Regular Meeting

Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
June 18, 2026 – 6:00 PM

The Board meetings are audio recorded. The public can hear and participate in the meeting via conference call by dialing 1 469-551-3616 and enter code 908-825-494#

COMMISSIONERS
Mark Hatch, District 3, Chairman
Jody Stephenson, District 1 – Not present
Daniel Wood, District 2
Jamie Storey, District 4, Vice Chairman
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
Chairman Hatch called the meeting to order.

Opening Remarks
Chairman Hatch noted that the room is filled to capacity, with attendees present in person and by phone.

- Chairman Hatch noted that:
    - The meeting is being recorded so that future generations can know how County business was conducted.
    - All attendees should silence or turn off cell phones and avoid sidebar conversations, as such conversations are picked up on the recording and interfere with the official record.
    - Seating is limited and attendees may need to "pack in like sardines "additional space is available in an adjacent room with the door open.
- The Chairman requested that everyone keep Commissioner Stephenson in their prayers, noting that he was not present and still "under the weather."

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

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

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

06/04/2026 Regular BOCC Minutes and 05/11/2026 BOCC & TOHB Workshop Minutes

Motion to approve the 06/04/20269 BOCC Regular Meeting Minutes and the 05/11/2026 BOCC & TOHB Workshop Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Vice Chairman Storey. Board approved.

VOUCHER APPROVAL

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

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS/CITY OFFICIALS

Town of Cross City – Solid Waste Assessment & Tipping Fees
Presenter: Attorney Lindsey Lander, Town of Cross City

- Provided historical context dating back to 1991 regarding:
    - The County's solid waste assessment ordinances, and
    - Discussions between then-town attorney Robert Moeller and then-county attorney Mr. Ted Burt (and Doyle Thomas) about Cross City joining the assessment.
- Stated that:
    - Town minutes and correspondence reflected that Cross City would participate in the assessment contingent on a county resolution exempting the Town from landfill/tipping fees for Town residents' garbage hauled by the Town's commercial carrier.
    - County minutes from that time indicated tipping fees would not be assessed "this year," creating ambiguity as to duration.
    - The referenced County resolution could not be located by the Clerk's Office, despite being referenced in Town minutes and correspondence.
- Noted that for approximately 34 years, the County did not charge tipping fees on Town residential garbage hauled by the Town's carrier, which:
    - Suggests an agreement or long-standing understanding existed; or
    - If no valid agreement was reached, raises questions about whether the Town's participation in the assessment is binding.

Town's Position:

- Cross City's commercial carrier:

    - Collects Town residential garbage and hauls it directly to the County transfer station,
    - Saving the County the cost of trucks, employees, and equipment to service the Town (unlike other areas, including Horseshoe Beach, which are County-serviced).
- The Town requested clarification whether the County believes it has legal authority—under the 1991 understanding—to impose tipping fees on the Town's commercial carrier.

Board / Mayor Fulford Discussion:

- Vice Chairman Storey questioned:
    - The status of the Waste Pro contract (Mayor Fulford stated it is month-to-month pending resolution of the tipping fee issue).
    - Allegations that Waste Pro trucks had been bringing Levy County garbage into Dixie County, with drivers allegedly admitting they had done so for years.
    - Argued that charging tipping fees to every truck crossing the scales is the only way to stop out-of-county dumping.
- Vice Chairman Storey cited prior discussions with Mayor Fulford:
    - Town residential garbage: approx. 28–30 tons per week.
    - At $50/ton, equal to about $6,000/month or $72,000/year in tipping fees.
    - Mayor Fulford had estimated about 1,200–1,300 residential customers, and that the City receives approximately $5–$6 per can above its cost to Waste Pro.
    - Vice Chairman Storey calculated City surplus at about $75,000 per year, roughly equal to the projected tipping fee; questioned why the city "needs" this margin when it owns no garbage trucks or solid waste employees.
- Mayor Fulford responded:
    - Any surplus from garbage fees is deposited into the City's general fund.
    - Suggested that if the County is concerned about Levy County garbage, it could adjust weigh-in procedures or enforcement rather than placing costs solely on Town residents.
    - Stated he does not agree with the City rule requiring garbage service for anyone who has City water and does not want that rule in the next contract.

Authority vs. Policy:

- Vice Chairman Storey reiterated:
    - His duty is to protect County taxpayers' money.
    - The County controls access to its solid waste facilities, can charge tipping fees on all trucks, and can require Waste Pro to haul elsewhere if needed.
- Attorney Lander clarified:
    - He was not there to defend Waste Pro's business patterns but to address only whether the County has legal authority—under the 1991 understanding—to charge tipping fees on Town residents' garbage.

    - If the County's position is that it does have such authority and intends to charge tipping fees, he will relay that position to the Town Council, which will then consider its options (including potential legal action).
    - Noted the Town had requested a workshop to address this collaboratively; since that did not occur, the issue is being discussed in a regular public meeting.

Conclusion:

- Vice Chairman Storey affirmed that the County believes it has authority to charge tipping fees and to control use of its facilities by any private hauler.
- Attorney Lander acknowledged the County's position and stated he would report back to the Town of Cross City.

No motion or vote was taken on this matter; discussion was for clarification of positions only.

<u>**ANDREW QUINCOSIS – DATA CENTER**</u>

Data Centers, AI, Utilities & Growth

Speaker: Andrew Quincosis ("King Cobra")

- Mr. Quincosis stated he cares deeply about Dixie County's land, children, culture, and traditions, and is concerned about the future direction of the county in light of rapid growth and outside development pressures.
- Main topic: Potential Data Centers in Dixie County
    - Clarified that no data center is currently proposed in Dixie County.
    - Noted that Senate Bill 484 (data center bill) was passed to create transparency between developers and local governments but still allows non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) up to 12 months.
    - Cited information from FloridaDataCenters.org, stating Dixie County was given a "56 out of 100" risk rating for data center siting, with:
        - High scores for water capacity and land availability, due to proximity to the Suwannee River and large tracts of agricultural land.
        - A moderate score for power availability and grid exposure, implying that infrastructure investment could make the county more attractive to developers.
- Concerns about Utilities and Grid Changes
    - Reported he had reviewed transcripts between Duke Energy and Central Florida Electric Cooperative (CFEC) regarding territory and service agreements, suggesting that Duke Energy may become the main utility provider over portions of the area in the next few years.
    - Mr. Quincosis stated that, according to his research:
        - Investor-owned utilities like Duke Energy are generally more attractive to data centers than cooperative-served areas.
        - A Duke Energy transcript referenced a 7% rate increase for customers over the next several years.

    - In North Carolina, Duke previously told residents bills would not rise due to data centers, but he stated there has been a 22% increase since 2020, with an additional 15% increase being sought.
- Water Usage & Environmental Concerns
  - Noted that agriculture currently uses about 64% of the water supply (per 2023 data) and that large data centers can use one to five million gallons of water per day, depending on the cooling system (open-loop vs. closed-loop).
  - Cited an example from Oregon where Amazon reached a $20.5 million class-action settlement related to data center cooling wastewater allegedly causing nitrate-laden contamination, linked to well contamination and health issues (miscarriages, kidney failure, cancer).
- Air Pollution, Noise, and Infrasound
  - Referred to a study from Cal Tech and UC Riverside predicting that data center air pollution could contribute to 1,300 premature deaths annually in the U.S. by 2030, disproportionately affecting low-income communities.
  - Described concerns over noise and infrasound:
    - Data centers reportedly generate a 24/7 low-frequency "hum" that traditional decibel-based regulations may not capture.
    - Claimed such infrasound can affect people, livestock, and wildlife by increasing stress hormones (cortisol), heart and respiratory rates, and disrupting feeding, breeding, and communication behaviors.
    - Mr. Quincosis suggested these data centers can interact with telecommunications towers, intensifying these effects.
- Land Use, Agriculture, and Community Character
  - Emphasized Dixie County is a rural, agricultural community, with tourism rooted in the Suwannee River, springs, and the coastline.
  - Expressed concern that data centers:
    - Are large, windowless, warehouse-style "hyperscale" facilities,
    - Provide very few permanent local jobs,
    - Generate little to no street-level activity or community integration,
    - Convert farmland and open land in ways that are not easily reversible ("farmland doesn't come back once it's gone").
  - Compared potential tax revenues from data centers to other forms of development, stating he would rather see:
    - A Publix or similar commercial development, or
    - A 2,000-home subdivision that residents could live in and work around, than a large data center complex that offers minimal local benefit and high environmental risk.
- AI, Data, and Control
  - Linked the data center push to the growth of artificial intelligence (AI):

        - Stated that AI requires massive computing capacity and data storage, driving demand for hyperscale data centers.
        - Expressed concern that AI, currently available “for free,” may later be sold back as a paid utility, after collecting extensive user input and data.
        - Referred to broader geopolitical and policy trends (e.g., World Economic Forum 2030 agenda) and suggested that large-scale data infrastructure can become part of surveillance and control systems (referencing kill switches in cars, Flock cameras, telecom towers, etc.).
- Call for a Moratorium / Ban
    - Emphasized he is not against all growth and believes Dixie County will see significant growth and new opportunities regardless.
    - Advocated for a “good defense” by acting before a data center is proposed:
        - Pointed out that Wakulla County adopted a one-year moratorium on data centers,
        - Jackson County adopted a one-year moratorium and is scheduled (June 23) to vote on a permanent ban.
    - Requested that the Board consider endorsing a moratorium or ban on data center development in Dixie County to protect water, agriculture, tourism, and community character.
    - Stated he would likely follow up individually with Commissioners and continue providing information.

Board Response

- Chairman Hatch:
    - Thanked Mr. Quincosis and attendees for the information.
    - Reiterated that, as of now, “there is nothing about a data center that’s in Dixie County right now.”
    - Acknowledged that the issue involves speculation about future development and infrastructure changes.
    - Noted the county’s reliance on data and connectivity (phones, computers, etc.) and compared the changing technology landscape to the closure of an old pulp mill, which became less necessary as society moved toward digital data instead of paper.
    - Expressed caution about adopting an immediate, sweeping moratorium or permanent ban without fully understanding:
        - How data centers and data infrastructure underpin existing technologies that residents depend on, and
        - What the unintended consequences might be if the county broadly “says no” and then residents experience degraded service or connectivity.
    - Chairman Hatch stated he does not yet know enough about data centers to support a “drastic” action like an outright ban, but acknowledged the need to

learn more, especially in light of the new state data center legislation, which leaves key land-use decisions to local governments.

Additional Public Comments

- Resident – Michelle Hatton
  - Long-time Florida resident (in the area since 1972).
  - Stated the county is "building quicker than we can grab hold of" and expressed concern about losing the county's rural, agricultural, and tourism character.
  - Highlighted the value of nearby springs, farmland, and the Suwannee River for residents and visitors.
  - Warned that large data centers could:
    - Damage local water resources,
    - Harm agriculture and recreation dependent on clean water, and
    - Reduce tourism.
  - Ms. Hatton supported considering a moratorium to further investigate impacts of data centers before any are allowed.
  - Chairman Hatch again clarified that there are no current data center proposals in Dixie County and thanked her for the comments.
- Chairman Hatch noted that public input on this issue is appreciated and that further study would be needed before the Board could consider formal policies such as a moratorium or land-use changes specific to data centers.

No formal motions or votes were taken on the data center topic during this portion of the meeting. Comments were informational and advisory in nature.

<u>**DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES**</u>

Emergency Medical Services – Station Two Closure & Paramedic Shortage
Speaker: Chief Darren Brown (Fire/Rescue/EMS)

- Reported that he had to make a difficult operational decision on Monday (earlier in the week):
  - Station Two has been temporarily closed due to a critical paramedic shortage.
  - One fire engine has been downgraded from an ALS ambulance backup to a BLS truck.
  - The department is effectively down three ambulances when accounting for the loss of that ALS capability.
- Staffing / Pay Issues:
  - Chief Brown stated the department is currently down six (6) paramedics.
  - Noted that Dixie County has lost paramedics to other agencies, including:
    - Columbia County and a private service there,
    - Which are paying approximately $22–$23 per hour.
  - Explained the history of wage pressures:

        - 5–6 years ago, when minimum wage changes and Medicare/Medicaid rules forced the County to move EMS starting pay to $15/hour ahead of others, it initially gave Dixie a competitive edge and attracted medics from surrounding counties (including Alachua).
        - In subsequent years, the County struggled to keep up with regional market increases; neighboring counties have now surpassed Dixie's pay.
        - Gave an example: Marion County recently advertised EMT positions in the low $70,000s annually, which is over $10,000 more than Dixie's paramedics currently earn; Levy County medics are making about $7,000/year more than Dixie paramedics.
- Operational Impacts:
    - EMS is now running approximately 350 calls per month per truck across the four primary units, stressing the fleet.
    - There are two engines capable of being converted to ambulances, but with the downgrade of one unit to BLS, effective ALS coverage has been reduced.
    - Noted that calls per truck average around 80 calls per month, and that the closure of Station Two will place additional response burden on Station Four and the remaining units.
- Overtime and Morale:
    - To cover gaps, remaining staff have been working two and three shifts in a row, attempting to maintain coverage.
    - The department cannot sustain the overtime costs, and continuous overtime is impacting employee fatigue and morale.
    - Despite the challenges, he praised his staff for their dedication and willingness to pick up shifts.
- Requests / Budget Implications:
    - Emphasized that the situation is not sustainable and that the County must address:
        - Pay competitiveness for paramedics, and
        - The need for additional units.
    - Reminded the Board he requested another ambulance in the previous budget cycle but it could not be funded; the current shortage has only heightened that need.
    - Stated that, in addition to the extra unit he previously requested, he now needs to restore the two effective ambulances just lost due to staffing and the downgrade.
- Fleet / Equipment Update:
    - Reported that a re-chassis ambulance has just come back from the vendor, but it was delivered without power locks and windows as specified.

        - He confronted the vendor and was able to secure a commitment that a technician will correct the deficiencies at no charge to the County.
    - Noted that the re-chassis cost has climbed to approximately $207,000 per ambulance.
    - Explained that the County's long-standing practice is to re-chassis one ambulance per year, but due to COVID-era delays and increased call volume, the County is now behind schedule, with three units meeting replacement criteria and only one budgeted for re-chassis in the next year.
    - Stated that a letter of intent for the next re-chassis will be signed for the upcoming budget year, with the understanding it can be canceled if funding is not available.
- Recognition of Former Chief Jimmy Gold:
    - Advised the Board that former Chief Jimmy Gold will be posthumously honored by:
        - The Florida Fire Chiefs Association at their summer conference in Punta Gorda (memorial service and recognition).
        - The Red Cross, which is recognizing Chief Brown's contributions to the smoke detector campaign; the Chief and Mrs. Gold have been invited to a recognition dinner in Alachua County on the 30th of this month.
    - Indicated that he and other Dixie County chiefs will attend these events and will provide photos and documentation for the County.
- New Station / Flag Donation:
    - Reported that a new station in the First District is nearing opening.
    - Chief Brown announced that Chris McKenzie has donated a handcrafted flag to be installed at that station.
    - Plans to hold an opening ceremony for the new station at which:
        - The donated flag will be formally recognized, and
        - Mr. McKenzie and the Board will be invited.
- Personal Note:
    - Notified the Board he would be leaving after the meeting to go out of town for vacation but would remain available by phone and could return if needed.
    - Gave a brief update on a family member's (grandchild's) health, noting improvement and expressing appreciation for the Board's concern.

Board & Public Follow-up

- Kay McCallister, a volunteer first responder from Suwannee (Station 71), addressed the Board to:
    - Express concern that the closure of Station Two could increase response times toward the river and along U.S. 19, at times approaching 30 minutes.
    - Requested clarification of coverage plans.
- Chief Brown clarified:

    - Station Four still has trucks and will respond to that area, subject to being available (i.e., not already on a call).
    - Acknowledged that delays are possible, reinforcing the urgency of addressing staffing and resources.
- Commissioners:
    - Thanked Chief Brown and EMS staff for their efforts under difficult circumstances.
    - Reiterated that EMS staffing and truck replacement will be major topics in the upcoming budget.

No formal motion or vote was taken on this item during this segment; it was presented as an informational operational update and early budget warning regarding EMS staffing, pay, and fleet needs.

<u>ETHAN MERCHANT - LIBERTY PARTNERS - LEGISLATIVE UPDATE</u>

Presenters:

- Adam Potts, Liberty Partners of Tallahassee
- Ethan Merchant, Liberty Partners of Tallahassee

Overview of 2026 Regular Legislative Session

- Adam Potts reported on the outcome of the 2026 Regular Session:
    - Regular session dates: January 13 – March 13.
    - The Legislature did not finalize the budget during regular session; the budget was completed later in May.
    - There are supermajority Republican majorities in both the House and Senate:
        - Currently 84 Republicans in the House; two House seats are vacant (members appointed to local offices).
    - This is an election year:
        - 21 Senate seats and 120 House seats are up, as well as the Governor, CFO, Attorney General, and Agriculture Commissioner.
        - There will be new leadership in both chambers and a new Governor, so the next four years are expected to be different from the last four.
- Session statistics:
    - Nearly 2,000 bills were filed.
    - 237 bills passed both chambers.
    - As of the presentation, 200 bills had been signed by the Governor; one bill remained pending; no vetoes had yet been issued.
    - Approximately 12.5% of filed bills passed (compared to 269 passed last year, with 11 vetoes).

Bills of Interest

- Did Not Pass:

        - Rural Renaissance – a major priority of Senate President Albritton; did not make it through the final process.
        - Blue Ribbon Projects – would have allowed development on large tracts (15,000+ contiguous acres) with 40% dedicated to affordable housing.
        - AI Bill of Rights – the Governor and Senate were interested in AI regulation; the House had little appetite, and the bill died (although a similar bill had passed the Senate).
    - Did Pass / Items Affecting Local Governments:
        - Sovereign Immunity / Suits Against Government:
            - Increases local government liability limits:
                - From $200,000 to $350,000 per person, and
                - From $300,000 to $500,000 per incident.
        - Local Government Finances:
            - Requires local governments to:
                - Post proposed budgets online at least five days before public hearings.
                - Conduct a 10% budget reduction exercise, documenting the analysis and posting the documentation online.
        - Data Centers:
            - A data center bill was passed that generally confirms local government control over siting and land use decisions for data centers, leaving it up to local governments to determine where they may or may not be located.

Special Sessions

- Adam Potts explained that there have been six special sessions over the last two legislative years, the most since the early 1990s. Many legislators are weary of being in Tallahassee so frequently.

1. Special Session D – Congressional Redistricting (and AI/Medical Freedom Add-Ons)
    - Called by the Governor in January 2026 to address Congressional redistricting.
    - The Governor also added AI Bill of Rights and Medical Freedom to the call, but:
        - The House did not file companion bills,
        - Those issues had passed the Senate in regular session but died in the House,
        - Therefore, no AI/medical freedom legislation was enacted in this special session.
    - Congressional maps:
        - Redistricting was done mid-cycle, narrowly for Congressional seats (normally done only every 10 years).
        - Previous Congressional split: 20 Republican – 8 Democrat.
        - New split: 24 Republican – 4 Democrat.

        - Districts 1–7 in North Florida (including this region) did not change; most changes occurred in the Orlando and South Florida areas.

2. Special Session E – Budget Conference / Finalization

- Mr. Potts reported on Special Session E, which was convened to complete the budget conference process after regular session:

Dixie County Appropriations & Reappropriations:

    - The process stretched over 17 days, with periods of inactivity followed by bursts of meetings.
    - During this process, Liberty Partners worked closely with the County's delegation and staff, resulting in strong outcomes for Dixie County.
    - $750,000 – Sheriff's Evidence Building.
    - $400,000 – Tax Collector's Office Renovation and Expansion.
    - $49,000 (approx.) – Revert and reappropriate lapsed funds for tanker equipment.
    - $289,000 (approx.) – Additional revert/reappropriate funds to support the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) / Fire Station project.

- Budget context:
    - The Governor's recommended budget was about $2 billion higher than his prior year recommendation ($101.8 billion).
    - The Legislature's final budget was approximately $600 million less than what they passed last year, reflecting a "tightening the belts" posture.
    - However, when compared to the post-veto budget from last year, this year's legislative product is about $700 million higher—leading Liberty Partners to expect the Governor will use the veto pen more aggressively this year.
    - The budget had not yet been transmitted to the Governor as of the meeting date, but was expected soon, with veto decisions to follow.
- Liberty Partners noted:
    - Over the last two sessions (their first two with Dixie County), they have helped bring back approximately $2.15 million to the County through grants and legislative appropriations.
    - With the current year's budget, there is an additional $1.5 million specifically identified for Dixie County, plus the revert/reappropriate amounts.
    - They believe Dixie County did very well in the budget and are cautiously optimistic pending the Governor's final actions.

Upcoming Property Tax Amendment – Save Our Homes from Excessive Property Tax

- Adam reported on another special session (later in the year) focused on property taxes, which resulted in a proposed constitutional amendment:
    - Amendment name: "Save Our Homes from Excessive Property Tax"
    - Will appear on the November general election ballot; requires 60% + 1 voter approval.

        - Key provisions:
            - New homestead exemption:
                - Additional exemption amount: $250,000 (phased in).
                - $150,000 exemption in 2027.
                - Full $250,000 exemption beginning 2028.
                - Starting in 2029, the exemption would be indexed to inflation.
            - Five-year residency requirement:
                - Homeowners must have at least five years of Florida residency to receive the additional exemption; otherwise, they remain at the standard $50,000 homestead exemption.
            - Reduces the non-homestead assessment cap from 10% to 5% annually.
            - The measure is intended to "hold harmless" public safety, education (schools), infrastructure, and natural resources, though details will be worked out in implementing legislation.
        - The Governor has announced he will call the Legislature back after the November election for another special session to pass implementing legislation if the amendment is approved by voters.

Board Comments

- The Chairman:
    - Thanked Liberty Partners for their work on behalf of the County, their regular communication, and responsiveness to calls and questions.
    - Noted that Dixie County has done very well in appropriations and expressed appreciation for their efforts in Tallahassee.

No formal Board actions or votes were taken during this update; it was provided for information and discussion only

<u>**SHANNON WIRICK JR – BALL FIELD SCHEDULE/SHARING**</u>

Youth Sports Facilities – Scheduling, Maintenance, and Hudson Ballfield
Dixie County Babe Ruth Board – Sports Complex Concerns

Speaker: Shannon Warrick, **representing the Dixie County Babe Ruth Board**

- Mr. Wirick stated that the purpose of appearing was to build a lasting relationship with the Board of County Commissioners to improve youth athletic programs in Dixie County.
- Emphasized that:
    - All youth sports groups share the same goal of providing safe, well-maintained facilities where children can learn, compete, and grow.
    - Families should feel proud of the facilities that represent their community.

Key Issues Identified:

1. Scheduling Conflicts (Soccer vs. Baseball/Softball)

  - Reported recurring scheduling conflicts over several years between soccer, softball, and baseball at the county sports complex.
  - Stated that current scheduling practices:
    - Delay the start of baseball/softball seasons due to overlap with soccer, and
    - Do not leave enough time to properly prep and maintain fields between sports.
  - Noted this has:
    - Hurt player development, and
    - Created a competitive disadvantage when playing other counties that start earlier and have more practice time.
2. Facility Condition and Safety / Liability Concerns
  - Described multiple maintenance issues at the sports complex, including:
    - Damaged chain-link fencing,
    - Holes around the facility,
    - Dilapidated batting cages,
    - Rotten boards on bleachers and handrails.
  - Expressed concern that these conditions:
    - Pose safety risks to athletes and spectators, and
    - Increase liability for the County.
3. Unclear Maintenance Responsibilities
  - Mr. Wirick stated there is confusion over which tasks belong to the County and which are the responsibility of the local leagues.
  - Requested a clear understanding of maintenance roles to improve communication and ensure needed work is completed.

Proposed Solution – Shared Use / Field 10 Reconfiguration

- Shannon presented a proposed resolution for shared field usage to reduce conflicts between soccer, baseball, and softball:
  - Reconfigure Field 10 at the sports complex by:
    - Moving the outfield fence in to approximately 200–250 feet to create a properly sized baseball field.
    - Using the outer grass area of that parcel to lay out 2–3 soccer fields, aided by existing lighting.
  - Noted that larger soccer age groups are already using the open area near the T-ball fields (right side of the main parking lot), and that this reconfiguration would formally account for their needs.
  - Stressed that this plan is not intended to favor one sport, but to:
    - Allow all sports to operate with sufficient space,
    - Reduce schedule overlap, and
    - Preserve field quality with proper prep time.
- Additional impacts raised:
  - Some Dixie County children are leaving to play in other counties where:
    - Facilities are better maintained, and
    - Schedules allow for full seasons and practices.
  - Once families move to other leagues—often combined with travel ball, they are unlikely to return, which can affect:

        - Local Babe Ruth participation,
        - School athletics, and
        - Possibly school funding tied to enrollment/participation.

Board Response – Site Visit & Long-Term Planning

- Chairman Hatch:
    - Confirmed he had already received calls regarding Field 10 and expressed support for reviewing the proposal, calling it "a really good idea."
    - Proposed scheduling an on-site visit including:
        - Himself,
        - Commissioners John and Roy,
        - Representatives of the Babe Ruth Board, and
        - Representatives of the soccer board,
          to examine field layout, review safety concerns, and develop a coordinated plan.
    - Chairman Hatch asked Babe Ruth to:
        - Finalize their new president/officers, and
        - Then contact him directly to set up the joint meeting and field review.
    - Observed that:
        - The current sports complex was established 30–40 years ago, and
        - While it was well-planned at the time and has served the community well, the County has now outgrown the facility.
- Chairman Hatch also discussed future facilities:
    - Noted the County has recently purchased approximately 50+ acres near the industrial area, with discussion of developing a new sports complex there.
    - Said long term, this would:
        - Free up the current complex area (within an industrial zone) for potential industrial/economic uses, and
        - Provide a modern recreation facility designed for current and future youth sports demand.
- Chairman Hatch reiterated that the Board historically supports youth programs, often:
    - Providing sponsorships as a Board,
    - Donating personally, and
    - In some cases, contributing via their own businesses.

Hudson Ballfield – Contract Status and Shared Use

- Question from Babe Ruth Representative
    - A Babe Ruth board member asked for clarification on Hudson Ballfield:
        - Stated they had been told that the field was "under contract" and at other times that they could also use it.
        - Requested clarification whether the field is:
            - Reserved exclusively for one group, or
            - Available for shared use under some arrangement.
- Response – Coach Christopher Lake (Travel Ball)
    - Introduced himself as Christopher Lake, a travel ball coach using Hudson Ballfield.
    - Explained:

        - A previous coach (Dwayne Cannon) originally arranged to use the field; when that team disbanded, Mr. Cannon encouraged Lake's team to assume use.
        - Mr. Lake and another coach (Travis Jones) then entered into a contract with the County to secure the field for their Dixie-County-based travel team.
        - The primary goal of the contract was to ensure:
            - A reliable practice location, and
            - Some control over access and maintenance, due to prior misuse and damage.
    - Field investments and misuse:
        - His group and prior users have invested a substantial amount of personal money and labor into improving and maintaining the field.
        - They have experienced issues with:
            - Multiple people possessing the gate lock code,
            - Pickup trucks and ATVs being driven onto the playing surface, causing ruts and damage to the clay infield, and
            - The field being found damaged after being fully prepped for tryouts.
    - Mr. Lake stated clearly that:
        - The contract does not prohibit other youth teams (including Babe Ruth and softball) from using the field.
        - They welcome other users, as long as:
            - Use is coordinated (e.g., a phone call or scheduling communication), and
            - Users clean up and rake the field after use to preserve playability.
- Attorney Watson / Commission Clarification
    - Attorney Watson noted that the Hudson Field agreement:
        - Requires the tenant to perform general maintenance in lieu of rent.
    - There was discussion of:
        - The need to install a new gate lock, and
        - Establishing a more controlled set of authorized users to improve accountability while still allowing shared use.
    - Chairman Hatch encouraged the youth sports groups to:
        - Communicate directly with one another,
        - Coordinate schedules, and
        - Bring any conflicts or specific needs back to the Board if they cannot be resolved informally.

Expansion Potential at Hudson Tract

- Christopher Lake further commented that:
    - The Hudson property is approximately 23 acres, although a significant portion can be flooded after heavy rain (recent storms left much of the field and surrounding area underwater).
    - Even so, with suitable site work and elevation, the parcel could potentially support:
        - Additional baseball/softball fields, and

        - Soccer fields or other recreational facilities.
    - Offered his 27 years of construction experience to assist with planning and design of expanded facilities.
    - Emphasized the importance of providing more constructive activities for youth, noting that there is “not much for kids to do here” and that strong recreation programs help keep youth engaged and rooted in the community.
- Commissioners responded that:
    - They are open to public-private partnerships,
    - Would support fundraising efforts led by the leagues, and
    - Will consider County participation and grant opportunities as detailed proposals are developed.

No formal motions or votes were taken during this segment. The Board provided direction for staff and youth sports representatives to coordinate, perform field visits, clarify maintenance responsibilities, and develop shared-use and improvement plans for the existing complex and Hudson Ballfield.

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

Not present.

NIKIE WAITS – ROAD 2 REDEMPTION

Veteran Suicide Awareness Event – “Paddle for 22”

- Ms. Waits reminded the Board of the upcoming “Paddle for 22” event to be held on the Weeki Wachee River on June 27 in recognition of PTSD Awareness Month and in honor of the estimated 22 veterans per day who die by suicide.
- Event details:
    - Goal is to have 22 participants paddling, symbolizing the 22 veterans.
    - Paddlers will cover 2.2 miles on the Weeki Wachee River.
    - Participants will wear matching T-shirts (“Paddle for the 22”) to create a visible presence and “make waves of hope.”
- Registration & Sponsorship:
    - Reported that 18 participants had registered so far.
    - Noted earlier problems with the QR code on a prior flyer (did not scan properly), but stated that the issue has been corrected and a working QR code is now available.
    - Encouraged additional individuals and sponsors to sign up; each paddler is being asked to seek sponsors, and all sponsorship proceeds will be donated to Wounded Warrior Project.
    - Confirmed that registrations have been received from local offices, including the Clerk’s Office.

- The Board thanked Ms. Nikki for her efforts and for raising awareness of veteran suicide and PTSD.

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Fishbone Lease – Recreational / Ecotourism Use

- Recalled that at the previous meeting, the Board tabled the proposed lease agreement for state-owned property near Fishbone (Fishbone Outfitters / Outlook area).
- Requested Board approval to move forward with a $500/year lease of the roughly 14–16 acre state-owned parcel, with management and funding handled by the Dixie County Tourism Development Council (TDC), not the general fund.

Planned Use & Management:

- The TDC proposes to:
    - Maintain hiking and biking trails,
    - Install educational and interpretive signage,
    - Establish birding and nature observation areas, and
    - Create designated primitive camping sites.
- All improvements will be:
    - Low-impact,
    - Designed to protect sensitive habitats, and
    - Aligned with the County's goals of sustainable ecotourism and conservation of natural resources.
- TDC plans to partner with Sunshine State Adventure Company / Florida Adventure Trails, whose mission is to create accessible and sustainable outdoor experiences.

- County Attorney Watson explained:
    - The property is state-owned and currently leased by the school district, which no longer has a use for it and wishes to be released.
    - For the school to be released, another public entity (here, Dixie County) must assume the lease.
    - The Board must understand that once it accepts the lease, the County is obligated until such time as the State allows or approves a transfer or termination.
    - An application will be submitted to the State; if approved, a lease will be issued to the County. If denied, the school remains on the existing lease.
- **Resolution 2026-32 – Lease Acceptance**
    - Attorney Watson read the title:

A resolution of the Board of County Commissioners of Dixie County, Florida, supporting the lease of a state-owned parcel for public recreation, tourism, and conservation purposes; authorizing the Dixie County Tourism Development Council to assume management and stewardship *responsibility; providing for partnerships to enhance recreational opportunities; and providing for an effective date.*

Motion made to approve Resolution 2026-32 and proceed with the lease: by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

2. County Parks Reservation System

- Mrs. McCallister provided an update and brief tutorial on the new online reservation system for County parks (e.g., Gornto Springs and other sites):

How to Reserve:

- At each park, a sign with a QR code is posted. Scanning the QR code takes users directly to the reservation page.
- Users can also go to VisitDixie.com:
    1. On the home page, click "County Parks" in the top menu.
    2. Select the desired park (e.g., Gornto Springs).
    3. Click "Reserve Your Spot Today" to access the reservation interface.
- Once on the reservation page, visitors can:
    - Choose dates,
    - Enter RV size,
    - Select 30-amp or 50-amp service, and
    - Pick a site from the map/list.
    - If a site cannot be clicked, it indicates it is already reserved.
- Support:
    - Shelly Ross and Kay McCallister monitor calls on weekends and assist users who have problems reserving sites in real time.

3. July 4 Events – Information

- Kay highlighted July 4th activities promoted through the VisitDixie.com events page:
    - On the home page, select "Events" to view the calendar.
    - Noted event listings including:
        - The Horseshoe Beach Airboat Poker Run (Friday prior to July 4th).
        - A full schedule of July 4th events in the Town of Suwannee (parades, fireworks, etc.) already posted on the site.
        - Horseshoe Beach's July 4th schedule is maintained on a separate website (theshoeeventcommittee.com); Kay has requested that they provide details for posting/linking.
- Encouraged the public and Commissioners to use the site to stay informed about local events and park availability.

<u>KAREN VANAERNAM, DIXIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT</u>

Not present.

SCOTT NIOLET, SAVINACIOUS

Hurricane Recovery / FEMA Project Updates

- Introduced his team members present: Jesse Sellers, Bill Matkin, Grayson Niolet, joking that since soccer camp was cancelled this week, they were attending "government camp" instead.
- Reported two positive updates on disaster recovery projects:
    1. PW 119 – State System Holds Cleared
        - Advised that all holds on Project Worksheet (PW) 119 have been removed from the State's system.
        - Confirmed with FDEM that the issues have been reconciled and PW 119 is no longer an obstacle in the reimbursement and recovery process.
        - Noted that this item "should not be in the way anymore."
    2. County Road 357 – FEMA Obligation
        - Reported that, within the past week, FEMA obligated funding for County Road 357, specifically for point erosion control and rip-rap work.
        - The obligation amount is approximately $1.4 million.
        - Stated that the County received a congratulatory letter from Congresswoman Kat Cammack's office regarding this funding.
- Indicated that the team will continue to work through remaining project worksheets and "move on with the recovery."
- Asked if the Board had any questions.

Board Comments

- Chairman Hatch:
    - Thanked Mr. Niolet and his team, as well as County staff, for their hard work on PW 119, noting it had been a persistent problem and a "pain."
    - Commented that clearing PW 119 will help the County a tremendous amount, especially heading into the July 4th period.
    - Expressed appreciation for the efforts and positive progress.
- Mr. Niolet responded that he was glad to be here and working with Dixie County.
    - Mentioned that as Hurricane Arthur passed over, he sustained storm damage at his own home, noting this is part of the reality of working in disaster recovery.
    - Mr. Niolet wished the Board a good evening.
- Chairman Hatch briefly noted that his own fence is still down from the prior hurricane, acknowledging the shared personal impact of storms.

No formal Board action was requested or taken during this update; it was provided for information only.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Capital Projects Update – Sheriff's Evidence Building & Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront

Speaker: Kellan Bailey (Project Manager / Engineer)

- Provided a brief update on two ongoing capital projects:

1. Sheriff's Office Evidence Building
    - Reported that the contractor will be performing test borings on the site next week.
    - An engineering report will follow the test borings to confirm that ground conditions and foundation design are appropriate and to finalize that phase of work.
    - Noted that he and the Sheriff recently met to review building plans; the Sheriff provided several comments and requested adjustments, which are being incorporated.
    - Revised plans will be sent back to the Sheriff for final review once updates are complete.
2. Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront
    - Stated that the complete permit package for the Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront project has been submitted to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP).
    - Once permits from FDEP and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers are received, the County will be ready to advertise the project for bids.

- Concluded that these projects are moving forward and that he hopes to have permits and final design details resolved soon.

No formal motions or votes were taken during this report; it was provided as a status update.

<u>JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES</u>

Nothing to present at this time.

<u>CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR</u>

Library and Gym Programs Update

- Ms. Bellot thanked the Board and audience for their patience with her speaking from her seat rather than using the podium microphone.
- Reported that everything is going well at the gym and at the library:
    - Stated that they are staffing both locations.
    - Noted that staff are busy at the library while other staff are busy at the gym running programs.
- Confirmed to Chairman Hatch that the work at the gym is "hard work" but manageable due to having a great staff.
- Expressed appreciation for the Board's strong support of the library, recalling that:
    - A library manager from another county once said she would like to work in Dixie because of the support the Board provides.

    - That level of support “hasn’t changed,” and she is grateful for it.
- Confirmed that children’s programs are ongoing and that there would likely be more programs added to the calendar the next day.

Board Comments

- Chairman Hatch:
    - Thanked Cindy and her staff for their work at both the library and the gym.
    - Acknowledged that the move to the gym was a significant change, but commended staff for adapting and moving forward.
    - Reiterated the Board’s appreciation for their efforts in keeping youth programs active and busy.

No formal Board action was requested or taken during this report; it was an informational update.

<u>RAELYNN BROWNELL, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER</u>

Not present.

<u>STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER</u>

Nothing to present at this time.

<u>MIKEL GAINEY, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT</u>

Nothing to present at this time.

<u>TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR</u>

Solid Waste Department – Equipment and Site Update

- Reported that the new “packer” garbage truck (front-loader/packer) arrived today:
    - Decals and identifiers will be installed on Monday.
    - The tag and necessary paperwork are ready so the truck can be placed into service promptly.
- Discussed conditions at the 349 North (Pole Gap) solid waste site:
    - Stated that this is the busiest dump site in the County.
    - Based on current volume, it would not surprise him if the compactor is handling close to 3,000 cubic yards (or equivalent load) per week.
    - Reported that on Sunday, he received a call that the compactor was overheating because it was being used so heavily in the high heat, and it “just couldn’t keep up.”
    - Concluded that it is time to add another compactor at that location to handle the increasing load and reduce strain on existing equipment.
- Budget / Purchase Details:
    - Noted that the price of new compactors has increased slightly since the last purchase (approximately $200 more).

    - His most recent purchase was about $19,800, and the last unit for the County was about $19,600, including shipping.
    - Reported that he met with Finance (Ms. Brenda Royal) and:
        - Confirmed there are sufficient funds remaining in the Solid Waste "Machinery & Equipment" line item to purchase another compactor now, rather than waiting for the new budget year.
        - Stated that Finance prefers to move forward with the purchase in the current year; funds will remain for other needs even after the compactor is purchased.
    - Mr. Johnson emphasized he is trying to stay on top of costs and manage taxpayer money carefully while responding to growth.
- Chairman Hatch corroborated:
    - Noted that when he drove past the 349 site around 8:50 a.m., there were already cars lined up before opening time.
    - Agreed that the site is extremely busy and that additional compaction capacity is needed.

Motion to authorize purchase of a new compactor for the 349 North solid waste site using available machinery and equipment funds made by Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Motion carried unanimously.

- Mr. Johnson concluded remarks; Chairman Hatch thanked him and acknowledged the need to "take care of that brand new baby".

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

APPLICATIONS FOR VARIANCES

20260539 A petition by **Richard Nance** requesting a variance for a reduction of the East side setback from 25' to 5' for the construction of a pole barn to be granted, as provided in 4.3.7 ESA subparagraph (1) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations in accordance with section 12.3 VARIANCE PROCEDURES., in accordance with the petition dated 04/29/2026 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 13-08-13-3706-0000-0080 966 NE 818 ST; 2.00. COMMISSION DISTRICT 1 JODY STEPHENSON - **No opposition - LPA Recommended Approval (3-0) Applicant was present.**

Motion to approve Variance 2026-0539 - Richard Nance: Made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

20260563 A petition by **Chris Laneau** requesting a variance for a reduction of side setbacks from 10' to 5' for construction of a pole barn to be granted, as provided in 4.7.7 RSF/MH subparagraph (2) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations in accordance with section 12.3 VARIANCE PROCEDURES., in accordance with the petition dated 05/05/2026 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 19-13-12-2942-0000-0480 58 SE 234 ST; .00. COMMISSION DISTRICT 3 MARK HATCH - **No opposition - LPA Recommended Approval (3-0) Applicant was present.**

Motion to approve Variance 2026-0563 - Chris Laneau made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Vice Chairman Storey. Motion carried unanimously.

20260590 A petition by **Jennifer Long** requesting a variance for a reduction of East side setback for deck and stairs. to be granted, as provided in 4.7.7 RSF/MH subparagraph (2) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations in accordance with section 12.3 VARIANCE PROCEDURES., in accordance with the petition dated 05/05/2026 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 30-13-12-3596-0001-0210 267 SE 218 ST; .14. COMMISSION DISTRICT 3 MARK HATCH - **No opposition - LPA Recommended Approval (3-0)**

Motion to approve Variance 2026-0590 – Jennifer Long made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

20260591 A petition by **HARRIS JAMES & SUSAN** requesting a variance for a reduction of South side setback for construction of a storage building. to be granted, as provided in 4.3.7 ESA subparagraph (1) of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations in accordance with section 12.3 VARIANCE PROCEDURES., in accordance with the petition dated 05/13/2026 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel # 13-10-13-4585-0000-0430 551 NE 83 AVE; .45. COMMISSION DISTRICT 2 DANIEL WOOD- **No opposition - LPA Recommended Approval (3-0)** Applicant was **present**.

- **Hearing Notes:**
  - Property is located on the river.
  - No opposition present at the hearing or on the phone.
  - County Attorney clarified for the record that both this variance and the prior one reduce side setbacks from 10 feet to 5 feet.
  - Planning staff noted they will not bring any variance to the Board that places a structure closer than 5 feet to a property line.

Motion to approve Variance 2026-0591 James 7 Susan Harris made by Commissioner Wood. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Motion carried unanimously.

<u>SCOTTY PENDARVIS, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER</u>

Not present.

<u>GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE</u>

Nothing to present at this time.

<u>HOLLY HOUGHTON, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT</u>

Not present.

<u>ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR</u>

Nothing to present at this time.

JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER

1. Request Board approval to execute Resolution 2026-33 to move forward with the Capital City Loan for the Packer Truck and Rolloff Truck for Solid Waste in the amount of $608,199.00 under previously agreed terms.

Motion to approve Resolution 2026-33 and proceed with the Capital City Bank loan made by Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded Commissioner Osteen. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Request Board approval of the Notice of Award to Ovid Solutions, LLC for 2026-02 Grant Assessment, Planning, and Writing Services based on separately issued work orders associated with grants.

Motion to issue Notice of Award to Ovid Solutions, LLC grant Assessment, Planning, and Writing Services based on separately issued work orders associated with grants: made by Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Request Board approval for Liberty Partners to apply for the Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) grant for infrastructure improvements at the County leased property located at 508 NE 165 Ave.

Motion to authorize Liberty Partners to submit the RIF grant for infrastructure improvements at the County leased property located at 508 NE 165 Ave application made by Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Request Board approval for Locklear to apply for the Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) grant for Cross City Airport Construction Project on NE 241st St.

Motion to authorize Locklear & Associates to submit the RIF application grant for Cross City Airport Construction Project on NE 241st St made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Request Board approval for Locklear to apply for the Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) grant for Dixie County Library and Job Training Center.

Motion to authorize Locklear & Associates to submit the RIF application: Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Request Board approval for Locklear to apply for the Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) grant for Dixie County Sports Complex Waldo Park.

Motion to authorize Locklear & Associates to submit the RIF application grant for Dixie County Sports Complex Waldo Park made by Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Motion carried unanimously.

7. Request Board approval for Locklear to apply for the Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) grant for Cow Creek Bridge Boat Ramp.

Motion to authorize Locklear & Associates to submit the RIF application grant for Cow Creek Bridge Boat Ramp: Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

8. Request Board approval for the SHIP down payment assistance for Tina Major in the amount of $19,300.00.

Motion to approve SHIP assistance for Tina Major made by Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

9. Request Board approval for Liberty Partners to conduct a feasibility study for a water and wastewater treatment facility in the Old Town area.

Motion to authorize Liberty Partners to conduct the feasibility study for a water and wastewater treatment facility in the Old Town area made by Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

Information Items:

1. Reminder of the FAC Conference Tuesday, June 23 – Friday June 26, 2026. Packets have been given out today.

2. Reminder County offices will be closed Friday, July 3, 2026, in observance of Independence Day. Does the County want to follow suit with Governor DeSantis closing state offices Thursday, July 2, 2026, and Monday, July 6, 2026, in observance of America's 250th anniversary of its independence?

Independence Day Holiday – Schedule and Holiday Pay Discussion

Topic: July 4th scheduling, additional days off, and how holiday pay applies to 4-day crews (Road & Solid Waste) and EMS.
Presenter: Clerk/Finance staff, with input from Commissioners and Department Heads

1. Governor's Additional Holiday Days

- Mr. Jenkins reported that the Governor had announced an extended five-day holiday period for State employees (Thursday–Monday) around Independence Day.
- Staff recommendation for County operations:
  - Close County offices and grant holiday time on Friday, Saturday, and Sunday (in addition to the regular July 4 holiday), rather than adopting the full 5-day State schedule.
- Board Action – Extra Holiday Days

Motion to follow staff's recommendation and grant Friday, Saturday, and Sunday as part of the July 4 holiday period for applicable County offices made by Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Holiday Pay for 4-Day / 10-Hour Crews (Road & Solid Waste)

- Discussion then turned to how holiday pay works for employees who work four 10-hour days (e.g., Road and Solid Waste departments), particularly when a holiday falls on a non-scheduled workday:
    - Finance / Attorney Explanation:
        - When the Board designates a specific day as a holiday, employees scheduled to work that day:
            - Have the day off, and
            - Are paid holiday hours to bring their weekly hours to 40.
        - If an employee's regular schedule does not include the designated holiday (e.g., they are normally off on Fridays, and the Board declares Friday a holiday):
            - They do not automatically receive extra pay for that day,
            - Because they have already worked or are scheduled to work their full 40 hours in the week.
        - Holiday hours can be tracked as holiday leave or special comp, but do not result in overtime above 40 unless the employee actually works on the holiday.
    - Some Commissioners expressed concern that:
        - Approving holidays that fall on a crew's standard off-day might result in those employees not receiving any holiday benefit, even though the Board believed it was granting a holiday to all.
        - Asked Finance to review the policy and bring back clarification or recommended changes, so that approved holidays are applied fairly and consistently across schedules.
- Road & Solid Waste – Specific Schedule Adjustments
    - Road Department / Solid Waste:
        - After discussion, it was agreed to:
            - Treat Friday as a holiday for standard schedules, and
            - Provide an additional day off on Monday for the Road and Solid Waste crews that are normally off on Fridays, so they also receive a functional holiday benefit.

Motion to give Monday off to the Road Department and Solid Waste (in connection with the July 4 holiday schedule made by Commissioner Daniel. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Motion carried unanimously.

-
    - Solid Waste Site Operations / Garbage Service:
        - Solid Waste Director Tim indicated:
            - The County's solid waste sites would be closed Friday and would reopen Monday.
            - He will stagger crews and maintain necessary coverage so that garbage does not excessively accumulate, using practices similar

to past holidays (e.g., rotating which crew members work and which get the day off).

3. EMS / 24-Hour Operations

- EMS Chief and staff noted that EMS operates 24/7, including holidays:
  - EMS personnel who work on the holiday receive appropriate holiday pay according to existing policy.
  - Since their schedule is continuous coverage, they do not receive extra days off but are compensated when they work designated holidays.
- Commissioners acknowledged the unique nature of EMS scheduling and confirmed that no change was being made to EMS holiday pay at this time.

4. Follow-Up – Policy Review

- At the Board's request, Finance (Brenda Royal) will:
  - Review current holiday pay and scheduling policies for all departments,
  - Clarify how holidays apply to 4-day / 10-hour crews, and
  - Report back with any recommended adjustments to ensure that:
    - When the Board declares a holiday,
    - Employees across different schedules are treated equitably and consistently, to the extent practicable.

Actions Taken:

- Approved extended holiday closure for Friday–Sunday (in addition to July 4).
- Approved Monday off for Road and Solid Waste crews to balance schedules.
- Directed Finance to review and clarify holiday pay policy and bring back recommendations.

<u>CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY</u>

County Attorney Report – Resolution for Capital City Bank Loan & Land Use Mediation

Resolution – Capital City Bank Loan for Solid Waste Trucks

- The County Attorney presented a formal resolution requested by Capital City Bank in connection with the previously approved loan for Solid Waste trucks:
  - Read the resolution by title:

A Resolution in Dixie County, Florida, accepting a loan from Capital City Bank, and authorizing John Jenkins, County Manager for the Dixie County Board of County Commissioners, to execute a promissory note for up to $608,199 to Capital City Bank and other necessary documents in order to fund the acquisition of equipment for the Solid Waste Department, including both trucks that were purchased.

- Explained:
  - This resolution was not listed on the agenda but is an additional documentation requirement from the bank for the loan package.

    - The resolution does not require advertisement and is essentially memorializing and authorizing what the Board has already voted to do (approve the loan and truck purchases).
    - Once signed by the Chairman, it will complete the bank's required documentation.
- Noted that the Board had already voted earlier in the meeting to approve the loan with Capital City Bank and that this resolution is simply the formal written authorization the bank needs.

2. Land Use Case – Mediation Status

- Reported that there has been movement on the pending land use case:
    - A mediator/magistrate has been identified and appears acceptable to the parties.
    - While a mediation date has not yet been set, the Attorney is optimistic that mediation may occur before the next Board meeting.
- Stated that all other legal matters remain unchanged since the last report.

3. Clarification – Resolution 2026-32 Vote (Fishbone Lease)

- At the request of the Chairman Hatch, Attorney Watson **clarified the vote previously made on Resolution 2026-32 (Fishbone lease):**
    - Motion to approve Resolution 2026-32 was made by Vice Chairman Storey.
    - Seconded by Commissioner Osteen.
    - The Chairman stated that the vote was "all in favor," and the Clerk confirmed that all Commissioners present voted in favor.

No new vote was taken during this segment on the Capital City resolution, as the loan had already been approved earlier and the resolution serves as required supporting documentation for the bank.

<u>BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT</u>

Finance Update – Ameris Bank Proposal, Budget Preparation, and Audit

Speaker: Brenda Royal – Chief Financial Officer

- Reported that she had provided the Board with a proposal from Ameris Bank:
    - The proposal resulted from meetings with the mayors, who expressed interest in including some County funds with municipal funds to improve overall interest earnings.
    - The concept is to pool certain County accounts that are not heavily used (e.g., impact fee and similar restricted or low-activity accounts), rather than major operating/general funds, so that:
        - The combined balance is higher,
        - The bank can offer a higher interest rate, and

        - Interest can then be allocated back to each participating account proportionally, based on its share of the total pool.
    - Emphasized that:
        - This is not a final commitment yet;
        - Staff must confirm that specific funds (such as impact fee funds) may be pooled on the banking side while still being tracked separately in County records in compliance with all legal and accounting requirements.
    - Stated that if all legal and procedural issues are resolved ("all our T's crossed"), staff will bring a formal recommendation back to the Board.
    - Clarified that from an accounting standpoint, each fund will continue to be tracked separately, and the pooling would occur only within the bank to obtain a better interest rate.
- When asked whether this would complicate her work, Brenda indicated it would not significantly increase Finance's workload and could result in better returns on idle balances.
- Provided a budget and audit status update:
    - Finance is simultaneously:
        - Closing out the prior fiscal year,
        - Managing the current year's budget,
        - Undergoing the audit for last year, and
        - Beginning preparation for the upcoming fiscal year.
    - She will be scheduling budget meetings with all department heads to:
        - Review departmental expenditures, and
        - Begin detailed budget planning for the new year.
        - Her goal is to have departmental reviews and expenditure planning substantially completed by the end of July, to provide a clearer picture of the County's financial position.
    - Noted that constitutional officers' budgets have been received and acknowledged some concern about overall budget pressures, but:
        - Stated that if necessary, budget meetings with the Board and officers will be held earlier than in past years to avoid surprises.
    - Observed that a major constraint is the timing of state revenue information, which is typically the largest hold-up in finalizing the County budget.
- On the County audit:
    - Finance is working closely with the auditing firm James Moore & Co.
    - Confirmed that the County's audit will not be completed by June 30, but:
        - Staff are working through the auditors' request lists line by line,
        - Providing all necessary documentation so audits can be completed for all County entities (the Board, Clerk, and others).

    - Explained that, in some areas, auditors had very limited starting documentation, so staff are effectively rebuilding records from scratch, making it a large and time-consuming task, but progress is being made.
- The Chairman and Commissioners thanked Brenda and the Finance/Clerk's staff for their work and the update.

No formal Board action was taken during this update; it was provided for information only.

<u>COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS</u>

Commissioner Wood

- Thanked everyone for attending and wished all a Happy Father's Day.
- Asked that everyone keep Commissioner Stephenson in their thoughts and prayers as he continues to recover and return to his duties.

Vice Chairman Storey

- Thanked the citizens of Dixie County for their support and stated he was honored to be re-elected for another four-year term.
- Acknowledged that he has been heavily involved in the solid waste / garbage issue between the City and County, and offered to spend time with any citizen who wants a more detailed explanation of:
    - The City's arrangement with Waste Pro,
    - How tipping fees and assessments work, and
    - Why he believes the City should not be using its solid waste revenues as a general "money maker."
- Emphasized his responsibility to protect County taxpayers' money and reiterated that his concerns are about fairness and cost to County residents.

Commissioner Osteen

- Expressed appreciation to the citizens for their continued trust and support.
- Again asked everyone to keep Commissioner Stephenson in their prayers, hoping for a full recovery and return to the Board.
- Wished all residents a Happy Father's Day, encouraging families to spend time with their fathers and loved ones.

Chairman Hatch

- Thanked Mr. Chris McKenzie for donating a handcrafted wooden flag to be displayed at the new fire station, noting the County's appreciation for the donation.
- Congratulated Vice Chairman Storey on being re-elected without opposition, commenting that going unopposed in local office is not easy and reflects public confidence.
- Praised all County staff in every department for working extremely hard as the County continues to grow:
    - Noted that Dixie County is changing, and staff are "busting their tails" to keep up with increasing demands.

    - Emphasized that the Board must manage growth carefully and responsibly.
- Addressed the EMS / Station Two closure and paramedic shortage:
    - Called the situation serious, stating that it directly affects the health and safety of citizens.
    - Pointed out that every additional paramedic or law enforcement officer represents a large financial commitment (salary, benefits, equipment, vehicles, etc.), and that the County will have to make “serious, serious changes” and funding decisions moving forward.
- On growth and development:
    - Stated that not every proposal is right for Dixie County, but “everything’s not bad either.”
    - Urged citizens and Commissioners to research and fully understand issues like data centers—just as they did with RV resorts—before taking absolute positions for or against.
    - Emphasized wanting growth that fits Dixie County’s character and long-term interests.
- Highlighted community efforts to promote and beautify the County:
    - Mentioned high participation in community clean-ups, hanging lights, picking up trash, and scrubbing sidewalks.
    - Chairman Hatch stated that such volunteer efforts show how much residents care about their communities.
- Closed with Father’s Day reflections:
    - Encouraged those whose fathers are still living to hug them and tell them they love them and to be sincere.
    - For those whose fathers have passed (including himself this year), urged them to honor the day, such as visiting cemeteries and placing flowers.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

No public comments were offered.

ADJOURN

Vice Chairman 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.