Regular Meeting

Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
August 20, 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
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.

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

08/06/2026 Regular BOCC Minutes, 08/06/2026 Ai/Data Center Workshop, 08/13/2026 Budget Workshop

Motion to approve the 08/06/2026 BOCC Regular Meeting Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson.

Motion to approve the 08/06 /2026 Ai/Data Center Moratorium Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson.

Motion to approve the 08/13/2026 Budget Workshop Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Vice Chairman Storey.

VOUCHER APPROVAL

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

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS/CITY OFFICIALS

Supervisor of Elections Darbi Chaires report:

- Reported on the recent election results and turnout.
- Noted overall voter turnout was 45.06%, meeting her personal goal of 45%.
- Stated that Dixie County had the third-highest voter turnout in the state.
- Encouraged citizens to plan ahead to vote in upcoming elections:
  - Cross City election in September.
  - November 3rd election (general election) "will be here before you know it."
- Election results (local races summarized for the Board):
- County Commissioner race:
  - Highest vote-getter: Keith Tuten with 2,343 votes.
- County Judge race:
  - Highest vote-getter: Jennifer Johnson with 2,941 votes.
- Stated that full results and percentages are available on the Supervisor of Elections website for public review.
- Board interaction:
- Chair Hatch invited questions from the Board.
- No questions were raised.
- Chair Hatch thanked Darby for her report.

City Officials – Cross City Mayor Ryan Fulford

- City election update:
  - Referenced the Supervisor of Elections' prior comments that elections will be in September.
  - Reported that three candidates qualified for the upcoming Cross City election.
  - Noted:
    - Councilwoman Carter went unopposed.
  - Councilman Heidelberg's race will proceed to election (he "drew an opponent").
  - Confirmed that the City election will be held in September.
- County–City joint meetings:
  - Stated that once the budget year is completed for both entities, he would like to reconvene joint meetings between the County and the City.
  - Suggested re-establishing quarterly meetings between the City of Cross City and Dixie County Board of County Commissioners.
  - Chairman Hatch agreed that resuming the quarterly meetings "sounds good."
- Board interaction:
  - Chairman Hatch asked if the Board had any questions for Mayor Fulford; no questions were raised.

- Mayor Fulford thanked the Board and yielded the floor.

J.D. Nobles, Horseshoe Beach Town Council on behalf of the Mayor Williams Town of Horseshoe Beach – Land Swap & Debris Cleanup

Horseshoe Beach – Land Swap Request (Post Office / City Hall)
Background:

- Referenced prior discussions at:
  - Previous BOCC meeting, and Joint Horseshoe Beach / County Commissioners meeting.
- Proposal is a land swap:
  - County-owned Horseshoe Beach post office property, for Town-owned City Hall property.
- Town Council has formally approved the land swap with one contingency:
  - Town to have first right of refusal if the County ever decides to sell the post office parcel.
- Purpose: Town needs the post office site to construct a new Town Hall.
  - Funding sources in hand, FEMA funds, Insurance proceeds.
  - State appropriations totaling $1.85 million.
- Town cannot rebuild on the existing City Hall parcel; needs the post office site.

Board Action & Discussion:
Initial motion:

- Commissioner Osteen moved to approve the land swap without granting first right of refusal, stating that the County might need to sell the property in the future to fund a boat ramp.

Response (JD Nobles):

- Mr. Nobles clarified that the Town's position is:
- Whatever sale price the County receives from any buyer, the Town would seek to match that price.
- If the Town cannot match the price, they would not object to the sale proceeding to the third party.

Explanation of "first right of refusal" (Chana Watson, County Attorney):

- Provided a practical example:
  - If the County receives an offer of $1.8 million, the County would notify the Town.
  - Town can either match the $1.8 million or decline.
- If the Town matches, it buys the property; if it cannot match, County is free to sell to the third party.
- Attorney Watson clarified that first right of refusal does not prevent the County from selling; it only gives the Town an opportunity to match a bona fide offer.

Rescinded motion / Final action:

- Commissioner Osteen rescinded his initial motion.

Commissioner Osteen then made a new motion to approve the land swap including the Town's requested first right of refusal condition. Seconded by Commissioner Jody Stephenson. Board approved.

Chairman Hatch asked if everyone understood the arrangement; Board indicated yes.

Result:

- Land swap approved:
  - County to receive Town Hall parcel.
  - Town of Horseshoe Beach to receive post office parcel,
  - With Town holding first right of refusal on any future County sale of that post office property.

Mr. Nobles thanked the Board and stated the Town looks forward to building a new Town Hall on the post office site.

Horseshoe Beach – Marsh Debris & State Cleanup (FWC / DEP)
J.D. Nobles, Horseshoe Beach Town Council

Observation of marsh debris:

- Mr. Nobles reported seeing numerous tire tracks and activity in the marsh areas.
- After speaking with **"Timmy,"** he learned:
  - There are four half-tracks (tracked vehicles) in the marsh.
  - They are being used by FWC personnel to drive the marsh and assess hurricane debris.
- Mr. Nobles noted that the County had not yet been formally notified, but said:
  - State agencies are taking interest, which is important because debris is deteriorating in the marsh.
- FWC / DEP debris survey update:

Mr. Nobles met with FWC staff earlier in the week:

- FWC is surveying hurricane-generated garbage on state lands.
  - They are seeking approval to cross private lands specifically Woodsworth property), and
  - Access additional marsh areas via airboats.
  - Funding and scope:
    - Cleanup is being conducted with DEP grant funds.
    - FWC is implementing the cleanup.
    - Work is limited to state-owned property at this stage.

Status:

- Debris cleanup on state lands is underway.

Board comments:

- Chairman Hatch and Commissioner Stephenson noted that marsh and debris issues have been discussed "for a long time."
- Commissioner Stephenson referenced prior pressure on agencies by warning that decaying debris could harm calves/fish and contaminate the water, which helped prompt action.

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

- FWC Public Meeting Announcement:
  - Reported that FWC has scheduled an oyster rulemaking meeting at the library on September 1, 2026, from 5:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

- Library Inventory / Barcoding:
    - Informed the Board that the library has been working on changing barcodes for inventory.
    - Stated that by October, the new barcoding system should be in place and they will be conducting inventory for a couple of months.
- Chairman Hatch thanked Ms. Bellot for the update.

RD BONNAGHAN – REBUILDING TOGETHER NCF – LETTER OF SUPPORT REQUEST

Nonprofit Presentation – Rebuilding Together North Central Florida
Organization Overview:
- Nonprofit providing repair and rehabilitation services for low-income homeowners for about 21 years.
- Currently active in Levy, Gilchrist, and Alachua Counties.
- Typical clients:
    - Low-income households
    - Seniors
    - People with disabilities
    - Veterans
- Uses a detailed vetting process to ensure funds are spent responsibly and frugally.
- Manages administrative burden for funders (federal, state, local, private foundations), and leverages public funds with private donations.

Request to Board:
- Not requesting County funding.
- Requested a letter of support from Dixie County stating:
    - The County supports RTNCF's efforts to provide home repairs to low-income residents in Dixie County.
    - RTNCF may seek external funding (federal/state/local grants, foundations) to work in Dixie County.

Board Questions & Responses:
- How do citizens apply / where do they sign up? (Commissioner Stephenson)
    - RTNCF has an online presence:
        - Website: rebuildingtogetherncf.org
    - Left brochures at the meeting and at the front table for attendees.
    - Offered to leave brochures with the Clerk's Office for ongoing public access.
    - Currently maintains offices in Alachua County and Levy County.

Relationship to SHIP funds / terms of assistance:
- This requested partnership is totally unrelated to the County's SHIP program, though funds can sometimes be leveraged together:
    - RTNCF may assist households who do not qualify for SHIP, or
    - Fill gaps in repairs where SHIP cannot fund 100% of needed work.
- RTNCF administers multiple funding sources (federal, state, local); terms vary by funder.
- For the USDA Housing Preservation Grant they are currently pursuing:
    - Uses a 5-year forgivable arrangement with a retention agreement (no formal lien, but a promise not to sell for 5 years).
    - If a homeowner sells within the 5 years:

            - Current design is full repayment if sale occurs within the 5-year term, then forgiven in full in year 6.
        - If a homeowner dies during the term:
            - RTNCF has a different policy; in most such cases, the obligation is forgiven rather than passed to heirs.
- Combining RTNCF funds with SHIP / exceeding SHIP limits: (Stephenson / Hatch)
    - County's SHIP thresholds:
        - $15,000 for emergency repair; above that triggers a 5-year deferred payment lien (DPL).
    - RTNCF can:
        - Supplement SHIP funds where SHIP limits are reached but more repairs are needed.
        - Cover items SHIP can't fund, or provide additional funds to complete a project.
    - One of the perks of partnering with RTNCF is their ability to match and fill funding gaps so a whole home can be addressed, not partially repaired.

Board Action:
Commissioner Jamie Storey made a motion to provide a letter of support to RTNCF. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

- Chairman Hatch directed that John Jenkins and Attorney Watson handle drafting the letter and obtaining his signature.

Mr. Bonnaghan thanked the Board.

VICTOR BLANCO-ARTIFICIAL REEF APPLICATION UPDATE

Anderson Columbia / Dixie County Offshore Artificial Reef Site
- Earlier in the year, the Board supported submitting an application for monitoring the Anderson Columbia Dixie County artificial reef site to collect baseline data for a future construction grant.
- That monitoring grant application was denied, but:
    - FWC has offered to perform a side-scan sonar survey of the area instead.
    - Side-scan will allow 100% bottom mapping, considered better than dive transects, which only sample portions of the site.
- FWC proposed several possible dates; recommendation is to complete the survey before the end of the year, preferably mid- to late fall when offshore conditions are better (site is ~60–64 miles offshore, ~90 ft depth).
- Request to Board:
    - For the Board to approve having Mr. Blanco serve as point of contact with FWC for planning and coordinating the side-scan survey.
    - Blanco stated he intends to be on the vessel during the survey, and will keep the County informed and provide the resulting bottom-type mapping to help select deployment sites.

Planning / Advisory Committee for Next-Year Construction Grant
- Noted that artificial reef construction grants are competitive and scored on multiple criteria, including public planning.

- Taylor County's application this year was denied partly because they did not hold an advisory committee meeting and report it.
- To avoid that problem for Dixie County's next-year construction application for the Anderson Columbia site, Blanco recommended:
    - Establishing 4–5 local stakeholders (or an open public workshop) as an artificial reef advisory group, representing reef user interests.
    - He would draft a county artificial reef plan, meet with the committee/workshop to discuss and refine it, and include their input and meeting record in the grant application.
- Timing: He proposes to conduct this early or mid-fall, depending on schedule.

Regional Artificial Reef Workshop – September 18

- Announced that FWC and partners are hosting the Big Bend Nature Coast & Big Bend Regional Artificial Reef Workshop on September 18, starting at 9:30 a.m. at the Steinhatchee Community Center.
    - Last such workshop was held in 2019 (in Cedar Key).
    - Goal is to bring together artificial reef managers from across the region to:
        - Share updates and challenges.
        - Hear from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers on permitting and re-permitting (including possible inshore reef sites for Dixie County).
        - Hear FWC updates on regional reef programs.
        - Meet contractors/vendors who build and deploy artificial reef structures.
- Blanco advised that FWC (Kip Minni, State Artificial Reef Program Manager) has already reached out through county staff and would like county participation.
- Request to Board:
    - For permission to give an update on Dixie County's artificial reef work (including prior monitoring and current planning) at the September 18 workshop.
    - He will also continue to coordinate with Taylor County and other partners on multi-county applications.

Taylor County Application / Potential Matching Funds

- Taylor County's artificial reef construction application for this year was not funded because they failed to convene an advisory committee, not due to the technical content of the project.
- Blanco stated:
    - Taylor County intends to honor its prior commitment and sign a letter of support next year for a multi-county application involving Dixie County.
    - He plans to reach back out to Coastal Conservation Association (CCA):
        - CCA had previously offered $60,000 in matching funds for the Taylor County application; since that was not used, those funds might be available for the future multi-county application that includes Dixie County (to be confirmed).

Anderson Columbia Company & Potential Materials

- Noted that the previous Anderson Columbia staff member leading their reef involvement has retired.
- A new environmental services manager at Anderson Columbia will be invited to the workshop so the company can:
    - Stay informed; and
    - Potentially participate in supplying materials for future deployments at the Dixie County site.

Duke Energy – Potential Reef Materials (Concrete Poles)

- Blanco reported initial conversations with Duke Energy:
    - Duke is expected to remove some large concrete poles (~100 feet long).
    - These might be suitable as offshore artificial reef material if configured correctly.
        - By adding weight to one end, they can be deployed to stand upright, creating vertical relief that attracts pelagic species (e.g., red snapper and other fish).
- This opportunity is preliminary; Blanco will inform the Board if it becomes viable.

Board Questions and Action

Commissioner David Osteen made a motion to approve Mr. Blanco acting as point of contact with FWC for the side-scan survey of the Anderson Columbia site; and approve him giving a Dixie County artificial reef update at the September 18 regional workshop and moving forward with planning efforts described. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved.

Discussion:
Commissioners asked about hurricane effects on reef structures:

- Mr. Blanco explained that nearshore reefs in 22–50 ft (e.g., Buckeye Reef area) saw some large structures (e.g., 36,000-lb "super towers") tipped over by storms, but only some were displaced.
- At the Anderson Columbia site (60+ miles offshore, 90 ft depth), he considers it very unlikely that even strong storms would alter the bottom conditions identified by the side-scan.

Board confirmed they understood his plan and expectations.

Workshop Details:

- **Event:** Big Bend Nature Coast & Big Bend Regional Artificial Reef Workshop
- **Date:** September 18
- **Time:** Begins at 9:30 a.m.
- **Location:** Steinhatchee Community Center
- **Access:** Open to the public; registration required (can register at the door).
- **Includes:** Snacks and lunch, presentations by FWC, Army Corps, reef managers, and reef construction contractors/vendors.

<u>**ANDREW QUINCOSIS – PROPOSED MORATORIUM – AI/DATA CENTER**</u>

Background / Personal Statement:

- Introduced himself as a resident of Dixie County (4 years), describing:
    - Leaving family, business, and home elsewhere to move to Dixie.
    - Choosing Dixie County for its sense of community, friendliness, and small-town values.
- Explained that his family:
    - Homesteads (farm with cows, goats, chickens, rabbits).
    - Homeschools.
    - Operates a small farm business selling animals and animal products.
    - Has begun purchasing adjacent land for conservation-focused use.

- Described a planned primitive campground / “glamping” project designed to:
    - Create a unique, low-impact visitor experience,
    - Draw people to appreciate and protect Dixie County’s natural character.

Concerns About Data Centers:

- Stated he is opposed to locating large-scale data centers in Dixie County, arguing they:
    - Consume large volumes of power and water.
    - Offer limited local economic benefit relative to their impact.
    - Are incompatible with Dixie’s rural and natural-resource-based character.
- Emphasized the value of sustainable, locally driven growth (e.g., agriculture, eco-tourism, small business) versus large industrial IT facilities.

Petition & Public Sentiment:

- Presented a “No Data Center in Dixie” online petition:
    - Approx. 518 signatures at the time of the meeting.
    - Approximately 70+% of signatures reported as Dixie County area residents.
- Asserted that his opposition reflects a broader community concern, not just a personal position.

Comments on Elections and Representation:

- Referenced recent election turnout (45.06%) and local election results:
    - Noted that approximately 75% of votes in one race went against the incumbent.
    - Interpreted this as a sign of a disconnect between residents and leadership, while stating he believes the Board members to be “good men.”

Summary of Prior Workshop (Aug. 6) – Data Center Impacts:

- Stated he had previously presented a detailed workshop covering:
    - Wastewater and water resource impacts.
    - EMF/ELF radiation from transmission and data facilities.
    - Noise pollution (24/7 equipment).
    - Infrastructure needs (power, wastewater, roads).
    - Heat island effects.
- Emphasized that his research used data from:
    - International Energy Agency (IEA).
    - Utilities’ own reported meter data.
    - Other cited sources (did not rely on AI-generated material).
- Characterized his evidence as “irrefutable circumstantial evidence” against large data centers in Dixie.

Comments on Previous Interactions:

- Mentioned a prior speaker (Chris McKenzie) had accused him of spreading false information on social media; he responded that he was quoting public transcripts from Central Florida Electric and Duke Energy regarding territory agreements and rate increases.
- Expressed frustration and emotional impact when told by someone he respects that:
    - The prior data center workshop was “a waste of time.”
    - He should “let it go” after being given time to speak.
- Interpreted such interactions as evidence that discussions with potential data center interests may already be occurring at some level.

Regulatory Suggestions:

- Provided the Board with:
    - A copy of Levy County’s draft data center moratorium ordinance.

    - A Commonwealth of Virginia report on data center impacts on aquifers (noting severe groundwater strain and restrictions on further facilities).
- Recommended Dixie County:
    - Enact a moratorium on data centers to allow time for:
        - Careful code and comprehensive plan review.
        - Defining “data center” clearly (size, load, use).
        - Evaluating water, power, environmental, and economic impacts.
    - Consider ultimately a ban, but at minimum a temporary moratorium to build a “firewall” at the local level.
- Acknowledged state and federal preemption issues (e.g., potential future laws or national security designations), but argued the County should still do what it can locally now.

Additional Public Comment – Data Centers & AI

Christine Pearson (Resident):

- Spoke from a broader AI/ethics perspective:
    - Characterized AI development as a “gold rush” for power and control, with some in the tech industry viewing themselves as “on the frontier of being God.”
    - Warned that advanced AI could become a superior intelligence with its own interests, potentially leading humans to become “pets” or “cattle.”
    - Linked data centers to this trajectory: they are the physical infrastructure required to build such systems.
- Argued:
    - AI/AGI poses grave risks; protection can equate to control and loss of free will.
    - Compared risk to nuclear power in terms of catastrophic potential.
- Urged the Board:
    - Not to “take the bait” of financial incentives.
    - To understand that corporations will *“lie, cheat, and steal”* for resources.
    - To “know your value, Dixie County” and reject offers that would exploit its natural resources for AI infrastructure.

Christy Bass (Resident, Old Town):

- Longtime Florida resident (moved from Orlando area); emphasized:
    - She has witnessed the destructive effects of rapid development.
- Focused on:
    - Wildlife and ecosystems as “residents” the Board also serves.
    - The Board’s role as guardian of both people and natural systems.
- Framed the issue as spiritual warfare, citing:
    - Revelation 13 and Book of Daniel prophetic visions.
    - Interpreted the “image/statue of the beast” as a robot / AI system.
- Challenged Board members and pro-data center residents:
    - To consider “How much is your soul worth?”
    - Whether they will stand before God as having facilitated or resisted prophetic “end times” technology.
- Chairman Hatch clarified:
    - No data center applications had been submitted to the County at this time; nothing was currently up for approval.
- Ms. Bass maintained that any future allowance would still be spiritually significant.

JJ Johnson (Resident, Tech Entrepreneur / Declared Presidential Candidate 2028):

- Introduced himself as:
    - Founder of Amili AI Corp, a technology startup based in Dixie County.
    - A declared candidate for President in 2028.
- Stated he works directly in the AI field and opposes large data centers in Dixie County.
- Outlined four main concerns and requests:
    1. Power Usage:
        - One large data center can consume electricity equivalent to 15,000–80,000 homes continuously.
        - Residents will compete with data centers for grid capacity.
        - Asked the Board to require an independent analysis of rate and grid impacts before any approval.
    2. Water Usage:
        - Data centers use millions of gallons per day for cooling.
        - Stated "this water belongs to us".
        - Requested full disclosure of projected water use before any approval.
    3. Jobs:
        - Cited University of Florida info that for every 10,000 sq. ft. of data center space, only 1–2 permanent jobs are created.
        - Requested binding, enforceable local hiring requirements before any vote on any such facility.
    4. Conflicts of Interest:
        - Formally asked each Commissioner to state on the record whether they or any family members have financial interests in any potential data center or connected company.
        - Each Commissioner (Hatch, Storey, Stephenson, Osteen, Wood) responded "No."
- Proposed alternative model:
    - Suggested Dixie County partner with his company, Amelia AI Corp, to:
        - Create a locally owned, quantum-safe technology facility.
    - Retain tax revenue and jobs locally.
    - In exchange, the County could:
        - Provide infrastructure support, land, utilities, permitting, and
        - Receive revenue sharing plus 1% equity in the company.
- Listed several innovative products developed:
    - Millepay (quantum-safe AI agent payment infrastructure).
    - Quantum-safe voting and communications.
    - Various web platforms and services (e.g., CopsMap, FedPurse, Scroll, Newsonscale).
- Emphasized that he has been banned from major platforms by many of the same large entities seeking data center growth and characterized himself as an independent, critical voice in the tech sector.

Other Residents (In-Person and Phone):

Numerous additional residents spoke, generally opposed to data centers, raising themes including:

- Resource Concerns:
    - Existing drought conditions and declining well levels.
    - Heavy agricultural water use already stressing aquifers.

        - Fears that data center cooling needs and indirect power-generation water use would further deplete the aquifer.
- Noise & Quality of Life:
    - Anticipated 24/7 fan and cooling noise.
    - Concerns about noise impacts on nearby neighborhoods and wildlife.
- Rural Character & Tourism:
    - Desire to preserve Dixie County's identity as a nature-based, rural community.
    - Fear that large industrial data facilities would irreversibly alter the landscape and diminish tourism and property values.
- Irreversibility & Environmental Damage:
    - Worries that once a data center and associated infrastructure (e.g., transmission lines, substations, pipelines) are built:
        - Land will be permanently altered and unsuitable for agriculture or natural habitat.
        - Aquifer or ecosystem damage may be irreversible.
- Precedent & Fairness:
    - Several speakers referenced other Florida counties (Walton, Levy, etc.) that have moved toward bans or moratoria.
    - Argued Dixie should act proactively, not reactively, and not wait for a formal proposal to appear.

Legal / Policy Context – County Attorney (Chana Watson)

State Law Constraints:

- Explained there are recent and overlapping state laws affecting local land-use regulation:
    - Senate Bill 180 / related measures:
        - Temporarily limit changes to comprehensive plans (Comp Plans) until approximately 2027, especially post-hurricane.
        - This constrains the County's ability to enact permanent bans or major Comp Plan changes in the near term.
    - Senate Bill 484 (Effective 7/1) – Large-Load Customers:
        - Provides a specific carve-out allowing local governments to regulate or deny "large load customers".
        - A "large load customer" is defined as an entity using 50 megawatts or more of power.
        - Most full-scale data centers exceed that threshold, so regulatory tools exist specifically for such customers.
- Based on these:
    - Advised against adopting an outright permanent ban on data centers at this time due to legal vulnerability and Comp Plan restrictions.
    - Suggested that a temporary moratorium may be permissible because:
        - It is a time-limited pause, not a permanent Comp Plan amendment.
        - Should be narrowly and clearly drafted to withstand legal challenge.

Levy County Draft Ordinance:

- Attorney Watson stated she had reviewed partial text of Levy County's draft (provided by Mr. Quincosis), but:
    - It was still a draft under review by their new attorney and not yet adopted.
    - It appears to:

        - Restrict locations (e.g., distances from conservation land, agriculture land, schools, certain waterbodies).
        - Prohibit co-location and other configurations.
- Emphasized:
    - Dixie should not copy blindly, but could use other counties' drafts for reference.
    - Any local moratorium or ordinance must be very carefully worded, with clear definitions (e.g., what constitutes a "data center") to avoid unintended impacts on smaller businesses or ordinary IT uses.

Planning / Zoning Perspective – LPA & Staff

Planning Official (Leon Wright / LPA Chair & Staff):

- Noted that:
    - Any significant siting or zoning for data centers would likely require special exceptions and LPA review.
    - Some facilities could be classified as "essential services", and state preemption is a legitimate concern (e.g., Governor's office could alter rules and override local decisions).
- Stated that the Local Planning Agency (LPA):
    - Should be involved in the front-end drafting of any moratorium or ordinance.
    - Can hold workshops, study definitions, and recommend LDR (Land Development Regulation) language to the BOCC (even if full LDR amendments may be delayed).

Comments from LPA Member / Tech Perspective (Chris McKenzie):

- Clarified he was not affiliated with Central Florida Electric.
- Warned that any blanket moratorium on "data centers":
    - Could be overbroad, because:
        - Even a single computer in a closet serving data could arguably be called a "data center."
    - Urged that:
        - The County must first define "data center" precisely (e.g., by size, power load, cooling type, zoning) before enacting a moratorium.
        - LPA should draft specific code language and present a carefully worded recommendation to the BOCC.
- Emphasized:
    - He was not necessarily for or against data centers, but:
    - Any regulation should be technically accurate and legally defensible, to avoid unintended impediments to ordinary businesses.

Board Deliberation – Water, Timber Economy, and Strategy

Commissioner Jody Stephenson:

- Expressed:
    - Strong concern about water resources, referencing:
        - Aquifer declines.
        - Impacts of timber spraying (herbicides) on rivers and marshes.
    - Heavily emphasized the need to protect rivers, Gulf nurseries, and fisheries.
- At first:

    - Supported doing “something” now (e.g., moratorium) to get ahead of the problem rather than waiting.
    - Also discussed inconsistencies in state law where environmental protections for some projects are bypassed by new housing mandates.
- Later in discussion:
    - Became concerned a moratorium could:
        - Accidentally block or harm other legitimate businesses not intended to be targeted.
    - Argued that:
        - The County must be very careful about wording and scope.
    - Ultimately rescinded his initial motion for a moratorium (see below) and favored:
        - A workshop and LPA-led drafting process first.

Commissioner Jamie Storey:

- Acknowledged:
    - Significant concerns about water (he makes his living from water-related industries).
    - Shares many of the environmental worries.
- Initially:
    - Leaned toward supporting a moratorium, but after hearing legal and technical concerns:
        - Requested more time to research potential timber-based power options and other alternatives raised by Chair Hatch (see below).
- Ultimately:
    - Supported scheduling a workshop and having the LPA develop specific language and recommendations before the BOCC adopts any moratorium.

Commissioner David Osteen:

- Emphasized:
    - His ongoing concern about water withdrawals by other regions (e.g., Jacksonville and St. Johns River Water Management issues).
    - Cited past battles at the Suwannee River Water Management District regarding cross-basin transfers and regional aquifer stresses.
- Expressed:
    - General skepticism of large data centers in the county.
    - Support for careful regulation, not hasty action.

Chairman Mark Hatch:

- Recognized:
    - The depth of public concern and the importance of water protections.
    - The prior Board actions to protect Suwannee River (opposing outside water discharges).
- Also highlighted economic considerations:
    - Dixie County is heavily timber-based (loggers, sawmills, landowners).
    - Stated pulpwood and sawtimber markets have declined dramatically (pulpwood prices dropping from ~$30/ton to ~$8/ton), partly due to digitization reducing paper demand.
    - Proposed a hypothetical scenario:
        - If a power plant (e.g., biomass using pulpwood) plus a data facility:

        - Created its own power and cooling, drawing primarily from water in the trees rather than the aquifer,
        - Provided substantial support to the timber economy (landowners, loggers, mills),
        - And did not impact residential power or aquifer resources,
    - The County should not automatically foreclose that option without full study.
- Emphasized:
  - There are already multiple layers of public notice, special exceptions, and hearings required for major projects.
  - A blanket, year-long moratorium might move the issue "off the front burner", reducing active monitoring.
  - Preferred:
    - Keeping the issue actively under study,
    - Involving LPA and workshops,
    - Using SB 484 (large-load customer) authority as needed when actual applications arise.

Additional Legal Notes (County Attorney Watson):

- Confirmed:
  - Future Comp Plan amendments or bans could be constrained or overridden by:
    - State preemption.
    - Possible future federal or military "critical infrastructure" designations for some sites.
  - Local regulation must be built on a solid legal foundation, with:
    - Detailed definitions.
    - Clear thresholds (e.g., ≥ 50 MW).
    - Consideration of state/federal preemption.

Motions, Rescissions, and Final Actions

A. Initial Motion for Moratorium (Rescinded)

- Commissioner Stephenson initially made a motion to enact a one-year moratorium on data centers in Dixie County.
- Commissioner Osteen seconded for purposes of discussion.
- After extended debate:
  - Concerns were raised about:
    - Overbroad scope.
    - Definitions (what counts as a data center?).
    - Potential unintended impacts on other businesses.
    - Need for careful LPA review and legal drafting.
  - Commissioner Stephenson rescinded his motion for a moratorium.
  - Commissioner Osteen rescinded his second.
- Result:
  - No vote was taken on the initial moratorium proposal; motion died after rescission.

B. Decision to Involve the LPA and Hold a Workshop

- Consensus emerged that:
  - The issue should be studied in detail by the Local Planning Agency (LPA) and then by the BOCC.
  - The County should:

        - Examine Levy County's draft and other models.
        - Draft clear definitions and potential local regulations or moratorium language focused on large-load/data center-type facilities.
- Board Direction / Action:
    - The BOCC directed:
        - LPA (via Leon Wright) to:
            - Place the issue on its agenda.
            - Meet on September 10 at 6:00 p.m. to discuss data centers / large-load customers.
            - Develop recommendations and draft language for the BOCC.
        - BOCC to hold a workshop on:
            - Date: September 14
            - Time: 3:00 p.m.
            - Purpose: Data center / large-load customer planning and potential moratorium or code changes.
    - The Board requested that:
        - Andrew Kinkosis be formally notified of:
            - The LPA meeting (Sept. 10), and
            - The BOCC workshop (Sept. 14),
        - So that he and other interested parties can attend and provide input.

Formal Motion for Workshop:
Commissioner Stephenson made a motion to schedule a BOCC workshop on September 14 at 3:00 p.m. to further address data center / large-load issues, following the LPA's September 10 meeting. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Closing Comments

- Several speakers and Commissioners closed by:
    - Thanking participants for the high level of community engagement.
    - Acknowledging tension and strong feelings, but emphasizing:
        - Shared love for Dixie County.
        - Commitment to protect water and natural resources.
        - Need to balance protection with economic reality and legal constraints.
- One resident quoted a cautionary line from *War of the Worlds* about change often coming at the precipice of destruction, urging the Board not to wait until it is too late.

<u>KATRINA VANAERNAM AND SHEILA FRIERSON, DIXIE COUNTY ANTI-DRUG COALITION</u>

Not present.

<u>NIKIE WAITS – ROAD 2 REDEMPTION</u>

National Recovery Month Event – "Lighting the Way Home"
Topic: Upcoming National Recovery Month community event and appreciation of County leadership.

Event Announcement – "Lighting the Way Home"

- Event name: *Lighting the Way Home – Together We Make Waves of Hope*
- Occasion: National Recovery Month and Suicide Prevention Month.
- Date & Time: Saturday, September 12, beginning at 5:00 p.m.

- Location: Wandal Wheeler Park, Cross City.
- Program overview:
    - 5:00–6:00 p.m.:
        - Live music by Josh Hay.
        - Registration and visits to community partner/resource tables.
        - Family activities (e.g., face painting, cornhole).
    - Throughout the evening:
        - Community recovery awards recognizing people in recovery and supportive partners.
        - Speakers sharing personal recovery stories and messages of hope.
        - Interactive “recovery Kahoot” game via smartphone.
        - Door prizes, raffles, T-shirt giveaways.
        - Opportunities for attendees to connect with local treatment, support, and recovery resources.
    - Closing segment:
        - Memorial walk and candlelight vigil to:
            - Honor community members lost to overdose and suicide.
            - Support their families and promote healing, connection, and hope.
- Emphasized goals:
    - To ensure people in recovery and their families feel seen and valued.
    - To show those still struggling that recovery is possible.
    - To foster community healing, connection, and hope.

Remarks on Service and Leadership:

- Ms. Waits spoke about:
    - The sacrifice and burden of service carried by public officials.
    - The weight of decisions that affect current and future generations.
- Expressed:
    - Appreciation to the entire Board for their service and care for the community.
    - Specific thanks to Commissioner Daniel Wood for his service and contributions, stating she believes each Commissioner has been “appointed” to serve this community.
- Chairman Hatch:
    - Thanked Nikie for her work in recovery and community support.
    - Stated on behalf of the Board and community that they are blessed to have her and her family in Dixie County and deeply appreciate their efforts.

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Nothing to present at this time.

KAREN VANAERNAM, DIXIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Not present.

SCOTT NIOLET, SAVINACIOUS

Disaster Recovery / HMGP & FEMA Projects Update (with Jason Benoit and Jesse Sellers present).

- **FEMA / HMGP Financial Reconciliation:**
- Reported they are working with the County Finance Office to reconcile interfund payables and receivables related to disaster (hurricane) projects.
- Goal is to ensure disaster-related revenues and expenses are correctly allocated to the proper departments, so:
    - Department budgets are not artificially inflated/deflated by FEMA/HMGP activity.
    - The County has accurate cost data by department for decision-making.
- **Project Status – Highway 357 Riprap:**
    - Highway 357 riprap project has been obligated by FEMA.
    - Currently coordinating with the State to get the project funded and ready to start construction.
- **Other Project Worksheets (PWs):**
    - Working through several additional FEMA project worksheets.
    - Some earlier cost estimates are now outdated (prepared 2 years ago).
    - Actively seeking price increases / revisions where needed to reflect current construction costs.
- **Board Response:**
    - Board expressed appreciation for the earlier workshop update and ongoing work.
    - Mr. Niolet stated his team is continuing to help the County and communities move storm-related recovery projects forward and is "here to help."

<u>**GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES**</u>

Project Management & Construction Updates – Kellan Bailey

1. Fire Station #3 (First District)

- Reported the generator for Station 3 was delivered earlier that day.
- Contractor has been provided a punch list.
- Project is in closeout phase; expected to be completed by early September.

2. Fire Station #6 – Horseshoe Beach

- Station 6 has been dried-in and painted.
- Contractors are working on electrical and mechanical systems.
- Paving work was underway that day.
- Contractor is still targeting substantial completion around the first of September.

3. Horseshoe Beach Water Line (to Station 6)

- The water line plans and permits are already in place; construction documents are complete.

- Funding:
    - Horseshoe Beach has a grant for water system work; first step is a Preliminary Engineering Report (PER).
    - Target for release of state funds for the water project remains November.

    - County and town are working to get early release of funds for the portion of the water line serving Station 6 so that line can be constructed as soon as possible.

4. Evidence Building – Secondary Grouting

- Reported that secondary grouting work has been completed at the evidence building.
- Waiting on test borings to confirm the grouting meets required standards.
- Once testing confirms compliance, this project phase will be considered complete.

5. Working Waterfront Project – Horseshoe Beach

- Continuing to work with DEP regarding stormwater requirements at the Working Waterfront site.
- DEP is requiring stormwater improvements; the County is asserting historical use of the lot and is seeking relief/clarification.
- Mr. Bailey and team are scheduling a meeting with the DEP Director of Stormwater to:
    - Discuss the historical-use argument.
    - Try to reach a resolution that allows the Working Waterfront project to proceed without undue delay.

Board Comments:

- Commissioners emphasized the importance of the Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront for local citizens and tourists.
- Commissioner Osteen requested that contractors "keep up the hard work" on the Horseshoe Beach Working Waterfront, noting it is badly needed.
- The Board thanked Mr. Bailey for the updates.

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

Dredging & Grants Update

1. Suwannee & Horseshoe Dredging Projects

- Reported that dredging in Suwannee and Horseshoe Beach is:
    - Progressing well.
    - On track and on schedule.
- Noted minor mechanical breakdowns in Suwannee, but:
    - Issues have been resolved.
    - No significant impact to the overall project schedule.

2. McGriff Pass Dredging (Design Phase)

- Geotechnical cores (subsurface borings) have been completed.
- A bathymetric survey (underwater depth/topography mapping) is scheduled for next week.
- A pre-application meeting with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is set for Monday morning to:
    - Discuss permitting needs.
    - Ensure the project design proceeds in compliance with federal requirements.
- Clarified:
    - Current funding of $500,000 from Florida Commerce is for design/engineering only, not for construction.
    - Locklear bills Florida Commerce directly; the County is not paying for the design work out of local funds.

3. Related Meetings & Opportunities

- Announced a regional dredging meeting:

        - **Date:** September 9th
        - **Time:** 9:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.
        - **Location:** Big Bend Technical College, Perry.
        - Organized by Florida Commerce and Regional Economic Development Partners.
        - Topic: Dredging funding, permitting, and best practices for rural areas of opportunity.
        - Locklear's subcontractor Coastal (performing the dredge work) will present.
        - Army Corps and DEP are being invited to speak.
    - Locklear offered to send the calendar invitation and details to the Board so Commissioners may attend.

4. Springs Grant – Gornto / Septic Project

- Reported that the DEP Springs grant program has reopened.
- Unless otherwise directed, Locklear will:
    - Resubmit last year's application for Gornto:
        - To install a central septic system.
        - To remove existing on-site septic tanks near the spring.
- Commissioners indicated support, noting the area "needs it."

5. Commissioner Comment – Possible Use of Existing Tank

- Commissioner Stephenson suggested:
    - Reviewing an existing large tank located at the County yard (apparently associated with a FAST-type treatment system).
    - To see if it could be repurposed or utilized in the Gornto septic project, since it is already on hand.
- Mr. Locklear agreed to look into that option.
- The Board thanked Mr. Locklear for the updates.

RAELYNN BROWNELL, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER

Suwannee Water & Sewer District – Grant Announcement (John Locklear spoke on behalf of Raelyn Brownell who was not present)

- Mr. Locklear reported that the Suwannee River Water Management District awarded the Suwannee Water & Sewer District a grant of approximately $17,000.
- Grant purpose:
    - To purchase new telemetry equipment for operation of the water/sewer plant.
    - The new telemetry will:
        - Reduce required on-site trips by staff (particularly George).
        - Lower labor and operating costs for the district.

Mr. Locklear thanked the Board for its support.

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Steve Freeman, Code Enforcement, was present.

- Chairman Hatch noted Mr. Freeman was having eye issues and was not scheduled with any specific items for this meeting and excused him, thanking him for his work.

MIKEL GAINEY, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Not present.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR

Not present.

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

APPLICATIONS for SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS
20260663 A petition by Margaret Corbin requesting a Special Exception to be granted, as provided in Section 4.7.5 (13) SPECIAL EXCEPTIONS of the Dixie County Land Development Regulations to permit Travel Trailer Parks (RSF/MH), in accordance with the petition dated 04/21/2026 to be located on the property as described as follows: Dixie County Parcel #26-09-09-0045-0000-1080 336 SW 911 ST, STEINHATCHEE, FL 32359; 1.98 Acres. COMMISSION DISTRICT 5 DAVID OSTEEN
Opposition noted by phone and in person - **LPA recommended denial**

Applicant Presentation (Wayne Corbin / Margaret Corbin):

- Explained the request is for an 8-space travel trailer park, not a large RV park.
- Noted:
    - There are already RV sites adjacent to their property.
    - The area includes commercially zoned property and existing RV uses.
- Stated they:
    - Lost their long-time home to hurricanes and cannot feasibly rebuild an elevated residence (18 ft) due to cost and lack of insurance/financing options.
    - Want the option to develop the property for income if needed in the future.
- Emphasized:
    - Historically, the area functioned as a residential neighborhood among a few families, but after multiple storms there are now very few homesteaded residences left.
    - They feel the character of the immediate area has changed.

- **Public Comment – Opposed:**
  Several nearby property owners spoke in opposition, raising the following points:
    - **Terry Martin Bach (adjacent owner):**
        - Owns a 50' x 220' lot adjacent to the Corbin property; has a septic tank and had previously applied for one RV pad for his own family use (which was denied by this Board without him having the chance to speak that day).
        - Argued:
            - The Corbin parcel is zoned VAC residential, not commercial; a trailer park would require rezoning or special exception.
            - The area is highly flood-prone (storm surge, water level, wind risk).
            - Most private RV parks they stayed in nationwide effectively became permanent residences, which he does not want in this location.
        - Stated he wants to eventually build an elevated home for himself or his children on his lot and believes a trailer park would undermine that investment.
    - **Paul Greenwell (nearby resident):**
        - Lives on **S**W 911th Street near the proposed site.
        - Opposed due to:

        - Road conditions: 287th Street is impassable for RVs in his view; overhanging cedar trees recently tore an AC unit off a fifth-wheel.
        - Potholes and drainage: numerous potholes and standing water; he personally pumped water off the road and yards after heavy rain.
        - Traffic congestion during scallop season: vehicles already line both sides of the road near the boat ramp and marina; adding RVs will worsen congestion and safety.
    - Stated he believed the owner of Good Times Marina was watching the outcome because they might seek an RV park next, compounding issues.
    - Requested the Board uphold the LPA recommendation to deny.
  - **Julianne Janson (nearby property owner):**
    - Lives at 861 911th Street; moved to the area 6 years ago for its "old Florida" feel (canal, wildlife, dusty roads).
    - Emphasized:
        - Frequent storm surges and saltwater flooding, even from relatively small events (e.g., 5–6 inches of water in the road and yards).
        - Newcomers with RVs may not understand or be able to react to rapid flooding, putting people and property at risk.
    - Stated she wants to keep the land as pristine as possible and believes additional RV parks will degrade the area.
  - **John Courtney (neighbor):**
    - Former public safety professional who lost his Steinhatchee home in the hurricanes and is now living apart from his wife.
    - Noted ongoing conflict among neighbors over past RV requests and storm impacts.
    - Expressed opposition to further RV intensification in this fragile location.
- **Board Discussion:**
  - **Commissioner Osteen (District Commissioner):**
    - Noted:
        - He has consistently voted against RV parks and special exceptions in this area in prior cases.
        - Some residents present (including Corbins) have historically opposed other RV requests; he has "fought alongside" them to deny those.
    - Recommended denial, citing:
        - Flood risk,
        - Neighborhood consistency, and
        - Past denials for similar requests nearby.
  - **Commissioner Stephenson:**
    - Stated he has repeatedly voted to deny prior RV special exceptions in this area (including single pads for family use).
    - Expressed:
        - Concern about consistency and fairness: approving this application after denying prior similar ones would put him in an unethical position.
        - Desire to treat all applicants equally, regardless of personal hardship.
    - Emphasized:
        - He is not against the Corbin's having one RV on their property for their own use.

        - His objection is to creating a multi-site RV park when others have been denied the same.
    - Mentioned "vested rights" as a potential avenue for some older properties but noted the Corbin's did not file for vested rights when the Comp Plan changed.
- **County Attorney (Chana Watson) – Vested Rights Explanation:**
- Explained "vested rights":
    - When the comprehensive plan was adopted in the late 1980s, property owners could file to retain prior zoning/uses.
    - If that paperwork was filed and recorded at that time, the property could maintain previously allowed uses.
    - If not filed, the property is governed by the new Comp Plan/LDR.
- Noted:
    - Vested rights are recorded and traceable via the Clerk's records and property chain of title.
    - Corbin's indicated they did not file such paperwork.
- **Chairman Hatch:**
    - Stated broadly:
        - The County is economically constrained and relies on business growth.
        - Cannot indefinitely go to Tallahassee "begging for money" while turning down every business proposition.
        - Any viable, appropriate business (including small RV operations) merits careful consideration.
    - Also recognized:
        - The property's flood exposure.
        - The long-standing history of prior denials in the same vicinity.
    - Emphasized that today's decision is on this specific 8-site application, not on past petitions.
- **Commissioner Storey:**

Expressed deep internal conflict:

- Acknowledged knowing the Corbin's personally and having visited after multiple storms when their home was destroyed.
- Recognized that rebuilding an 18-ft elevated home is financially unrealistic for them.
- Recalled a prior case where:
    - Another man nearby was denied a special exception for a single RV on a lot where a house had been; that case was turned down while this Board tried to maintain consistency with Corbin opposition.
- Initially indicated he would likely support denial for consistency.
- After a brief recess and personal reflection (stated he prayed about it), he ultimately changed his position, explaining:
    - Given the Corbin's' total loss and long-term residence, he wanted to give them a chance to pursue this limited development.
    - Recognized they must still meet all other planning, septic, and engineering requirements before any RV park actually operates.
- Stated he believed the Corbin's remain responsible for:
    - Obtaining a site plan,
    - Meeting septic/water/sewer requirements, and

    - Complying with all codes; the special exception is not a blank check.
- **Motions and Votes:**

Motion to Deny (Failed):

- Motion: Commissioner Osteen moved to deny the special exception.
- Second: Commissioner Stephenson.
- After discussion and public input:
    - Vote:
        - For Denial: Osteen, Stephenson (2)
        - Against Denial: Hatch, Storey, Wood (3)
    - Result: Motion failed, special exception not denied.

Motion to Approve (Passed):

Commissioner Storey made a motion to approve the Corbin special exception for an 8-site travel trailer/RV park. Seconded by Commissioner Wood.

Vote:

- **For Approval: Hatch, Storey, Wood (3)**
- **Against Approval: Osteen, Stephenson (2)**

Result:

Special exception approved, subject to all applicable permitting, septic, engineering, and code requirements.

- Following the vote, there was brief discussion among Commissioners and audience members regarding:
    - The need for consistent standards.
    - The fact that approval does not bypass regulatory requirements (e.g., site plan, utilities, flood regulations).
- The Chair concluded the item and moved on to the next agenda topic.

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

Nothing to present at this time.

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

Nothing to present at this time.

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

Nothing to present at this time.

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

Employee Health Benefits – HSA Contribution Structure

The Board discussed returning from an **FSA** to a **Health Savings Account (HSA)** structure for employees **enrolled in the County's health insurance**, with new conditions.

- **HSA Contribution Plan Approved:**
    - County to contribute $1,000 per eligible employee per year, divided as:
        - $500 on January 1, and

- $500 on July 1.
- **Probation requirement:**
  - Employees must complete a 90-day probationary period before receiving the first $500 contribution.
  - Employees hired or leaving between distribution dates may still be eligible for the second half in July if they meet probation and are employed at that time.
- Employees who do not carry County health insurance will continue to receive the existing card benefit (unchanged).

Additional direction:

- County staff (including HR/County Manager and Sheriff's Office) to **a**mend internal policies so that:
  - EOC, EMS, and Sheriff's Office employees' probation policies align with the 90-day requirement for HSA eligibility (Sheriff's current 1-year probation policy must be reconciled).

Commissioner Wood made a motion to approve the HSA structure and contribution schedule as described. Seconded by Commissioner Storey. Board approved

<u>JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER</u>

1. Request Board approval of the Savinacious Task Work Order # 2 for HMGP management services in the amounts listed on Exhibit A of the Agreement Contract dated Dec 3, 2024.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve the Savinacious Task Force Order Number Two for HMGP Master Services as listed in Exhibit A of the agreement dated December 3, 2024. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

2. Request Board approval of the revised lease agreement with Red Roof Aviation, LLC. name change to Palmer Aeroplane, LLC.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve the revised airport lease agreement reflecting the name change from Red Roof Aviation LLC to Palmer Airplane LLC. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

3. Request Board approval of the Department of Commerce Grant Agreement D0358 for the Design/Engineering of McGriff Pass in the amount of $500,000.00.

Motion by Vice Chairman Storey to approve the Department of Commerce grant agreement D0358 in the amount of $500,000 for the design and engineering of McGriff Pass. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

4. Request Board approval of the SHIP Rehab Reimbursement for Pamela Davis in the amount of $20,192.00.

Motion by Commissioner Wood to approve the SHIP rehab reimbursement for Pamela Davis in the amount of $20,192. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

5. Request Board approval of the Locklear Task Work Order for LPA0279 DCFSM Design/Engineering in the amount of $50,000.00.

Motion by Commissioner David Osteen to approve the Locklear Task Force Order for LPA 0279 DCF SM design/engineering in the amount of $50,000. Seconded by Commissioner Jody Stephenson. Board approved.

6. Request Board approval to purchase fencing from Lanford Farms, LLC as the lowest quote in the amount of $2,211.00 based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve the purchase of fencing from Lanford Farms LLC in the amount of $2,211. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

7. Request Board approval for Locklear to apply for the Resilient Grant to lower 3 box culverts in Old Town Hammock based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion by Vice Chairman Storey to approve Locklear applying for the Resilient Florida grant to lower three box culverts in Old Town Hammock. Seconded by Commissioner Wood. Board approved.

8. Request: Direction regarding county-owned parcels that may be surplus and buildable and whether staff should prepare a list of such parcels for possible sale.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve directing staff to prepare and bring back to the Board a list of surplus county-owned properties that may be suitable for sale. Seconded by Vice Chairman Storey. Board approved.

County Attorney Watson briefly discussed surplus property procedures and noted that formal fair market value appraisals should be obtained before any sale; existing surplus property policy procedures do not bar this preliminary listing step.

Meeting Schedule & Location – September 3rd Budget Hearing / Regular Meeting

- **Schedule Reminder:**
  - Finance Director Ms. Royal reminded the Board that the next BOCC meeting is scheduled for **Thursday, September 3**, with:
    - **Budget hearing at 5:30 p.m.**, and
    - **Regular meeting at 6:00 p.m.**

Meeting Location Change (Due to Expected Attendance):

- Chairman Hatch noted he has received numerous calls about the September 3rd meeting and expressed concern about seating capacity in the regular BOCC meeting room.
- Proposed moving the meeting to a larger venue within the courthouse.

- County staff advised that, rather than the small Judge's chambers, the main courtroom (through the double doors) would be more appropriate and could accommodate overflow.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to relocate the September 3, 2026 BOCC budget hearing and regular meeting to the main courtroom and to ensure the necessary equipment (audio/recording) is moved for that meeting. Seconded by Vice Chairman Storey. Boad approved.

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

County Attorney Report – RV Park Litigation (Hammock Area) & Legal Update

- **RV Park Mediation (Hammock Area):**
    - County Attorney Chana Watson reported that mediation was held regarding the RV park case in the Hammock area.
    - No resolution was reached at mediation.
    - The case will proceed to a formal hearing.
    - Notice of the hearing will be sent to neighbors in the affected area.
- **Location of Disputed RV Park:**
    - In response to a question from the Board, Planning staff (Leon Wright) clarified:
        - The location is in the Hammock area near Palm Drive,
        - Between Glisson and Wells roads/areas.
        - It involves an RV park application previously denied by the Board, which is now in litigation.
    - Parcel information can be provided if requested.
- **Other Legal Matters:**
    - Attorney Watson noted that, as usual, there are a few other pending lawsuits, but all are tracking normally with no unusual issues to report at this time.

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

Finance Director Brenda Royal to speak on behalf of the Clerk's Office.

<u>**BRENDA ROYAL, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER**</u>

Clerk's Budget & Audit Update – James Moore & Emergency Budget Meeting

FY Budget & Audit Status – James Moore & Co.

- Ms. Royal reported on a working meeting held earlier that day with **J**ames Moore & Co. (County's auditors), the County Manager, HR, Barbie Higginbotham and Verna Wilson from the Clerks Office.

Audit Challenges & Extra Services:

- The first year with the new auditor has been difficult due to:
    - The County not having a prior "pre-audit" cleanup firm; most counties use an outside preparer to organize fixed assets, grants, etc. before the auditors arrive.
    - Significant work required in:
        - Fixed assets (longstanding audit finding; inventory and valuations not in auditor-ready form).

    - Compensated absences (system reporting not in the format auditors require).
    - Certain grant schedules and reconciliations.
- James Moore has identified some non-audit services they can provide (at additional but relatively modest cost, estimated approx. $2,000–$5,000 in total) to:
  - Help prepare fixed asset schedules,
  - Clean up grant/compensated absences schedules, and
  - Get the County to an "audit-ready" state.
- These would be separate from the main audit contract and are subject to:
  - Independence rules (must be structured so as not to impair auditor independence).
  - Board approval.

Board Action – Authorizing Limited Extra Assistance:

- After discussion:
  - Commissioners recognized the extra workload on Clerk staff and the need to move the audit forward.

Commissioner Storey moved to authorize the Clerk's Office to engage limited additional services from James Moore (and/or other recommended sources) as needed to prepare schedules for the audit, staying within the County Manager's spending authority (under $5,000 per item). Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

2. Budget Status – Revenue Delays & Problem Funds

Ms. Royal updated the Board on FY budget development:

- Still waiting on key revenue estimates from EDR (state estimates), particularly for:
  - Transportation Fund (no revenue numbers yet; only expenditure requests have been loaded).
- Most small funds are balanced.
- Problem areas include:
  - Solid Waste – facing shortfalls that will require policy decisions (e.g., fees or service levels).
  - EMS (Darren's department) – challenges because:
    - Earlier revenue assumptions from grants / billing did not fully materialize.
    - There are cash shortfalls versus projected revenues; grant balances and timing must be clarified.
  - General Fund – expenditures loaded, but still awaiting full revenue picture and decisions on:
    - Raises beyond bringing employees up to $15/hr.
    - Requested increases from constitutional officers (entered as submitted, but not yet matched with revenues).

Ms. Royal stated:

  - Without updated revenue estimates and decisions on Solid Waste and EMS, the County cannot finalize a balanced budget.
  - She may need Board-level decisions on service levels, fees, and/or cuts.

Emergency Budget Meeting – August 25

- To ensure enough time to balance the budget before statutory deadlines, Brenda requested an additional Board meeting.

- Commissioners discussed dates and personal conflicts (e.g., doctor appointments) and agreed to hold an emergency budget meeting on Tuesday, August 25 at 4:00 p.m. with the understanding that:
  - If revenue estimates arrive in time and issues are resolved, the meeting can be canceled.
  - If not, the meeting will be used to:
    - Address Solid Waste funding,
    - Clarify EMS grant/cash status, and
    - Make any necessary policy decisions to balance the budget.

Commissioner Storey moved to schedule an emergency BOCC budget meeting on Tuesday, August 25 at 4:00 p.m. (to be noticed as a full Board meeting in case action is required). Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Ms. Royal confirmed the meeting would be properly posted and advertised and that the purpose is to give the Board time to “make some decisions” if outstanding revenue and Solid Waste issues are not resolved beforehand.

<u>COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS</u>

- **Commissioner Storey:**
  - Commented that it was a good but long meeting.
  - Asked the public to keep him in prayer, noting that:
  - He strives to make the best decisions he can.
  - The Lord “changed [his] heart tonight” on one issue, and he is willing to explain his reasoning after the meeting to anyone who wishes to discuss it.
- **Commissioner Stephenson:**
  - Expressed hope that he had not offended anyone, stating he can be very passionate about County issues.

Shared a personal concern:

  - Reported that Mr. Paul Martin, a close friend and fellow board member on other committees, has been diagnosed with stage four cancer and is declining quickly.
  - Encouraged those who know Mr. Martin to visit or call him soon.

Reported several road and safety issues:

  - A tree down in a ditch on CR 353 near CR 349, requesting Road Department attention.
  - A caution light on a radar sign: one light is out and the other is blinking excessively; asked that it be checked and repaired.

Thanked everyone and said he felt it was a good meeting, urging the County to keep moving forward.

- **Commissioner Osteen:**
  - Acknowledged it was a long meeting and that the Board sometimes must make difficult decisions that can hurt feelings and make people upset, but are intended to better the County overall.

Expressed appreciation for:

  - County staff and the public for working with the Board to improve Dixie County.
  - Thanked everyone for their hard work.

- **Chairman Hatch:**
    - Reported receiving a text after 9:00 p.m. regarding Miss Dorothy McCann near Timbers Road he noted that a gate there had been taken off its hinges and swung open, though it is supposed to remain latched/slashed.
        - Directed staff (John / Road Department) to chain the gate back into the correct position and install a padlock through the hinges and post to prevent further tampering.
    - Announced:
        - The first home football game will be Friday night at Bruce Boyette Stadium.
            - Invited everyone to attend, support the local team, and enjoy some of the "best hamburgers and hot dogs" around.
    - Wished everyone a safe trip home and thanked the public for enduring the lengthy meeting and for their continued engagement.

<u>PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS</u>

Public Comment – Jim Ward / Salt Creek Boat Ramp Access & Erosion
(Fish House property owner at end of Salt Creek Road near Salt Creek Restaurant).

- **Issue Presented:**
    - Ward owns the Fish House property with a private concrete boat ramp extending from his lot into Salt Creek.
    - Using the property appraiser's map, he showed that:
        - His property line begins at the top of the concrete ramp.
        - The steep approach from SR 349 down to the top of his concrete is county right-of-way, not his property.
    - Since the hurricanes, and with:
        - Increased use of his ramp by the public and contractors (especially due to loss/closure of other local ramps), and
        - Heavy rainfall and runoff,
        - The county right-of-way slope between the highway and his ramp has developed deep ruts and erosion, making access increasingly unsafe and soon potentially unusable.
    - He emphasized:
        - He has allowed public use of his ramp and property for nearly five years at his own expense (estimated $500/month).
        - He is not asking for compensation but needs the County to address the erosion on the right-of-way so people can still safely reach his ramp.
- Concerns About Fix Type:
    - Ward requested a permanent, stable surface (ideally concrete or similar hard surface) from the edge of his ramp up to the right-of-way line.
    - Objected to simply using millings:
        - Believes they will wash into Salt Creek during heavy rains.
    - Stated he is willing to contribute cash toward an appropriate permanent fix but cannot perform work himself on county right-of-way.

Board / Staff Discussion & Direction:
Acknowledged:

- The ramp approach is county right-of-way, so the County can and should address erosion there.
- Ward has been a good neighbor in allowing public access to his private ramp.

- County Attorney Watson noted:
    - County may work only within its right-of-way; cannot construct improvements on Ward's private property (beyond his property line).

Direction to Staff:

- Chairman Hatch instructed Road Department and staff (John / Leon / Mikel) to:
    - Verify the exact right-of-way limits with surveys/records as needed.
    - Prepare a work order to repair the rutted slope from SR 349 down to the top of Ward's concrete ramp, staying within the public right-of-way.
    - Evaluate appropriate materials (millings or otherwise) with attention to drainage and runoff to minimize sediment into Salt Creek.
    - Ward asked to be informed of the plan before work is done; Board agreed his concerns about runoff would be considered.

The Chair thanked Mr. Ward for his input and moved on after confirming staff would address the access erosion in the right-of-way.

Public Comment – RV Special Exception Consistency & Fairness
Sarah Ross (LPA Board member and resident of Jena)

- Stated she serves on the Local Planning Agency (LPA) and strives to put personal feelings aside when making recommendations.
- Noted she has a personal relationship with the Corbin's (has eaten at their table, now lives near them), which made the recent RV special exception decision emotionally difficult.
- Emphasized her belief that the waterfront and marsh properties in Steinhatchee are high-value, limited resources:
    - Argued that elevated homes (even at 18 feet) on those parcels would:
        - Generate substantial ad valorem tax revenue for the County.
        - Preserve the area's appeal (sunrise/sunset views, "old Florida" character).
    - Mrs. Rodd believes a multi-site RV park will devalue the area and reduce long-term tax benefits compared to elevated homes or second homes.
    - Stated that in voting at the LPA to recommend denial of the Corbin's RV park, she was acting to protect the County's long-term financial interest and neighborhood character, not out of personal animosity.
    - She would have voted the same way even if the applicant had been a family member, to avoid future lawsuits and unequal treatment.
- Mrs. Ross urged the Board to:
    - Trust the LPA's analysis and recommendations.

        - Consider the long-term economic and environmental value of the shoreline when deciding similar cases.

Speaker (by phone): John Mash Jr.

- Called in while on duty at his fire station; aligned with earlier comments about fairness and consistency in RV park decisions.
- Mr. Marsh cited a past case near his residence on NE 614th Street:
    - A 15-acre parcel owned by a man from Germany was proposed for an RV park in the middle of a residential neighborhood.
    - Due to local opposition, the Board denied that request; Mr. Mash supported that denial.
- Mr. Mash expressed concern that:
    - The Board's approval of the Corbin RV special exception in Steinhatchee, after denying similar RV requests (including the one near him), creates an appearance of unequal treatment.
- He stated his principle:
    - If the Board can do something for one person, it should be willing to do it for another in a similar situation.
    - If the Board cannot or chooses not to do it for one, it should not do it for another, regardless of who they are.
- Asked to go on record emphasizing the need for consistent, fair application of standards in RV and land-use decisions.

After these comments, Chair Hatch asked if there were any further public comments. Hearing none, a motion to adjourn was made.

ADJOURN

Motion to Adjourn made by Vice Chairman Storey. 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.