

**Regular Meeting
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
March 19, 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 1 – Not Present
Daniel Wood, District 2
Jamie Storey, District 4, Vice Chairman – Not Present
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

District Three School Board Member John Driggers led the Invocation and Commissioner Wood led the Pledge to the American Flag.

• **Welcome & Attendance Note**

- Commissioner Hatch welcomed everyone to the Board of County Commissioners meeting.
- Noted that Commissioner Storey was attending a Suwannee River Water Management District meeting in Live Oak representing the county.
- Commissioner Hatch reported that Commissioner Stephenson had successful surgery and remained in the hospital recovering; requested prayers for both Commissioner Storey (travel) and Commissioner Stephenson (healing).

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

03/05/2026 BOCC RM Minutes

Motion to approve the 03/05/2026 BOCC Regular Meeting Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

VOUCHER APPROVAL

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

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS/ CITY OFFICIALS

Supervisor of Elections Darbi Chaires

- **Topic:** Political sign ordinance & state electioneering buffer
 - Mrs. Chaires explained that the current county sign ordinance designates specific sign locations by precinct, based on an older 100-foot buffer.
 - State law has since changed to a 150-foot buffer from the polling place, which now conflicts with the local ordinance.
 - Primary concern: First District community building site (main sign location) is now entirely within 150 feet and cannot be used under state law.
 - Additional issues identified:
 - 55A precinct: Portions of the designated sign area fall within 150 feet.
 - Suwannee precinct: Similar concerns, depending on facility used (fire station, library, etc.).
 - Proposed steps:
 - Mark 150-foot boundaries at polling locations (using aerial imagery and physical markers).
 - Consider updating list of county properties where political signs are allowed, including:
 - Corner by the prison road (commonly used but not on the current list).
 - Last three parking spots at the Supervisor of Elections office (outside the 150-foot buffer).
 - Mrs. Chaires also raised a wiring issue at the elections office:
 - Building has two main breakers; issues arose during hurricanes, including a generator component melting.
 - Mrs. Chaires has been told “they are working on it” but no recent update; requested the matter be addressed before June (hurricane and election season).

SCOTT WHEELER – VIA TELEPHONE – LETTER OF SUPPORT REQUEST

Lawrence Welk Show 70th Anniversary

- Speaker: Mr. Scott Walker
- Request: Letter of support from the Commission recognizing the 70th anniversary of the national debut of the Lawrence Welk Show.
 - Goal: Build national/local recognition to support a potential symbolic congressional resolution honoring the show's positive cultural and musical contributions and its family-friendly entertainment.
 - Not requesting funding—only a letter of support.
 - Has already received recognition letters from 80 counties nationwide, including Hillsborough County, FL.
- Board Discussion / Action:
 - Martha McCaskill confirmed receipt of the draft letter language and examples from other counties.
 - Commissioners expressed support and familiarity with the show.

Motion to sign a Letter of Support made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

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

Not Present

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

- Speaker: Ms. Kay McCallister (Tourism) and Victor Blanco (Florida Sea Grant)
- Tourism & Events Updates:
 - Mrs. McCallister reported that the Suwannee Arts & Nature Festival held the previous Saturday was very successful, with strong attendance from Cross City residents; Mrs. McCallister thanked everyone for their support.
 - Mrs. McCallister noted that the Horseshoe Beach Festival also had a good turnout.
 - Upcoming events on March 28:
 - A Community Easter Egg Hunt (with additional details to be provided by Karen VanAernam).
 - The Hill Heritage Festival is on the same day.
- Regional Economic & Environmental Issues:
 - Mrs. McCallister stated she attended a North Florida regional tourism/economic meeting involving 14 counties.
 - Mrs. McCallister reported that the group passed a resolution opposing the Water First North Florida Aquifer Recharge Project.
 - Mrs. McCallister noted the County was planning to discuss that project.
 - Mrs. McCallister stated she has brought 12 letters of support related to Florida Sea Grant projects, including from chambers, businesses, marinas, and fishing captains.
- Artificial Reef / Sea Grant Project:

- Victor Blanco - UF/IFAS Extension in Taylor County (Florida Sea Grant):
 - Mr. Blanco has collected 12 letters of support from chambers, businesses, marinas, fishing captains, Gainesville Offshore Fishing Club, Anderson Columbia environmental manager, and local diving community.
 - Mr. Blanco described technical plan to survey about 4,000–8,000 linear feet using DPVs (diver propulsion vehicles) and special gas mixes due to deeper dives.
 - Mr. Blanco noted discussions at the Southwest Artificial Reef Workshop; methodology aligned with FWC and BOCC expectations.
 - Mr. Blanco visited Taylor County BOCC; they unanimously agreed to provide a support letter for next year’s application.
 - Mr. Blanco clarified the \$9,000 requested amount remains unchanged; this is detailed in itemized proposal.

- **Board Comment:**
 - Commissioner Hatch confirmed the Board had already voted at a prior meeting to sign the application form and will get signature finalized.
 - No objections raised.

KAREN VANAERNAM, DIXIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development – Circularity Two Biochar Project

- Speaker: Karen VanAernam (Economic Development), with Dammon Frecker (Circularity2 / by phone).
- Biochar Facility Update:
 - Circularity2 is developing a biochar/advanced biocarbon plant in the County industrial park behind Cross City Lumber.
 - Mr. Dammon Frecker’s update:
 - Project has been in development over a year.
 - Feedstock: low-grade Southern Yellow Pine and sawmill residuals from regional suppliers; goal is to produce a coal replacement for industrial uses.
 - Lease with Dixie County is in place; wood supply agreements secured; process design is about 95% complete.
 - Extensive site environmental and engineering studies completed:
 - Wetland delineation
 - Environmental Site Assessment
 - Topographic survey
 - Habitat survey
 - Geotechnical analysis
 - No “fatal flaws” identified; site deemed very suitable.
 - Working on stormwater system design and permitting for project approvals.

- Reported excess thermal energy will be available, potentially supporting nearby industrial users or future tenants in the park.
- Customer interest:
 - Significant domestic and international interest in product.
 - Currently providing test samples; expects to have offtake agreements in place by mid-year.
- Schedule: Hoping to begin construction in the 3rd quarter of this year.
- Board Q&A:
 - Commissioner Hatch emphasized the local timber industry is ready to supply the facility.
 - Mr. Kimbo VanAernam asked if there were any customers ready to buy the product.
 - Mr. Frecker confirmed they have strong interest from both domestic and international customers, are testing product samples, and are receiving very positive feedback.
 - Mr. Frecker stated they expect to have long-term offtake agreements in place by about mid-year.
 - Mr. John Driggers asked about construction start and customer commitments; Mr. Frecker confirmed both are progressing and targeted for mid-year.
- Future Co-Tenant / Good Neighbor Concept:
 - Mrs. VanAernam stated Circularity2 is leasing approximately half of the 50-acre tract; County's priority is to secure a compatible second tenant on the remaining acreage.
 - Mr. Frecker agreed they wish to be a good neighbor and support additional economic development, including potential sharing of thermal energy if appropriate.

Downtown Revitalization / Community Consultant Program

- **Speaker: Karen VanAernam**
- **North Florida Economic Development Partnership (NFEDP) Pilot:**
 - NFEDP (15-county rural region) launched a pilot project with nationally recognized community consultant Shellie Phelps (works with HGTV and similar community revitalization efforts).
 - Dixie County was selected as one of four counties to participate.
 - Scope:
 - Mrs. Phelps will work 3 days/month for 1 year (March–next March), “boots on the ground” in Dixie County.
 - Focus: Revitalization of downtown areas, primarily US-19 in Cross City, with additional work in Old Town (US-19) and along SR 349 toward Suwannee.
 - Activities include stakeholder meetings with downtown business and property owners and broader community engagement.
 - Funding Structure:

- NFEDP is funding the bulk of the consultant’s costs; participating counties are asked to show “skin in the game.”
- Total local contribution target: \$20,000, to be shared among:
 - Cross City Restore & Renew
 - Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition
 - Town of Cross City
 - Chamber, Roy Bass (County Manager’s office), and other partners.
- Request to BOCC:
 - Mrs. VanAernam requested a \$2,500 commitment from Dixie County toward the project.

Motion to allocate \$2,500 toward the NFEDP/Shellie Phelps revitalization initiative made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

- **Speaker: Kellan Bailey**

Fire Stations & Road Projects

- Fire Station 3:
 - Progressing with electrical, mechanical, and interior work; building is being dried-in.
- Fire Station 6:
 - Foundation poured on the day of the meeting.
 - Building delivery scheduled for first week of April; site work ongoing.
- CR 95th Street & 97th Street Road Project:
 - Paving completed; working on shoulders, striping, signage, and final clean-up.
 - Resident in audience expressed appreciation for improvements.
- CR 351 Project:
 - Essentially complete, with only minor sign panel changes outstanding.

Sheriff’s Office Evidence Building – Foundation Grouting

- Bids:
 - Opened for foundation grouting for the evidence building.
 - Only one bid received: Foundation Professionals for \$560,750.
 - There was a form filled out incorrectly in the bid package; the County Attorney Watson indicated this could be corrected before award, subject to Board’s decision.
- Cost Context:
 - Engineer explained:
 - The price reflects a “worst-case” quantity assumption for grout and pipe, due to the subsurface void and karst conditions.
 - Actual cost is expected to be less if the void fills more quickly than the worst-case estimate; quantities will be monitored throughout construction.

- Original budget estimate was about half the bid amount, but that was based on more optimistic assumptions about void size and grout volume.

Motion to accept bid from Foundation Professionals for up to \$560,750 made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

Motion contingent on correction of bid form and attorney approval:

- Engineer will send corrected form to Attorney Watson for review and proceed once approved.

Water Line / Town & Beach Grant

- Water Line Project (Town of Horseshoe Beach):
 - FDEP grant has been submitted.
 - Administrative/preliminary work is expected to begin soon; goal is to complete by grant deadline.

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

Representative for Locklear & Associates - Jered Lizotte

Airport Expansion / Rural Infrastructure Fund Grant

- Presenter: Mary Jensen, Locklear & Associates (airport consultant)
- Grant: Florida Dept. of Commerce – Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF), Grant D0304
- Purpose: Planning and preparation for expansion of facilities at the Cross City Airport and related access roads.

Grant Components

- Task 1 – Survey:
 - Airport property and road corridors surveyed; 100% complete.
- Task 2 – Feasibility Study (~75% complete):
 - Evaluates development of county-owned land near the airport for additional hangars.
 - Two county-owned sites analyzed:
 - 76-acre parcel at end of runway:
 - Pros: large site, runway-adjacent.
 - Cons: FAA safety rules restrict development on ~25% of parcel; no direct access to NE 255th St (would require buying easement/land); high water table requiring a large stormwater pond.
 - 44-acre parcel along side of runway (three parcels combined):
 - Pros: better access to NE 255th St, near existing utilities, good runway adjacency, large enough for multiple hangars.
 - Selected by staff and consultant as preferred site, with emphasis on the front 11-acre portion along NE 255th St.
 - Using the airport’s waiting list (20 aircraft, 17 wanting T-hangars), a conceptual plan was prepared for the 11-acre parcel:

- Four 8-unit nested T-hangar blocks (32 T-hangars total) and four box hangars.
- Full “Phase 1” build-out of that 11-acre concept (all 32 T-hangars, 4 box hangars, and full infrastructure) is estimated at about \$11.2 million (construction plus soft costs).
- To make funding more attainable, Phase 1 was broken into four sub-phases (1A–1D):
 - Phase 1A (one 8-unit T-hangar + one box hangar + major infrastructure) estimated at about \$4 million.
 - Other sub-phases (1B–1D) range from ~\$1.8M to ~\$3.3M each.
- Consultant noted there is room to reduce costs (e.g., fewer units, using existing sewer instead of septic).
- Recommendation:
 - Place the hangar project on the County’s Capital Improvement Plan.
 - Seek grant funding first for detailed engineering and then for construction of an initial phase.
- Task 3 – Engineering & Permitting (≈72% complete):
 1. NE 241st Street – Airport Access Road Widening/Resurfacing
 - Existing: one half of the road is wide enough (11' lanes), the other half is narrow (~10' lanes).
 - Design:
 - Resurface adequate half with 1.5" asphalt and 2' shoulders.
 - Widen narrow half to full 11' lanes, add safety edge and 2' shoulders.
 - Estimated costs:
 - Construction approx. \$834,000; total with contingencies and soft costs approx. \$1.13 million.
 2. NE 255th Street Driveway – Access to 11-acre Parcel
 - New driveway crossing canal to the 11-acre hangar site.
 - Design includes multiple 48" reinforced concrete pipes with headwalls, 12' travel lanes, 10' shoulders, and safety edge for heavy truck access.
 - Estimated total cost approx. \$453,000.

Schedule & Next Steps

- 60% plans submitted to County in February.
- 90% plans expected April; final plans & permits targeted for June.
- Grant expiration is December, allowing time to complete deliverables.
- County will later need to apply for construction funding for NE 241st, the NE 255th driveway, and any hangar phase it chooses to pursue.
- During the presentation Mrs. Kelly Chaires asked whether the 11-acre parcel near the airport being discussed was the one with multiple canals and flooding issues.
- The consultant clarified it was **not** that parcel and pointed out on the map that the subject **11-acre site** lies just across a small bridge over the canal, accessed from the **prison road (NE 255th Street)**, adjacent to the airport.

No formal motion was recorded specific to her presentation; the Board received the report and directed staff and the consultant to continue with design, permitting, and grant-seeking consistent with the plan presented.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

The library will host a “Author’s Night” on April 9, 2026, at 5:30 P.M. Special guests will Be Mr. Lance Walker and Mr. Ed Braddy, both are local authors.

RAELYNN BROWNELL, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER

Not Present

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Nothing to present at this time.

MICHAEL GAINNEY, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Road Department Update (Charlie Kirk / Horseshoe / Jena / Jena Road)

Mr. Gainey reported that the Charlie Kirk signs have been installed and “look really good.” They further stated that the Horseshoe and Jena roll-off sites have been milled, and that work has begun on shoulder work on SW Hwy 358 the Jena Road, noting that the road “has never looked as good” and that they are now receiving more calls with compliments than complaints.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

- Mr. Johnson reminded everyone of the toxic roundup event on Saturday at Old Town Fire Station 2, from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Mr. Johnson noted the helipad at the Old Town fire station is now in use.
- Mr. Johnson reported that many employees have questions about FRS retirement, and he cannot adequately answer them.
- Mr. Johnson asked for an FRS seminar or webinar so employees can better understand their options, noting that each employee’s retirement situation is different.
- It was reported that Angie Crowley (HR) has contacted FRS to arrange a workshop and has emailed links to online meetings for employees who wish to view them.
- Commissioner Hatch agreed it would be good to have an in-person session (possibly with a luncheon) because some employees are not comfortable with or do not use the internet.
- It was mentioned that Smith’s previously held an FRS explanation session followed by optional one-on-one meetings, which was very informative.
- There was interest in having Mr. Smith provide input again, and the School Board’s FRS practices might also be shared at a future seminar.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

APPLICATIONS for SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS

RESOLUTION NO. PZ/LPA LDR 2026-13

A RESOLUTION OF THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA, AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 90-04, THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, AS AMENDED, RELATING TO A TEXT AMENDMENT TO THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, PURSUANT TO AN APPLICATION BY THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA; THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA, SERVING AS THE LOCAL PLANNING AGENCY OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA; RECOMMENDING TO THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF DIXIE COUNTY, FLORIDA, APPROVAL OF AN AMENDMENT TO THE DIXIE COUNTY LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS; AMENDING SECTION 4.3.5 ENTITLED "SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS"; AMENDING SECTION 4.4.5 ENTITLED "SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS"; AMENDING SECTION 4.7.5 ENTITLED "SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS"; REPEALING ALL RESOLUTIONS IN CONFLICT; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

- The amendment:
 - **Amends Sections 4.3.5, 4.4.5, and 4.7.5, each entitled "Special Exceptions."**
 - **Removes RV special exceptions** from the Land Development Regulations.
 - **Repeals** all resolutions in conflict and provides for an effective date.
- The Local Planning Agency recommended approval of the amendment.
- Attorney Mr. Stokes requested that the Board hold two BOCC meetings on this matter; this meeting constituted the first hearing.
- Commissioner Hatch asked if there were questions from the audience; no questions or comments were received.

APPLICATIONS FOR VARIANCES

20260247 A petition by **John Corbin** requesting a variance for a Set back from 25 ft to 5 for AG pole barn to be granted, as provided in 4.3.7 ESA subparagraph (1) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations in accordance with section 12.3 VARIANCE PROCEDURES., in accordance with the petition dated 02/02/2026 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 24-09-13-0000-4414-0102 6104 NE 349 AVE; 12.81. COMMISSION DISTRICT 1 JODY STEPHENSON - **LPA Recommended Approval (4-0) No opposition present or on the phone**

Motion to approve a Variance for John Corbin made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

- Notes: Applicant believed an ag barn did not require a permit and was unaware of zoning setback requirements.
- LPA Recommendation: Approval.

20260328 A petition by **Greg Pyle** requesting a variance for a reduce side setbacks 10'to 5' for construction of new home to be granted, as provided in 4.7.7 RSF/MH subparagraph (2) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations in accordance with section 12.3 VARIANCE PROCEDURES., in accordance with the petition dated 02/05/2026 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 19-13-12-2942-0000-0290 71 SE 231 ST; .15. COMMISSION DISTRICT 3 MARK HATCH **LPA Recommended Approval (4-0) No opposition present or on the phone**

Motion to approve a Variance for Greg Pyle made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

- Notes: New home, not storm-related replacement; no recorded opposition.
- No opposition in person or by phone.

APPLICATIONS FOR RE-ZONING

20260330, an application by Gary Jones, Petition dated: 02/20/2026. for the owners, located at 20095 SE 349 HWY, Old Town (Suwannee), FL 32680: To amend the Official Zoning Atlas of the Land Development Regulations by changing the zoning district of certain lands. The zoning district is hereby changed from ENVIRONMENTAL SENSITIVE AREA (ESA-4) to COMMERCIAL, NEIGHBORHOOD for property described, as follows: TAX PARCEL NUMBER(S) 16-13-12-2926-0000-0260 CONTAINING .53 ACRES, MORE OR LESS. LOCATED IN COMMISSION DISTRICT 3 MARK HATCH - **LPA Recommended Approval (4-0) No opposition present or on the phone**

Motion to approve Re-Zoning for Gary Jones made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

SCOTT PENDARVIS, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

- Mr. Pendarvis updated the Board that AT&T will discontinue copper/analog lines in June, affecting county communications, especially at the jail.
- A Unity quote to run fiber to the jail was approximately \$106,000 for installation, with ongoing service around \$2,500/month, which was considered too costly.
- The preferred alternative is an AT&T 1 Gbps circuit via the state SunCom contract, at about \$224/month, plus approximately \$550/month for the phone system service.
- Total projected monthly cost under the SunCom option would be similar to current jail telecom costs, but with a major bandwidth increase from 20 Mbps to 1 Gbps.
- This was presented as an informational item only, with no Board action requested.

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Fire / Emergency Management – Report & Action

- Wildfire update: The “440 fire” caused by a lightning strike near the highway burned approximately 150 acres and is now 100% contained by Forestry.
- Stations 3 & 6: Mr. Kelly has already provided status updates on Fire Stations 3 and 6 (no further details given in this segment).

Grants / Equipment

- The county received notification of a grant previously discussed by Chief Brown for six (6) ballistic armor vests:
 - Approximate total cost: \$6,100+
 - County match: \$1,537.29
 - These vests will equip all on-shift personnel with ballistic armor as needed.
- One of the new fire engines has been in the shop for 1.5–2 months with factory-related mechanical issues; it appears the unit will receive a new motor due to those defects.
- The department is working with Florida Gateway College (fire program) to sell 10 Dräger air packs (previously purchased by the county and now tested/certified). Proceeds will offset the original purchase cost.

Air Methods Helicopter – Old Town

- Air Methods medical helicopter is now in Old Town and becoming operational.
- Request: for hazardous materials “Toxic Round-up” operations, materials should be staged behind the building rather than near the helipad, so the helicopter can take off when needed.
- Signs have been posted; the helicopter location is expected to be temporary (6–12 months) while a long-term plan is determined.

Hurricane Helene – Cost-Share Waivers

- Staff are preparing waivers of the 12.5% local match for Hurricane Helene Public Works/Projects (PWs).
- Request to Board: authorize the Chairman to sign all such waivers once complete, without bringing each individual waiver back to the Board.
- Rationale Commissioner Hatch: The deadline is near; these waivers will save the county substantial funds and have been coordinated in the Thursday morning emergency meetings.

Motion to approve signing waivers of 12.5% local match for Hurricane Helene Public Works/Projects made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

- Staff will, after receiving approval from Sarah at Locklear, proceed with obtaining the Chairman’s signatures and submitting the waivers.

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Not Present

HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Not Present

ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

Not Present

JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER

Action Items:

1. Request Board approval for Liberty Partners to apply for the FWC Boat Ramp grant for Old Pine Landing.

Motion to approve Liberty Partners to apply for the FWC Boat Ramp grant for Old Pine Landing made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

2. Request Board approval for Liberty Partners to apply for the FWC Boat Ramp grant for Horseshoe Beach Commercial Boat Ramp.

Motion to approve Liberty Partners to apply for the FWC Boat Ramp grant for Horseshoe Beach Commercial Boat Ramp made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

3. Request Board approval of the SHIP Down Payment Assistance for Dianna Baton in the amount of \$25,000.00.

Motion to approve the SHIP Down Payment Assistance for Dianna Baton in the amount of \$25,000.00 made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

4. Request Board approval of the SHIP Repair Reimbursement for Martin Barber Jr. in the amount of \$11,700.00.

Motion to approve the SHIP Repair Reimbursement for Martin Barber Jr. in the amount of \$11,700.00 made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

5. Request Board approval for the SHIP Release of Lien for Tanya Walker and Glenna Lamb Fraser in the amount of \$24,998.50.

Motion to approve the SHIP Release of Lien for Tanya Walker and Glenna Lamb Fraser in the amount of \$24,998.50 made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

6. Request Board approval to rescind Locklear TWO for Grant Oversight of the LPA0279 DCFSM in the amount of \$115,000.00.

Motion to approve rescinding Locklear TWO for Grant Oversight of the LPA0279 DCFSM in the amount of \$115,000.00 made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

7. Request Board approval of the DSI TWO for LPA0279 Grant Oversight for Ph II in the amount of \$95,059.00.

Motion to approve the DSI TWO for LPA0279 Grant Oversight for Ph II in the amount of \$95,059.00 made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

8. Request Board approval of the FDLE Criminal Justice Grant for a new K-9 in the amount of \$15,000.00.

Motion to approve the FDLE Criminal Justice Grant for a new K-9 in the amount of \$15,000.00. made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

9. Request Board approval of the Artificial Reef Construction & Monitoring grant application FY 2026-2027 in the amount of \$9,000.00.

Motion to approve Artificial Reef Construction & Monitoring grant application FY 2026-2027 in the amount of \$9,000.00 made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

10. Request Board approval of the Notice of Award to Anderson Columbia for SE 218 St Overlay (Mullet Road) from SE 205 ST to End of Cul-de-Sac in the amount of \$94,044.02.

Motion to approve the Notice of Award to Anderson Columbia for SE 218 St Overlay (Mullet Road) from SE 205 ST to End of Cul-de-Sac in the amount of \$94,044.02 made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

11. Request Board approval to select Sunshine Outdoor Services, LLC as the lowest quote, with long reach boom, at \$175.00 hourly rate for the CR 358 (Old 19) to US 19-27-98 1.5 mile Clean Out based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion to approve the selection of Sunshine Outdoor Services, LLC as the lowest quote, with long reach boom, at \$175.00 hourly rate for the CR 358 (Old 19) to US 19-27-98 1.5 mile Clean Out based on SWTF recommendation made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

12. Request Board approval to replace 6-8 48"x50' culverts on CR 358 (Old 19) based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion to approve replacing 6-8 48"x50' culverts on CR 358 (Old 19) based on SWTF recommendation made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

13. Request Board approval to replace 2-60"x50' culverts, and guardrails, and to sure up the embankment at CR 357 & CR 358 intersection based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion to approve replacing 2-60"x50' culverts, and guardrails, and to sure up the embankment at CR 357 & CR 358 intersection based on SWTF recommendation made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved

14. Request Board approval to purchase 1-48"x40' culvert located at 190 NE 165 Ave based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion to approve purchasing 1-48"x40' culvert located at 190 NE 165 Ave based on SWTF recommendation made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

15. Request Board approval to purchase 1-48"x120' culvert located at 508 NE 165 Ave based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion to approve purchasing 1-48"x120' culvert located at 508 NE 165 Ave based on SWTF recommendation made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

- **Informational Announcements**
 - There will be a School Board business lunch tomorrow at 12:00 p.m. at the Dolphis Peppers Gymnasium in Old Town.
 - Reminder that County offices will be closed Friday, April 3, 2026, in observance of Good Friday.
 - Gangways have been installed at Horseshoe Beach Park.
- Mosquito Control Employee
 - Mr. Jenkins reported Adam Stinson is interested in mosquito control, he has completed two classes and holds a 2-year applicator’s license.
 - Requested permission to stagger the employee’s hours (e.g., four 10-hour days) so he can attend required seminars, classes, and shadowing in Citrus County to obtain full director-level certification, and to provide a support letter.

Motion to approve Adam Stinson flexible/staggered work hours to obtain his full director-level license made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

- **St. Johns Water Management / Water Project**
 - Mr. Jenkins noted ongoing St. Johns River Water Management District meetings regarding a proposed water treatment/aquifer project affecting the County.
 - Requested Board approval to send a letter opposing the project.

Motion to send letter of opposition made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

- Attorney Watson reported that in the opioid litigation the County joined against additional pharmaceutical companies, a proposed settlement with “six remnant defendants” has been reached.
- Although no payout amounts have been provided yet, those defendants have agreed to settle and begin making payments; counsel recommends the County sign on, and the Attorney Watson will execute the required documents with Board awareness and consent.
- The County has been served notice of a lawsuit (a formality before filing) by Morgan & Morgan on behalf of an individual present at the landfill chemical spill.
- The County’s insurance has denied coverage, so staff must compile all related costs and damages in preparation to potentially file suit against the waste hauler and responsible party, Mr. Tim Johnson is working on gathering those figures with the attorney.
- Attorney Watson noted the County was not at fault, having only provided the permitted disposal location.

- Attorney Watson also noted there is a SHIP Release of Lien for the Chairman to sign before adjournment.

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

- Mrs. Higginbotham noted the passing of Mr. Joe Hubert Allen, who served the County beginning in 1978.
- Funeral service will be held Saturday, March 21, 2026, at 3:00 p.m., with visitation Friday from 5:00 p.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- No additional items were brought forward; Ms. Brenda Royal confirmed Board members had received their information packets.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

- Commissioner Wood reported attending the Charlie Kirk memorial sign unveiling and stated it made him proud to be from a county willing to honor individuals in that way. Commissioner Wood requested that everyone keep Commissioner Stephenson and his family in their thoughts and prayers.
- Commissioner Osteen further noted:
 - Continued concern and prayers for Commissioner Stephenson and his family, as well as Louie Hutchinson, mentioning he is facing approximately 100 days of treatment, believed to be bone marrow related.
 - Commissioner Osteen stated appreciation for the signing and memorial efforts, describing them as “awesome.”
 - Commissioner Osteen said there is potential for an upcoming putt-putt golf feature at the D-Track, being discussed with Mr. Paul Greenwell.
- Commissioner Hatch shared an economic development item: in coordination with the county’s economic team, the county is working with Mr. Damon Frecker (Circularity 2) regarding the industrial park property behind Cross City Lumber. Commissioner Hatch emphasized the need to strongly urge the Town of Cross City to size any new sewer line to provide sufficient capacity for the remaining 24 acres and the Cross City Lumber site, noting this additional capacity would significantly benefit current and future business development on that property.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Ms. Nikki Waits – Road to Redemption - described elevated risks of HIV, Hepatitis C, and other STDs among individuals struggling with substance misuse and the lack of easy access to testing and treatment.

- Proposed a mobile clinic event on April 22, 12:00–4:00 p.m., offering free rapid testing for HIV, Hepatitis C, and other STDs, with immediate linkage to treatment for anyone testing positive.
- Requested permission to set up either in the Save-A-Lot parking lot (subject to owner’s permission) or on County property in front of the courthouse.

- Commissioner Hatch clarified that Save-A-Lot is private property and would require owner approval; the Board approved use of the courthouse parking area as an authorized alternative location for April 22, 2026.

Motion to allow use of the Courthouse parking area for the Mobile Clinic made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

- Ms. Waits noted Healthy MD is interested in coming on a regular basis and serving multiple areas of the County to reach residents without transportation.
- Youth & Re-Entry Programming
 - Ms. Waits reported she is now certified in anger management and youth prevention, and can provide classes for youthful offenders, DJJ-involved youth, and school referrals.
 - Programs include:
 - Juvenile MRT – “How to Escape Your Prison” (decision-making, changing criminal thinking, accountability).
 - “Taking the High Road” (education on dangers of illicit drugs – for youth and adults).
 - Job Readiness curriculum written at an eighth-grade reading level, covering basic communication, interviewing, and workplace skills.
 - Ms. Waits currently has four youth interested and is meeting with two of them the following day to begin enrollment.
- **Public Comment – Sewer/Grinder Pump on Private Property**
 - A property owner (**Courtney Dyals and her mother, Ms. Kelly Chaires**) addressed the Board regarding a county grinder pump/sewer line located on their private property behind their commercial building near the library.
 - They described a recent incident where a county worker attempted to access the grinder pump, which they initially denied because they did not understand what had been installed on their property and had no records from the Health Department showing the layout.
 - A state inspector later reviewed the system and advised them that although the equipment serves county infrastructure, because it is physically on private property, any code or compliance violations would be cited to the property owner, creating potential liability for them.
 - They stated they had tried to work cooperatively with the County but remained concerned about being held liable for non-compliant infrastructure they do not control, including any remaining sewage in the lines.
- **Board / Staff Response**
 - Chairman Hatch suggested a practical solution would be for the County to:
 - Vacate/cap the existing line that crosses the private property; and
 - Install a separate lift station and line to serve the County’s needs without using the private parcel, and have any remaining

sewage pumped out by a septic contractor (Justin Stephenson) so the owners are not left with active county infrastructure on their land.

- The property owners maintained that, per the state inspector, they could still face liability as long as any portion of the non-compliant system remains on their property.
 - Attorney Watson advised that the property owners already have legal counsel, and that the matter involves potential legal and liability issues that should be handled through attorneys rather than further public discussion.
 - Mr. Wright requested time to review the situation with staff (including John Jenkins and Attorney Watson) and to coordinate with the property owners' attorney.
 - Chairman Hatch agreed to proceed that way, indicated the County would involve its attorney, and noted he would follow up by phone with Ms. Chaires after the meeting.
-
- **Public Comment - Mr. Brian Turk** reported that thick grapevines are hanging into the roadway on NE 597 and Chavous Road, damaging his truck antenna and contacting his windshield.
 - He expressed concern that school buses and power lines are also affected.
 - Staff acknowledged the concern and stated they would inspect the locations and have the vegetation cut back, assigning the issue to road department personnel (get Mr. Gainey on NE 597 Rd. & NE 592 Rd.)

 - **Public Comment - Mr. Doug Sanders**, with Andy Easton & Associates (Tallahassee), introduced himself and stated he has been working with the City of Cross City to establish a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA).
 - Mr. Sanders requested placement on April 2, 2026, BOCC agenda to present a PowerPoint on a proposed Community Redevelopment Area of approximately 22 parcels, utilizing tax increment financing (TIF) to fund downtown improvements.
 - The Board acknowledged Mr. Sanders request and confirmed the April 2, 2026, meeting date for his presentation.

ADJOURN

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

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