

Regular Meeting
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
May 07, 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 1 – 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
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator – Not Present
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

04/16/2026 Regular BOCC Minutes

Motion to approve the 04/16/2026 BOCC Regular Meeting Minutes made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

VOUCHER APPROVAL

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

Commissioner Hatch noted that Commissioner Stephenson is still out and asked everyone to keep him in their prayers for a speedy recovery.

LAUREN COHN - MERIDIAN HEALTH CARE

Meridian Behavioral Healthcare – Annual Report & Funding Request

Presenter: Lauren Cohn, Meridian

Lauren Cohn presented Meridian’s annual report and funding request for the upcoming fiscal year, noting:

- **Organization & Services**
 - Meridian has provided behavioral health services in North Central Florida for over 50 years.
 - Services in Dixie County include:
 - Outpatient treatment (individual, group, and family therapy)
 - Substance use treatment
 - Expanded medication-assisted treatment (MAT) services
 - Telehealth services to improve access to care
- **Current Year Activity (FY runs July 1 – June 30; data through March 31)**
 - 427 Dixie County residents received over 3,200 telehealth services.
 - Over 400 adults and 60 children received outpatient treatment.
 - 26 adults received inpatient treatment.
 - Psychiatric care provided to 169 adults and 32 children.
 - 121 adults participated in MAT, with continued growth expected.
- **Satisfaction & Outcomes**
 - Client satisfaction at the Dixie County location averages 4.68 out of 5.
 - 8.9 out of 10 respondents would recommend Meridian to others.
 - Across the organization, a strong majority of adults and children report improved functioning and reduced symptoms.
 - New onsite kiosks collect local client feedback specific to the Dixie County clinic.
- **Funding & Local Match**
 - 52% of services this fiscal year were funded with state indigent care funding, making local support critical.
 - For FY 2027, Meridian’s local match requirement is over \$2.6 million.
 - Meridian requested a 2% increase in Dixie County’s funding, for a total of \$57,488, to help meet the local match requirement, particularly for the central receiving facility and related ongoing care coordination and post-discharge support.

Commissioners thanked Ms. Cohn and Meridian for their services and expressed appreciation for the partnership and community support. Ms. Cohn noted she had extra copies of the report available and offered to email it and be available for any further questions or assistance.

STACY MCLAMB – NATIONAL POPPY DAY

American Legion Auxiliary – Poppy Day Proclamation

Speaker: Stacy McLam, American Legion Auxiliary Unit 383, Member-at-Large, Old Town

Summary:

Ms. McLam addressed the Board regarding National Military Appreciation Month and National Poppy Day, observed on the Friday before Memorial Day. She explained the history and symbolism of the red poppy, noting:

- The poppy became a symbol of hope and renewal after World War I, flourishing on the battlefields of Flanders.
- The flower serves as a perpetual memorial to the bravery of those who gave their lives in service.
- Contributions from Memorial Poppy distributions are devoted entirely to rehabilitation and assistance for veterans and their families.

Ms. McLam then read a proposed Poppy Day Proclamation recognizing that:

- America’s freedoms are preserved by citizen soldiers;
- Millions have died on the battlefield;
- The nation must be reminded of the price of war and the debt owed to the fallen; and
- The red poppy has been designated as a symbol of sacrifice in all wars, with the American Legion Auxiliary pledging to remind America of this debt.

The proclamation declares every Friday before Memorial Day in May as Poppy Day in Dixie County and asks all citizens to pay tribute to those who made the ultimate sacrifice by wearing the national poppy on that day.

Motion to approve the Poppy Day Proclamation as presented made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

BRONZELL FOWLER - UPDATE

Bronzell Fowler – Proposal for Women & Children’s Homeless Center

Speaker: Bronzell Fowler

Summary:

Mr. Fowler discussed a county-owned building previously inspected by himself, Leon Wright, and others. Mr. Wright advised the building can be brought up to code, but it will require an engineer and architect to design the needed work.

Mr. Fowler requested that the Board allow his organization to use the building to establish a homeless center for women and children. Key points from his remarks:

- The proposed facility would serve women with children, particularly those abandoned by spouses and in crisis situations.

- The program would be faith-based and focused on restoration and self-sufficiency, including:
 - Support through local churches,
 - Life-skills training and counseling,
 - A structured path to employment and independence.
- He referenced a similar center in Pasco County operated by their proposed coordinator for about 20 years, with more than 100 women successfully returning to stable lives and church involvement.
- He emphasized that the program:
 - Is not for individuals with active drug problems or for men,
 - Is intended strictly for women with children,
 - Will be funded through churches and private support, at no cost to the County, other than any legal or title work for the building.
- Mr. Fowler stated they can have an engineer and architect on site within a week once they are authorized to proceed and reiterated that finances for renovation are “covered” through churches and supporters.

Additional Comments (Support):

- Commissioner Storey expressed support and summarized the request: allow Mr. Fowler to use or receive the building, subject to it being brought up to code by Leon and at no cost to the County.
- Commissioners noted the building has been sitting unused for years with doors left open, creating safety concerns and a risk that someone could be injured.

Remote Comment – Neighborhood Housing & Development Corporation (NHDC):

Speaker: Kim Lander (NHDC Representative, via phone)

- Ms. Kim stated she is affiliated with the Neighborhood Housing and Development Corporation (NHDC), which has grant funds earmarked for Dixie County to assist individuals and families who are homeless or near homeless.
- NHDC’s goal is prevention of homelessness, including:
 - Assistance with utilities, rent, and mortgage payments,
 - Credit education, homebuyer education, and other counseling services.
- She has met with Mr. Fowler’s church and confirmed that NHDC leadership is in full support of the proposed women and children’s center.
- NHDC is willing to partner by providing counseling, education, and financial assistance to help families stabilize and “get back on their feet,” emphasizing that the goal is not handouts, but training and long-term support.

Board Discussion – Lease vs. Donation & Legal Requirements:

- Commissioner Hatch stated that the County must determine whether the building will be leased or donated to Mr. Fowler’s organization.
- Mr. Fowler indicated their preference is a donation of the building.

- Chairman Hatch noted there will be legal hurdles to ensure the County can lawfully donate the building, and he does not want any issues for the County or the organization later.
- The Board directed John (County Administrator) to work with Chana Watson (County Attorney) to:
 - Review the legal process for donation,
 - Confirm the organization’s 501(c)(3) status is in place,
 - Ensure the transaction is 100% legal and compliant.
- **Motion to approve Mr. Fowler’s proposal subject to all legal requirements being met made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen.**

Requirements to be met including:

- Verification that the building can be brought to code as determined by Leon, and
- Completion of all necessary legal steps (lease or donation) as advised by the County Attorney.
- **Board Direction:** The motion was clarified as contingent on “everything being legal” and properly documented.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS/CITY OFFICIALS

Nothing to present

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

Nothing to present.

NIKIE WAITS – ROAD 2 REDEMPTION

Mental Health Awareness Month / “Light Up Dixie Green”

Speaker: Nikie Waits

Summary:

Ms. Waits addressed the Board in recognition of May as Mental Health Awareness Month. She shared her personal experience with mental health struggles and substance misuse, and told a story titled “The Quietest Room” about her brother-in-law John, who died by suicide at age 24, and her nephew Justin, who also died by suicide at age 27. She emphasized:

- Many people who appear strong on the outside may be struggling internally.
- “Silence is not peace” and “I’m okay” is not always the truth.
- Prevention often looks like:
 - Paying closer attention to people,
 - Asking one more question, and
 - Creating safe spaces where people can be honest and “not okay.”

She highlighted the message on her shirt, “You matter, your story isn’t over,” and the local theme “doing it for the love of Dixie.”

Ms. Waits requested permission to conduct a countywide awareness effort in May by:

- Placing green ribbons and signs on county property;
- Encouraging businesses and residents to:
 - Display green porch lights,
 - Wear green ribbons/shirts, and
 - Share mental health awareness messages on social media.

She explained that the signs would include QR codes linked to 988, the national suicide and crisis lifeline, so individuals in crisis can easily access help.

Board Discussion & Clarifications:

- Commissioner Hatch clarified that the Board can only authorize placement of signs and ribbons on county property, and that participation on private property must be voluntary and with the owner’s permission.
- Ms. Waits confirmed she always asks permission before placing anything on private property.
- Commissioner Osteen thanked Ms. Waits for her efforts and stated she is a “blessing” to the community.

Motion to allow Ms. Waits to place green ribbons, signs, and related lighting/awareness displays on county property in recognition of Mental Health Awareness Month made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Tourist Development – Lease for “Fishbone” Property (Primitive Camping)

Speakers: Commissioner Hatch; County Attorney Chana Watson

Summary:

In the absence of Kay McCallister (Tourism Director), Attorney Watson reported that:

- Ms. McCallister wishes to move forward, through the Tourist Development Board, with a lease of the state-owned property commonly known as “Fishbone” near Horseshoe, for use as primitive camping.
- The state has indicated they do not object to primitive camping on the site provided there is an educational component, such as:
 - A kiosk or similar installation to educate visitors on primitive camping, resource protection, and appropriate use of the area.
- To proceed with the lease, the state requires a \$300 application fee.
- Attorney Watson noted she does not have authority to pay the fee directly on behalf of the Tourist Board and requested Board approval so the application will not be delayed.

Motion to approve payment of the \$300 application fee for the lease of the “Fishbone” property for primitive camping, on behalf of the Tourist Development Board made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

KAREN VANAERNAM, DIXIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development / Community Clean-Up & America 250 Resolution

Speaker: Karen VanAernam – Economic Development

Horseshoe Beach Park & Coastal Recovery

- Reported that the county park at Horseshoe Beach is nearly complete and should go online for rental within the next few weeks, confirming with Shelly Ross and Mrs. McCallister.
- Noted this park, with its Gulf view, will be a major asset for economic development and tourism.
- Commented that watching the coastal communities' recovery and reopening has been "a blessing," highlighting their perseverance and grit.

105th Birthday Community-Wide Cleanup (Recap)

- The 105th birthday / community cleanup event was a success, with over 110 participants from across the county.
- Recognized the Old Town team, led by **Supervisor of Elections Darbi Chaires* and Commissioner Wood, as the cleanup "winners", presenting them with the "trash can trophy."
- Reported that volunteers observed significantly less trash in parts of Cross City compared to previous efforts—evidence that ongoing cleanups are making a difference.
- Tagline "Doing it for the love of Dixie – keep it clean" is gaining traction and community recognition.

Next Community Cleanup – May 23

- Announced the next cleanup on Saturday, May 23, from 8:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m., focused on Highway 19 in Cross City and selected adjacent properties.
- Emphasized that cleanliness directly supports economic development, retail attraction, and community image.
- Noted positive feedback from out-of-town passersby who stopped to praise the cleanup efforts; volunteers reported picking up large amounts of cigarette butts, alcohol bottles, and small drug baggies, especially near bridge areas.
- Commissioners and staff underscored the importance of proper disposal of cigarettes given current dry conditions and fire risk.

America 250 – Local Recognition Day & Events

- Announced that Monday, May 18 at 12:00 p.m. (noon) will be Dixie County's official local recognition day for the 250th anniversary of the United States (America 250).
- Plans include:
 - A short (~30-minute) program in front of the courthouse (on the CR 351 side),
 - Historical remarks by Judge Johnson,
 - Participation by the Dixie County High School band,
 - Displaying America 250 flags on municipal buildings.
- Encouraged all citizens and coastal communities to participate and incorporate America 250 into local Fourth of July and other patriotic celebrations.

Resolution No. 2026-22 – America 250 Local Recognition Day

Presenter: Chana Watson, County Attorney

Summary of Resolution:

Attorney Watson presented Resolution No. 2026-22, “A Resolution of the Board of County Commissioners of Dixie County, Florida, Recognizing May 18, 2026, as the Official Day of Recognition of the 250th Anniversary (Semi-Quincentennial) of the United States of America.” Key points:

- Recalls that on July 4, 1776, the Continental Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming the thirteen colonies to be free and independent states and marking the birth of the United States.
- Notes that 2026 marks the 250th anniversary of this event, commonly known as America 250, and provides an opportunity to reflect on the founding principles of liberty, democracy, and self-governance.
- Recognizes the contributions of the United States to freedom, justice, and opportunity worldwide.
- Acknowledges Dixie County’s history of patriotism and service and deems it fitting to officially commemorate this milestone.

The resolution:

1. Recognizes May 18, 2026, as Dixie County’s official local celebration day of the 250th anniversary (semi-quincentennial) of the United States.
2. Encourages all citizens, schools, businesses, and community organizations in Dixie County to participate in appropriate observances, educational programs, and patriotic events.
3. Directs the County Administrator to coordinate with local organizations as an American 250 Commission to promote county-wide activities celebrating America’s 250th anniversary.
4. States the resolution takes immediate effect upon adoption.

Motion to approve Resolution No. 2026-22 as presented made by Commissioner Storey.

Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

- **Discussion:**
 - Commissioner Hatch noted this is a once-in-a-lifetime event, encouraging citizens to come out, support the event, and show support for country and county.

Commissioner Comments – Litter & Community Effort

- Commissioner Osteen reported receiving positive comments from citizens about commissioners personally participating in trash pickup, noting that many residents were grateful and wished their own counties had such involvement.

- Additional brief remarks emphasized continuing and expanding cleanup efforts next year.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Project Updates – Engineer Report

Speaker: Kellan Bailey

Summary of Project Status:

- **Fire Station 3**
 - Parking lot has been paved as of this week.
 - Interior work is ongoing, including tile, mechanical equipment, and casework.
 - Project is progressing as planned.
- **Fire Station 6**
 - Building is on site and they are finishing erection of the structure.
 - Contractor is working on site work and any interior work that can be done concurrently.
 - Project is moving along.
- **Evidence Building**
 - Grounding work is scheduled to begin on Monday under the current contract.
 - Visible progress is expected soon; updates will be provided as the project advances.
- **NE 95th & NE 97th (Road Project)**
 - Project is essentially complete.
 - Remaining item: contractor is correcting signposts (sign faces are correct; posts need adjustment).
- **Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront Project**
 - Received a request for additional information from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers; request was brief and staff is confident in the response.
 - Staff is:
 - Preparing and submitting the response to the Corps.
 - Confirming whether a Corps permit is required based on project size (initial belief is that a permit may not be required, but they are verifying to ensure all clearances are in place).
 - Pile design is being finalized, with completion expected within about a week.

Kellan concluded by stating that is all he had for the Board and asked if there were any questions. None were noted.

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

Dredging Projects – Horseshoe & Suwannee

Speaker: John Locklear

Project Update – Horseshoe Beach & Suwannee Dredging

- Reported that the County is proceeding with the dredging contractor.
- For Horseshoe Beach:
 - Contractor has mobilized on site.
 - Dredging is scheduled to begin on May 25.
 - Work at Horseshoe will be performed hydraulically.
- For Suwannee:
 - Dredging at Suwannee will be done mechanically.
 - The contractor has not yet provided a schedule; Mr. Locklear is awaiting that information.

Material Testing / Disposal Location – Compliance Clarification

Commissioner Hatch referenced a letter received by the Board regarding dredged material and asked Mr. Locklear to report his findings.

- Mr. Locklear stated that the project is exempt from U.S. Army Corps of Engineers testing requirements for the dredged material, and therefore no material testing was required or performed.
- Confirmed, the County is in full compliance with all federal and state requirements regarding the dredged material.

Commissioner Hatch added:

- The County initially considered using the boat ramp parking area as a spoil site but instead secured two private landowners as the disposal location, away from heavily traveled areas, to reduce impacts.
- Explained that the material must dry out/dewater before final handling and transport, and that the chosen site is the best location with the least disruption and least mess for the public.

No further questions were raised. Commissioner Hatch thanked Mr. Locklear for verifying compliance.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Library – Parking, Summer Programs, and Event Logistics

Speakers: Commissioner Hatch; Library Director Cindy; Commissioners; County Attorney Chana Watson; others from audience (Joseph Lander, Roy Bass, etc.)

Issue:

Ongoing parking and event-capacity conflicts at the County Library, particularly during large children’s programs and multi-organization events, in light of:

- A 90-day parking/usage agreement with an adjacent business (Hutches/flower shop) that restricts certain weekday parking.
- Growth in library use and county population, creating logistical problems with parking and restroom capacity.

Key Points from Discussion:

- Commissioner Hatch:
 - Noted the importance of being respectful of adjacent private businesses and honoring the new parking agreement.
 - Stressed that the Board supports the library and its programs, but events cannot be scheduled beyond the facility's parking and logistical capacity.
 - Emphasized that the County is a public servant and must treat taxpayers and private business owners fairly.
 - Stated that the goal is to preserve and "save" the library and its programs, not to oppose them, but some operations need adjusting.
- Library Director Cindy Bellot:
 - Stated the library has been in its current location for many years and that past events have relied on surrounding parking areas.
 - Confirmed they are already working on solutions and that the school has agreed to allow use of the old gym for large children's programs and food distribution, if needed.
 - Committed to:
 - Moving larger programs to the old gym to relieve parking pressure,
 - Using the library's own property for parking where possible,
 - Publicly announcing location changes (Facebook, local paper, and on-site notices).
 - Affirmed that the library staff "serve with honesty and integrity" and will continue to support the public to the best of their ability.
- Additional Offers / Comments:
 - Joseph Lander (Dixie County Advocate) offered to reprint the program calendars at cost if needed to reflect new times/locations.
 - Commissioners and staff mentioned:
 - Possible use of church/grass parking areas behind the library (with permission).
 - The need for a longer-term solution, such as a community event center or a new library facility with adequate parking.
 - Roy Bass and others discussed existing overflow arrangements with nearby churches and the importance of coordinated use.
- Future Library Facility:
 - Commissioner Storey noted the Board has been discussing a new library for 2–3 years, has looked at property across from the current library, and is evaluating whether ~2 acres would be sufficient.
 - Commissioner Hatch mentioned County-owned property (approx. 5 acres near the rock shop / voting precinct) as another possible library site for the future, emphasizing any new facility would be planned with population growth in mind.

- John Gerry indicated he is working on potential funding for a library project and wanted to ensure his efforts wouldn't conflict with any time-sensitive Board plans. Commissioners welcomed his efforts.

Board Direction / Consensus (No formal motion recorded specific to schedules):

- Large children's programs and high-attendance events (including food distribution, "horses and cannons," etc.) are to be moved from the main library site to the old gym or other suitable locations when they exceed on-site parking capacity.
- The library will coordinate scheduling and parking plans with:
 - The County Administrator and Board,
 - Adjacent churches and the school, and
 - The adjacent business in accordance with the written parking agreement.
- The Board reiterated full support for library services, while requiring compliance with parking/logistics constraints to avoid losing access to neighboring parking arrangements.

Several commissioners expressed appreciation for Cindy and library staff, acknowledging the value of their work with children and the community.

RAELYNN BROWNELL, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER- Not present

Suwannee Water & Sewer District – Health Insurance Option for Board Members

Speakers: Commissioner Hatch; Attorney Watson; Commissioners

Summary:

- Attorney Watson reported she had been in contact with the attorney for the Suwannee Water & Sewer District regarding health insurance.
- She reminded the Board that district employees already have the option to obtain coverage through the County's health insurance plan (with the district paying the cost).
- The district has asked whether its board members (elected officials) could also be allowed to participate in the County's health insurance plan under the same arrangement, i.e., the district would pay for any premiums for its board members.

Commissioner Hatch stated he is supportive of allowing the option, provided no cost is borne by Dixie County and all premiums are paid by the Suwannee Water & Sewer District (for both employees and board members).

Motion to allow Suwannee Water & Sewer District board members to participate in the County's health insurance plan, on the same basis as the district's employees, with all costs/premiums to be paid by the district, not by Dixie County made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Not present.

MIKEL GAINEY, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Not present.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

Solid Waste – Burn Ban Debris Policy & Shed Purchase; Stormwater Personnel & Special Exception Follow-Up

A. Burn Ban – Suspension of Limb/Yard Debris at Sites

Speaker: Tim Johnson, Solid Waste Director

- Tim reported he has stopped accepting limb/yard debris at County solid waste sites due to the current burn ban.
- He is receiving numerous calls and is advising citizens that debris can be brought back once the burn ban is lifted.

Motion to affirm the suspension of limb/yard debris acceptance at County sites during the burn ban, with acceptance to resume when the ban is lifted made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood.

B. Shed Purchase – CR 55A Compactor Site

Speaker: Tim Johnson

Mr. Johnson presented three quotes for a new shed at the CR 55A compactor site (installed, turnkey):

- Harris Construction: \$10,640
- Mission Metal: \$11,294
- Dixie Depot: Lower than some, but the County has already used other vendors.

Tim recommended awarding to Mission Metal, noting:

- The price difference is about \$600,
- The County has used the other companies before,
- He would like to spread work among local businesses, and the County has not yet used Mission Metal.
- Mission Metal indicated they could start within about two weeks of approval.

Motion to accept Mission Metal’s quote of \$11,294 for the shed at the CR 55A compactor site made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood.

- Discussion: Commissioners acknowledged the small cost difference and the desire to support multiple local vendors.
- Vote: Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Johnson also noted a new compactor has arrived (after a weather-related delay in New Jersey) and appears to be a good value.

C. Personnel – Reassigning Jimmie Jerrells to Stormwater / Drainage

Speakers: Commissioner Jamie Storey; Chairman Mark Hatch; Roy Bass; County Administrator John Jenkins

- Commissioner Storey reported that the Stormwater Task Force has worked extensively with Mr. Jimmie Jerrells, training him on:
 - Ditch work,
 - Proper culvert installation, and
 - Overall drainage improvements.
- The Task Force would like Mr. Jerrells assigned back to stormwater full-time, as they:
 - Trust his work, and
 - Believe no additional money is required for this reassignment (reallocation of duties only).

Board Discussion:

- Chairman Hatch clarified that Mr. Jerrells would be moved to the Road Department under stormwater / drainage.
- Commissioner Storey acknowledged there has been some personal friction between Mr. Jerrells and Mr. Mikel Gainey and proposed:
 - Having Assistant Supervisor Bradley Hurst manage Mr. Jerrells directly,
 - Addressing any personnel issues through management.
- Roy Bass explained:
 - The County completed millions of dollars in storm drainage projects under state funding.
 - Because the County performed this work cost-effectively, the State now expects ongoing maintenance: monthly work, reports, pictures, mulching, spraying, etc.
 - Existing yard crews are too busy with other duties to maintain this level of stormwater work.
 - A dedicated, trained employee (such as Mr. Jerrells) is necessary to maintain canals and drainage systems and avoid a repeat of past flooding issues in 10 years.
 - Stated Mr. Jerrells must be professional; if he and his supervisor cannot work together, he may need to move elsewhere.

Motion to reassign Mr. Jimmie Jerrells to stormwater/drainage work under the Road Department, with direct supervision by Assistant Supervisor Bradley Hurst made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

- Implementation: The Board directed County Administrator Jenkins to determine the most feasible effective date and implement the reassignment accordingly.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

Not present.

D. Special Exception – Compliance & Enforcement

Speakers: Commissioner Jamie Storey; Chairman Mark Hatch

- Commissioner Storey reported that at the prior meeting, a citizen raised concerns about a property operating under a special exception.
- Commissioner Storey advised:
 - He previously helped the property owner obtain that special exception;
 - He has since spoken with Building Official Leon, who plans to:
 - Visit the site,
 - Give the owner 30 days to come into full compliance with County rules and the conditions of the special exception,
 - Report back if compliance is not achieved.
 - If the owner fails to comply within 30 days, Commissioner Storey said he will move to revoke the special exception and disconnect any related service.
- Commissioner Hatch agreed and emphasized:
 - It does not matter who the person is;
 - If someone is violating County rules and regulations, the County should immediately revoke the special exception;
 - Once revoked for noncompliance, they should not expect to get it back.

No motion was required; this served as clear direction to staff regarding enforcement.

SCOTTY PENDARVIS, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

9-1-1 Grant Agreement & Cybersecurity Update

A. 9-1-1 Spring Grant Agreement

Speaker: (9-1-1 / IT Representative – context: Scotty Pendarvis)

- Reported that the County previously received approval for the Spring 9-1-1 grant and now has the formal grant agreement in hand.
- Identified the grant as Grant No. 26-04-E-L-1 in the amount of \$17,745.85.

Motion to approve Grant No. 26-04-E-L-1 in the amount of \$17,745.85 and authorize execution of the agreement made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

B. Cybersecurity Tabletop Exercise & Phishing Incidents

Speaker: (9-1-1 / IT Representative – context: Scotty Pendarvis)

Tabletop Exercise:

- Reported that the County completed its annual cybersecurity tabletop exercise, as required.

- Exercise participants heavily critiqued the existing Incident Response Plan (IRP), which was expected and desired.
- Staff is now:
 - Incorporating the recommendations,
 - Revising the IRP, and
 - Will send the updated plan to the Board for review and discussion once revisions are complete.

Recent Phishing / Cyber Events:

- Over the past several weeks, the County’s email domain was targeted by multiple phishing campaigns.
- Thanks to existing security measures:
 - Most phishing attempts were blocked before reaching inboxes.
 - A few suspicious emails did bypass initial filters, but staff promptly identified, reported, and responded to them, preventing escalation.
- Some user accounts were temporarily disabled as a precaution, but:
 - There was no compromise of County systems or data.

Commendations:

- On behalf of County Administration, he commended:
 - All County staff for their swift and diligent response,
 - Their proactive approach, openness, and remediation efforts,
 - The Clerk’s Office and its IT team for working hand in hand with County IT to contain and resolve the threats.
- Emphasized that staff followed their training and procedures, which helped prevent any breach.

No further Board action was required; information item only.

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Emergency Management / Fire & Hurricane Season Update

Speaker: Garner – Fire Chief / Emergency Management

1. SCBA Sale

- Reported that the County has finalized the sale of half of its old Draeger SCBA packs to Gateway.
- Gateway now has those units in their possession.
- Gateway may purchase the remaining units later at the same price.

2. Hurricane Season & Training

- Stated that NOAA will release its official hurricane season outlook on May 21.
- Noted that Colorado State University has already issued a forecast, and National Weather Service will release theirs in the coming days.

- Garner will be out next week attending the Governor’s Hurricane Conference in Palm Beach.

3. EMS Week

- EMS Week will be May 17–23.
- A staff appreciation dinner is scheduled for Thursday, May 23, from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Station 4.
- Commissioners and staff are welcome to attend.

4. Active Fire Situation & Use of EOC / Office Space

- Reported that the County is in fire season:
 - Crews responded again to the 351 fire the previous night due to flareups; mop-up work is ongoing.
 - Crews are also assisting with the South Canal fire in Lafayette County, approximately 800 acres, which has reached into Mallory Swamp.
 - 11 retardant drops were made by aircraft the previous night in an effort to contain the fire and avoid a repeat of the 2001 fire event.
- The Florida Forest Service has requested to use the County’s Emergency Management office for mapping and planning, given the limited space in Dusty’s office.
- Garner confirmed with IT (Scotty) that the additional users will not overload the County’s internet; they can operate without impacting other County systems.
- The Board had no objection to allowing the State to use the Emergency Management office as needed.

Draft Local State of Emergency / Burn Ban Resolution (Discussion)

Speaker: County Attorney Watson; Fire/EM Garner; Commissioners

- Chana explained she had prepared a draft resolution declaring a local state of emergency and countywide burn ban due to drought conditions, modeled in part on neighboring counties’ actions.
- She read the draft resolution into the record, summarizing that it:
 - Finds that prolonged dry conditions, low humidity, and forecast wind create a high wildfire risk in Dixie County.
 - Declares a local state of emergency under F.S. 252.38.
 - Prohibits:
 - All outdoor burning of yard debris, trash, campfires, land-clearing burns, etc.
 - Other spark-producing or open-flame activities capable of igniting wildfires (with specified exceptions).
 - Exempts:

- Enclosed gas cooking appliances used as intended and attended by an adult,
- Properly permitted agricultural/silvicultural burns with adequate fire suppression,
- Certain public fireworks events with suppression on site,
- Emergency flares and firefighter training exercises.
- Provides enforcement provisions and penalties consistent with Florida law.
- States the local state of emergency would last seven (7) days, renewable in 7-day increments by proclamation of the Chair or Vice-Chair until conditions improve.
- Chana clarified this resolution was more general and proactive and that she and Garner are also working on a permanent burn-ban ordinance framework for future use.

Delegation of Authority – Local State of Emergency (Smoke / Fire Conditions)

Speaker: Garner; Commissioners

- Garner clarified his immediate need was not necessarily to adopt the full burn-ban resolution that day, but to ensure:
 - In rapidly developing situations (e.g., heavy smoke, visibility issues, or school safety concerns like those in Lafayette County), he can quickly request a local state of emergency without convening a special Board meeting.
- Chief Garner noted:
 - Lafayette County had to close schools due to dense smoke.
 - Forecasts suggest that smoke from the South Canal fire could shift over Dixie County in the next day or two.
 - If early-morning conditions are severe (e.g., near zero visibility at school time), he might need to move quickly with recommendations.

Board Action – Procedural Authority Only:

Motion to authorize the Chairman (or acting Chair) to declare a local state of emergency in coordination with the Fire Chief/Emergency Management (Garner) when conditions warrant, without the need for a special meeting made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

- Discussion:
 - Commissioners confirmed this authority is to streamline emergency decision-making, especially in fast-emerging threats (e.g., fire/smoke impacting schools and public safety).
 - The Board acknowledged the drafted resolution as a useful tool but focused this motion on who can act and how quickly.

Chief Garner stated he will monitor conditions and, if necessary, call Commissioner Hatch as early as needed (e.g., 5:00 a.m.) to recommend declaring a local state of emergency under this authority.

Power Line / Fire Risk Concern – Duke Energy Response Time

Speaker: Joseph Lander

- Mr. Lander relayed a recent incident at his father-in-law's property on US 19 where:
 - A cabbage palm along the power line right-of-way was sparking and causing fires on the ground.
 - When the fire department responded, they explained they could not address issues in the power lines themselves and that Duke Energy would have to handle it.
 - The family was reportedly told Duke's response could take three to four days, which he felt was too long, especially during current dry conditions.
- He asked if there was a way to streamline the response process with Duke, especially when there is an actively sparking line in a residential area.

Response from Fire/EM & Board:

- Chief Garner explained:
 - Fire crews always notify the power company when there is an active line on the ground or sparking; they do not handle energized lines for safety reasons.
 - Dispatch has a direct number for Duke Energy (and Central Florida Electric) for such emergencies.
 - In practice, response time is usually 45 minutes to four hours, not several days.
 - Sometimes it is initially unclear which utility owns the line, so Central Florida Electric may be called first, then determine it is Duke's and notify them.
- Commissioner Hatch emphasized that if there are ongoing problems or excessive delays with Duke's response, citizens should let the County know so it can be addressed with the utility.

No Board action was required; informational and for coordination with power companies.

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Nothing to present.

HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Not present.

ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

Not present.

JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER

1. Request Board approval for the SHIP HHRP Demo / Reconstruction for Lou Watson in the amount of \$11,724.00.

Motion to approve reconstruction assistance for Lou Watson in the amount of \$11,007.00 made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

2. Request Board approval for SHIP release of lien for Beverly Snellgrove.

Motion for SHIP release of lien for Beverly Snellgrove made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

3. Request Board approval to assume payment of the power bill for the Dixie Horsemen's Association.

Motion to assume payment of the power bill for the Dixie Horsemen's Association made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

4. Request Board approval for Resolution 2026-25 FBIP (Florida Boater Improvement Program) Grant application for the boat ramp at the Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront project.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-25 FBIP (Florida Boater Improvement Program) Grant application for the boat ramp at the Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront project made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

- **Discussion:**

- Commissioner Hatch noted he had received a text from Anna King and would provide Katie Grimes' contact information to Mr. Jenkins and Commissioner Osteen regarding the Cow Creek boat ramp program and potential funding for a bridge there and bridges into Shired Island.

5. Request Board approval for Resolution 2026-26 FBIP (Florida Boater Improvement Program) Grant application for the Old Pine Landing Boat Ramp project.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-26 FBIP (Florida Boater Improvement Program) Grant application for the boat ramp at the Old Pine Landing Boat Ramp project made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Information Items:

1. Reminder of the BOCC workshop today May 7, 2026 at 1:00 PM in the Board Room.
2. Reminder of the Dixie County / Cross City meeting May 12th at 5:00 PM at the City Hall.
3. Reminder of the Dixie Celebrates USA 250th anniversary on May 18th, 2026, at 12:00 at the front of the Courthouse.
4. Horseshoe Beach Visit: Noted a planned visit to Horseshoe Beach on May 11th for commissioners to view park improvements.

B. Horseshoe Beach RV Park – Soft Opening & CampSpot Setup

Speakers: Chairman **Mark Hatch; John; Shelly Ross;** Commissioners

- Mr. Jenkins reported that:
 - The Horseshoe Beach park improvements (RV sites) are essentially complete.
 - Electrical, water, and separate hookups/stove boxes for campers have been installed and tested.
- Commissioner Hatch proposed:
 - Conducting a “soft opening” of the Horseshoe Beach park with local residents first before full public rollout, given the park has been offline for approximately 1½–2 years.
 - Purpose: to identify and resolve any operational or infrastructure issues while locals can easily return home if needed, before accepting broader, long-distance reservations.
 - Once the County is confident everything is functioning properly, operations will be turned over to CampSpot for full online reservations.
- **Payment & CampSpot:**
 - Discussion noted that each park has its own payment setup; Horseshoe Beach will need to be added to CampSpot.
 - Staff plan to:
 - Configure Horseshoe Beach in CampSpot,
 - Run at least one test rental through the system to ensure functionality before fully opening online.
- **Readiness:**
 - Mr. Jenkins confirmed:
 - All RV sites have been tested,
 - Water service is good,
 - Main shutoff on the platform is secured,
 - The park will be ready before Memorial Day weekend, when it is expected to be full.

The Board expressed appreciation to staff for their work in completing the improvements and supported the soft opening approach followed by integration into CampSpot.

CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

Horseshoe Beach Park – Neighbor Survey / Possible Encroachment

Speakers: Attorney Watson; Commissioner Hatch; Commissioner Osteen

- Attorney Watson reported that a neighboring property owner next to the Horseshoe Beach park continues to request a survey to determine whether the County’s park improvements have encroached onto his property.
- She stated:
 - She has contacted John Locklear’s office and Kellen’s office, but no survey records have been located to date.
 - She has confirmed, with assistance from Ms. Christie Zander, that the work was done under a grant, but has not yet found any survey in the County’s records related to that grant.
 - If the County has such a record, it has not yet been located.

Board Direction:

- Commissioner Hatch noted that each Commissioner has committee/district assignments, and this park is in Commissioner Osteen’s district.
- He requested that Commissioner Osteen:
 - Take the lead on tracking down any existing survey or grant-related documentation,
 - Work with staff to determine what, if any, survey work needs to be done.
- Commissioner Osteen agreed to handle the matter and coordinate with Attorney Watson and staff.

No formal motion was taken; item was assigned as a follow-up task to Commissioner Osteen.

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

Clerk / Finance – Proposed New Finance Software & Budget Timeline

Speakers: Clerk’s Office Representative Brenda Royal; Commissioner Hatch; Commissioner Storey

A. Transition to New Finance / Accounting Software

- Ms. Royal reported that the Clerk’s Office has been evaluating new finance software vendors and believes they are now at a point where they are ready to move forward with a new system.
- Key points:
 - The current system is outdated and not user-friendly, making routine tasks overly difficult and time-consuming.
 - Staff are not tax experts, yet the current system requires:

- All W-2s to be manually keyed into a third-party system each year (names, Social Security numbers, amounts, all boxes), greatly increasing the risk of error.
- The new system under consideration, (Aclarian – as referenced):
 - Automates tax functions, including W-2 generation.
 - Includes timekeeping, allowing employees to clock in from their phones, and automatically tracks accruals and other payroll data.
 - Updates data daily, improving accuracy and timeliness.
 - Offers advanced features (including AI tools) that can quickly produce reports and presentations from financial data.
- The software will not be cheap, but is considered critical for:
 - Accuracy and compliance,
 - Reducing manual workload and error risk,
 - Supporting County-wide financial management.
- Ms. Royal also noted:
 - When she started a little over four years ago, bank statements had not been reconciled since 2018.
 - Staff have since brought all reconciliations current; about 40+ bank accounts (Board & Clerk) are now reconciled monthly, and trial balances match bank statements.
 - The County’s new auditors, James Moore, are strong supporters of the proposed software and can be given direct access, which should simplify audits.
- She emphasized this was an update only:
 - They are still collecting detailed quotes and implementation costs,
 - They may phase in modules, not necessarily purchase every component at once,
 - She expects to return to the Board with a formal proposal, even if it requires financing (loan or other arrangements).

Board Response:

- Commissioner Hatch acknowledged the importance of the upgrade and stated, “We’ll figure it out.”
- Commissioner Storey asked if the County could afford it; Brenda replied they cannot afford all of it at once, but Jamie responded that it still needs to “make it happen”, noting he will be discussing solid waste revenues and related items in an upcoming workshop to help support needs like this.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner Daniel Wood

- Thanks to Staff: Commissioner Wood thanked Tim Johnson, John Jenkins, and County staff for helping him assist several community members in need over the past few weeks.
 - Prayer Requests: He asked that everyone keep Ms. Colleen Dyals and her family in their prayers, noting that Colleen was having surgery that morning and mentioning her husband John, as well as continued prayers for Commissioner Stephenson.
-

Commissioner David Osteen

- Appreciation for County Workers: Commissioner Osteen expressed appreciation for County workers, noting:
 - He recently took a week off to work with County crews,
 - Staff are working very hard and helped him significantly,
 - There is always something broken or needing repair, and he enjoys being hands-on and assisting them when he can.
-

Commissioner Jamie Storey

- Thanks to Staff & Offices: Commissioner Storey thanked:
 - Ms. Royal and the Clerk's finance staff,
 - Tim Johnson, Attorney Watson, John Jenkins, Roy Bass, Barbie Higginbotham, and all County employees,
 - Emphasizing that "we're all working hard."
 - Upcoming Workshop / Solid Waste & Recycling:
 - Announced he will present ideas at the 1:00 p.m. workshop today related to recycling solid waste and saving the County money.
 - Described this as a "sneak peek" and said he would discuss details at the workshop.
-

Commissioner Hatch

A. General Thanks & Letter Follow-Up

- Thanked Mr. Jenkins for handling a recent letter from Suwannee and quickly resolving the issue referenced there.

B. Family Medical Practice Closure & New Primary Care Proposal – Old Town

- Commissioner Hatch informed the Board that the local Family Medical Practice will have its last day of operations on May 22 (noted as the 28th or 29th at first, later clarified as the 22nd).
- On the same day, he received a call from Logan Andrews, who is seeking a facility to open a primary care / walk-in clinic in Old Town.

- Commissioner Hatch and Mr. Jenkins discussed that the County has an unused old ambulance station in Old Town, which might be ideal for such a clinic.

Request & Discussion:

- Chairman Hatch asked if the Board was interested in pursuing a lease of the old ambulance station to Mr. Andrews for a walk-in primary care clinic, noting:
 - Mr. Andrews has 6–7 providers who wish to serve Dixie County residents.
 - The building will need some work before occupancy.
- County Administrator John Jenkins noted:
 - County workers had been pulled off the new logistics/communications (“COP”) building to complete work at Horseshoe Beach Park,
 - As a result, EMS supplies and equipment are still stored in the old station, mainly in the bay area,
 - Staff must first finish the new logistics building and relocate EMS before the old station is fully available.
 - This is therefore not an immediate change, but something that can proceed as logistics are resolved.
- Commissioner Hatch stated:
 - This will not happen tomorrow, but staff need to start preparing—clearing out County equipment, verifying building condition, then meeting on site with Mr. Andrews.
 - Mr. Andrews is willing to attend the next Board meeting to answer questions and present his plans.

Board Action:

Motion to proceed with leasing the old ambulance station in Old Town to Logan Andrews for use as a primary care / walk-in clinic made by Commissioner Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Subject to:

- Staff review of building needs,
 - Relocation of existing EMS equipment, and
 - Preparation of an appropriate lease agreement.
- **Discussion:**
 - Confirmed the building is the old ambulance station in Old Town.
 - Acknowledged the station needs repairs and clean-out, but the Board views it as a good fit for primary care.

Follow-Up / Direction:

- Commissioner Hatch directed:
 - County Administrator John Jenkins to:

- Coordinate with Chief Brown and Scotty Pendarvis to ensure all County equipment is removed from the old station in an orderly fashion;
- Meet with Logan Andrews to inspect the building and confirm suitability.
- Attorney Watson to draft a lease agreement between the County and Mr. Andrews for Board review.
- A brief note was made that May 22 (closing date of the current practice and Commissioner Hatch's wife's birthday) is easy to remember.

C. America's 250th Reminder

- Commissioner Hatch reiterated the earlier discussion regarding the America's 250 recognition (250th anniversary of the United States) and reminded everyone not to forget the upcoming event and its importance.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Public Comment – Finance Software Funding Structure

Speaker: John Gerry (Public Comment)

- Mr. Gerry followed up on the discussion about the proposed new finance software.
- He asked Mr. Royal whether the vendor's pricing structure is:
 - A one-time (up-front) charge, or
 - A Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) model allowing a monthly subscription that bundles:
 - Compliance updates,
 - Time and attendance,
 - Payroll,
 - Accounting, and
 - Other modules.
- Brenda responded:
 - Implementation would currently require paying at the time of implementation under the proposal they have discussed.
 - They have had some conversations with the vendor about options but are still in the very early stages of evaluation.
 - The company is eager to work with the County, and staff will continue exploring available options, including structure and timing of payments.
- Mr. Gerry suggested that, based on his experience, a monthly SaaS subscription can often:
 - Be less expensive up front than a large lump-sum purchase,
 - Bundle all necessary compliance and maintenance,
 - Fully cover liability and legal requirements,
 - Provide a cost-effective alternative to "dropping 100k at once."

- He encouraged the County to consider such subscription-based pricing as “food for thought” while negotiating with the vendor.

No Board action was taken; informational comment only.

Public Comments – Parks Fees and Service Issues

Speaker: Ruth Carter

- Ms. Carter addressed the Board regarding conditions and pricing at a County park (Gornto Springs) where her family camped over spring break (Thursday–Sunday).
- She reported:
 - On Saturday, they had no water for roughly half a day;
 - Toilets were not working during that period;
 - Although County staff ultimately fixed the issue, the delay significantly impacted their stay.
- She stated she had rented three different sites for that weekend and felt the cost was high given the problems experienced.
- Ms. Carter further expressed concern that the recent price increase for camping will make it difficult for regular local campers to continue using the park:
 - She compared Dixie’s park to a park in Gilchrist County, where, for about \$10 more per night, campers receive access to two bathhouses, a pool, and a splash pad.
 - She said that while her family would prefer to camp in their home county, they now feel they may have to go elsewhere because of cost versus amenities.

She also noted:

- When reserving online, she requested Lots 8 and 9, but her email confirmation showed Lots 9 and 14.
- After speaking with Mrs. McCallister and working with another camper (Shane Fowler) who held the desired lot, they effectively swapped sites, but it required coordination on their part.
- She stated that the old \$10/night sign at the park remained posted during their stay and was only removed while they were there.
- She reiterated that her son did not have water at first due to a faulty spigot; the water was repaired later, but something had been left turned off and had to be turned back on by someone else.

Board / Staff Response:

- Commissioner Hatch:
 - Acknowledged use of the CampSpot reservation system has benefits (e.g., cashless operation and safety for attendants), but stressed that if the County charges more, the facilities must work properly.

- Emphasized that when citizens pay for a service, the County must deliver that service, using a hotel analogy (changing rooms if the first is unsatisfactory).
- Mrs. McCallister and staff comments (via discussion and clarification):
 - Recognized there were start-up and learning-curve issues with the new online system and operations;
 - Confirmed that water issues were repaired, and the old price sign was removed and replaced with a new sign, noting a difference in recollection on the exact day/time but agreeing it was changed during that general period.
- Attorney Watson:
 - Explained the Board’s long-term goal is to improve County parks and expand amenities, but:
 - Under prior pricing, the County was not even covering attendant costs, and parks were often operating at a loss.
 - Increased revenue is necessary to fund improvements (e.g., converting tennis courts to pickle ball, future amenities like splash pads) and make the park system more competitive.
 - Noted that Park & Recreation’s budget is limited, so the new fee structure is intended to create a dedicated revenue stream for upgrades.
- Commissioner Osteen:
 - Stated the County is in the early stages of improving its park system and that it will be a slow, ongoing process.
 - Apologized for any inconvenience and reiterated that each time they try to improve a park, they find more things that need replacing or upgrading.
- Joseph Lander (public comment from the floor):
 - Pointed out the Gilchrist County park Ms. Carter referenced is actually owned by Suwannee River Water Management District and only managed by the county, with infrastructure funded by others, functioning largely as a profit center.
 - Noted that even there, nightly rates are still higher than those currently charged in Dixie County.
 - Emphasized Dixie County is trying to build up its park system from a lower baseline and must bring in enough revenue to preserve and improve it.
- On the idea of local resident discounts, Chairman Hatch explained:
 - Many of Dixie’s park projects are funded with state and federal grants, not solely local tax dollars.
 - Because all taxpayers (statewide/nationwide) contribute to those funds, the County cannot legally offer reduced rates only to local residents; everyone must have the same rate.

The Board thanked Ms. Carter for her comments and acknowledged that parks remain a work in progress as the County transitions to the new system and higher service expectations.

Public Comments

Speaker: Brian Gavette

- Mr. Gavette stated he has lived in the Hammocks area for about five years and has lived in Florida his entire life.
- He:
 - Thanked Commissioner Storey, noting he personally saw him stop on the roadside to help pick up trash, and expressed appreciation for that kind of leadership by example.
 - Offered to donate mowing/grass-cutting services if needed, noting he owns his own company.

Concerns and Requests:

- Mr. Gavette spoke broadly about community atmosphere and public discourse, especially:
 - Online forums (e.g., local Facebook pages) where residents raise concerns about issues such as park fees or other County matters.
 - He asked that people be allowed to voice grievances without being “dog-piled” or attacked and urged everyone to lower the rhetoric and be more respectful.
- He referenced:
 - Tensions that can arise over private property vs. public use, such as parking near the library, while emphasizing the importance of the library and praising Cindy (Library Director).
 - A perception among some residents that if they speak up or challenge local practices, they may face retaliation or harassment, including from individuals in or around government positions.
- He shared that:
 - He has personally experienced feeling unsafe on his own property, has installed cameras, and believes past incidents were not handled fairly, in part because a neighboring party was a longtime local.
 - He is a caretaker for a disabled veteran and had been advised by others not to attend or speak at Board meetings out of fear he would be targeted or not heard.
- Mr. Gavette also discussed stigma around medical marijuana:
 - He holds a medical marijuana card and uses it at home, noting it allowed him to get off prescription Xanax (two to three bars per day).
 - He feels judged because of this, despite not driving under the influence, and would like to see the stigma reduced, pointing out that some others likely use marijuana without a license.
 - He emphasized he was not seeking to argue about the law but asking for less judgment and more understanding.

Closing Request:

- Mr. Gavette urged the community and County to:
 - Be kinder and more open-minded with one another,
 - Allow residents to express concerns without fear, and
 - Work together to improve the environment and community rather than “teaming up” on individuals.

No Board action was requested or taken; comment was received for the record.

Public Comments

1. Use of Cross City Woman’s Club for Events

Speaker: Kirk Marhefka, Vice Mayor, Town of Cross City

- On behalf of the Town of Cross City Council and working through Mr. Jenkins, the Town’s City Manager, the Vice Mayor:
 - Offered the Cross City Woman’s Club building for use by the County and community groups for meetings and events, including:
 - Chamber of Commerce,
 - Rotary, and
 - Similar civic events.
 - He invited the Board, Chamber, and Rotary to reach out if they are interested so arrangements can be worked out.

The Board thanked him for the offer.

Public Comments

Neighborhood Speeding, Campers, and Road Paving – NE 356 / Crab Subdivision

Speaker: Michael Flynn

A. Speeding and Traffic Safety – NE 356 (McCrabb Subdivision)

- Mr. Flynn stated he lives on NE 356 (McCrabb Subdivision) and raised concerns about excessive speeding and disregard for stop signs on his road by:
 - UPS and FedEx trucks,
 - The school bus, and
 - Other vehicles.
- He noted:
 - Vehicles travel at very high speeds, some estimated around 70 mph in a 30 mph zone, which he considers extremely dangerous.
 - Some drivers purposely swerve down the road to kick up dust, creating large dust clouds that severely reduce visibility.
 - Many residents in the area are elderly; he will be 80 in four months and has health issues, and the dust and speeds are dangerous and disruptive.
- He previously:
 - Requested 30 mph speed limit signs, which were installed,
 - Contacted the Sheriff’s Office about reckless driving but feels the situation has not meaningfully improved.

Board / Staff Response (Speed):

- Commissioner Hatch:
 - Confirmed the County can and will repost or replace speed limit signs if they are missing or knocked down and asked Mr. Flynn to provide the exact road/house number, which he did (NE 356, Crab Subdivision).
 - Advised that once signs are correctly posted, law enforcement can enforce the speed limit more effectively.
 - Asked Mr. Flynn to notify the County if signs are damaged or removed so they can be reinstalled promptly.
-

B. Camper Trailers / RVs in Residential Area

- Mr. Flynn also raised concerns about camper trailers being used as residences in his neighborhood:
 - Reported at least one camper directly behind his property being lived in,
 - Another lot with two campers (one on each side of the road) with electric service,
 - He stated that “no one is doing anything about it” and reiterated he has raised this concern before, including during Commissioner Jody Stevenson’s campaign visit.
- He clarified he has no issue with mobile homes (he has lived in them himself) but objects to campers being used as permanent housing in that area.

Board / Staff Response (Campers):

- Commissioner Hatch explained:
 - The County has discontinued new RV special exceptions in the land development regulations.
 - Existing RV special exceptions must pay an annual renewal fee; if they do not pay or fail to comply, the exception is revoked.
 - Having two campers on one lot could constitute a code enforcement issue.
 - Attorney Watson:
 - Noted that while it is helpful for Mr. Flynn to speak to the Board and staff, the formal process is to file a complaint with Code Enforcement so the Code Enforcement Officer can inspect and act.
 - Stated that Code Enforcement is actively working cases monthly and encouraged Mr. Flynn to submit a formal complaint.
 - Commissioner Hatch added he directed Mr. Flynn to John Jenkins at the meeting because the Code Enforcement Officer (Steve Freeman) was not present, and Mr. Jenkins can help connect him with Code Enforcement and ensure the issue is addressed.
-

C. Paving of NE 349 Avenue Spur / Dust from Crushed Lime Rock

- Mr. Flynn’s final concern was the paving status of a short road segment:

- Described as “349 Avenue” off US 349 to NE 765, connecting to NE 356 (a short connector).
- He stated:
 - All right-of-way has been acquired,
 - The road was once listed as #1 to be paved in Dixie County, later moved to #2,
 - It has been on the list for about 10 years.
- The road currently has crushed lime rock, and when speeding vehicles pass, it produces a large white dust cloud, which is:
 - A nuisance,
 - A health concern for those with COPD, emphysema, heart conditions, including himself.
- He asked when the road will be paved.

Board Response (Paving):

- Commissioner Hatch explained:
 - The County submits 3–5 roads per year to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) for funding.
 - FDOT approval is not guaranteed; they mainly fund resurfacing of existing paved roads and only rarely fund the paving of new dirt roads.
 - Even if a road has been on the County’s priority list, the County cannot control FDOT’s project selection or timing.
 - He stated he wishes it had been paved 10 years ago but cannot give a date when it will be paved.
- Mr. Flynn emphasized the county’s growing population and increased traffic on the road, reiterating the health impacts (dust, breathing issues, heart condition).

Commissioner Hatch thanked Mr. Flynn for coming, acknowledged his concerns, and appreciated his input.

ADJOURN

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

ATTEST:

Mark Hatch, Chairman

Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk-Auditor

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.