

Liberty County, FL

Liberty County Board of County Commissioners - Regular Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, December 4, 2025 at 6:00 pm

Zoom Link and Call in Numbers

Topic: Liberty County BOCC - Regular Meeting

Time: Dec 4, 2025 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89580515951?pwd=a2kdPZrC3aPGCGdat1mGxSOa6Qj96b.1>

Meeting ID: 895 8051 5951

Passcode: 212134

One tap mobile

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+19292056099,,89580515951#,,,,*212134# US (New York)

Join instructions

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meetings/89580515951/>

[invitations?signature=jkzaRsDzyFVDcKYonXcAGd4SSTEpG7IFx_7X7vKC4M4](https://us02web.zoom.us/join/89580515951?signature=jkzaRsDzyFVDcKYonXcAGd4SSTEpG7IFx_7X7vKC4M4)

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, Clerk Jace Ford, and Deputy Clerk Dillan DeLoach.

2. Invocation

Minutes:

- Invocation was led by Brett Phillips.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes:

- Pledge of Allegiance was led by Deputy Bruce Smith

4. Awards and Recognitions

Minutes:

- Mrs. Kathy Browns recognition will be moved to the next meeting date since she

was out of town.

5. Audience Concerns

Minutes:

- Richard Clark addressed the board regarding a fire on November 15th, 2025, at a neighbor's property. He read a neighbor's letter expressing frustration with the Samantha Fire Department's delayed response. It took over 30 minutes for the department to arrive, and their equipment was nonfunctional. Clark criticized firefighter Bill Robinson for his unprofessional behavior, including shouting insults and making inappropriate comments about another individual in front of children. He also noted that the fire department failed to assist with smoke inhalation and told residents to go to the ER instead. Clark concluded that, based on this experience, he would prefer to rely on community members rather than the fire department in future emergencies. He submitted additional letters from other concerned citizens.
- Ambulance Director Melissa Peddie stated that Fire Chief Bill has always been professional and did not act out of character during the incident. She reported that multiple witnesses, including Mr. Danny, confirmed Bill remained calm and that firefighters were confronted several times at the scene. She noted the "halo law" requires individuals to maintain distance when instructed, and violations may result in charges. Ms. Peddie stated that Mr. Mabry, who has a trespass notice from the Fire Department, refused to step back, became confrontational, threatened Bill, and initiated a physical altercation. She added that additional individuals also became involved. A witness reported hearing profanity but could not determine who used it, and affirmed Bill had always been polite in past interactions. She emphasized that volunteer firefighters should not be assaulted or harassed while performing their duties and stated charges will be pursued if this continues. She noted ongoing issues with the same individuals, which appear retaliatory, and confirmed the case has been sent to the State Attorney's Office. She requested Board guidance if these incidents persist.
- There were no board member comments.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Monthly Department Briefing

- Brian Eddins – Fire Control Coordinator
 - They have moved the new fire truck down to Sumatra.
- Marie Arick – Extension Director
 - None
- Deanna Bryant – Recreation Director
 - Not in attendance.
- Melissa Peddie – Ambulance Director
 - None
- Cole Maloy – Solid Waste Director
 - None
- Boo Bryant – Road and Bridge Superintendent
 - Boo Bryant reported that crews are currently focused on building roads, and county trucks

are busy. Private dirt work is on hold, though tickets are being collected and will be addressed as time allows. Crews are trying to complete small tasks in the afternoons, including grading and delivering a few loads as needed. Mulching continues on Season 7, with efforts spread throughout the county. Mr. Bryant noted there may be calls regarding Larkin's Road, as residents were requesting assistance on-site; he instructed the crew not to leave until the issue was resolved and notified individuals to use an alternate route.

- Monica Welles – Transit Director
 - On the agenda
- Holly Shuler – Building Department
 - None
- Ben Guthrie – Emergency Management Director
 - On the agenda
- Kaly Barfield – Grants and Special Projects Coordinator
 - "It's all good!"
- Dewberry - County Engineer
 - Noah Byler reported that minor punch-list items were identified during the recent walkthrough and that shoulder damage from heavy rain has been addressed with the contractor.
 - He informed the Board that the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Grant is open and can fund sidewalks, multi-use paths, or paved shoulders/bike lanes. A resolution will be needed in January, and staff should submit project location ideas before Christmas. Suggested locations included:
 - Sidewalk from Red light to Bristol boat ramp
 - Sidewalk connections around the high school
 - Replacing former walking paths and amenities at Rock Bluff
 - Discussion also included the possibility of relocating a pole barn from the old voting precinct if feasible.
 - A culvert concern on Russell Road was raised; the Engineer will follow up as the project remains open.

6. Motion to Amend Agenda

Minutes:

- A motion was made to amend the agenda for Ben Guthrie to explain the 911 circuits by by Commisioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.
- Mr. Ben reported that the 911 circuits must be relocated due to the opening of the new jail. Because the existing contract is based on location, it has been redrawn to reflect the new site. As part of this change, two connections will be eliminated, resulting in a reduction of the monthly circuit costs by approximately half. Mr. Ben further explained that the current contract is within a five-year window and is expiring at this time. The proposed action is a change order to relocate the circuits and continue service at the new jail location for the next 12 months, with the option to consider an extension. A motion was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Causseux, motion carried.

7. Adoption of the Agenda

Minutes:

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

8. Motion to Approve Consent Items**Minutes:**

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

CONSENT ITEMS

9. Motion to Approve Board Minutes
10. Motion for the Clerk to pay the bills
11. Letters of Support
12. Human Resource Management
13. Next month meeting schedule
14. Liberty County Jail - Change Order 14
15. Liberty County Jail - Change Order 15
16. Liberty County EMS - Change Order 1
17. Ben Guthrie - CEMP Resolution 2025-38
18. Marie Arick - Civic Center Cohesive Contract
19. Monica Welles - Regular Cycle Funding
20. Monica Welles - Title VI Update
21. Monica Welles - Transit Resolution #2025-39

ACTION ITEMS**22. James Moore - Audit****Minutes:**

- James Moore, joined by partner Kendrick, presented the annual audit; third year working with the County.
- Expressed appreciation to the Board, Clerk's Office, and constitutional officers for assistance during the audit.
- County received an unmodified (clean) opinion on the financial statements.
- Single Audit of major federal and state grants resulted in no findings.
- Two material weaknesses noted, both recurring:
 - Audit adjustments/financial statement preparation
 - EMS billing system internal controls related to third-party oversight
- No fraud or major concerns identified.
- Required state reports showed no financial emergency conditions and compliance with state investment statutes.

- General fund balance decreased from approximately \$5 million to \$3.8 million, primarily due to capital expenditures and grant reimbursement timing.
- Unrestricted reserves declined from about 37% to 23% of expenditures, remaining above minimum recommended levels.
- Net pension liability discussed as an accounting requirement, not an immediate financial obligation.
- Mr. Moore offered to answer questions and thanked the Board.
- No action taken

23. Platt Resolution No. 2025-37

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford explained Resolution 2025-37, which resulted from the most recent legislative session. He noted that while the Board previously adopted an ordinance related to this issue, further review determined that a resolution was more appropriate. The resolution requires the Board to designate an administrative authority—such as an individual, department, or group—to review and approve future plat applications, as state law no longer allows these decisions to be made solely by the Board. Clerk Ford stated that the resolution temporarily assigns this authority to the County Administrator, allowing the Board flexibility to restructure or designate a different administrative body in the future. The purpose of the resolution is to ensure compliance with legislative requirements, with adoption required by the end of the year.
- Commissioner Brown suggested involving the Clerk and County Administrator in the process, emphasizing the importance of having accessible, accountable officials for the public to contact regarding plat decisions.
- Motion to approve the Platt Resolution 2025-37 made by Commissioner Brown, Seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Approved.

24. Greg Parks - RedSpeed Service Agreement

Minutes:

- Greg Parks was unable to attend the meeting. Jeff Duflogct appeared on behalf of the Sheriff to present information regarding the law governing computer-based photo enforcement for speed violations in school zones. Mr. Duflogct explained that the presentation included two brief videos: the first summarizing the law and how it is applied, and the second serving as a public service announcement to support public awareness efforts.
- A presentation was given on the use of automated speed enforcement cameras in school zones, emphasizing that the Legislature intended the program as a child-safety measure to protect students, parents, and crossing guards during school hours. Enforcement applies from 30 minutes before the first bell until 30 minutes after the last bell, with citations issued at 11 mph over the posted school-zone speed limit. Outside flashing-light periods, normal roadway speed limits apply.
- The presenter explained that the program is violator-funded, with no cost to the County. The vendor installs, maintains, and operates the cameras, conducts

traffic studies, provides signage, and funds public awareness campaigns. Citations are reviewed by the Sheriff's Office before issuance, and violators retain the right to a hearing. Fine revenues are distributed by statute, with a portion dedicated to public safety initiatives and school security enhancements.

- Examples from other jurisdictions showed significant reductions in speeding violations and improved driver behavior following camera installation. Additional benefits discussed included law-enforcement support through license plate data, which may assist in investigations and child-abduction cases.
- Several concerns were raised by Commissioner Johnson regarding public opposition, privacy, fairness, equipment reliability, and the preference for visible law-enforcement presence over automated enforcement. Questions were asked about enforcement during rain, holidays, non-flashing periods, and vehicle owner responsibility.
- It was clarified that no speed studies have yet been conducted locally and that the presentation was informational only. The Board discussed allowing an additional vendor to present at a future meeting, with a potential decision to be considered at a later date.
- No action was taken.

25. LCSO - FDLE Grant Funding

Minutes:

- Lisa Shiver addressed the Board regarding a request for applying for a grant to purchase two fully equipped patrol vehicles for \$143,000. She stated that the department is actively and continuously pursuing external funding opportunities in an effort to reduce the need for 100% local funding.
- Motion made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Approved.

26. Emergency Declaration Order 25-1

Minutes:

- Ben Guthrie provided a Drought Information Statement from the National Weather Service, noting the county is currently under Exceptional Drought conditions. He stated that recent rainfall has not significantly improved conditions and that drought recovery will take time, requiring slow, steady rainfall. Mr. Ben requested guidance from the Board regarding the burn ban. The Board agreed to wait until Monday to reassess conditions following anticipated rainfall. If conditions are deemed safe and winds are minimal, the burn ban may be lifted at Mr. Ben's discretion, in coordination with Forestry.
- Motion to approve Emergency Declaration Order 25-1 made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold, Motion Carried.

27. Clerk Ford - Website Proposal

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford informed the Board that the current contract for the County's website vendor will expire next month. He noted ongoing issues with the current vendor

regarding timely posting of required information for compliance with advertisements and grants.

- Clerk Ford recommended considering a new local vendor, Jack Kerrigan from Mexico Beach, who manages his office's website. The proposed vendor can use Clerk Ford's website as a template, reducing workload and cost. An email with pricing details was provided, showing the new vendor would be significantly less expensive than the current \$6,000 annual contract. Clerk Ford requested Board approval to pursue this vendor for the County website.
- Motion to approve new vendor made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

28. Dewayne Branch, Commissioner - District 1

Minutes:

- Chairman Branch stated that a petition had been circulated regarding the cedar tree located on the west side of the courthouse, expressing concerns about its appearance and potential safety hazards from falling limbs. The tree was described as unsightly and potentially dangerous due to its size and condition. The Board discussed the issue and agreed to obtain quotes for removal or maintenance, with the matter to be revisited at the next meeting.
- Additionally, Clerk Ford provided an update on the Rock Bluff voting precinct project, noting a projected completion date of February 2026 and referencing recent email updates and a call with project representatives.

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:

- Not in attendance.

34. Dusty Arnold, Liberty County Sheriff

Minutes:

- Sheriff Arnold stated open house for the new jail and Sheriff's Office is scheduled for tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. The event will include a brief ceremony and speakers, but the facility will remain open for tours throughout the day until approximately 6:30 p.m. Attendees are invited to walk through the facility, ask questions, and learn about its features and planning. Board members were encouraged to attend at any time during the event.

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

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford reminded The Board was reminded that the County Christmas party is scheduled for December 12 at 3:00 p.m. at Torreya Park. Staff were asked to coordinate with the Board early next week to finalize details, including contributions and logistics.
- The Board also discussed providing holiday vouchers for County employees. It was proposed to offer \$25 vouchers for approximately 60 employees, totaling \$1,500, as done in previous years for holiday ham or turkey gifts. The Board agreed to proceed with this amount, and staff were directed to begin arrangements.

36. Motion to Adjourn

Minutes:

- Motion to Adjourn made by Commissioner Johnson, Seconded by Commissioner Causseux. Motion approved.

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."