

Regular Meeting
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
June 04, 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, Commissioner
Jody Stephenson, District 1 – Not present
Daniel Wood, District 2
Jamie Storey, District 4, Vice Commissioner
David Osteen, District 5

STAFF

John Jenkins, County Manager
Roy Bass, Assistant County Manager
Martha McCaskill, Administrative Asst/Grant Coordinator
Chana Watson, County Attorney
Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court
Brenda Royal, Chief Financial Officer
Christie Zander, Deputy Clerk

CALL TO ORDER

Commissioner Hatch called the meeting to order.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

Commissioner Storey led the Invocation and Commissioner Wood led the Pledge to the American Flag.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

05/21/2026 Regular BOCC Minutes

Motion to approve the 05/21/2026 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

None present

KATRINA VANAERNAM, DIXIE COUNTY ANTI-DRUG COALITION

Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition – Opioid Abatement Funds / Narcan Boxes

Presenter: Sheila Frierson, Dixie County Anti-Drug Coalition

Summary:

- Thanked the Board for providing opioid settlement/abatement funds to the Coalition.
- Reported purchase of 22 Narcone/Narcan emergency wall boxes, including:
 - Two installed at the courthouse, mounted above AED units.
 - Additional boxes placed in local banks and businesses, in response to a prior accidental overdose linked to handling of money.
- Each box:
 - Contains Narcan to reverse opioid overdose.
 - Includes clear instructions to call 911.
 - Provides audio instructions in English and Spanish when activated, describing how to administer Narcan.
- Stated goal is to ensure Narcan is readily accessible throughout the community.
- Distributed an informational handout to commissioners.
- Reminder: Juneteenth celebration to be held on Saturday, June 27, 2026, at Johnny Green Park; commissioners and public invited.

Board Action: None required. Board thanked Mrs. Frierson for the update.

NIKIE WAITS – ROAD 2 REDEMPTION

PTSD Awareness Month – “Paddle for the 22” Event

Presenter: Nikie Waits (Road 2 Redemption / Recovery / Community Partner)

Summary:

- Noted that June is PTSD Awareness Month and June 27 is National PTSD Awareness Day.
- Cited statistic that approximately 22 veterans per day die by suicide in the United States.
- Proposed a community event titled “Paddle for the 22”:
 - Date: June 27, 2026 (National PTSD Awareness Day)
 - Location / Launch Site: Rogers Park
 - Start Time: 8:30 AM
 - Activity: Kayak trip on the river in honor of the 22 veterans lost daily to suicide.
 - Participants: Seeking at least 22 community leaders, including:
 - Elected officials
 - First responders
 - Veterans
 - Business owners and community partners
 - Purpose:

- Raise awareness about PTSD and mental health, particularly among veterans.
 - Convey the message: “No veteran fights alone.”
 - Encourage open conversations that could help save lives.
- Fundraising:
 - Participants encouraged to obtain sponsors/donations.
 - All proceeds to benefit the Wounded Warrior Project.
- Apparel:
 - Participants will wear teal T-shirts (PTSD awareness color), carrying a message of hope, healing, recovery, and resilience.
- Described prior success with a similar Mental Health Awareness paddle on the Santa Fe River, where the group’s green shirts drew attention and started conversations about mental health.
- Emphasized:
 - Event is not a race and not political.
 - Focus is on support, visibility, and compassion for veterans and others facing mental health challenges.
 - Stated: “No one should have to navigate those waters alone,” likening life and recovery to sections of the river (calm, strong currents, obstacles).
- Logistics:
 - Kayak rentals:
 - There is a livery directly across from Rogers Park that has rental kayaks.
 - She is coordinating with them to reserve at least 22 kayaks.
 - Also in contact with AW Kayaking (Adam) to provide additional kayaks; he is checking his schedule.
 - Registration:
 - A flyer will be distributed in the community and on social media.
 - Flyer includes a QR code for online registration.
- Ms. Waits stated her strong personal commitment, based on her own recovery journey and prior work with veterans, to helping both veterans and individuals in recovery.

Board Questions / Comments:

- Chair and commissioners expressed support and indicated they are willing to participate in the event.
- Chair:
 - Asked about kayak availability and rentals.
 - Requested that organizers work with the local livery and AW Kayaking to ensure an adequate number of boats for participants.
- Lighthearted remarks were made about commissioners paddling and needing additional boats to follow behind.

Board Action:

No formal motion. Board consensus to support the event and individually participate where possible.

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Tourism & Eco-Tourism – State-Owned Uplands near Fishbone / Shired Island

Presenters:

- Kay McAllister, Dixie County Tourism
- County Attorney Chana Watson

Tourism Report (Ms. McAllister):

- Noted no new tourism events to report aside from the upcoming scallop season:
 - Scallop season begins June 15, 2026.
 - Asked that residents and businesses be courteous and helpful to visitors navigating the area during the season.
- Mrs. McAllister reported ongoing work with Attorney Watson on an application for use of state-owned uplands near Fishbone / Shired Island.

Background on State-Owned Parcel:

- Parcel description:
 - Approximately 16.4 acres of state-owned uplands near Fishbone and Shired Island.
 - Historically leased by the Dixie County School Board.
 - Lease fee is \$500 per year.
 - Area is primitive, with no utilities; primitive camping is allowed.
- History:
 - Parcel was originally secured and used by Ms. Bonnifay Williams for educational purposes (school field trips).
 - After her retirement, the School Board largely ceased using the property and no longer wants to maintain the lease.
 - Standard state lease condition: the School Board remains under the lease until another qualified entity assumes it.
 - The state offered the parcel to other state agencies first; no agency agreed to take it.
 - The County (via Tourism Development Council) is now in a position to pick up the lease.

Proposed Management Plan:

- Dixie County Tourism Development Council would:
 - Assume the lease and primary responsibility for:
 - Management
 - Maintenance
 - Stewardship

- Preserve the natural character and ecological integrity of the site while providing:
 - Low-impact public access
 - Recreational opportunities
- Planned uses and improvements:
 - Maintenance of narrow hiking and biking trails (“cow trails”) – not wide or heavily cleared paths.
 - Primitive camping areas.
 - Birding and nature observation spots.
 - Educational and interpretive signage explaining local flora, fauna, and habitat.
 - Potential collaboration with IFAS to develop accurate educational materials about the swamp/forest ecosystem.
- Anticipated impact:
 - Very low cost to the county (primarily monitoring for trash and damage).
 - Another eco-tourism asset to attract visitors, especially given:
 - Closure of some nearby camping at Shired Island.
 - Growing market interest in primitive camping and overlanding.

Partnership with Sunshine State Adventure Company / Florida Adventure Trail:

- Tourism plans to partner (for management assistance) with:
 - Sunshine State Adventure Company / Florida Adventure Trail, based in Gainesville.
- Their contributions:
 - Organization has a couple hundred members and maintains a trail network across Florida.
 - Shired Island is already a stop along one of their overland trails.
 - Can provide volunteer work crews (up to ~60 people) to:
 - Clear and maintain trails.
 - Help prepare primitive campsites.
 - Assist with occasional cleanups.
 - There will be no charge from this group; work is volunteer-based.
- Possible improvements:
 - Modest, low-key signage for trails and educational information.
 - No major construction or utility infrastructure anticipated.

Draft Resolution (Attorney’s Overview):

- Attorney Watson read the heading of a draft resolution for Board consideration at a later meeting:
 - A resolution of the Board of County Commissioners supporting:
 - The lease of the state-owned parcel for public recreational eco-tourism and conservation.

- Assigning management and stewardship responsibilities to the Dixie County Tourism Development Council.
 - Authorizing partnerships to enhance recreational opportunities.
 - Providing for an effective date.
- Additional documentation required by the state application includes:
 - The descriptive statement read by Ms. McAllister.
 - The formal Board resolution.
 - A separate Board statement acknowledging that this is a takeover of an existing lease from the School Board.

Condition of the Property & Maintenance:

- Questions were raised regarding:
 - Current condition of trails:
 - Attorney and tourism staff indicated trails are likely overgrown and will need minimal, careful reopening.
 - Limitations on improvements:
 - Property will remain very primitive; no major clearing.
 - Maintenance:
 - Periodic checks to ensure no trash or destructive behavior.
 - Some cost for sign fabrication; otherwise, volunteer labor expected.

Board Discussion and Direction:

- Commissioner Hatch:
 - Noted prior conversations about this lease and an earlier request for \$300 for application fees.
 - Stated that, given the low annual lease cost and the additional camping access toward Shired Island, this could benefit the county and visitors.
 - Asked that the Board:
 - Discuss during this morning meeting, and
 - Formally adopt the resolution at the night meeting, allowing commissioners time to read all documents.
- Commissioners:
 - Expressed general support for:
 - Low-impact recreational use.
 - Eco-tourism development.
 - Taking over the lease to relieve the School Board.
 - Acknowledged the growing demand for primitive camping, citing similar interest in nearby communities (e.g., Cedar Key).

Board Action:

- No formal motion taken.
- Consensus to:

- Allow staff and attorney to finalize the application packet, including required letters and the resolution.
- Bring the resolution back for formal adoption at the evening meeting.

Related Follow-Up (for your Action Item List, if desired):

- Finalize lease application for state-owned Fishbone/Shired Island parcel and submit to state once all documents are ready.
- Present resolution for adoption at the next scheduled BOCC meeting on June 18,2026.

KAREN VANAERNAM, DIXIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Economic Development Report – Cross City / Community Pride & Downtown Improvements

Speaker: Karen VanAernam, Dixie County Economic Development (Speaker: Karen VanAernam)

Mrs. VanAernam provided an update focused on Cross City and community revitalization efforts:

1. Community Pride & Recent Events

- Mrs. VanAernam reiterated that Cross City is the county seat, and improvements there benefit the entire county.
- Mrs. VanAernam thanked all who participated in:
 - The Memorial / “250” Celebration held on Monday, May 18, 2026.
 - Reported a great turnout and “sweet celebration” building community pride.
- Noted:
 - 250th banners have been installed on municipal and county buildings (courthouse, Supervisor of Elections, and others), provided by the Cross City Restore & Renew team.
 - Banners are also on the welcome sign, symbolizing the “250 celebration.”
- Commented that community pride is “really growing” throughout Dixie County, especially in Cross City.

2. Downtown Cleanup & Building Improvements

- Reported on the May 23, 2026, cleanup day on US Highway 19:
 - Work focused around Dixie Appliance and adjacent buildings on both sides of the highway.
 - Activities included trash pickup, painting, weed removal, and general cleanup.
- Mrs. VanAernam noted:
 - Dixie Appliance property is for sale, and the county hopes a buyer will bring new retail and tax revenue to both city and county.
- Explained that these efforts are part of a broader plan to:
 - Restore and renew key commercial buildings.
 - Make Cross City more attractive to new businesses and investors.

3. Upcoming Community Cleanup & Lighting Project – June 12

- Announced the next community cleanup / beautification event:
 - Date: Friday, June 12
 - Time: 4:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
 - Location: At the four-way stop in downtown Cross City; participants to meet in the county parking lot next to the Supervisor of Elections office.
- Purpose:
 - Encourage participation especially from those who cannot attend early-morning events (noted previous pushback on 7–8 a.m. start times).
- Project components:
 - “Market lights” / café-style Edison lighting to be strung across:
 - Hatcher Realty
 - Forward Fitness
 - Other nearby buildings with owners’ permission.
 - Requested Board approval to extend lighting across the street to:
 - The Dixie County Advocate building
 - United Christian Services / election office / poly building and nearby offices
 - Certified handyman Harry White will handle most of the installation.
 - Large planters will be installed on the corners to further enhance the streetscape.

Board Response:

- Commissioner Mark Hatch indicated that using county buildings for lighting was acceptable and discussed it positively.
- No formal motion/vote was recorded in this segment; the Chair indicated general support for the lighting project along the affected county-fronted blocks.

4. Regional Promotion & “For the Love of Dixie” Campaign

- Highlighted the “For the Love of Dixie” branding effort:
 - T-shirts feature the Dixie County outline on the back with “For the Love of Dixie.”
 - Cleanup shirts are considered work shirts (meant to get paint and splatter).
- Reported the success of a promotional video produced by Meridian Pursuit:
 - Over 25,000 views and 170+ shares on Facebook alone.
 - Also circulating on LinkedIn and other platforms.
 - Feedback from neighboring counties has been very positive; people express that they “wish they had this” in their own communities.
- Framed the effort as:
 - “Putting Dixie on the map.”

- A collective initiative involving many groups, not just one person or organization.
 - Specifically thanked Nikki and the Anti-Drug Coalition as partners.
5. Coastal Community Updates (Horseshoe Beach & Suwannee)
- Briefly updated on work in the coastal communities:
 - Dredging projects are moving forward.
 - Group path (multi-use trail) construction is progressing.
 - Stated that “good strides” are being made and that “life is coming back” to the coastal areas, helped by:
 - Upcoming June 15 scallop season opening, expected to increase visitation and economic activity.
6. North Florida Economic Development Partnership (NFEDP) Meeting
- Announced that Dixie County will be highlighted at the upcoming North Florida Economic Development Partnership meeting:
 - Date: Friday (this week)
 - Location: Palatka / East Palatka
 - Reported:
 - The county’s promotional video will be showcased as the “big hurrah.”
 - Four communities (including Dixie) will be highlighted.
 - Several commissioners and officials (including “John and others”) plan to attend.
 - Emphasized this as further regional recognition of Dixie’s revitalization efforts.

No motions or formal votes were recorded in this segment. The Board received the report, offered thanks, and provided informal approval for the downtown lighting effort to include county-associated buildings.

SCOTT NIOLET – SAVINACIOUS

FEMA & Disaster Recovery Funding Update

Speaker: Scott Niolet (FEMA consultant/representative)

- Reported on FEMA projects for four storms, totaling approximately \$5.9 million obligated, with \$2.9 million received and about \$3 million still in process.
- Scott Niolet, FEMA consultant/representative, provided an update on FEMA disaster recovery projects related to four storms. He reported that approximately \$5.9 million has been obligated, with about \$2.9 million received to date and roughly \$3 million still in process.
- Mr. Niolet stated that recent progress has been made a payments have begun to move forward. He noted, however, that timelines were affected by a recent FEMA holiday week and the Florida Division of Emergency Management conference held in Orlando.
- He advised that current efforts are focused on County Road 119 and that he expects positive movement on that project within the next two weeks.

- Mr. Niolet also stated that the Governor's Office has accepted our application regarding the 12.5% local match waiver for Hurricanes Debby and Helene and that the State will advise if any additional information is needed.
- No questions from the Board.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Capital Projects & Facilities Construction Update

Speaker: Kellan Bailey, Engineer/Project Manager

Fire Stations & Evidence Building

- Fire Station 3:
 - Contractor is still working on interior; project is moving toward completion.
- Fire Station 6:
 - Framing is nearly complete; site work and electrical rough-in are underway.
 - Once framing is finished, interior work will accelerate.
- Sheriff's Evidence Building:
 - Primary grouting has been completed; quantity of grout used was less than bid, which is favorable.
 - Remaining step is to present data to the engineer to confirm no secondary grouting is needed.
 - Meeting scheduled with the County Manager (John), his staff, and the Sheriff on June 11, 2026, to:
 - Review building plans;
 - Discuss next steps; and
 - Coordinate bidding and funding strategy, including pending appropriations.

Horseshoe Beach Park & Commercial Working Waterfront

- Horseshoe Beach card/park issue:
 - Staff is researching existing plats/surveys; prior documents are archived and being retrieved.
 - A surveyor is reviewing records; further information will be provided once located.
- Working Waterfront / Commercial Grant (BP funds):
 - Still in permitting with DEP and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.
 - County has responded to requests for additional information from the Corps and expects permit issuance once approved.
 - Plans are essentially ready; construction can proceed once DEP and Corps permits are in hand.
- Commissioner Hatch asked staff to:
 - Ensure the boat ramp is inspected and ready ahead of scallop season;
 - Continue addressing congestion and use at busy ramps during the season.

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

Horseshoe Beach & Suwannee Dredging and Utilities

Speaker: John Locklear

- Horseshoe Beach Dredging:
 - Dredging equipment scheduled for delivery this week.
 - Contractor plans to start dredging the outer canal on Monday, assuming equipment arrival is on time.
- Suwannee Dredging:
 - Will follow later, using a different type of equipment (may be subcontracted).
 - No firm start date yet, but work is expected within the next month or so, possibly concurrent with Horseshoe operations.
- Utility Projects (on behalf of Raelynn Brownell Suwannee Water and Sewer):
 - Working with Horseshoe Beach on execution of an agreement with State Revolving Fund (SRF) to construct an elevated water tank.
 - Awaiting the Governor’s final action on a state appropriation for wastewater improvements; if not vetoed, the town should be within budget.
- Pipeline Easement:
 - Roy Bass reported a meeting next week with the land group that owns property outside Horseshoe along the intended pipeline route.
 - County must obtain permission from landowner Brian Croft to run the pipeline; Mr. Bass expects to resolve remaining issues at that meeting.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR- Not present

Library Summer Programs & Transition

Speaker: Brenda Alexander (Library representative)

- Mrs. Alexander reported that June is the library’s busiest time due to children’s summer programming.
- Because of recent changes and facility issues, Wednesday children’s programs have been moved from the library to the old gym:
 - First Wednesday: ~40 children attended (versus 140 last year’s opening day), attributed to early summer timing and location change.
 - Amanda Martin (American Red Cross) presented “Pedro the Penguin,” teaching children about emergency preparedness.
- Upcoming/ongoing summer programs include:
 - Jackie Manna – Fossil Finders;
 - “Unearthing a Story” with magician Mark Allen;
 - Mystic Jungle live-animal program (planning to bring more and larger animals due to increased gym space);
 - Dr. Seuss on the Loose;

- Tales of the Seminole;
- Painting, arts, sewing, cooking, and cake-decorating classes on Mondays and Thursdays (already at full capacity).
- Library metrics:
 - 807 registered patrons;
 - 14,183 visits in May;
 - 22 new patrons added in the prior three weeks.
- Mrs. Alexander emphasized:
 - The library often serves as an information hub for new residents and the community, helping connect people with local services and events;
 - Staff view the library as the “heart of the community”, focused on service, loyalty, and integrity;
 - They appreciate the partnership with the School Board for use of the gym and with the County for ongoing support during transition.
- Mrs. Alexander thanked the Board for difficult decisions made regarding the library facility and expressed optimism about a future, improved library building.

Board response:

- Commissioner Hatch:
 - Acknowledged the hard decisions involving the library and reiterated the Board’s intention to ultimately build a modern library suitable for decades to come.
 - Praised the professionalism, compassion, and willingness to adapt shown by library staff and the School Board’s rent-free use of the old gym for summer programs.
- Commissioner Osteen:
 - Thanked library staff for all they do and noted it has been a rough year, but expressed confidence it “is going to get better.”
- Mrs. Alexander reaffirmed that library staff are 100% committed to serving the community, regardless of facility changes.

RAELYNN BROWNELL, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER

Not present.

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Code Enforcement Update

Speaker: Steve Freeman

Mr. Freeman reported that tires at the former Methodist Church site have been picked up; however, other issues at the property remain.

- Mr. Freeman noted there is already a court judgment against that property; a county lien will follow once the process is complete.

- Mr. Freeman announced a code enforcement hearing later that afternoon (around 3:30–4:00 p.m.) for:
 - A property in Jena (final judgment); and
 - A property near the rock pit.
- Mr. Freeman stated he plans to seek permission to tow a camper off the side of the road at the rock pit location.
- Commissioners encouraged him to continue strong enforcement.

MICHAEL GAINEY, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Nothing to present at this time.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

Solid Waste Department – Equipment Failures & Need for New Trucks

Speakers: Tim Johnson, Commissioner Storey, Roy Bass, Nextran Truck Center (equipment representative) Robert Judkins, Board discussion

Mr. Johnson reported that it has been a difficult two weeks for the department, with multiple pieces of equipment out of service. He stated that “everything we’ve got [is] broke down,” and that they are using a “knuckle boom truck” in an effort to keep up with countywide garbage collection, but progress is slow and problems keep arising.

He requested Board approval to repair the cylinder on the last remaining packer truck, explaining:

- The quote to replace the cylinder is \$13,376.64.
- The cylinder cannot be repacked; it is a one-time-use component.
- A similar repair was performed last year on another truck, and this situation is the same type of repair.

Board Action:

- **Motion to approve replacement of the packer truck cylinder in the amount of \$13,376.64.**
 - **Motion made by: Commissioner Storey**
 - **Seconded by: Commissioner Osteen**
- **Vote: Motion carried unanimously.**

Current equipment and repair costs

- Department operates four main trucks:
 - Two roll-off trucks: 2001 and 2007 models;
 - Two packer (garbage) trucks: 2011 and 2019 models.
- Commissioner Storey presented a detailed three-year repair cost summary for these four units:
 - FY 2023 (approx. “2024” in discussion):

- 2001 roll-off – about \$12,000 in repairs
- 2007 roll-off – about \$6,600
- 2011 packer – over \$20,000
- 2019 packer – about \$8,000
- Total: ≈ \$46,000
- FY 2024 (approx. “2025” in discussion):
 - 2001 roll-off – nearly \$25,000
 - 2007 roll-off – about \$8,100
 - 2011 packer – about \$45,000
 - 2019 packer – about \$20,000
 - Total: ≈ \$97,000
- Current year through June 3 (FY 2025 YTD):
 - 2001 roll-off – about \$10,000
 - 2007 roll-off – nearly \$12,000
 - 2011 packer – about \$48,000 (not including current welding/repairs)
 - 2019 packer – about \$13,000, with another major cylinder repair quoted at \$13,376.64
 - Total to date: ≈ \$81,000
- Three-year total repair cost on these four units is approximately \$225,000.
- Mr. Johnson described current operations as “everything’s broke down”, with staff resorting to using a backhoe and dump truck to move garbage, causing extreme inefficiency and overtime.

Revenue offsets & budget context

- Solid Waste receives revenue from scrap metal:
 - Last year: about \$55,000 from one major pickup, which Jamie believes will be higher this year.
 - There is ongoing work with WC to increase metal volume; target is to raise that revenue from roughly \$50,000 to \$140,000 annually.
- Commissioner Storey noted:
 - Prior year (approx. FY 2024) budget line for repairs & maintenance was about \$130,000.
 - Current year (FY 2025) budget:
 - Repairs & maintenance: \$175,000, nearly exhausted by mid-year;
 - Machinery & equipment: \$75,000 available for capital purchases.

Proposal – Purchase of New Roll-off Truck and Packer Truck

Immediate repair approval

- The Board first considered the \$13,376.64 quote to replace a non-rebuildable packer truck cylinder.

- Consensus was that the repair is necessary to keep equipment temporarily operational, but focus quickly shifted to long-term replacement rather than continuing high repair expenditures.

New equipment plan

- Commissioner Storey proposed the county purchase:
 - One new packer truck, and
 - One new roll-off truck, on a five-year financing plan with a single annual payment.
- Preliminary financing quote presented:
 - Interest rate: about 5.69%;
 - Annual payment (for both trucks combined): approximately \$139,159 (≈\$140,000), including interest;
 - First payment due: December 15, allowing the county to receive trucks now and pay after the next budget cycle.
- Commissioner Storey argued that:
 - Annual repair spending (~\$80–100k) plus growing scrap metal revenue could support the payment;
 - New equipment would reduce downtime, overtime, and emergency repairs;
 - In his experience, going into debt for reliable equipment was ultimately more cost-effective than constantly repairing very old units.

Operational strategy – reducing open-top boxes

- Commissioner Storey outlined a long-term plan to phase out most open-top cans at collection sites and replace them with stationary compactors (“packers”):
 - Residents would deposit waste into compactors rather than open-top boxes, reducing litter and cleanup.
 - Full compactors would be hauled using roll-off trucks, decreasing dependence on road-running packer trucks.
 - As more stationary compactors are installed, the county’s need for packer trucks should decline, making this likely the last packer truck purchase for some time.

Board Discussion & Motion

- Commissioner Hatch agreed equipment replacement is necessary but requested:
 - A check with local banks for potentially lower interest rates than 5.69%;
 - Clarification of how the annual payment fits into the solid waste assessment and overall budget;
 - Consideration of selling or scrapping old equipment to offset costs.
- The equipment representative, Mr. Judkins, stated:
 - One packer truck is already on his yard, and a roll-off truck would be available in about 1.5–2 months;
 - He has arranged 5-year / 250,000-mile engine and after-treatment (DEF system) warranties on both trucks;

- Truck delivery is not tied to using his financing source—the county is free to finance locally.

Final motion (as clarified on the record):

- **Motion made by: Commissioner Osteen moved to:**
 1. Proceed with the purchase of both the new packer truck and roll-off truck; and
 2. Direct staff to immediately seek lower interest rate options from local banks, with the understanding that:
 - If a local bank can match or beat the presented rate, the county may use that bank;
 - If not, financing will proceed with the originally-quoted municipal lender so trucks can be delivered promptly.
- **Seconded by Commissioner Storey.**
- **Additional clarification:**
 - The Board expects staff to act the same day to contact local banks and finalize financing so that trucks can be ordered and delivered without delay.
 - Commissioner Hatch authorized signing final financing documents consistent with the Board’s decision.
- **Vote: Motion carried unanimously.**

Follow-up / Implementation Notes

- Staff (Tim Johnson, John Jenkins, Roy Bass, and finance staff) are to:
 - Coordinate with the equipment vendor and selected lender;
 - Finalize purchase and financing documents;
 - Arrange delivery of the new packer and roll-off trucks;
 - Evaluate older units for disposal, surplus, or scrap to recover value and reduce maintenance burden.
- Commissioner Storey stated that with new equipment, the department will:
 - Improve site cleanliness and reliability over the next 1–3 years;
 - Enforce proper equipment maintenance (including regular washing) and accountability for operators.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

Nothing to present at this time.

SCOTTY PENDARVIS, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Nothing to present at this time.

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Chief Jason Lemmermen had nothing to present at this time.

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Not present.

HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Nothing to present at this time.

ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

Not present.

JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER

Administrative Items – Contracts, SHIP Assistance, Amendments, and Letters of Support

Speaker: John Jenkins

Mr. Jenkins presented several items for Board consideration:

1. Agreement – DDT Transportation Services (Airport Project)
 - Requested Board approval to execute a contract with DDT Transportation Services for airport-related work in the amount of \$6,453.
 - **Motion made by: Commissioner Osteen.**
 - **Seconded by: Commissioner Wood.**
 - **Vote: Motion carried unanimously.**
2. SHIP Down Payment Assistance – Laura Rhymes
 - Requested Board approval of State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) down payment assistance for Laura Rhymes in the amount of \$20,000.
 - **Motion made by: Commissioner Osteen.**
 - **Seconded by: Commissioner Wood.**
 - **Vote: Motion carried unanimously.**
3. CDBG Project Amendment – NE 241st Street (D 0304)
 - Requested approval of Amendment No. 1 to project D 0304 – NE 241st Street, specifically to remove the contracted brokerage from Task Deliverable No. 3.
 - **Motion made by: Commissioner Wood.**
 - **Second: Commissioner Osteen.**
 - **Vote: Motion carried unanimously.**
4. Letter of Support – Sheriff’s Evidence Building (FY 26–27)
 - Requested Board approval of a letter of support to Governor DeSantis for state funding for the Sheriff’s Evidence Building in Fiscal Year 2026–2027.
 - **Motion made by: Commissioner Wood.**
 - **Seconded by: Commissioner Osteen.**
 - **Vote: Motion carried unanimously.**
 - Commissioner Hatch noted that current legislative budget figures are \$750,000 for the Evidence Building.
5. Letter of Support – Tax Collector’s Office Expansion (FY 26–27)

- Requested Board approval of a letter of support to Governor DeSantis for foundation and expansion of the Tax Collector’s Office in Fiscal Year 2026–2027.
 - **Motion made by: Commissioner Osteen.**
 - **Seconded by: Commissioner Wood.**
 - **Vote: Motion carried unanimously.**
 - Commissioner Hatch noted current legislative figures include \$400,000 for the Tax Collector expansion.
6. FAC Annual Conference (Information Item)
- Mr. Jenkins reported, as an information item, the dates for the Florida Association of Counties (FAC) conference:
 - Tuesday, June 23 – Friday, June 26, 2026.

Recognition – County Manager Leadership Academy Certificate

Speaker: Attorney Watson (reading certificate); Commissioner Hatch; Board and audience

- Attorney Watson read aloud a certificate from the Florida Association of Counties / Institute for County Government recognizing County Manager John for successfully completing the Florida County Leadership Academy, Class of 2026 (26th Academy).
- The certificate acknowledges completion of required coursework and leadership training specifically designed for county managers.
- Commissioner Hatch and commissioners:
 - Publicly congratulated Mr. Jenkins on earning the certificate;
 - Noted that the program involves significant hours and commitment;
 - Encouraged him to “tighten up, John, tighten up” in a light-hearted, congratulatory manner.

CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

County Attorney Report – Public Records, Land Use Mediation, and City Garbage Issue

Speaker: County Attorney Chana Watson

Attorney Watson provided the following updates:

1. Public Records Request
 - Attorney Watson reported that the office is moving forward on a large public records request.
 - Most requested items have been gathered and compiled.
 - One remaining item is being obtained from Ms. Angie Crowley, who was home sick but working to provide the needed document.
 - Once that item is received, the response can be completed and finalized.
2. Land Use Mediation (Ongoing Case)
 - Attorney Watson updated the Board on an ongoing land use case that is headed to mediation.

- Attorney Watson and opposing counsel have been attempting to agree on a mutually acceptable mediator:
 - Several potential mediators suggested by the County were declined by the opposing side due to prior case involvement or concerns from their law partners.
 - Attorney Watson stated they are now considering a retired judge from further south in Florida.
 - Attorney Watson acknowledged a preference for mediators who understand rural counties, but noted that options are limited and they are close to an agreement on a mediator so the case can move forward.
3. City of Cross City / Waste Pro Solid Waste Issue
- Attorney Watson then summarized the solid waste disposal dispute between the County and the City of Cross City, involving Waste Pro:
 - Historically, when the County opened its transfer station/landfill, the City hauled its own garbage.
 - At that time, a letter between then-county attorney Doyle Thomas, then-Chairman (Ms. Watson's father), city attorney Robert Moeller, and the City's chairman reflected an understanding that the County would temporarily not charge the City disposal fees while the City was hauling its own garbage.
 - That understanding covered one year of charges and an agreement not to charge the next year; it was not intended as a permanent, open-ended exemption.
 - Presently:
 - The City contracts with Waste Pro, which collects and hauls municipal solid waste.
 - The City receives revenue under that contract, while no tipping/disposal fee is being paid to the County for use of the County facility.
 - From the County's perspective, the prior arrangement no longer applies, as the conditions (City hauling its own garbage) have changed.
 - Attorney Watson emphasized that:
 - The County is losing money by not collecting disposal fees.
 - The County's position is that Waste Pro should be paying tipping fees, as other haulers do.
 - Next Steps:
 - Attorney Watson will contact the City's attorney and invite the City (mayor and/or council) to the next BOCC meeting to discuss the issue.
 - Attorney Watson noted that the City had indicated interest in mediation or a workshop, but the County's preference is to address the matter during a regular board meeting if possible.

Board Discussion

- Commissioner Storey:
 - Reiterated his concern that this issue has been ongoing for some time.
 - Stated he is tired of certain City representatives “picking at” the County Manager over this matter.
 - Indicated he expects the City to:
 - Attend the next BOCC meeting, and
 - Be prepared to make a decision, as he is ready to make one himself if they do not.
- Attorney Watson noted this summarizes the issue “in a nutshell” and that she will move forward with contacting the City’s attorney to coordinate their appearance or participation.

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

Nothing to present at this time.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

Commissioner / Staff Comments – Rock Crusher, Horseshoe Park Host, and Other Items

Speaker: Commissioner Wood had nothing to present.

Speaker: Commissioner Osteen

- Thanked everyone for attending the meeting and stated it had been a productive meeting.
- Asked that Greg Bailey be informed he apologizes for calling him while he was out of the country on a hunting trip when trying to obtain information about the Horseshoe Beach park/survey.
- Commissioner Osteen reported that the individual he had previously mentioned to the Board regarding a rock crusher has finally contacted him back.
- Described the crusher as an old-style, U.S.-made rock crusher that can be worked on and repaired locally.
- Commissioner Osteen stated his intention to:
 - Coordinate with Mikel Gainey and arrange a visit next week to inspect the crusher;
 - Evaluate whether it could be suitable for County use before bringing any formal proposal back to the Board.

Speaker: Roy Bass speaking for Kay McCallister

- Mr. Bass provided an update on park operations:
 - Reported that the Horseshoe Beach park is now online for rentals.

- Reservations for the park are booked out past July 4, 2026, indicating strong demand.
- Shelly Ross advised that there is currently no dedicated camp host at Horseshoe Beach:
 - Any park-related problems are directed first to her phone;
 - If she is unavailable and shuts off her phone, calls roll over to Mrs. Kay McCallister.
- Mrs. Ross asked the Board:
 - Which commissioner or staff contact they would prefer him to call when issues arise at the park. She mentioned that Gornto Springs has a host to handle calls.
- Commissioner Hatch responded:
 - Advised that Mrs. Ross should contact “whoever you can get ahold of,” but that Commissioner Osteen, as the district commissioner, should be considered the first point of contact.

Discussion – Potential Camp Host & Budget Timing

- John Jenkins raised the idea of a camp host at Horseshoe Beach:
 - Commissioner Hatch noted that with the park now heavily used and fully booked, some form of on-site management or host might be needed in the future.
 - Commissioner Hatch asked whether the County might consider establishing a camp host position in a future budget, recognizing that nothing was budgeted for the current year.
- Brenda Royal and Commissioners briefly discussed:
 - That the current year’s budget does not include funding for a camp host at Horseshoe Beach.
 - The possibility of revisiting the issue in the next budget cycle if demand and revenue levels continue to justify it.
- Speaker Commissioner Hatch:
 - Commissioner Hatch reminded staff to follow up on financing details for the newly approved solid waste trucks, including checking with local banks for potentially better interest rates.
 - Commissioner Hatch mentioned his upcoming wedding anniversary and that he and his wife would be out of town over the weekend, noting that some signatures on financing documents might need to be handled before he leaves or upon his return.
 - Commissioner Hatch lightly referenced that Commissioners Storey and others also had upcoming anniversaries or commitments but would still be participating in scheduled community cleanups where possible.

- Commissioner Hatch stated he had no further items to bring before the Board. He asked everyone to keep Commissioner Jody in their prayers, noting that he was unsure of Commissioner Jody’s situation but was confident that, if able, he would have been present at the meeting.
- Commissioner Hatch then closed his remarks and opened the floor for Comments and Concerns, calling first on Mrs. Karrie Miles.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Carrie Miles – Suwannee Waterfront Parcel / School Board Coordination

Speaker: Karri Miles, Suwannee resident

Mrs. Miles addressed the Board regarding the school-owned waterfront parcel in Suwannee that had been on the School Board agenda for surplus/disposition:

- Reported that on Tuesday night, approximately 25 citizens from Suwannee attended the School Board meeting to speak against surplus/selling the parcel.
- Stated they were told at that meeting that the County “wants nothing to do with that property.”
- Requested that the County Commission meet with the School Board to explore:
 - A possible lease of the property, or
 - A potential donation/transfer of the parcel to the County.
- Noted:
 - A nonprofit organization, the Chamber, is willing to invest money in improvements on the property if a lease is in place.
 - The Chamber does not wish to invest in improvements on land where it has no lease or secure interest.

Board / Staff Response:

- Commissioner Hatch stated he had already spoken by phone with all five School Board members and the School Board attorney the day after their meeting.
- Commissioner Hatch summarized the County’s position:
 - The County has repeatedly tried in the past to obtain the Suwannee parcel from the School Board.
 - The County has already paid for a survey and expended funds on that property in anticipation of acquiring it.
 - The School Board later indicated they wished to sell the property to the County.
 - The Board of County Commissioners is willing to accept the property at no cost:
 - “We would gladly take that property off their hands free of charge, no problem whatsoever. We’ll accept it. As Chairman, I’ll sign what I need tomorrow.”
 - The County does not have funding available to purchase the parcel at an appraised price.

- Commissioner Hatch explained that, from the County’s perspective, the idea is to build a new community center at Glen Dyals Park, rather than rebuild on the old school site:
 - The current helipad at Glen Dyals is in a tight area; he has personally observed the limited approach space for medical helicopters.
 - The plan he and staff have discussed is to:
 - Relocate the helipad further to the back of the park (even if the land there must be built up).
 - Construct a new community center where the helipad currently sits.
 - Keep the front area open and visible for better security and vandalism deterrence.
 - Commissioner Hatch noted:
 - Glen Dyals Park already has the fire station, library, and the planned new post office (USPS will not return to the old Suwannee location due to flooding).
 - The site includes pickleball courts and existing park amenities.
 - A new center there would still serve as a community facility for Suwannee but must be available to all county residents under the standard county facility-rental system.
- Commissioner Hatch reiterated that:
 - The Board of County Commissioners has a good working relationship with the School Board.
 - Any suggestion that there is a “problem” between the two boards is inaccurate; they cooperate on multiple fronts (summer programs, bricks for projects, garbage services, etc.).
 - If the School Board decides to donate the property, the County will accept it; if they decide to sell it, the County cannot afford to purchase it.

Mrs. Miles added:

- If the County acquires the parcel, the Chamber is willing to:
 - Construct an open-air pole barn on the waterfront parcel as a community asset.
 - Help apply for rural USDA grants to support tourism and recreation at the site (e.g., kayak launches, waterfront programs, library summer activities).
- Reiterated that the Chamber will not invest approximately \$25,000 in improvements without a lease or secure interest in the property.

Stacy Beauchamp – Historical Use and Local Concerns

Speaker: Stacy Beauchamp, Suwannee resident

Mrs. Beauchamp stated:

- She attended the recent School Board meeting and understood that:
 - The School Board intends to move forward with surplus and selling the parcel unless the County steps in.

- Emphasized that for Suwannee residents, “it’s not the money, it’s the land”:
 - The parcel has served as community property for approximately 50 years.
 - Residents use it for barbecues, events, and gatherings, and value the waterfront location, which reflects why people live in Suwannee.
- Mrs. Beauchamp said the community feels they are still contributing substantial tax revenue (many property owners are non-homesteaded) and requested the County’s help in keeping the property for community use.

No Board action was taken; comments were received.

Brian Turck – Code Enforcement Follow-Up

Speaker: Brian Turck

Mr. Turck, a Dixie County property owner, addressed the Board regarding:

- Previous discussions at earlier meetings about his property and an allegation that he was living there without a well.

Mr. Turck informed the Board that:

- A well has now been installed on his property.
- His RV exemption is now 100% compliant.
- He has also installed an \$11,000+ privacy fence around the property.
- Mr. Turck displayed minutes from a prior Board meeting in which his situation had been discussed, and noted:
 - The very next day after that meeting, he was visited by county staff regarding the well issue.
 - He promptly complied with the requirements and has receipts showing he acted immediately.

Mr. Turck then asked:

- Why similar complaints he had previously made (around August) about three other parcels had not resulted in visible action.
- Whether citizens must come before the Board to get code issues resolved, since that appeared to have prompted quick action in his own case.

Response:

- Commissioner Hatch asked for identification of the three parcels and suggested bringing them back with specifics at the next Board meeting.
- Code Enforcement Mr. Freeman stated that:
 - There are active code enforcement cases on all three properties Mr. Brian had complained about.
- Commissioner Hatch clarified:
 - In Mr. Turck’s situation, there had been a complaint, staff went out immediately, and he cooperated and corrected the issue.
 - In the other cases, the properties are now in formal code enforcement proceedings, which take longer due to due process (hearings, notices, etc.).

- The County is not “picking on” Mr. Brian; rather, they applied the same courtesy to him as to others, and he responded quickly.
- Mr. Turck stated that he will remain in compliance and appreciated the clarification.
 - Mr. Turck concluded his remarks by noting:
 - For military veterans suffering from PTSD, there is a telephone number available to call for help.
 - He stated he fully supports PTSD assistance efforts and encouraged others to support them as well.
 - He shared that he was personally one of the people who made that call almost 20 years ago, underscoring the importance of such resources.

No motion was taken; this was informational/public comment.

Public Comment – Suwannee School Property / Community Center History

Speaker: Jim Ward, non-resident property owner in Suwannee

Mr. Ward stated that:

- Although he is not a Dixie County resident, he owns property in Suwannee, directly across from the school-owned waterfront/community center parcel.
- He attended the recent School Board meeting and was surprised to hear that the County allegedly has “zero interest” in the Suwannee property:
 - Noted he has attended prior County Commission meetings where he heard clear interest in that parcel expressed.
- Acknowledged that a new building cannot be rebuilt on the original site due to current regulations, but insisted that:
 - “Something needs to be worked out” between the School Board and the County.
- Emphasized the historical significance of the parcel:
 - The property was first deeded on July 15, 1944, making it nearly 90 years since it was first designated for community use.
 - For approximately 90 years, it has been treated as community property for Suwannee.
- Mr. Ward urged the Board:
 - To work with the School Board,
 - To “try harder, whatever it takes”, and
 - To develop a workable scenario that allows the Suwannee community center property to remain community property.

No Board action was taken; the comment was received.

Additional Suwannee Comments – Process & Next Steps

Several additional Suwannee residents commented, including:

Rob McInnis, Old Town stated:

- He frequently travels through the Hammock area and has observed the property discussed earlier Mr. Turck’s property, calling it a “shining example” of how the RV exemption can work properly when the right people follow the rules.
- He expressed the view that:
 - Many problems associated with RV exemptions in the Hammock stem from lack of enforcement over time, rather than the exemption itself.
 - If the County had followed up consistently from the beginning, the current level of issues would likely be reduced.
 - He then commented on broader funding challenges:
 - Noted that the County is under fiscal pressure related to property tax changes.
 - Pointed out that the School District is also losing significant revenue because of students being able to leave the public school system for private schools, impacting school funding.
- Mr. McInnis also commented on operations at the solid waste collection sites:
 - Observed that many people bypass the compactors and instead throw trash directly into the open-top boxes.
 - Suggested that the County should reduce the number of open-top boxes, since “a lot of lazy people” go straight to those boxes rather than line up and use the compactor.

Response:

- Commissioner Storey agreed this is a problem and stated:
 - The County is already working toward phasing out open-top boxes.
 - As existing boxes become unusable, they will not be repaired but instead removed from service.
- They will be replaced with compactors, so eventually citizens will have no choice but to use the compactors until they are full and then the roll-off containers can be hauled.

No action was taken; the comments and response were received.

-
- Follow-up on Suwannee Parcel – Process / Timeline:
 - Mike Ragland, Suwannee resident, asked for a clear understanding of what happens next regarding the parcel:
 - Noted the School Board had tabled action for 30 days, but there is a strict timeline for them to decide whether to surplus and sell.
 - Asked which entity (County or School Board) will take the next action, and how Suwannee citizens can engage productively.
 - Attorney Watson explained:
 - The School Board tabled the item for 30 days; it will return to their agenda.
 - Attorney Watson had anticipated drafting a resolution to surplus the property, but that did not move forward due to the tabling.

- Before the School Board can dispose of the property, they must adopt a formal resolution of surplus; only then can they sell, auction, or give it away.
- Commissioner Hatch reiterated:
 - He has already clearly communicated the County’s position to each School Board member and the School Board attorney:
 - The County will take the property free of charge.
 - The County cannot purchase it.
 - If needed, he is willing to attend a School Board meeting and state that position on the record.
 - From the County’s perspective, the “ball is now back in the School Board’s court”; they must decide whether to:
 - Surplus and sell the parcel, or
 - Donate/transfer it to the Count

Resident Linda Musgrove (Suwannee, fulltime):

- Identified herself as a full-time Suwannee resident and long-time Florida broker.
- Stated that when the property was deeded in 1944, the intent was never that it be sold almost 90 years later “because they need a little money.”
- Mrs. Musgrove emphasized the parcel’s historic significance:
 - It is considered a significant historical site, with monuments present.
- Mrs. Musgrove announced that community members are:
 - Exploring historic designation and
 - Planning to retain legal counsel to oppose sale and to protect the parcel as community property.
- Mrs. Musgrove stated that any buyer intending major development (e.g., condos) should expect a lengthy process, as the community will actively contest such changes.

No motions or actions were taken by the Board during this comment period; the comments were received and discussed, with the Commissioner reiterating the County’s position and the need for a School Board decision.

ADJOURN

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

PLEASE BE ADVISED that if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearings, he/ she will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose, he/ she will need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. “Persons with disabilities requesting reasonable accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact (352) 486-4931 (Voice & TDD) or via Florida Relay Service at (800) 955-8771.” The Board meets the first Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM and the third Thursday of each month at 6:00 PM. Individuals that would like to be placed on the agenda should call Barbie Higginbotham, Clerk of Court, by 4:00 PM on the Friday Preceding the Board meeting, at (352) 498-1200.