

Liberty County, FL

# Liberty County Board of County Commissioners - Regular Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, October 9, 2025 at 6:00 pm

## ZOOM LINK AND CALL IN NUMBER

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87177756477?pwd=8bnssUU1j8sr3wrtLQsbp6iVBaeFmA.1>

Meeting ID: 871 7775 6477

Passcode: 161217

One tap mobile

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### 1. Call to Order

#### Minutes:

- Chairman Dewayne Branch called the regular meeting to order in person and via zoom at 6:20 P.M. Present at the meeting were Commissioners Hannah Causseaux, Jim Johnson, Doyle Brown, Derrick Arnold, County Attorney Ken Hosford, Clerk Jace Ford and Deputy Clerk Dillan DeLoach.

### 2. Invocation

### 3. Pledge of Allegiance

### 4. Awards and Recognitions

#### Minutes:

- Katie Thomley, Housing Director, was recognized for her 24 years of service to Liberty County and congratulated on her retirement.
- Tommy Duggar, Recreation Department, was acknowledged for his many years of service and upcoming retirement at the end of the month. Mr. Duggar was present at the meeting and thanked the Board for their support.
- Pat Alfonso, Road Department, was honored for her 26 years of dedicated service and will be retiring at the end of the month.
- Shellie King, Extension Office, was recognized for her 25 years of service to the County and her retirement.

### 5. Audience Concerns

#### Minutes:

- Fran Davis raised concern about the vandalism of the memorial bench for Mr. Anders before Labor Day, noting community concern and confusion over replacement efforts. Mrs. Davis stated the issue needs to be addressed to determine how replacements or donations should be handled. She also noted the playground equipment at Estiffanulga boat ramp has mold and suggested using community service labor to power wash and clean the area.

## COUNTY DEPARTMENT REPORTS

### Monthly Department Briefing

- Brian Eddins – Fire Control Coordinator
  - Commissioner Branch asked about an incident he had received calls about, and Mr. Brian Eddins reported on it. Mr. Eddins stated that an Estiffanulga Fire Department member responded without authorization to a Sumatra fire call using a department vehicle. The vehicle was reportedly driven recklessly on rough terrain and may have been damaged. After learning of the issue, Mr. Eddins confirmed the truck required servicing and ordered it out of service pending inspection. The Sheriff’s Office was notified, and the Hosford and Bristol departments are covering calls for Estiffanulga until the matter is resolved. Further disciplinary action will be considered at the next meeting.
- Marie Arick – Extension Director
  - No business
- Tommy Duggar Jr – Recreation Director
  - Tommy expressed his gratitude to everyone for the opportunity to work with them.
- Melissa Peddie – Ambulance Director
  - Melissa reported that they get contacted several times yearly requesting assistance with PAC testing. In the past, the department has helped without reimbursement; however, due to staff time and budget impact, Melissa advised that compensation would now be required. PAC agreed to pay through invoicing, rather than a lump sum check. The next PAC test is scheduled for December. Melissa asked for Board approval to continue assisting with the testing under this new reimbursement arrangement.
- Cole Maloy – Solid Waste Director
  - No Business
- Boo Bryant – Road and Bridge Superintendent
  - Boo reported that, after contacting surrounding counties, most do not provide similar dirt sales or delivery services. He explained that the current cost to the County for labor and fuel alone is approximately \$99.25 per load, with total expenses including wear and tear estimated at around \$140–\$150 per load. He also asked that the Board re-evaluate and update the existing ordinance related to private dirt sales to clarify procedures and ensure consistency among staff handling payments and delivery coordination. Chairman Branch agreed that all departments and personnel involved should follow the same documented process to maintain accountability and fairness in how dirt requests are managed and billed.
- Monica Welles – Transit Director
  - Monica stated that interviews for the transit opening will begin on October 16th.
- Katie Kellett – Housing Director
  - Not in attendance.
- Ben Guthrie – Emergency Management Director
  - No business
- Kaly Barfield – Grants and Special Projects Coordinator

- Kaly introduced herself in her new position with the Grants Department and thanked everyone for their patience as she transitions into the role. She reported the following project updates:
  - The County received \$650,000 in funding for the EMS Project.
  - Work has begun on the Rock Bluff Community Project this week.
  - The Veterans Park project agreement has been signed.
  - Hwy 67 is about 70% complete, with completion expected by November 28.
- Dewberry - County Engineer
  - On the agenda

## 6. Motion to Amend Agenda

### Minutes:

- Motion to amend the agenda to include a discussion with Justin Ford regarding Dewberry/Webber's proposed work on the Veterans Park Railroad made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion Carried.

## 7. Adoption of the Agenda

### Minutes:

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

## CONSENT ITEMS

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

## 8. Motion to Approve Board Minutes

### Minutes:

Motion to approve last months board minutes made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

9. Motion for the Clerk to pay the bills
10. Letters of Support
11. Next month meeting schedule
12. 911 - Fiscally Constrained Funds & DataMark agreement
13. BFBSA VE - Fee Proposal
14. Melissa Peddie - New EMS supply contract
15. Rachel Bryant - Core Contract
16. New EMS Building Contract
17. Transit building renovation bids
18. Sheriff's Office Budget Amendment
19. FY 2025-2026 Budget Resolution

## ACTION ITEMS

## 20. VFW - Request to honor Mr. Johnny Eubanks

### Minutes:

- Woody Stewart, representing the Apalachicola Valley Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW), addressed the Board to request that the West Auditorium of the Civic Center be named in honor of Mr. Johnny Eubanks. Mr. Stewart noted that Mr. Eubanks has served 54 consecutive years as a Veteran Service Officer, assisting countless veterans and their families, as well as contributing significantly to the county. Among his contributions, Mr. Eubanks personally funded and installed the flagpoles at both the Civic Center and Veterans Park, which the VFW continues to maintain. The proposal includes placing professionally made metal plaques reading “Johnny Eubanks Auditorium” beside the double doors of the West Auditorium. The plaques will be modest in size, aesthetically appropriate, and installed by Mr. Roger Reddick, who also built the Civic Center’s veterans display case. Mr. Stewart emphasized that the project would come at no cost to the County and that the veterans group would handle all expenses. He also stated that the request is intended as a meaningful recognition of Mr. Eubanks’ decades of service to veterans and the community. Motion to approve made by Commissioner Arnold, seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion Carried.

## 21. Liberty County Chamber of Commerce - EDC proposal

### Minutes:

- Mike Stewart addressed the Board on behalf of the Liberty County Chamber of Commerce to provide an update on the newly formed Economic Development Council (EDC). He explained that the EDC was created to support and advance local business growth, job creation, and economic investment while preserving the county’s rural character. The EDC operates as a subset of the Chamber of Commerce and will work closely with the Board of County Commissioners to identify opportunities, recommend strategies, and coordinate efforts that strengthen the local economy. Mr. Stewart noted that the EDC’s mission is to assist county leadership by focusing on attracting and retaining businesses, supporting small business development, improving workforce readiness, and promoting the county’s assets. He emphasized that the EDC will act as an advisory body only and bring recommendations to the Board for approval. Commissioner Brown will serve as the Board’s representative, and Clerk of Court Jace will also participate. Mr. Stewart introduced Jennifer Conley, CEO of Florida’s Great Northwest, who described her organization’s role in marketing and recruiting businesses across Northwest Florida. She highlighted that Liberty County’s membership connects it directly to regional economic recruitment efforts and access to new investment opportunities. Richard Williams also spoke, emphasizing the importance of having a local team prepared to respond quickly to potential business prospects and provide technical assistance. He noted that the EDC will strengthen communication between local, regional, and state partners and that all decisions will remain with the County Commission. Discussion followed regarding potential impacts of statewide tax policy changes, with assurance that fiscally constrained counties like Liberty will be protected. The Board expressed support for the EDC’s efforts to attract appropriate business and diversify the local economy. No action taken

## 22. Apalachicola Dredging Resolution

Resolution #33

### Minutes:

- Jim McClellan, addressed the Board to discuss a proposed resolution concerning river dredging and restoration along the Apalachicola River system. He thanked Commissioner Arnold and Mrs. Fran Davis for representing Liberty County on the coalition board and explained that the six riparian counties are working together to ensure the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers conducts any future dredging responsibly and with local input. Mr. McClellan clarified that the coalition supports dredging as necessary to restore navigation and remove excess sand from the river, but emphasized that past dredging practices caused significant environmental and navigational damage. The resolution requests that the counties have a seat at the table with the Corps to discuss plans for sand disposal, environmental protection, and restoration before any dredging begins. The goal is to ensure sand is removed from the floodplain rather than piled along sandbars, which previously led to sediment buildup and creek blockage. He noted that dredging, when done correctly, could help restore natural water flow and improve the overall health of the river system. The coalition is also seeking to have the Apalachicola River recognized for full federal funding, similar to the Flint and Chattahoochee Rivers, which would reduce local financial burden. Commissioners and residents discussed local erosion concerns, marking submerged rock areas near Ocheesee Landing, and opportunities to use dredged material to repair eroded riverbanks. Several members expressed support for moving forward, emphasizing the need for accountability, environmental care, and coordination among the six counties. Mr. McClellan encouraged the Board to approve the resolution, joining Calhoun and Gadsden Counties, which have already passed it. He stated that this cooperation is a necessary step to protect both navigation and the environment while holding the Corps to responsible practices. Motion to approve Resolution made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

## 23. Melissa Peddie - EMS Billing Contract

### Minutes:

- Melissa Peddie received an EMS call and will be moved on to the next meeting.

## 24. Rockbluff Community Center - Change Order

### Minutes:

- Jace Ford discussed the Rock Bluff Community project change order. It was noted that the change order was received late and not included in the meeting packet. The change involves removing the paved parking lot from the project due to previous scope reductions needed to stay within budget. The omission was an oversight when the contract was prepared. Since the documentation was not received in time for review, the Board agreed to place the change order on the November agenda for consideration. No action taken by BOCC.

## 25. Dewberry - CR 67

### Minutes:

- Justin Ford discussed two Dewberry task orders for the design of Highway 67 improvements, covering two phases from FH 13 to the Franklin County line (approximately eight miles). It was clarified that the approval is for design work only, as construction funding will be addressed separately once applications are announced in the spring. A motion to approve was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

## 26. Commissioner Johnson - Bristol Boat Ramp

### Minutes:

- Commissioner Johnson discussed this item during the workshop meeting at 5:00 PM. No action was taken.

## 27. Human Resource Management

### Minutes:

- The Board discussed advertising for several new and replacement positions, including:
  - A SHIP/Building Technician for the Building Department.
  - A recreation support position to assist with duties following the retirement of Tommy. It was agreed to advertise the recreation position at minimum wage, with the exact department placement to be determined by the Board. Current vacancies for Shelley, Bruce, and Tommy were also noted. During the discussion, the Board considered whether the new recreation employee should be placed under Road and Bridge (Boo) or Building and Maintenance (Joe). It was noted that Road and Bridge has more equipment and resources to manage parks and grounds, while Building and Maintenance focuses on facilities. After discussion, the Board agreed the position should be placed under Road and Bridge to oversee mowing and park maintenance. A motion to advertise the positions and assign the new recreation position under Road and Bridge was made by Commissioner Causseaux, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, and carried unanimously. Motion carried.

## DISCUSSION ITEMS

## 28. Dewayne Branch, Commissioner - District 1

### Minutes:

- No business.

## 29. Hannah Causseaux, Chairwoman - District 2

### Minutes:

- No business.

## 30. Jim Johnson, Vice Chairman - District 3

### Minutes:

- No business.

**31. Doyle Brown, Commissioner - District 4**

**Minutes:**

- No business.

**32. Derrick Arnold, Commissioner - District 5**

**Minutes:**

- No business.

**33. Ken Hosford, County Attorney**

**Minutes:**

- No business.

**34. Dusty Arnold, Liberty County Sheriff**

**Minutes:**

- No business.

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

**Minutes:**

- Clerk Ford filled in for Melissa, who had to leave early. He explained that Melissa is working on transitioning from the current EMS billing company to a new one. The change is expected to improve the collection rate and increase revenue. However, because this involves entering into a new contract, the matter was brought before the Board for approval. Motion to approve the contact change made by Commissioner Arnold, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

**36. Motion to Adjourn**

**37. 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."**