Regular Meeting
Commission Board Room
Dixie County Courthouse
214 NE Hwy 351, Cross City, FL 32628
October 15, 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
Chairman Hatch, District 3, Chairman
Commissioner Stephenson, District 1
Daniel Wood, District 2
Vice-Chairman 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 – Not present
Attorney 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 and welcomed all attendees, thanking everyone for coming.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE TO THE AMERICAN FLAG

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

OPENING COMMENTS
Commissioner Stephenson: I'd like to make a statement before we get started, if I may. I feel better than I have in a long time. I got out the hospital last night about 11 o'clock. They finally figured out what been going on with me. My valve and all that is fine. I got a thyroid issue that makes you run wide open and then you crash. So I'm happy to know now that I've got a way to get it fixed. I got to get with a doctor to get medication to get That straight, so I'm feeling pretty good, guys. I mean, I had all those surgeries and still didn't know what the heck was going on, and it just kept getting worse. They finally figured it out last night. I'm glad to be here, and I appreciate all the prayers. And me and Monk (Mikel Gainey) have been running like wild Indians all afternoon trying to figure out about the crusher and stuff for the county.

APPROVAL OF COMMISSION MINUTES

Motion to approve the 09/14/2026 AI/Data Center Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Vice Chairman Storey.

Motion to approve the 09/14/2026 Final Budget Hearing Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Vice Chairman Storey.

Motion to approve the 09/14/2026 RM Minutes made by Commissioner Osteen. Seconded by Vice Chairman Storey.

Motion to approve the 10/01/2026 RM Minutes made by Vice Chairman Storey. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen.

VOUCHER APPROVAL

The board deferred consideration of vouchers while Finance Director Brenda Royal prepared to address them later.

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICERS/CITY OFFICIALS

Darbi Chaires, Supervisor of Elections, announced that early voting would run October 22–31, from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., except Sundays, when the office would be open 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Election Day is November 3. She said the voting equipment had passed its logic and accuracy test, with a representative from the Division of Elections present. Sample ballots and early-voting flyers were available.

Ms. Chaires then asked about the remaining half of her office's requisition funding. She said the office had received only half and that the election was 19 days away. With more than 50 poll workers to pay, she wanted to know when the remaining money would be available and whom she should contact.

Ms. Chaires described trying to obtain an answer by email and follow-up. She said she had been told that John would be made aware of the question, but, when she contacted John, he did not know the status and directed her to the clerk because the matter fell under the clerk's jurisdiction. Ms. Chaires then contacted Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham, who told her she was waiting for board approval. Ms. Chaires explained that her concern was not simply that the payment was divided; she needed a clear answer about the second payment and its timing so the office could plan for poll-worker payments.

During the exchange, Vice-Chairman Storey raised the county manager's role in communicating payment arrangements. His understanding, as discussed at the meeting, was that the county manager was supposed to notify the constitutional officers when their checks would be paid in two installments. Ms. Chaires confirmed that John Jenkins had contacted the offices about payment arrangements on previous occasions, including the previous month and at some point the prior year. She reiterated that the immediate problem was being passed between contacts without a clear payment date.

Chairman Hatch said the county had split payments in the past and apologized if Mrs. Chaires had not been notified. He said John would notify the constitutional officers if the county used this arrangement again. Chairman Hatch also confirmed that Clerk of Court Higginbotham's

office handled the payment process. Mrs. Higginbotham said she would contact Ms. Chaires when it was time for the next payment.

Outcome: No specific date or timeframe for payment of the remaining requisition funds was established in this discussion other than it would be handled by the end of the month. No motion was made on Ms. Chaires's request. The exchange recorded a concern about responsibility for notifying constitutional officers, as well as the lack of a definite answer on payment timing.

County financial condition and state response

The board continued discussing the county's cash-flow position. Commissioner Stephenson said the general fund was in deficit, which he estimated at a few million dollars, and referred to the possibility that the county might have to seek assistance from the state.

Attorney Watson read a response from the Office of the Chief Inspector General. The letter acknowledged concerns about the county's financial condition, referred the county to Florida statutes governing local-government financial emergencies, and identified the Department of Financial Services as a source of reporting information and general technical assistance. The letter stated that the Inspector General's office could not provide legal advice or direct financial support and would take no further action on the complaint.

Chairman Hatch explained that county representatives had asked the clerk's office and others to contact Tallahassee about the county's situation. He said October was historically a difficult month for county cash flow because revenue did not arrive evenly, and that the county had previously used a line of credit to bridge the period until revenue came in. He said he had discussed the situation with Senator Corey Simon, who recommended pursuing a line of credit. Commissioner Stephenson said that, when he had contacted Senator Simon previously, he understood that the county should provide a number so assistance could be considered. He also said he had spoken with SeaCoast Bank about a possible line of credit and had discussed comparing rates. Chairman Hatch responded that the county was not currently in a state of emergency and that a line of credit was the recommended option. Attorney Watson said the county had reviewed the statutory process but apparently had not reached the point where the state would intervene.

Municipal announcements and joint meetings

Ryan Fulford, **Cross City mayor**, gave the following announcements:

- Cross City trunk-or-treat: October 30 at 5:30 p.m. at Cross City Lumber.
- Veterans Day parade: November 11; lineup by 10:00 a.m., parade at 10:30 a.m., and speaking event at 11:00 a.m. at City Park.
- Florida Rural Economic Development Association event: November 17–19 at the Ocala World Equestrian Center. Ryan invited interested officials and others to attend.

Mayor Fulford asked when joint city council and county board meetings should resume. The board and mayor agreed to hold the next joint meeting on November 10 at 6:00 p.m. at the Courthouse in the Commission Boardroom. Ryan said he would coordinate with the city manager and distribute the meeting information. Chairman Hatch asked that the meeting be properly posted.

Mayor Fulford also raised a proposal to develop basketball and pickleball facilities in the park. The board agreed to place the proposal on the November 10 agenda. Members discussed whether tourism-related funds could be used. Attorney Watson and Kay McCallister said the funds were subject to coastal-area restrictions; Commissioner Stephenson questioned whether some park and recreation uses might qualify. Funding eligibility was not resolved at this meeting.

During this discussion, Commissioner Stephenson asked whether tourism funds could be used for a park near County Roads 351 and 349. Attorney Watson said the area was not coastal. The board agreed to bring the park proposal forward for discussion rather than decide the funding question at this point.

Mr. Jenkins asked Mayor Fulford if he has firefighter EMT or paramedic certification. Mr. Jenkins said the county had been trying to get assistance and asked the Mayor to consider filling out an application. The Mayor jokingly stated he had a couple days here and there and said he would look into the application.

Chairman Hatch said the meeting agenda was going to skip around a little bit due to speakers that needed to leave to attend Bear Growl.

CINDY BELLOT, LIBRARY DIRECTOR

Library summer-program report

Brenda Alexander reported on the library's summer program. She said the library held larger programs at the old high-school gym, with smaller programs at the library, and had worked with the school board to use the gym.

Gail Carter with Indigent Care introduced two students, Lilah Cheggeh and Braylnn Snedecker, who completed a sewing class and wore outfits they had made. Mrs. Carter described teaching the class and said the students had progressed from simple projects to complete outfits. Commissioners thanked Gail for working with the children.

Mrs. Alexander described a varied summer schedule, including emergency preparedness, fossil discovery, animals, Seminole history, crafts, cooking, cake decorating, art, beekeeping, sewing, and a Dr. Seuss-themed program. She said local organizations, churches, public offices, and community members sponsored bags of supplies and prizes that children received during the program.

Mrs. Alexander reported that 716 children and 172 parents, grandparents, and other adults attended summer activities. She also cited nearly 19,898 visits so far that year, nearly 9,000 active patrons, and roughly 18,000 checkouts. The library continued a Thursday "Read with Me" program both in person and on Facebook; Mrs. Alexander said the videos had received up to approximately 6,000 views.

Commissioner Stephenson praised the facility and staff, saying the library served people from other counties as well. Brenda thanked the board for its support and invited commissioners to participate in the reading program.

NIKIE WAITS – ROAD 2 REDEMPTION

Community events, toy drive, and former fire station

Mrs. Waites invited the public to a "Seat at the Table" Friendsgiving dinner on November 15, from 2:00 to 5:00 p.m. She described it as a community event for neighbors, people in recovery, and people who might not have family with whom to celebrate. She invited officials, service providers, churches, law enforcement, and community members to attend and bring a dish and a guest.

Mrs. Waites also described the Hands of Mercy toy drive. She said her church had set aside approximately **$2,300** to purchase toys and sought permission to place a toy-donation box and a box for suggesting families at the courthouse. She said she had received permission to place boxes at the Courthouse.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Storey to allow the boxes at the courthouse. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

Mrs. Waites asked for an update on Station 3. **Commissioner Stephenson** asked whether everything had been removed from the former fire station at the First District Community Building. **Chief Ferguson** said a few items remained.

Commissioner Stephenson requested that the remaining items be cleared so the facility could be made available for events. Mrs. Waites asked to arrange a walkthrough to assess needed repairs and plan ahead.

The facility was described as being beside the First District Community Building, with a paved parking lot, three roll-up doors, two bedrooms, two bathrooms, a full kitchen, and a three-bay garage. The air conditioning was running; cleaning was mentioned as a remaining need.

Chairman Hatch said Mrs. Waites should coordinate with **John Jenkins** regarding access and the walkthrough.

KATRINA VANAERNAM AND MELODY ANDERSON, DIXIE COUNTY ANTI-DRUG COALITION

Katrina VanAernam stated The Coalition celebrated 15 years this year and works in two areas: recovery education and prevention education. Its prevention work includes approximately 60 community strategies.

The Coalition served 20 peers during the quarter referenced and has a certified peer specialist on staff.

Melanie Anderson was recently hired as the prevention education staff member. The speaker noted her 16 years as the county tobacco specialist, her school SWAT involvement, and her community roles.
The Coalition plans to promote the Red Ribbon campaign message, "Be a Hero, Stay Drug Free," through October and November events. The homecoming parade theme is movie genres.

Mrs. VanAernam shared a homecoming schedule and information about October events and reported that the Coalition provides about 197 opportunities each year for community engagement.

Mrs. VanAernam emphasized the importance of positive community influences in helping young people stay drug-free and thanked the Board for its support.

MR. QUINCOSES – AI/DATA CENTER MORITORIUM RESQUEST

Resident **Andrew Quincoses**, of Old Town, addressed the proposed data-center moratorium. He said he had discussed the subject with **Chris McKenzie** and had adjusted his position. He said he remained concerned about data centers but believed the county should consider regulation rather than assume every facility would be identical.

Mr. Quincoses presented a draft from Levy County and discussed possible facility size, cooling methods, water and electricity use, noise, expansion, and the possibility that a project could be presented initially as a smaller facility and later expanded. He cited information from a University of Florida Law presentation and said further guidance for rural counties might be available in 2027. He offered to help the board research the issue without compensation.

Mr. Quincoses proposed a **one-year moratorium** while the county studied the issue and drafted regulations. He said a moratorium would not itself amount to approval of a data center and argued that it could deter developers from pursuing projects while the county worked on rules.

Attorney Watson and board discussion
Commissioner Stephenson said he was relying on the attorney to ensure that any county action was legally sound. **Attorney Watson** clarified that a moratorium could be considered, but said comprehensive-plan changes were restricted until **October 2027** under the timeline she associated with Senate Bill 180 and recent emergency declarations. She also said other counties, including Taylor County, were working on guidance and that there was more information in development.

Mr. Quincoses argued that the county should act while information was being developed. He said he was concerned that a project could be proposed and begin moving forward before the county had suitable regulations.

Chairman Hatch said the board should be cautious about drafting a moratorium before the county understood all the legal and regulatory issues. He argued that the county should not provide developers with a list of restrictions they might work around and said that, in his view, a data center could not currently be permitted on a property under the existing land-development rules without the matter coming before the county for review.

Chris McKenzie said a moratorium could invite legal challenges and argued that the county should complete land-development regulation work before publicly announcing a moratorium. He said the county could face litigation if the language were incomplete.
Mr. Quincoses disagreed with the view that a moratorium necessarily invited development or litigation. He said developers could instead choose another location and reiterated that a moratorium would give the county time to prepare.

Commissioner Stephenson said that announcing a moratorium could put the idea in front of developers who might not otherwise have considered the county. He compared the risk to other developments that began after the county attracted more attention. Chairman Hatch said he understood Mr. Quincoses' concerns but believed the board should examine any actual proposal and seek expert advice if one came forward.

Additional public speakers

- **Joey Lander**, identified as Dixie County Advocate, described a South Florida project involving a building originally used for content distribution that later functioned as a 10-megawatt data center. He said a local moratorium had not prevented the continued use of a pre-existing facility. He cautioned that data centers can emerge from other types of approved projects, making regulation difficult.
- **Cat Cheever, of Old Town**, said she understood both sides and believed data centers could have both positive and negative effects. She noted concern that a business could arrive under a different description and later operate as a data center.
- **Jerry Spire** said he favored considering how construction and equipment could be regulated. He discussed Bloom Energy, noise, cooling equipment, flood risk, the possibility that technology could become obsolete, and who would maintain or remove an unused building.
- **JJ Johnson** asked whether the county had already paused the possibility of a data center. Chairman Hatch and Commissioner Osteen said one could not currently be built without county action. JJ also raised cybersecurity concerns and offered to help the county. Chairman Hatch and Attorney Watson said the county had cybersecurity protection but could not disclose all security details publicly.
- **Ingrid Welch**, of Old Town, asked whether the county was working on regulatory language and said she wanted to preserve the county's natural resources. Chairman Hatch and Commissioner Stephenson said regulatory work was underway, though not a moratorium. Staff directed her to the Land Planning Agency process.
- **Jenny Welch**, of Old Town, asked how the public would be notified if a data center were proposed. Chairman Hatch and Attorney Watson described newspaper publication, mailed notices to affected property owners, and a posted sign. Jenny also asked how to follow agendas and was directed to the clerk's website.
- **Jerry Spire** later described nearby land-use concerns, including potential residential development and a proposed dirt-bike track. Chairman Hatch and Attorney Watson said certain uses could require a special exception and that adjacent property owners would receive notices.

Attorney Watson said a data center was not an expressly approved use under the existing land-development code and would likely require special permission and a public process. The discussion included a reminder that property owners within the affected notice area would receive mail and that a sign would be posted.

Chairman Hatch stated that if a data-center proposal came to the county his first call would be to Mr. Quincoses so Mr. Quincoses could review what was proposed and give his perspective. Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham told Mr. Quincoses that when the Chairman said if something came to him he would go to you, he should take that to heart because the Chairman means it.

Outcome on moratorium

Chairman Hatch asked whether a commissioner wanted to make a motion for a moratorium.

No motion was made and the board took no vote.

Commissioner Stephenson said he did not want to proceed until the legal details were settled. The discussion indicated continued work on land-development language and legal review but did not establish a moratorium or a formal task force.

KAY MCCALLISTER, TOURISM DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL

Kay McCallister presented three quotes for resurfacing the Dyals Park pickleball court:

- **Sports Service LLC:** approximately **$34,000** for a mat-court system, which Kay said the group did not prefer because flooding could damage it.
- **NIDY Sports Construction:** approximately **$21,240** for concrete repair, resurfacing, and repainting.
- **Coastal Courts:** approximately **$17,250** for concrete repair, resurfacing, repainting, and a fiberglass overlay.

Mrs. McCallister said the Coastal Courts quote was the lowest and was preferred by the pickleball group. She requested board approval to proceed.

- **Initial motion:** Commissioner Osteen moved to accept the Coastal Courts quote.
- **Seconded by:** Vice-Chairman Storey.
- **Discussion:** Vice-Chairman Storey asked whether funds were available. John Jenkins said there was money in the account. Mrs. McCallister said tourism-related money was subject to statutory limits. Members discussed whether the funds were coastal tourism funds, camping-fee funds, or part of the general fund. Brenda Royal said the bed-tax revenue went into the general fund and that Mrs. McCallister's budget was in the general fund; Mrs. McCallister distinguished that from camping-fee funds used for certain park locations.
- **Brenda Royal** clarified that Tourism Development Council (TDC) funds are accounted for through the county's **General Fund**. She explained that their use is subject to statutory requirements, including restrictions related to eligible tourism purposes and coastal areas. The Board discussed whether the pickleball-court work would qualify, but did not resolve that question during the discussion.

- **Further concern:** Commissioner Stephenson questioned the durability and safety of the fiberglass overlay. Mrs. McCallister said the quote described the overlay as a way to help prevent premature cracks, but she was not a construction specialist. Mrs. Higginbotham asked whether the work had been advertised and noted that a local business might provide the service.

Disposition: Jamie withdrew his second and the motion was withdrawn. **No contract award was approved.** Chairman Hatch asked staff to clarify the funding and advertising requirements and asked that the pickleball-court lights be checked.

KAREN VANAERNAM, DIXIE COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Not present

SCOTT NIOLET, SAVINACIOUS

Scott Niolet reported on public-assistance projects for storms **Debby, Milton, Idalia, and Helene**. He said the county had approximately **$10.01 million** in total projects, **$8.69 million obligated**, approximately **$1.4 million** still being processed, and approximately **$3.9 million**

funded to date. He said roughly **$4.1 million** in funding on obligated work remained outstanding.

Mr. Niolet explained that earlier advance-payment and reconciliation issues had been cleared, including an offset related to an earlier overpayment. He said the county could now request additional advances and had active requests for approximately **$2.5 million**. He said about **$130,000** in payments was being processed. A **$736,000 local-match waiver** for Debby and Helene remained pending with the governor's office.

Chairman Hatch asked Mr. Niolet to distribute the project graphics and present the status again at the next board meeting. Mr. Niolet agreed.

GREG BAILEY, NORTH FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Phil Bishop reported that Fire Station 6 at Horseshoe Beach was nearing completion. Most exterior work, grading, and sod were complete, with some interior work remaining. Power was on, but the facility did not yet have water. Phil said the town was working toward water service and expected its consultant's preliminary engineering report around **November 14**. He reported no significant changes on the sheriff's building, working waterfront, or other projects.

JOHN LOCKLEAR, LOCKLEAR AND ASSOCIATES

John Locklear, Locklear Associates, provided the following updates:

- McGriff Pass permits: Army Corps and DEP permit applications were expected to be submitted by October 31, 2026, on schedule with the original timeline.
- Dredging: Projects in Horseshoe and Suwannee were reported to be on schedule. Mr. Locklear said he had not heard of any concerns about completing them on time.
- Playground grant: The county had submitted a FRDAP grant application for playground equipment at D-TRAC. The exchange noted that the application deadline was the previous day.

Storm-debris removal grant:

Mr. Locklear said he was working with Commissioner Osteen on a National Fish and Wildlife Foundation grant for storm-debris removal. The potential work involved submerged or partly submerged debris around Rocky Creek and the Jena area. The place name "Jena" is unclear in the supplied transcript.

Commissioner Osteen noted that the grant covered waterways and discussed a waterway connection through Porpoise Creek to the river.

Mr. Locklear said the team had inspected the affected area by boat for about half a day with Commissioner Osteen's help. Drone footage was planned, though the exchange was uncertain whether it would be taken the next day or Monday. The grant application was due the following Friday, leaving a short turnaround.

Mr. Locklear thanked Commissioner Osteen for helping with the site visit and said he hoped the grant would fund debris removal. No motion or Board action was recorded in this update.

RAELYNN OSTEEN, SUWANNEE WATER AND SEWER

Not present

STEVE FREMEN, CODE ENFORCEMENT & VETERANS SERVICE OFFICER

Not present

MIKEL GAINEY, COUNTY ROAD SUPERINTENDENT

Equipment and road-rock processing

Commissioner Stephenson reported that a quote from **United Rental** for a one-month roller rental was still pending. The anticipated cost was approximately **$800–$900 per month**. Commissioner Stephenson favored a rough-drum vibratory roller to help break up road rock.

Commissioner Stephenson described several options under consideration: using a shaker table to separate usable rock; retrofitting existing machinery; repurposing older equipment; and borrowing steel wheels from another machine. Commissioner Stephenson also offered the county use of one of Jody's rock crushers, subject to repairs. A second crusher had a conveyor-belt problem.

Chairman Hatch suggested investigating whether a large propane tank—described as approximately **10,000 gallons**—could be fitted with an axle, filled with water for weight, and modified with angle iron to serve as a pulled roller. This was a design idea, not a purchase or approved project.

Vice-Chairman Storey discussed a related concept: mounting a roller on a front-end-loader frame, potentially adding a hydraulic valve for vibration. The participants also compared rollers with dozers for compacting rock.

Road conditions, staffing, and follow-up
The Board discussed the loss of a motor-grader operator to retirement. Members said some roads had rock that could be ripped and regraded, while other roads needed more material. They also noted that the high-water table and recent heavy rain were affecting road conditions.

Chairman Hatch asked **Commissioner Stephenson and the committee** to continue evaluating the options and develop a plan.

Chairman Hatch relayed a road complaint from **Stephen Petty**, whose road is near Dewey's place and may be in Commissioner Osteen's district. The complaint concerned rock spreading across the road; Chairman Hatch noted that heavy rain had further damaged road conditions. Another road complaint in Chairman Hatch's district was raised, **but the road name and details are unclear in the transcript.**

Motions and outcome: No formal motion or vote is recorded in this excerpt. The Board's direction was for Commissioner Stephenson and the committee to continue developing an equipment and road-maintenance plan; the United Rental quote remained outstanding.

TIM JOHNSON, SOLID WASTE DIRECTOR
Not present

LEON WRIGHT, BUILDING AND ZONING OFFICIAL

Not present

SCOTTY PENDARVIS, CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER

Not present

DARIAN BROWN, DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES

Chief Matt Ferguson was asked whether he had any items to bring before the Board. He indicated that he had no additional business to report.

Commissioner Stephenson described a recent ambulance ride to Gainesville and asked how many county ambulances were currently operating. Chief Ferguson indicated that four are running most days**.**

Commissioner Stephenson commended the two-person crew, describing them as professional and thorough, and said she felt well cared for and was transported promptly. She asked that her thanks be passed along.

Commissioner Stephenson only complaint was that the ambulance had no air conditioning. Chaiman Hatch responded that the issue would be addressed

GAIL CARTER, INDIGENT CARE

Mrs. Carter spoke earlier in the meeting.

JESSICA COOPER, COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT

Not present.

ANGIE CROWLEY, HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATOR

Not present.

JOHN JENKINS, COUNTY MANAGER- SEE REPORT

1. Request Board approval of Resolution 2026-50 Department of Health Fee Schedule change for FY 2027.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve Resolution 2026-50 Department of Health Fee Schedule change for FY 2027. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Storey. Board approved.

2. Request Board approval of the NCFRPC Agreement between Dixie County and the Planning Council for the Annual Monitoring of Hazardous Waste Generators FY 2027 in the amount of $2,717.00.

Motion by Commissioner Stephenson to approve the NCFRPC Agreement between Dixie County and the Planning Council for the Annual Monitoring of Hazardous Waste Generators FY 2027 in the amount of $2,717.00. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Storey. Board approved.

3. Request Board approval of the Locklear TWO for McGriff Pass Engineering / Design in the amount of $500,000.00.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve the Locklear TWO for McGriff Pass Engineering / Design in the amount of $500,000.00. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

4. Request Board approval of Sunshine Outdoors Services as lowest bid for the canal clean out on NE 241 St at $155.00 per hour based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve Sunshine Outdoors Services as lowest bid for the canal clean out on NE 241 St at $155.00 per hour based on SWTF recommendation. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

5. Request Board approval of SRM Concrete as the lowest bid for the pole barn footers in the amount of $820.00 based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion by Commissioner Stephenson to approve SRM Concrete as the lowest bid for the pole barn footers in the amount of $820.00 based on SWTF recommendation. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Storey. Board approved.

6. Request Board approval of Father & Sons Fence Supply as the lowest bid for the gates on the north side of the airport in the amount of $ 770.26 based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Storey to approve Father & Sons Fence Supply as the lowest bid for the gates on the north side of the airport in the amount of $ 770.26 based on SWTF recommendation. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

7. Request Board approval of Father & Sons Fence Supply as the lowest bid for the barbed wire on the north side fencing at the airport in the amount of $762.63 based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve Father & Sons Fence Supply as the lowest bid for the barbed wire on the north side fencing at the airport in the amount of $762.63 based on SWTF recommendation. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

8. Request Board approval to advertise for the CR 358/CR 357 culvert replacement based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to advertise for the CR 358/CR 357 culvert replacement based on SWTF recommendation. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

9. Request Board approval of the purchase of a bridge in the amount of $20,000.00 for a required canal crossing based on SWTF recommendation.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Storey to approve the purchase of a bridge in the amount of $20,000.00 for a required canal crossing based on SWTF recommendation. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

10. Request Board approval of the P0568 CPTAG (Community Planning Technical Assistance Grant) agreement in the amount of $75,000.00.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve the P0568 CPTAG (Community Planning Technical Assistance Grant) agreement in the amount of $75,000.00. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

11. Request Board approval of the Lincoln Dinner donation in the amount of $500.00 divided by 7 for a total per person of $71.43. (Five Commissioners, plus the County Manager & Assistant County Manager who will cover their own costs)

Motion by Vice-Chairman Storey to approve the Lincoln Dinner donation in the amount of $500.00 divided by 7 for a total per person of $71.43. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

DISCUSSION

Chairman Hatch said he had learned that day about a scheduling conflict with a **Canvassing Board Meeting** and that items had to be taken to **Ms. Chaires**. He said he could not attend the Lincoln Day Dinner because of the conflict and described the event as "basically a Republican" event. The Chairman stated that he had no objection to proceeding with the contribution, but wanted it understood publicly that he would not attend.

12. Request Board approval of the SHIP Release of Lien for Denise Foster who has sold the home before a year was out. We have received a check in the amount of $17,681.50 to be deposited back into SHIP fund.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Storey to approve the SHIP Release of Lien for Denise Foster who has sold the home before a year was out. A check received in the amount of $17,681.50 will be deposited back into SHIP fund. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

13. Request Board approval of the SHIP Rehab Reimbursement for Doris Warner in the amount of $24,106.00.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to approve the SHIP Rehab Reimbursement for Doris Warner in the amount of $24,106.00. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

14. Request Board approval to hold a Committee Assignment Workshop before the P.M. Meetings for the next few months. Meetings to be held at 4:30 p.m. prior the regular Board Meeting.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Storey to approve holding Committee Assignment Workshops prior to the P.M. Board Meetings. Seconded by Commissioner Stephenson. Board approved.

15. Request Board approval to lease the Old EMS building located at 12756 NE Hwy 351.

County Manager John Jenkins reported a prospective business, transcribed as Macks Belts LLC, had asked to lease the former EMS building near County Roads 349 and 351. The proposed first-year payment was stated as $20,000. A later increase in rent was discussed, but the amount and schedule are unclear in the transcript.

Commissioner Stephenson said the building was in his district and that he had wanted to use the property for a park. Given the county's financial position and the uncertainty about tourism funding for the park, he supported leasing the building to generate revenue.

Chairman Hatch stated **Attorney Watson** should prepare a lease and ensure the terms were legally appropriate. The discussion included stepped rent, insurance, utilities, and a triple-net arrangement under which the tenant would be responsible for specified costs and maintenance obligations.

Mr. Jenkins said he wanted to meet with the prospective tenant. **Commissioner Storey** said he was comfortable with staff and counsel completing the lease after review, without bringing it back to the board.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Storey to approve the lease of the Old EMS building located at 12756 NE Hwy 351 to Macks Belts LLC. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

Disposition: The board authorized proceeding with the lease, subject to attorney review and completion of the terms. The transcript does not show that a final lease was signed.

County office closing for the homecoming parade
Mr. Jenkins asked what time the county offices should close for the homecoming parade. Members discussed matching the city's schedule, which was noon.

Motion by Commissioner Osteen to close county offices at noon for the Homecoming Parade. Seconded by Vice-Chairman Storey. Board approved.

Additional coordination: Vice-Chairman Storey said he would pick up the county truck at **1:00 p.m.** and meet the commissioners at the courthouse staging area.

Information Items:

1. Reminder of Dixie County/HSB Workshop Monday, Nov 2, 2026, at BOCC meeting room 5:30 pm – 6:30 pm.

CHANA WATSON, COUNTY ATTORNEY

Ordinance 2026-03 Burn Ban 2nd Reading

The Board held the second and final reading of Dixie County Ordinance 2026-03, establishing an emergency burn ban and providing for activation, deactivation, enforcement, penalties, severability, codification, and an effective date.

Discussion: Attorney Watson explained that the ordinance would allow **County Manager John Jenkins** to call a burn ban when specified conditions arise, including when the fire service determines one is appropriate. Attorney Watson confirmed that the commissioners would be notified before the ban is activated and that the fire chief and fire department would be involved.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Storey to approve Ordinance 2026-03. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. Board approved.

BARBIE HIGGINBOTHAM, CLERK OF COURT

Clerk of Court Barbie Higginbotham reported that Stuart Wasson of Capital City Bank had contacted her that day. She planned to arrange a meeting with the bank for the following week.

Commissioner Stephenson recommended seeking the best available interest rate and said he and John Jenkins had spoken with **Sea Coast Bank,** which also offered a line of credit.

Chief Financial Officer Brenda Royal later noted that most county accounts are with Capital City Bank, which could make transfers between accounts easier if the line were held there. The discussion also addressed placing any funds drawn into the General Fund, subject to Board approval.

The Board discussed comparing rates and reviewing the terms after the bank meetings.

Motion by Vice-Chairman Storey to authorize the Clerk of Court, Barbie Higginbotham to pursue the line of credit. Seconded by Commissioner Osteen. **Board approved**

This authorized pursuing the option; no credit limit or final rate was set.

Mrs. Higginbotham said staff were continuing to work through the new financial system and manage the county's finances. She raised the previously discussed question of salaried versus hourly status for employees but said they were continuing under the current arrangement.

Chairman Hatch described October as a challenging cash-flow period because tax revenues arrive at different times. He said **John Jenkins** would begin meeting weekly with staff to review bills and available options. The Board also discussed committee-assignment meetings as a way to keep commissioners informed

BRENDA ROYAL, CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER

Brenda Royal discussed the new audit firm, identified in the exchange as James Moore. She described the work as a substantial mid-year undertaking involving the county and its constitutional officers and praised the firm's cooperation and thorough approach.

Ms. Royal said the office is open to the public and welcomed residents to come in and discuss concerns.

Board members thanked staff for their diligence in obtaining a prompt response from the Governor's Office on a previously discussed matter.

COUNTY COMMISSION ITEMS

Vice-Chairman Storey told County Manager **John Jenkins** that he wanted to schedule a time the following week to talk privately. Jamie said he had not yet had time to do so, had a lot on his mind, and had been receiving significant criticism from the community in recent months. He said he wanted to discuss the matter directly with Mr. Jenkins and did not want to blindside him by bringing it up unexpectedly in a future meeting.

Commissioner Stephenson said he and Jamie had taken John to the dump area and shown him items that might be sold to raise revenue. He mentioned a grill, truck side rails, chairs, and other items that appeared usable. He suggested holding a sale periodically.

Commissioner Stephenson also discussed the county's scrap-metal revenue and said he had checked with a location in Baldwin about the potential value of hauling material there. He suggested the county might receive more if it transported the material itself rather than relying on another party to haul it. The figures in this portion of the transcript are unclear and should be verified before being recorded as exact amounts.

Commissioner Stephenson: audit questions and financial accountability
Commissioner Stephenson said residents had asked him about the additional audit-related service. He asked whether the county should already be providing the material the auditor needed and why additional services were being paid for.

Ms. Royal explained that the additional service was for areas such as grants and fixed assets and was being provided through the audit firm as work outside the basic contract. She said it provided additional capacity the county did not currently have.

Commissioner Stephenson said he wanted the process and costs to be transparent so residents could understand the county's finances. He said the county had significant financial and infrastructure needs and that the county had to acknowledge its responsibility for the situation and work to correct it.

Commissioner Stephenson also commented on proposals to reduce or eliminate property taxes. He said county services, including ambulance service, fire protection, and roads, would still need funding and cautioned that replacing property taxes with assessments could shift costs to residents with fewer resources.

Brenda Royal: budget policy
Ms. Royal reiterated that the board's decision requiring funds to operate within their own revenue was a significant departure from past practice. She said the general fund had transferred approximately **$5.4 million over about seven years** to balance other funds and that the money was no longer available to support general-fund obligations. *(Approximately*

Commissioner Osteen: property and grant
David said county staff had accompanied him to a property and building acquired through a grant that was currently losing money. He said **Bobby Crosby** was aware of the situation and would work with the team on possible ways to generate revenue from the property. David said they would continue exchanging information and develop options.

Commissioner Stephenson and Commissioner Osteen: Gornto Springs
Commissioner Stephenson said the cleanup at Gornto Springs had improved but that the area near the entrance gate still needed attention. Commissioner Osteen said painting and cleanup were underway and that someone completing community-service hours was pressure-washing the area. Commissioner Stephenson said the entrance remained a concern.

Chairman Hatch suggested that people needing community-service hours be directed to the county manager's office so they could help with appropriate maintenance work. Commissioner Osteen said there was painting work available.

Chairman Hatch: closing remarks

Chairman Hatch thanked staff and commissioners for holding expenses close during the difficult October budget period. He said the board had made major changes and that more work remained.

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND CONCERNS

Chairman Hatch asked whether anyone in the room or on the phone wished to make additional public comments. No further speakers were identified.

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.