

Liberty County, FL

Liberty County Board of County Commissioners - Regular Monthly Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, August 7, 2025 at 6:00 pm

ZOOM LINK AND CALL IN NUMBER

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82401993286?pwd=6H4AUJhJu0Xka0VKr4ZVvop4Cuo9pM.1>

Meeting ID: 824 0199 3286

Passcode: 880191

One tap mobile

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Dial by your location

• +1 305 224 1968 US

1. Call to Order

Minutes:

- Chairman Dewayne Branch called the regular meeting to order in person and via zoom at 6:00 P.M. Present at the meeting were Commissioners Hannah Causseaux, Jim Johnson, Doyle Brown, Derrick Arnold, Clerk Jace Ford and Deputy Clerk Kaly Barfield.

2. Invocation

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Awards and Recognitions

5. Audience Concerns

Minutes:

- Ben Naselius of Tall Timbers provided an update on their conservation work. Tall Timbers, a research station and land conservancy, recently secured a five-year, \$25 million USDA grant to support land management assistance for landowners with 10 or more acres. He also highlighted a partnership with the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation to preserve key land connections in the Big Bend region, with upcoming outreach efforts through media and direct mail. Handouts with program details were distributed.
- Fran Davis raised concern about Waste Pro leaving piles of trash, including plastics, paper, batteries, and glass, near the boat landing for two weeks in a row, creating safety and access issues. Responsibility for cleanup and accountability with Waste Pro management was questioned. Additionally, an update was given regarding the Corps of Engineers' upcoming public meeting on dredging the Apalachicola River. Local stakeholders support dredging if the spoils are used to stabilize eroding riverbanks, though questions remain on how stabilization will be achieved. Issues with channel markers, slough blockages, and erosion were also discussed, with calls for more consistent maintenance by

COUNTY DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Monthly Department Briefing

- Brian Eddins – Fire Control Coordinator
 - Brian discussed a first responder class is beginning with all four volunteer fire departments, followed by a Fire I class taught at no cost. Sumatra will host a Fire Prevention Fun Day at Sumatra Assembly of God Church on Saturday with activities and food. Chiefs' meetings have resumed and will be held the last Thursday of each month at the EOC until station meeting rooms are available. Lastly, a request was made to add to the agenda permission to negotiate (not purchase) for a 2009 International fire truck in good condition, priced at \$84,000 and including equipment valued around \$40,000.
- Marie Arick – Extension Director
 - Marie discussed that a proposal to take five students to Washington, D.C. next March has been accepted. Plans are underway, and fundraising efforts will be conducted to support the trip.
- Tommy Duggar Jr – Recreation Director
 - Tommy asked the board about an easement. Discussion was held regarding a possible easement request through Veterans Park. It was noted that the property is owned by the State of Florida under a 99-year lease, which may limit the county's ability to grant an easement. Further review of the lease terms is needed before any decision can be made.
 - Commissioner Dewayne Branch recognized and thanked Tommy Dugger Jr. for hosting a cookout for the Road Department and county staff, noting his efforts were appreciated.
- Melissa Peddie – Ambulance Director
 - Melissa was not in attendance.
 - Commissioner Branch, on behalf of Melissa, provided an update on the EMS building project. The current design remains over budget by approximately \$160,000 despite reductions, and further redesign work is underway to bring costs within budget. Funding options, including potential grants, are being explored, with possible updates expected within three to six months. Due to rising construction costs, the goal is to begin the project as soon as feasible while keeping the option to add back removed features if additional funding becomes available.
- Cole Maloy – Solid Waste Director
 - No Business
- Boo Bryant – Road and Bridge Superintendent
 - Boo Bryant led a discussion on road department issues, including the use of reclaimed materials for road maintenance and cost savings. Clerk Ford, County Attorney Hosford, and Commissioners Doyle and Branch also contributed to the discussion. Concerns were raised about funding, the role of outside assistance for projects, and whether county resources might be better directed toward lobbyist support to secure additional funding
- Monica Welles – Transit Director
 - Monica Welles reported that rural funding has been reduced, and further discussions will take place at a September meeting she cannot attend. She noted a potential opportunity to apply for a \$7 million TD grant, with the possibility of submitting a proposal on a short timeline focused on creating a local route to serve community needs. Monica requested direction from the board and stated that Melissa would be available to assist during her absence.
- Katie Kellett – Housing Director
 - Not in attendance.
- Ben Guthrie – Emergency Management Director

- No business.
- Allison Maloy – Grants and Special Projects Coordinator
 - Allison discussed the CBDGR grant program for infrastructure improvements. She noted the potential opportunity to apply those funds toward improvements at the boat ramp, citing damage and flooding issues caused by last year’s storm and the resulting rise in river levels.
- County Engineer - Dewberry
 - No business.

6. Motion to Amend Agenda

Minutes:

- Motion to amend the agenda to include Ochlockonee Bridge repair change order, Culpepper change order on the jail project and Brian Eddins' pumper truck discussion made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

7. Adoption of the Agenda

Minutes:

- Motion to adopt the agenda made by Commissioner Causseaux, seconded by Commissioner Johnson. Motion Carried.

8. Motion to approve consent items

Minutes:

- Motion to approve consent items made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

CONSENT ITEMS

9. Approve previous month's board minutes
10. Approve Clerk to pay the bills
11. Letters of Support
12. Human Resource Management
13. Next month meeting schedule
14. Georgia Pacific - Rental Fee
15. Parade Dates and Routes
16. CR 67 SCOP Phase I Supplemental Agreement
17. CR 67 SCOP Phase I Resolution
18. CR 67 SCOP Phase II Supplemental Agreement
19. CR 67 SCOP Phase II Resolution
20. Sumatra Voting Precincts

INDIVIDUAL ACTION ITEMS

21. Value Adjustment Board - Member Selection

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford discussed the Ochlockonee Bridge repair change order. He explained that the approach slab leading to one of the bridges has been closed. Since there is an ongoing project with DOT, they have allowed the county to incorporate this repair into the larger project. This change order, in the amount of \$28,500, adds the additional repair to the current project and prevents the county from having to cover the cost out of pocket. Motion to approve Change Order for \$28,500 made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.
- Brock Gholston presented Change Orders #9 and #10 for the jail project. A motion to approve Change Orders #9 and #10 was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.
- The board authorized Brian Eddins to negotiate the purchase of a used fire truck up to \$84,995. Motion made by Commissioner Causseaux, seconded by Commissioner Johnson. Motion Carried.
- Clerk Ford noted that the School Board has already selected its representatives, Boo Morris and Mitch Willis, both continuing from previous service. A motion was made by Commissioner Causseaux, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, to appoint Commissioners Brown and Arnold to the Value Adjustment Board, with Commissioner Brown serving as Chairman; motion carried. The Board also reappointed Patricia Whitfield as the citizen representative with a homestead exemption, on a motion by Commissioner Causseaux, seconded by Commissioner Johnson; motion carried.

22. Estiffanulga Boat Ramp Design - Dewberry

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford discussed a change order to the Estiffanulga Boat Ramp design based on feedback received from FWC. FWC requested that Dewberry make revisions to the design, resulting in additional work outside the original scope. The change order reflects payment for this additional design work, and Board approval was requested. Motion to approve made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

23. Liberty County Jail - Brock Gholston

Minutes:

- The motion to approve Change Order #9 was made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

24. CR 67 Phase IV SCOP Design – Dewberry Task Order

Minutes:

- Chairman Branch announced CR 67 Phase IV SCOP Design will be tabled to next meeting.

25. Health Insurance Quote - Lisa Shuler

Minutes:

- Lisa Shuler reported a 4.42% insurance increase. Motion to accept the increase was made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold; motion carried. Lisa Shuler and Clerk Ford noted insurance representatives will be at the Civic Center on August 14 for discussions and enrollment.

26. Proposed Millage Rate

Minutes:

- Jace Ford reviewed the resolution included in the board package, setting the proposed millage rate at 9.3380 mills in accordance with the TRIM process and compliance deadlines. He explained that this reflects the Board's intent to remain essentially at 10 mills, minus the fire tax, which results in the adjusted rate of 9.338 mills. Motion to approve Resolution 2025-23 made by Commissioner Causseaux, seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion Carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

27. Dewayne Branch, Chairman - District 1

Minutes:

- Commissioner Branch noted positive feedback on recent road work. He reported that a meeting with the contractor regarding the Rock Bluff Precinct/Community Center is scheduled for August 12, after which further updates will be available. He also stated that the Department of Commerce has finalized changes to the grant by removing certain amenities, such as the basketball court, allowing the project to move forward with updated pricing.

28. Hannah Causseaux, Commissioner - District 2

Minutes:

- No business.

29. Jim Johnson, Commissioner - District 3

Minutes:

- Commissioner Johnson noted concerns regarding past engineering work, particularly at the Estiffanulga Boat Ramp, citing design issues that make loading and unloading boats difficult. He encouraged the Board to consult with surrounding counties to review which engineers they use and what projects have been successfully completed, as he feels Liberty County may have been shorted in comparison. He expressed frustration that nearby counties have received improved facilities, such as floating docks, while Liberty has not.

30. Doyle Brown, Vice Chairman - District 4

Minutes:

- No business.

31. Derrick Arnold, Commissioner - District 5

Minutes:

- Commissioner Arnold reported driving around with Boo earlier in the week to review road conditions. He also joined Jace and Boo in meeting the new prison warden, noting there may be an opportunity to receive help from inmates.

32. Ken Hosford, County Attorney

Minutes:

- County Attorney Hosford reviewed county ordinances dating back to 1982 regarding dirt sales and grading services, noting Chapter 125 authorizes such services but requires cost recovery without profit or loss, and equal access for all citizens. He explained how true cost per load should be calculated, including labor, fuel, depreciation, and equipment expenses, and questioned whether the county is currently recovering full costs. Commissioners discussed misuse of dirt deliveries, with concerns that materials are being used for purposes beyond driveways and final access roads. The Board agreed that dirt use should be restricted to private driveways/egress points and directed staff to review costs and the current ordinance to ensure compliance and proper allocation.

33. Dusty Arnold, Liberty County Sheriff

Minutes:

- No business.

34. Jace Ford, Liberty County Clerk of Court and Clerk to the Board

Minutes:

- No business.

35. Motion to Adjourn

Minutes:

- Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Causseaux.
Motion Carried.

36. Signature

Florida Statute 125.001 requires that due public notice be given of all regular meetings of the Board of County Commissioners of a County in the State of Florida. Florida Statute 286.0105 requires that notices of any meeting or hearing, if a meeting or hearing is required, must include the following language, "if a person decides to appeal any decision made by the board, agency or commission with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing he will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he may need to insure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based."