman Hatch responded that he and Mr. John Locklear already had a site visit scheduled at the park for 9:00 a.m. the following morning and invited Mr. Noble to meet them at the park at that time if he was able.

Mr. Noble also asked for an update on the dredging permit, noting that the matter had been on hold for a significant period during the federal government shutdown, and expressing concern that the upcoming holidays could cause additional delays. Commissioner Hatch stated that any delays were not due to the County, and that the County is doing everything possible to move the dredging permit forward.

Mr. Noble commented on the current site conditions, stating that he had reviewed the latest site drawings prepared by Mr. Wood, which he viewed as Phase 1, with notations regarding a potential future Phase 2. He reported that recent negative low tides (-1.2 to -1.3) had left the boat ramp area completely dry. He further noted that the riprap along the ramp area keeps collapsing, likely due to boats digging out the sand, and that the fill material placed by the County continues to settle.

Mr. Noble stated that he had taken photographs of the conditions that morning and would forward them to Mr. Jenkins and Mr. Roy Bass to document the continued settling and erosion in the area.

Mrs. Michelle Schneider, with Empowered to Change, addressed the Board and announced that the organization has opened its first safe house in Dixie County. Mrs. Schneider explained that Empowered to Change provides safe housing and programs for vulnerable citizens and is working in partnership with the court system, probation, and soon the Road to Redemption program. Ms. Schneider stated that the safe house and associated programs are intended to support individuals in crisis and assist them in stabilizing their lives. She expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve the community and for the cooperation of local justice and recovery partners.

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.

APPLICATIONS for SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

Discussion:

Commissioner Hatch went to the property and stated that he spoke with the applicant stating they have a nice high-quality RV, and the applicant is making 100% improvements to the lot and installing an oversized septic system in anticipation of a future home. Following this explanation, a motion was made and seconded, and the board voted in favor of approving the special exception.

20260014 A petition by **Robert and Danita Lotspeich** requesting a Special Exception to be granted, as provided in Section 4.4.5 SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations to permit one recreational vehicle. ("AG" AGRICULTURE), in accordance with the petition dated 10/07/2025 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel #29-10-13-5577-0000-0020 190 SE 636 St, Old Town, FL 32680; 1.00 Acres.

COMMISSION DISTRICT 3 MARK HATCH

LPA Recommended Approval (4-1)

Chris McKenzie voted “No”

Tabled on 11/20/2025 BOCC Meeting

Motion to approve Special Exception for Robert and Danita Lotspeich made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

Mr. Leon Wright advised the Board that the owner of Old Mexico in Steinhatchee, has purchased Grandpa’s Café, had contacted him regarding compliance with state requirements for alcohol sales. Mr. Wright explained that the Board had previously adopted a resolution allowing alcohol sales under the applicable state rule reducing the requirement from 500 square feet and 50 seats. However, the restaurant building itself cannot meet the 50-seat requirement indoors and must rely on outdoor seating to reach that capacity. The owner intends to sell margaritas and tobacco. Mr. Wright noted that the property is zoned Commercial Neighborhood, and the use qualifies as a legitimate restaurant, but the indoor seating alone does not meet the required capacity, and the

County's Land Development Regulations do not specifically address restaurants in this context. He asked the Board whether he should count outdoor seating toward the required seating capacity and sign off on the zoning, or whether the Board wished to discuss the matter further. The Board discussed the issue and, by consensus, agreed that outdoor seating may be counted, consistent with how other establishments are treated. It was noted that the indoor dining area is approximately 26 feet by 26 feet.

Motion to authorize staff to include outdoor seating in the seating capacity count for Old Mexico / Grandpa's Café for purposes of compliance with the previously adopted alcohol sales resolution and related requirements made by Commissioner Storey. Motion seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

Following this item, Mr. Wright informed the Board that the first set of code enforcement cases would be going before the court later that day, concurrent with the Board's workshop, and stated he would return to provide an update if the Board was still in session at the conclusion of the hearing.

Chairman Mark Hatch raised an issue regarding FEMA trailers that some residents wish to purchase. He referenced a specific case involving a woman within the city limits who lost her husband and, after a lengthy delay, received a FEMA unit. He stated that there is a perception that the County is preventing her from purchasing the unit and expressed concern that the County is being blamed for blocking such purchases.

Leon Wright clarified that the County does not have jurisdiction within the City, and that if the property is in a single-family residential zoning district that allows only conventional homes and not mobile homes, the City may deny placement or purchase of a FEMA unit or similar structure. He stated that the County is not blocking anyone from purchasing FEMA **trailers or units**. Mr. Wright further noted that, in Commissioner Wood's district (Old Town), there is a homeowner whose house was damaged and who received a single-wide unit as temporary housing, and that she is currently in the process of purchasing that unit, demonstrating that such purchases are proceeding where zoning allows.

Mr. Wright added that, in cases where a permanent home is repaired, the County does not have a mechanism to permit both a house and an RV on the same site long-term, but that is a separate, future issue.

Chairman Hatch requested that Mr. Wright communicate with the City to ensure they understand that the County is not blocking FEMA trailer purchases, and to clear up any misunderstanding or misattribution of blame to the County on this matter.