

**EMERGENCY
BUDGET MEETING**
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
August 25, 2026 – 4:00 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 908825494#

COMMISSIONERS

Mark Hatch, District 3, Chairman
Jody Stephenson, District 1 – Not present
Daniel Wood, District 2 – Not present
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 Mark Hatch called the workshop to order and welcomed all attendees, thanking everyone for coming.

Agenda Order

Chairman Hatch stated that the meeting would begin with a report from Finance Director Brenda Royal.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

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

Solid Waste Assessments and Tipping Fees

The Board resumed budget discussions on Solid Waste.

- Residential assessment: Confirmed that the residential solid waste assessment is proposed to increase from \$180 to \$210 per year, a \$30 annual increase.
- Small commercial: Confirmed as being assessed at the same rate as residential (\$210).
- Non-residential / large commercial: The Board discussed the current proposed non-residential rate of \$357 and concerns about previously adopted rates and fairness

relative to the prior year's figure of \$159 and actual bills paid by businesses (Hudson Properties, Hardee's, Lucky Charms, etc.).

Tipping Fee Proposals (Tim Johnson):

- Commercial MSW garbage: \$50/ton → \$60/ton
- C&D: \$35/ton → \$45/ton
- Pressure-treated C&D: remain at \$70/ton
- Dirty loads: \$150/ton → \$200/ton

Direction:

Finance and Solid Waste staff were directed to calculate projected additional revenue from these tipping fee increases using prior-year tonnage and to bring those numbers back before October 1.

RV Parks / Campgrounds and Assessment Equity

The Board discussed RV parks/campgrounds (e.g., Lucky Charms, Old Town Campground, Suwanee Highway, Yellow Jacket, Shady Oaks, Jasmine Breeze, Piddler's Point) and noted that per-site fire and solid waste assessments appear significantly lower than what single-family residences pay, despite similar or greater trash generation.

Direction:

Staff (Property Appraiser, Tax Collector, and Finance, with input from Attorney Watson and Martha McCaskill) were directed to review all RV parks and campgrounds to verify:

- Site counts and occupancy assumptions
- Application of statutes for fire and solid waste assessments
- Equity with residential assessments

Solid Waste Sites – Hours, Staffing, and Possible Closures

The Board discussed options to reduce costs at Solid Waste through:

- Standardizing most sites to 5 days/week, 12:00 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
- Keeping weekend access at each site
- Maintaining Pole Gap as a high-volume site at extended hours
- Considering closure of at least one site (such as First District/317) and potentially converting Jack Roberts Curve to a limb-debris-only site.

Preliminary calculations indicated that:

- Reducing site hours and reconfiguring to 10–11 part-time attendants (from 23) could save approximately \$400,000–\$500,000 per year in part-time wages.

Direction:

- Solid Waste to conduct car counts at all sites to measure usage.
- Finance and Solid Waste to model a system with:
 - Seven sites operating 12:00–6:00 p.m., five days per week, and
 - Pole Gap operating seven days a week at current hours;
 - One site (First District or other) to be closed;
 - Updated staffing counts and annual cost savings.

Motion – Relocation of Solid Waste Billing Clerk to Transfer Station

During the Solid Waste discussion, the Board addressed billing and payment processes for tipping fees.

Motion 1: Relocate Solid Waste Billing Clerk

Vice Chairman Storey motioned to send Kristen Jerrells to the Solid Waste transfer station. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Responsibilities:

- Take all payments for Solid Waste (including tipping fees) on-site at the transfer station;
- Handle receipts and paperwork for Solid Waste billing at that office; and
- Deliver daily receipts and records to Finance/Clerk (Brenda's office) for deposit and posting.
- Discussion:
 - The Board discussed ensuring Ms. Jerrells has appropriate workspace, computer, and card-processing capability at Solid Waste.
 - Staff were instructed to replicate the current billing workflow on-site so invoices and payments are handled at the transfer station, reducing Finance's back-office workload and resolving issues with "do-not-pay" lists.

Direction following the motion:

- Tim Johnson, John Jenkins, Roy Bass, and Ms. Royal to:
 - Set up the Solid Waste office (main transfer station) with the necessary computer, printer, and card machine.
 - Establish a daily deposit process (cash and checks brought to the Clerk/Finance by a set time).
 - Train Ms. Jerrells on the existing invoicing and receipt process.

Metal Recycling, Tires, and Related Issues

The Board discussed:

- The current metal recycling contract paying substantially less per load than other counties;
- The need to collect any outstanding checks from the current metal vendor;
- Tire fee structure (\$5 car tire, \$7 with rim, \$9 semi tire);
- The possible acquisition of a tire shredder and repurposing tire machines from behind the EMS shop to remove rims before disposal.

Direction:

- Vice Chairman Storey to contact the metal vendor WC Mills regarding:
 - Next metal pickup; and
 - Delivery of any outstanding payment checks.
- Tim Johnson to evaluate and, if feasible, relocate a tire machine and integrate tire shredding into operations.

EMS and Fire Budget Discussion

EMS Current-Year Shortfall:

Fire/EMS leadership Chief Brown reported:

- Approximate \$1.2 million cash shortfall due to:
 - Under-collected EMS billing (\$200,000);
 - Delayed P.E.M.T. funds (\$196,000 expected);
 - Delayed FEMA reimbursements (\$300,000 range);
 - Lost or reduced wall-time payments from North Florida and Shands;
 - Removal of tower revenue to General Fund (\$20,000);
 - Unbudgeted workers' compensation backfill (\$80,000);
 - General increases in call volume and operating costs.

Fire Assessment – Commercial Rate:

- The Board discussed the proposed increase in commercial fire assessment from \$0.12/sq ft to \$0.23/sq ft.
- Concerns were raised about very large increases for major employers (e.g., lumber mills, carrot barns, large marinas), potentially resulting in fire assessments of \$15,000–\$20,000+ annually for single parcels.
- Commissioners expressed concern that such increases could force businesses out of the county.

Direction:

- Ms. Royal to model fire budgets at:
 - \$0.12/sq ft (current rate); and
 - A smaller increase (a few cents) short of \$0.23/sq ft;
- Compare impacts on:
 - Fire department budget balance; Residential vs. commercial burden.

Transportation (Road Department) Budget Discussion

Reported by Brenda:

- Estimated transportation revenues: \$2.3 million;
- Estimated expenditures: \$3.1 million;
- Shortfall: \$775,000.

The Board discussed:

- Keeping certain positions vacant (estimated savings of \$250,000 for five positions);
- Conducting a surplus equipment auction (old trucks, the EOC tractor-trailer, older boats and vehicles);
- Pursuing, in future budget years, a 1-cent gas tax or sales surtax for roads (not possible for this coming year due to statutory deadlines).

Direction:

- Road Department leadership and Clerk's office to:
 - Prepare a surplus list for auction;
 - Explore using a local auctioneer to minimize commission and maximize return.

General Fund and Constitutional Officers

Raises and Base Budgets:

- Brenda reported that all raises have been removed from department budgets other than amounts required to bring any remaining employees up to the \$15/hour minimum.
- Constitutional Officers' requested increases total approximately \$770,000 above last year's base budgets.

Board Discussion:

- Consensus that if county departments must operate at or below last year's levels, Constitutional Officers should also be held to their prior-year base budget amounts, with no net increase except where they adjust internally to meet \$15/hour within existing totals.
- The Board directed that FY 2026-27 General Fund projections be rebuilt assuming each Constitutional Officer's FY 2025-26 budget is the cap for FY 2026-27.

Direction:

Ms. Royal to:

- Recalculate General Fund under that assumption Identify remaining amounts needed, if any, to support EMS and Transportation.

Next Meeting

The Board agreed to schedule another Emergency Budget Meeting to review:

- Updated General Fund projections;
- Solid Waste models for hours/staffing and tipping fee revenue;
- Fire commercial assessment scenarios;
- Any new state transportation revenue estimates.

Emergency Budget Meeting set for: Date: Thursday, August 27, 2026, Time: 4:30 p.m.

ADJOURN

**Motion to adjourn made by Vice Chairman Jamie Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen.
Meeting adjourned.**

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.