

Workshop – Progress of Departments

Commission Board Room

Dixie County Courthouse

214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628

May 07, 2026 – 1:00 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 394317873#

COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Hatch, District 3, Chairman

Jody Stephenson, District 1 – Not present

Daniel Wood, District 2 – Not present

Commissioner Storey, District 4, Vice Chairman

Commissioner Osteen, District 5

STAFF

John Jenkins, County Manager

Roy Bass, Assistant County Manager

Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator – Not present

Attorney Watson, County Attorney

Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court

Brenda Royal, Chief Financial Officer

Christie Zander, Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

The workshop was called to order by Commissioner Hatch

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

- Invocation by Commissioner Storey.
- Pledge of Allegiance lead by Commissioner Hatch.

DISCUSSION

A. Horseshoe Property / Seawall Encroachment Issue

- Attorney Watson and Commissioner Hatch reviewed the long-standing issue with a property owner alleging an 18-inch seawall encroachment and seeking compensation.
- Board members and staff noted legal concepts that may apply, including eminent domain, adverse possession, and prescriptive

easement, and the fact the wall has existed for decades and likely protected the property.

- John Locklear reported the county has applied for a Community Technical Assistance Planning Grant to digitize county records, which should help locate historic surveys and documents and prevent similar issues.
- **Outcome/Direction:**
 - Staff to continue searching for survey and project records related to the seawall and the grant/engineering work.
 - No formal action taken.

B. Parks, Recreation, RV/Camping, and Rocky Creek / Old Boat Ramp Property

- **Parks & Camping Revenue Ideas:**
 - Commissioner Osteen and Commissioner Storey discussed potential revenue from RV and camping spots (Rocky Creek and the Cheek's property), noting high infrastructure and maintenance costs and funding restrictions.
 - Commissioner Hatch suggested focusing on private-sector RV resorts and using county incentives rather than the county directly developing small RV sites.
- **Rock Creek / Old Boat Ramp Parcel:**
 - Discussion of a 3-acre parcel with an old boat ramp that the county has invested in.
 - The Board suggested exploring sale or alternative use to generate revenue and better utilize the property.
- **Direction / Action Item:**
 - Commissioner Osteen to:
 - Check zoning on the Rocky Creek / old boat ramp parcel.
 - Work up an option for selling or listing the partial property with a realtor.
 - Bring recommendations back to a future Board meeting.

C. Recycling Program Concepts (Cardboard, Cans, Plastic, Glass, Tires)

- **Recycling Contact:**
 - Commissioner Storey reported contact with an individual who owns 3–4 recycling plants and is interested in materials the county is currently burning or landfilling.
 - Plan to visit the recycler with Tim Johnson, County Manager John Jenkins, and possibly John Locklear, to see their operation and explore partnership.
- **Program Ideas:**
 - Focus areas discussed:
 - Cardboard: heavy when wet, drives up tipping fees; potential for cost avoidance or revenue.

- Cans, glass, plastic: separate containers at dump sites; security for aluminum cans (locks or small openings).
- Use of inmates for sorting on a conveyor belt (referencing prior programs).
- Business/government focus first (schools, prison, large retailers) for high-volume cardboard and paper.
- Exploring recycling grants tied to diversion.
- **Tires and Waste Operations:**
 - Tires are a significant cost due to trailer rental and haul charges.
 - Discussion of tire shredding and opportunities to help other counties load tires with county equipment for a fee.
- **Direction / Action Items:**
 - Commissioner Storey to:
 - Meet with the recycler and develop a preliminary recycling plan, including business/government cardboard and metals.
 - Coordinate with Tim Johnson and DEP inspectors on what materials may be burned vs. recycled, especially cardboard.
 - John Locklear to continue exploring 10% waste reduction strategies and business recognition programs.

D. Equipment, Solid Waste, and Transportation Finances

- **Equipment Needs:**
 - Commissioner Storey noted aging trucks and equipment, frequent breakdowns, and the need to explore leasing (similar to graders) versus purchasing.
 - Plan to meet with Ms. Royal regarding short-term and long-term equipment financing.
- **Grant Management and FEMA Projects (Savinacious / PW 119):**
 - Commissioner Hatch explained the transition of FEMA/storm recovery management from EOC staff to Savinacious due to workload.
 - Scott Niolet (Savinacious) reported:
 - They are integrating with state and federal systems, reviewing project worksheets, and will provide a presentation at the next Board meeting summarizing:
 - All projects applied for
 - FEMA and state status
 - Pending documentation
 - Typical presentation length 10–15 minutes.
 - **PW 119 (Problem Project):**
 - Identified as the key bottleneck holding up other funding.
 - John Locklear stated all questions have been answered and the project is in the agency's hands.

- Savinacious confirmed the file is complete and awaiting state/FEMA processing.
- **Direction / Action Items:**
 - Savinacious (Scott Niolet) to present a full recovery status update at the next Board meeting.
 - PW 119 designated as top priority (Commission consensus), as it is blocking approximately \$5 million and delaying multiple projects and reimbursements.

E. District Priorities / Strategic Planning

- **District/Jena Area Priorities (Commissioner Osteen):**
 - Primary: Bridges and road safety on key access routes (e.g., Cow Creek Bridge and road).
 - Secondary: Continued improvements at Butler- Douglas Park and the Jena community recreation area (D-TRAC):
 - Playground equipment, ball fields, potential baseball practice field and soccer.
 - Park is heavily used by locals and visitors (pickleball, disc golf, walking trail).
- **Strategic Use of FEMA/HMGP Funding:**
 - Discussion on aligning recovery funding with long-term strategic goals (roads, parks, community facilities) and packaging projects by area (e.g., Shired Island, Butler- Douglas Park, etc.) to reduce confusion.
- **Direction:**
 - Commissioners to identify and rank top priorities for their districts for use in strategic planning with Savinacious.

F. Ordinances: Landfill Enforcement and Burn Bans

- **Need for Enforcement Mechanisms:**
 - Attorney Watson reported requests (including from Tim Johnson and Chief Brown) for ordinances to:
 - Enforce landfill rules, including tipping fees, non-payment, and improper dumping.
 - Enforce burn bans and fire safety, including ability to recover costs for fire response and restrict non-compliant businesses from using county facilities.
- **Board Feedback:**
 - Commissioners expressed support (general consensus) for drafting enforcement ordinances (no formal vote – workshop only).
- **Direction / Action Items:**
 - Attorney Watson to:
 - Research and draft:

- Landfill enforcement ordinance (fees, privilege suspension for repeat violators).
- Burn ban/fire cost recovery ordinance.
 - Bring draft language to a future Board meeting/workshop.
- Commissioner Storey to check with contacts in Greenville and other jurisdictions for sample ordinances.

G. Finance Update (General Fund, Fire, EMS, Solid Waste, Rock)

• **Finance Overview (Brenda Royal / Finance):**

- General Fund:
 - Strained by required subsidies to other funds (Transportation, Fire, EMS, Solid Waste), limiting ability to build reserves.
- Transportation:
 - Nearly \$1 million support from General Fund in prior year.
- Fire & EMS:
 - New stations and staffing/utilities mean assessments don't fully cover costs; funds cannot sustain themselves yet.
- Grants / Cash Flow:
 - Approximately \$600,000 in reimbursements pending.
 - Advance pay on grants has helped stabilize cash flow.

• **Rock Purchases Line Item:**

- With Crusher Down and more purchased rock, Finance and Solid Waste will:
 - Create a separate budget line for rock purchases (estimated \$100,000–\$125,000/year).
 - Expect repair/maintenance costs to decline once crusher-related expenses are gone.
 - Track rock costs by line item rather than burying in general operating supplies.

• **Direction / Action Items:**

- Finance to:
 - Add a “Rock Purchases” line to the budget.
 - Monitor trends in repair/maintenance versus rock cost.
- Solid Waste/Transportation to continue tracking loads by road/district, as feasible.

H. Pump Removal / Utility Issues (Kelly Chaires Property)

• **Abandoned Pump:**

- Discussion about a pump on private property that must be removed as a county responsibility.
- Plan:
 - Hire licensed plumber (e.g., George Edmonds) to supervise removal.

- Coordinate with applicable inspector (for a “clean bill of health”).
- Obtain/confirm liability release from the owner (Ms. Chaires).
- **Direction / Action Item:**
 - **Mikel Gainey to:**
 - Coordinate with George Edmonds and inspection staff.
 - Communicate with the property owner and schedule removal and proper abandonment of lines.

I. Shired Island / Cow Creek / DOT Coordination

- **Shired Island:**
 - Commissioners and staff discussed ongoing issues with:
 - Bridge safety and condition.
 - Unauthorized camping and vehicle use on the beach area.
 - Attorney Watson and Roy Bass reported:
 - Ongoing conversations with FDOT and other contacts.
 - A letter from FDOT supporting grant extensions related to Shired Island projects.
 - Expect an update by the next Board meeting.
- **Direction / Action Items:**
 - Staff to:
 - Continue coordination with FDOT on Shired Island and Cow Creek.
 - Provide an update at a future Board meeting, particularly once FDOT’s timeline and extension approvals are clearer.

J. City–County Joint Meeting; Agenda Order

- City–County Meeting:
 - Karen VanAernam reminded commissioners about the upcoming City–County meeting:
 - Date/Time: Tuesday, May 12, 5:00 p.m.
 - Location: City Hall (meeting now alternates between City Hall and the Manager’s Office).
 - Emphasis on better attendance from both city and county officials.
- **Board Agenda Order:**
 - At Commissioner Hatch’s request, the Board agreed (by consensus) that future agendas should:
 - List Constitutional Officers and City Officials immediately after voucher approval to allow them to address the Board early and return to their duties.

- **Direction / Action Items:**
 - **Karen VanAernam / Clerk's Office:**
 - Ensure Savinacious (Scott Niolet) is on the next agenda.
 - Adjust agenda format so Constitutional Officers and City Officials follow vouchers.
 - Remind Commissioners Wood and Stephenson to attend the City–County meeting and reiterate at Monday's Board meeting.

5. Public Comment (if applicable)

- **Public Comments:**
 - No public comments were offered.

ADJOURN

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

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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.