

Regular Meeting
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
February 05, 2026 – 10:00 AM

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 394317873#

COMMISSIONERS

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

STAFF

John Jenkins, County Manager
Roy Bass, Assistant County Manager (Not present)
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

01/15/2025 Workshop BOCC Minutes

Motion to approve the 01/15/2025 BOCC Workshop Minutes made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

01/15/2025 Regular (Amended) BOCC Minutes

Motion to approve the 01/15/2025 BOCC Regular (Amended) Minutes made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. 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: Elections – Important Dates

- A candidate workshop will be held February 10, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. at the Supervisor of Elections office for anyone interested in or planning to run for office; those who attended the December workshop do not need to attend.
- For judicial, State Attorney, Public Defender, and other judicial offices:
 - Petition deadline: noon, March 23, 2026.
 - Qualifying period: noon, April 20 through April 24, 2026.
- For state and local offices, U.S. Senator, and U.S. Representative:
 - Qualifying period: noon, June 8 through noon, June 12, 2026.
 - Petition deadline: noon May 11, 2026.

Sheriff Darby Butler: Sheriff's Office – Evidence/Training Building and Jail Facilities Update

- Sheriff Butler thanked the Board, County staff (including John Jenkins and Roy Bass), and the team for their support during Rural County Days and for prioritizing the Sheriff's Office evidence/training building (Phase 3). Sheriff Butler reported that geotechnical testing at the site revealed sinkholes, requiring a grouting process before the slab can be poured. Commissioner Hatch stated that the grouting would be advertised for approximately three weeks, with work expected to be completed around April 1, 2026, after which the County can advertise for construction/erection of the building, subject to permitting. With anticipated state appropriation, Phase 3 is expected to fully complete the building.
- Sheriff Butler further reported that an existing building on the site has been relocated to serve as an annex for a future firing range, allowing the Sheriff's Office to become independent from using the Department of Corrections' range. Sheriff Butler expressed appreciation to the Commission and staff for site preparation and in-kind work that is minimizing project costs.
- Sheriff Butler also provided an informational update on the jail's mechanical systems. The facility was built with two hot water systems (one redundant), and one unit has failed and is antiquated, making parts difficult to obtain. A new system is being installed, and parts from the old unit are being used as needed. He noted there have also been air conditioning issues at the jail. No Board action was requested at this time; Sheriff Butler advised that a more formal proposal or package for the Board's consideration will be forthcoming.

Mayor Ryan Fulford - City/County reports and discussion – Rural County Days, City updates, and tipping fees

- Mayor Fulford of Cross City thanked the Board and community for their strong participation in Rural County Days, noting more than 30 attendees from across Dixie

County representing the city and positive attention statewide (including their matching coral shirts). He also reported a successful Martin Luther King Day event, coordinated by Cross City on the Move and the Achievement Committee, and reminded everyone of the upcoming City Council meeting at 5:00 p.m. at the library next Tuesday, February 9, 2026.

- At the Board’s request, the mayor then outlined the City’s position on landfill tipping fees. He stated that the City believes it is unfair to be charged additional tipping fees by the County because it uses a private hauler (Waste Pro) instead of County trucks. The small handling fee the city retains (about \$5.50 per account) is used primarily to cover the salary of the employee who coordinates garbage service; the City does not consider itself to be making a profit. The mayor stressed he must look out for what is best for Cross City residents and reported he has heard significant support for the City’s position.
- Commissioner Hatch responded that, under the City’s own Code §26-21, garbage service is currently mandatory and has been tied to receiving City water, leading to complaints from residents who want water only and haul their own garbage. Commissioners encouraged the City to revisit and amend this code, so water service is not conditioned on garbage service, especially where customers receive no can or pickup. Commissioner Hatch reviewed the history of the city’s written contract with Waste Pro (beginning around 2007 with a five-year extension, now long expired) and noted that contract places responsibility for tipping fees on the hauler, even though the City has effectively not been paying tipping fees for about 19 years.
- The Board emphasized that the County is not charging the City or City residents directly. Instead, the County is treating Waste Pro as a commercial customer, in the same way the City charges different rates for commercial water and sewer compared to residential accounts. Commissioner Storey explained that accurate billing requires weighing trucks empty and full, but Waste Pro has been running County and City routes on the same rear-load trucks and even dumping commercial two-yard cans on those trucks, which corrupts the residential tonnage figures attributed to the City. Evidence was also presented that partial loads originating in Levy County were being brought into Dixie County rather than dumped in Levy, further skewing the numbers. Commissioners stated this has inflated the apparent City share and insisted that every load crossing the County scales must pay \$50 per ton to allow the solid waste system to at least break even.
- Financially, Commissioner Storey reported that the \$180.00 annual County solid waste assessment generates about \$1.7 million. Of that, approximately \$800,000.00 was paid to Aucilla last year for disposal, leaving roughly \$900,000.00 to cover salaries, equipment, insurance, and all other operating costs—an amount that is causing the system to “go backwards” financially. Using Waste Pro’s estimated volumes (roughly 25–30 tons per week, with a maximum annual exposure of about \$72,000 at \$50/ton), Commissioner Storey argued that any necessary garbage rate increase should be about \$5 per month per account to break even, not \$10.00; a \$10.00 increase, he suggested, would result in the City netting additional revenue.

- From the County’s perspective, tipping fees must be charged to the commercial hauler under County and City ordinances and state law, and with the current operation there is no reliable way to separate County, City, and commercial loads without strict weigh-in/weigh-out procedures. Commissioners repeatedly stated that the real solution lies in fixing the City’s contract with Waste Pro, requiring proper tracking and separation of loads and clearly distinguishing commercial from residential service.
- Several Commissioners suggested that the simplest long-term option would be for the City to exit the garbage business entirely and allow Waste Pro to contract directly with individual customers. Under that model, City residents who want curbside service could sign up directly with the hauler, while those who prefer to haul their own trash could decline service and rely solely on the County roll-off system (for which they already pay the County assessment). Commissioner Hatch noted that City residents are also County residents, all pay the County’s solid waste and fire assessments, and already benefit from both City and County fire/EMS responses; they urged that the two governments continue to work together.
- Mayor Fulford agreed that the contract with Waste Pro must be renegotiated and said he plans to hold a City Meeting with Waste Pro, inviting County officials to attend so both sides can “grill” the hauler on routing and weights. Mayor Fulford reiterated his opposition to forcing residents to take garbage service when they do not want it (calling that government overreach) and said he supports an eventual opt-in/opt-out option, including for customers who wish to keep City water only, subject to City Council action.
- During public comment, JD Nobles, a representative of a 68-unit condo association near Horseshoe Beach explained that, for convenience, their landscaper currently hauls garbage in cans to the nearby roll-off site once a week. Under the new policy, he would have to haul those cans to Cross City and pay a tipping fee. Commissioner Storey responded that the \$180.00 assessment is for residential use, but many of those condos are rented, making them commercial; staff will investigate and likely reclassify such units from residential to commercial solid-waste accounts so that properties generating rental income pay appropriately. The condo representative indicated the association may instead discontinue the shared collection and have each unit owner haul their own garbage to the roll-off site.
- Additional citizens (Shelly Cannon, Beneatha Lake) commented on the impact of potential increases and on mandatory City garbage service. Ms. Cannon living just outside the City but receiving City water and garbage stated she understands and accepts tipping fees after the Board’s explanation, but reported that when she first obtained water, she was told she must pay for garbage or would not receive water. Ms. Cannon supported the Mayor’s efforts to allow residents to opt out of garbage service, noting she is capable of hauling trash to County roll-off sites she already pays for via the assessment. Ms. Beneatha Lake highlighted significant concern among older and low-income residents about possible \$10–\$15 monthly increases, and confusion over what a “tipping fee” is (some believing it was a per-pickup payment to the driver). She acknowledged

that the Mayor inherited existing contractual and code provisions and urged continued cooperation.

- Commissioners responded that the County is working to collect all proper revenues to keep the system solvent and has assigned each Commissioner to a committee role, with Commissioner Storey overseeing Solid Waste. They noted that research over the past several months shows the County should have been enforcing these provisions all along.
- Commissioner Hatch concluded the item by emphasizing that City and County are “one” community, that every City resident is also a County resident, and that the County will continue to support the City’s major projects, including water and sewer expansion, maintenance yard improvements, the evidence building, and economic development wins. The Mayor agreed, and both parties affirmed they will not allow a disagreement over garbage and tipping fees to undermine the broader City–County partnership or ongoing joint successes.

Karen Ganus Ingress/Egress Easement – Ward Cemetery Road (Ganus property)

Ms. Karen Ganus requested a small easement across a narrow strip of County right-of-way on Ward Cemetery Road (634 NE 696th St.) to provide **legal ingress and egress** to her residence, where she and her husband have lived for approximately 20 years. Staff and the Commissioner Hatch confirmed the request affects only access across existing County right-of-way.

- On motion by **Commissioner Storey** and second by **Commissioner Osteen**, the Board **approved granting an ingress/egress easement** to Mr. and Mrs. Ganus, with the width to conform to County standards (to be adjusted from the originally requested 20' to **approximately 22–30 feet**, sufficient for emergency vehicle access). Staff will correct the dimensions on the easement document, obtain signatures, and return the executed easement to Mrs. Ganus.

Motion to approve ingress/egress easement to conform with County Standards made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Chief Brown was not present, and Chief Garner spoke earlier on the agenda so he could attend another meeting.

Emergency Management – drought/burn ban outlook and Air Methods COPCN

The Emergency Management Chief reported that the Keetch–Byram Drought Index (KBDI) is currently around 520, conditions are drying out, and if the area does not receive additional rain in the next 30–60 days, staff may return to the Board to request a local burn ban. He clarified that no burn ban is currently in effect.

He then requested Board approval of a Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity (COPCN) for Air Methods to establish a temporary air medical helicopter base at the Old Town helipad. Air Methods is building a permanent facility in Levy County but has encountered engineering delays and wishes to base an aircraft temporarily in Dixie County. The base will be for air transport only (no ground transport), with crew quarters in existing County building space,

and will improve response times for critical patients (strokes, trauma, cardiac, etc.) in Dixie and surrounding areas.

On motion by Commissioner Osteen, seconded by Commissioner Wood, the Board approved issuing the COPCN to Air Methods for a two-year term, renewable every two years. It was clarified that:

- This does not alter current County EMS operations; it only allows EMS to hand off patients to a helicopter already in-county rather than having to request services from other providers outside of the county.
- Air Methods already holds COPCNs in other counties; each county must approve its own.
- Air Methods will provide a template COPCN and rental/lease contract for the use of approximately 1,800 sq. ft. of station space and the helipad.

Staff will forward the draft rental/lease agreement (including compensation to the County) to the County Attorney and County Manager for review and will bring the final contract back to the Board at a subsequent meeting (target by mid-March) for approval.

Motion to approve issuing the COPCN to Air Methods for a two-year term, renewable every two years by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

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

Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition – Environmental Scan Report

Ms. Sheila Frierson reported that the Coalition conducts an annual Environmental Scan of local retail outlets (primarily convenience/gas stores; pharmacies are reviewed separately) to see what products are sold and how they are advertised, with a focus on items that may entice youth.

From the 2024 scan of 27 stores:

- 33% sold CBD/THC-related products in infused drinks and energy drinks.
- Of those, 75% carried products containing over 400 mg of THC per package, which she characterized as extremely high.
- Only 50% of those stores posted any warnings that such products are harmful to children or pets.

Ms. Frierson noted that Coalition members have visited store owners to discuss these concerns; one prominent local store has removed the highlighted products after those conversations. She encouraged continued community engagement with retailers to reduce youth exposure to harmful products. She provided the Board with a summary sheet and sample scan form and offered additional copies to anyone interested.

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Not present

KAREN VANAERNAM, DIXIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Liaison Report

Mrs. Karen VanAernam, Board-appointed Economic Development Liaison, provided an update on current initiatives:

- **Canal dredging – Horseshoe Beach and Suwannee:** All required Army Corps and FDEP permits have been obtained; the project is now out to bid and should proceed soon.
- **McGriff Pass dredging:** The team has been working on this needed dredge for over 20 years, with urgency increased by three recent hurricanes. An advocacy letter outlining five key safety

and access reasons for the project has been prepared and shared with legislative contacts, including Representative Shoaf and Senator Corey Simon's office. Senator Simon's staff indicated they are looking to fund several regional dredging projects, including this one, and requested ballpark cost figures (expected to be in the several-million-dollar range).

- **Industrial park:** Part of a 50-acre tract has been leased to Circularity; efforts continue to market and lease the remaining acreage to attract additional industry.
- **Business recognition:** The Economic Development Team will resume monthly business recognition next month to highlight local businesses in both the City and County.

Mrs. VanAernam also promoted upcoming revitalization and economic development events:

- A joint City–County meeting will be held Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. at the library.
- On Wednesday, February 11, 2026, from 12:00–1:30 p.m., Shellie Phelps a nationally recognized downtown revitalization expert (who works with HGTV and similar projects) will speak in Cross City about strategies to reactivate vacant/boarded buildings and recruit businesses. The event is open to the community, held during Rotary time (but not limited to Rotarians), with a bag lunch provided.
- Ms. Phelps will give a shorter presentation at the Chamber of Commerce meeting on Thursday, February 12, 2026.

Mrs. VanAernam noted that Duke Energy is sponsoring most of the speaker's fee; the Restore/Renew team and Anti-Drug Coalition are covering lodging. The speaker previously visited Dixie County in December 2025, toured Dixie Mainline, Suwannee, and Horseshoe Beach, and expressed strong enthusiasm for the County's potential. Mrs. VanAernam encouraged broad community attendance to build momentum for countywide revitalization and economic development.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Phil Bishop - Engineer's Project Update

- Mr. Bishop appeared in Greg Bailey's absence to provide project updates and answer questions.
- **Sheriff's Evidence Building – Ground Improvement (Grouting):**
 - Board paused the report to take action on the needed grouting/soil modification.
 - Motion to proceed with/advertise the grouting work for the sheriff's evidence building site: motion by David, second by Jamie, passed unanimously.
- **CR 351 Project:**
 - Contractor is in the final stages of shoulder dressing and patching.
 - Anticipated completion in approximately two weeks.
 - Project has had some issues but they have been worked through with the contractor and engineer; expected to be a good project when finished.
- **95th & 97th CDBG Paving Projects:**
 - Contractor will move to these projects (and some city projects) immediately after completing CR 351.
- **Fire Stations (Stations 3 and 6):**
 - Station 3: Under construction; a couple of issues are being worked through.
 - Station 6: Construction has not yet started; county is working through some issues with the contractor.

No further action requested; informational update only after the grouting motion.

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

FDOT / Project Update

- Mr. Locklear reported his office has moved nearby, and he is working on getting signage in place.
- SR 349 Project:
 - Paving is complete.
 - Contractor will now begin work on guardrails and related roadside items; anticipated duration of approximately five weeks.
- Suwannee & Horseshoe Dredging Project:
 - Bid due date is February 13; 23 contractors have bid packages which should provide good competition.
 - In response to a commissioner’s question, it was confirmed that dredged material from Suwannee canals will not be placed at the boat ramp/dry-out area; it will be hauled directly to the permitted Horseshoe disposal location.
- No further board action requested, informational update only.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Not present

RAELYNN BROWNELL, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER

Not present

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Code Enforcement Report – Steve Freeman

- **Code Enforcement Hearing:**
 - Previously scheduled hearing for this afternoon is being rescheduled.
 - New date is pending; Steve will notify the board when confirmed and a new notice sign will be posted.
- **Crown Property (Suwannee):**
 - Property has been sold (unless the sale falls through).
 - New owner has agreed to assume liability and complete demolition/cleanup of remaining structures.
- **Property Behind Methodist Church:**
 - Mr. Freeman contacted a new DEP representative and sent the full case file, including prior court documentation.
 - DEP indicated they will work to expedite the case.
- **Additional follow-up:** Mr. Freeman will contact a party referenced by Mr. Jenkins regarding letters reportedly going to Jacksonville and update the Board once clarified.

MICHAEL GAINEY, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Road Department – Rock Purchase

- Report that Bobby VanAernam supplied 95 loads of rock at a total cost of \$5,477.00. County Manager John Jenkins requested board approval due to this being over the allowed threshold of his spending amounts.

Motion to approve payment of \$5,477.00 to Bobby VanAernam made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

Solid Waste – Hazardous Materials Incident at Transfer Station

Mr. Tim Johnson reported that on January 21 a hazardous chemical container was unknowingly delivered to the County transfer station, spilled during dumping, and forced evacuation and closure of the site. Emergency Management (Chief Garner and team) and HazMat responded promptly. A non-County employee who was dumping a load at the time suffered lung and vision issues and has required multiple hospital visits; the hauling company’s driver was also affected.

The material is believed to have come from a single can placed in a dumpster and hauled by a private hauler. The County has documented the incident and, with County Attorney Watson’s guidance, will seek cost recovery from the responsible generator and/or hauler, including cleanup contractor costs, HazMat response, site closure, and overtime. The Board also noted potential liability considerations for another private company whose employee was on site at the time.

Mr. Johnson advised that the cleanup invoice from the Gainesville response team is expected within 2–6 weeks, at which point recovery efforts will proceed. Commissioners commended Mr. Johnson and staff for excellent record-keeping and noted significant improvements at the transfer station compared to prior years.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

Planning & Zoning / RV Regulations and Other Updates

- Mr. Wright reported receiving many calls about recent RV-related changes, with both support and questions.
- Mr. Wright clarified that an amendment to the land development code regarding RVs has been sent to an outside planning service for full vetting and review (will not be drafted solely in-house).
 - The amended ordinance will be advertised and brought back to the Board next month for the standard two readings.
- Upcoming LPA meeting, February 12, 2026, at 10:00 a.m. will still include several RV special exception applications already in process; applicants will be allowed to complete those cases.
- Mr. Wright addressed hurricane-related concerns:
 - Noted there is an existing Florida Statute allowing a temporary shelter (including RV) for up to 36 months (three) when a home is damaged in a named storm.
 - County has already issued several such temporary housing permits.
- Additional update: Mr. Wright announced that the local hardware store in Suwannee is expected to reopen “tomorrow.”

APPLICATIONS for SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

NA

APPLICATIONS FOR VARIANCES

NA

SCOTT PENDARVIS, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

IT / Cybersecurity and Telecommunications Update

Mr. Pendarvis reported:

- A tabletop exercise to satisfy the County's annual Cybersecurity Policy review has been scheduled at the EOC for May 5 in coordination with the Florida Association of County's (FAC). He requested that participation be made mandatory for all administrative staff; the County Manager confirmed staff can handle that administratively without Board action.
- Mr. Pendarvis is updating cybersecurity policies, including restrictions on using public Wi-Fi with County devices after a recent issue, and is working with the County's managed service provider (Atris) to ensure proper language. He will attend a cybersecurity framework class through Cyber Florida next month to further strengthen policy development.
- The County has received notice from SunCom that AT&T will decommission analog (copper) lines in June of this year, moving the deadline up by a year. This affects fax lines and other analog circuits, particularly at the jail and library.
 - Mr. Pendarvis is already coordinating with Uniti to migrate fax and voice services where fiber/VoIP is available.
 - The library conversion is relatively straightforward due to its location on US-19.
 - The jail is more complex; an initial quote for a new fiber circuit (including phone service) was about \$1,800 per month, which he is working to reduce by exploring AT&T fiber under SunCom contract and then riding Uniti VoIP over that circuit. This would also address the jail's current 20 Mbps circuit, which he described as inadequate and overpriced.
- Mr. Pendarvis emphasized that, while phone numbers will be retained, the County must move all remaining services off copper lines within the shortened timeframe. Special attention will be given to ensure required fax capability for the Supervisor of Elections and other critical offices.

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Nothing to present at this time.

HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Not present – Martha McCaskill relayed a message reminding everyone that the Suwannee River Fair will run from February 28 through March 18, 2026, with March 18 being the sale day. Commissioners were asked to keep these dates in mind for budgeting and participation purposes.

ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

Not present

JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER

Action Items:

1. Request Board approval of the revised Dixie County Purchasing Policy Manual 2026 as presented.

Motion to approve the revised Dixie County Purchasing Policy Manual 2026 as presented made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

2. Request Board approval to accept the SHIP LHAP (Local Housing Assistance Plan) for 2026 – 2029 as presented.

Motion to accept the SHIP LHAP (Local Housing Assistance Plan) for 2026 – 2029 as presented made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

3. Request Board approval to execute Resolution 2026-01 in support of the SHIP LHAP (Local Housing Assistance Plan) for 2026 – 2029.

Motion to execute Resolution 2026-01 in support of the SHIP LHAP (Local Housing Assistance Plan) for 2026 – 2029 made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

4. Request Board approval of the SHIP Rehab Reimbursement for Josee Demarco in the amount of \$24,606.00.

Motion to approve the SHIP Rehab Reimbursement for Josee Demarco in the amount of \$24,606.00 made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved

5. Request Board approval of the SHIP Demo/Reconstruction Reimbursement in the amount of \$12,077.55 for Peter Bregenzer.

Motion to approve the SHIP Demo/Reconstruction Reimbursement in the amount of \$12,077.55 for Peter Bregenzer made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

6. Request Board approval to sign a letter of support for Road 2 Redemption, Inc., and the development of the Intensive Outpatient (IOP) Court Diversion Program to serve Dixie and surrounding rural communities.

Motion to sign a letter of support for Road 2 Redemption, Inc., and the development of the Intensive Outpatient (IOP) Court Diversion Program made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved

7. Request Board approval for the County Manager, John Jenkins, to attend the 2026 County Leadership Academy on April 28 – May 1, 2026, in St. Petersburg, FL.

Motion to approve the County Manager, John Jenkins, to attend the 2026 County Leadership Academy, made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

8. Request Board approval of the Proclamation for the Hazardous Material Awareness Week February 23 – March 1, 2026.

Motion to approve the Proclamation for the Hazardous Material Awareness Week February 23 – March 1, 2026, made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

Information Items:

1. Reminder County Offices will be closed Monday, February 16, 2026, in observance of President’s Day.
2. FWC Debris Assessment (Horseshoe Beach):
 - a. Mr. Jenkins reported receiving an email from Chris Wynn (FWC) regarding storm debris near Horseshoe.
 - b. FWC staff flew a drone just before the holidays and are coordinating with DEP to determine the best approach for debris removal in the environmentally sensitive area.
 - c. FWC anticipates hiring a contractor and the local biologist (Cade Chaney) will provide a follow-up update.
 - d. Commissioner Hatch directed staff to stay on top of the issue due to unsightly conditions.

CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

Seawall/Property Discussion

- Horseshoe Seawall / “Rom” Property Encroachment Question:
 - Attorney Watson reported she is not yet convinced there is an encroachment issue but noted the Board had inquired because the owner indicated he might sell after receiving FEMA reimbursement.
 - Recommended that, if the matter arises again, the county should:
 - Obtain a survey to confirm boundaries, and
 - Check for any existing easements or grant records, as similar shoreline/seawall work (e.g., Suwannee seawall) was done with grant funds and included a maintenance easement.
 - Chairman agreed and suggested looking specifically for a maintenance easement on that property based on past practice with grant-funded projects.
- No board action taken; informational guidance only.

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

Clerk’s Office – Website / Minutes Posting Update

Ms. Higginbotham reported that, in order to become ADA compliant, the County changed website providers. The new website is now active and functioning well, and Ms. Christie Zander has posted the December 2025 and January 2026 Board minutes. Future minutes will continue to be posted online as they are approved.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioners' Comments

- **Commissioner Wood:**
 - Stated that prior discussion covered his intended remarks.
- **Commissioner Storey:**
 - Requested prayers for the Howell family following the passing of Mr. Lyndell Howell.
 - Noted many county residents are ill and asked everyone to keep one another in prayer.
- **Commissioner Osteen:**
 - Commented positively on the county's DTRAC frisbee golf activities, noting kids are off computers and engaged in outdoor recreation.
 - Reported an update from Don Sheffield regarding Johnson's Bakery project in Cross City: equipment has been built and delivered; training will be conducted and an opening day event will be scheduled, with the Board and local newspaper to be invited.
- **Chairman's Additional Comments (meeting schedule & well wishes):**
 - Commissioner Hatch mentioned increased interest and a friendly challenge between Jena and Suwannee groups in pickleball, praising the value of county parks for both youth and adults.
 - Commissioner Hatch clarified the Board's regular meeting schedule has long been the first and third Thursdays each month, with a morning meeting on the first Thursday and an evening meeting on the third Thursday; this pattern has been in place for over 30 years and is reaffirmed annually to avoid confusion.
 - Asked for continued prayers for Commissioner Stephenson, noting he is dealing with health issues but is expected to recover.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Public Comment – Suwannee Pavilion (Former Fish House)

Mr. Joseph Lander, speaking on behalf of Mr. Jim Ward, informed the Board that Mr. Ward, owner of the former fish house in Suwannee (now used as a community pavilion), has decided not to sell the property to the County and will instead continue to make it available for public use. The pavilion is used for community activities, storm relief staging, fishing, family reunions, picnics, and similar events.

Mr. Ward asked that the Board and community be assured it is his intent to maintain the facility for community use as in the past, and he expressed appreciation for the County's prior discussions and

consideration. Commissioner Hatch thanked Mr. Ward (via Mr. Lander), praised his long-standing generosity, and asked that the public keep Mr. Ward in their thoughts and prayers as he deals with health issues.

Public Comment – JD Nobles (Horseshoe Beach)

- Reminded Board of the upcoming collaborative County–Horseshoe Beach meeting on Monday February 9, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.
- Requested that the county be prepared to discuss:
 - Status and planning for the county park in Horseshoe Beach, including walkways to the docks to improve safety for boaters.
 - Updates on storm repair projects and their planning/start timelines, including working waterfront issues.
- Asked County Manager John Jenkins for a copy of the FWC letter on Horseshoe debris to share at the evening Horseshoe meeting; staff indicated they can provide it and noted there will be good news for Horseshoe.

Additional Public Comment

- A member of the public Mr. Chris McKenzie announced having two tickets available for the “Taste of the Nature Coast” fundraiser at the Fanning Springs Pavilion benefiting the Tri-County Community Resource Center, inviting anyone interested to attend.

ADJOURN

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