

Liberty County, FL

Liberty County Board of County Commissioners - Regular Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 6:00 pm

ZOOM LINK AND CALL IN NUMBER

Time: Feb 5, 2026 06:00 PM Eastern Time

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87999060146?pwd=INuBdPmGkvVymrFzwZlEd91RvPV4lv.1>

Meeting ID: 879 9906 0146

Passcode: 088615

One tap mobile

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Join instructions

<https://us02web.zoom.us/join/87999060146/invitations?signature=A0q-1IJ-BjEx473tLki5Yx96cfDoGWAvpPmmpjKyvBnl>

1. Call to Order

Minutes:

- Chairman Dewayne Branch called the regular meeting to order in person and via Zoom at 6:04 P.M. Present at the meeting were Commissioners Derrick Arnold, Jim Johnson, Doyle Brown, Hannah Causseaux, Clerk Jace Ford, and Deputy Clerk Dillan DeLoach.

2. Invocation

Minutes:

- County Commissioner Hannah Causseaux led the invocation.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes:

- Brett Phillips led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Awards and Recognitions

Minutes:

- No awards or recognitions.

5. Audience Concerns

Minutes:

- No audience concerns.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Monthly Department Briefing

- Brian Eddins – Fire Control Coordinator
 - Mr. Brian shared that Panama City has offered to donate a fire truck to the county. The truck is in good condition and is expected to pass the pump test. Panama City will vote on the donation at its February 12 meeting.
- Marie Arick – Extension Director
 - Mrs. Marie updated on recent and upcoming student activities. Sixteen students attended the Capitol, where they met with Jim Patronis and discussed Liberty County, providing strong representation. It was also noted that a trip to Washington, D.C. is planned during which five students will present at a workshop. Additionally, a senior team will travel to Tampa next weekend to compete in the State Fair food challenge. If the team places first, they will qualify to advance to the national competition at the State Fair of Texas in Dallas.
- Deanna Bryant – Recreation Director
 - Not in attendance, but Boo Bryant updated on her behalf.
 - Mr. Boo provided an update on lighting issues at Veterans Park. Several lights fell, with one crossarm reusable and the other damaged beyond repair due to internal rust not visible from the outside. The area has been roped off due to safety concerns. It was noted that similar failures may exist on other poles, creating potential risk with upcoming ball season and increased public use.
 - A lift capable of reaching up to 120 feet is needed to safely inspect and address the remaining poles; however, availability is limited. Discussion included renting a lift to inspect all poles and potentially replace deteriorated bolts to improve safety, rather than continuing repeated temporary repairs.
 - The board was reminded that a Veterans Park grant (over \$1 million) was largely intended to replace the lighting system, but grant funds cannot yet be used due to required environmental review and state approvals. Clerk Ford is actively working with Tallahassee to seek authorization to use grant funds for emergency repairs. If not approved, county funds may be required at an estimated cost of approximately \$2,500 per pole.
 - Boo and Clerk Ford emphasized the urgency of addressing the issue for public safety and requested direction from the board, noting that efforts are being made to resolve the problem in the most cost-effective way while avoiding unnecessary duplication of work prior to the grant project moving forward.
- Melissa Peddie – Ambulance Director
 - On Agenda
- Cole Maloy – Solid Waste Director
 - Cole Maloy provided an update regarding the Household Hazardous Waste Collection Day scheduled for Saturday, April 4, beginning at 9:00 a.m. Items to be accepted include chemicals, old paint, gasoline, and batteries.
 - Discussion followed regarding the use and placement of flashing signs to help advertise the event throughout the county. It was noted that multiple departments have flashing signs available, and coordination with Mr. Ben and Boo was suggested to place them in strategic locations to increase visibility.
- Boo Bryant – Road and Bridge Superintendent
 - Mr. Boo Bryant provided updates on current road maintenance efforts, including grading and drainage improvements. Recent work has performed well despite heavy rainfall, and crews

continue to address areas incrementally across the community.

- A concern was raised by Chairman Branch regarding activity at Rock Bluff, specifically near the restroom building. Questions were asked about whether work crews or inmates were using the restroom facility, as they should only be using the restroom on the trailer. An incident involving an unknown individual at the site prompted additional concern. It was discussed that locks may be installed on the restroom doors, with keys provided to authorized users such as the fire department and county staff, to prevent unauthorized access while keeping the facility usable.
- Additional discussion included a reported issue at Johnson's Crossing near the branch, where repeated work has not resolved a larger underlying problem.
- Additional discussion included a reported beaver issue at Johnson's Crossing near the branch, where repeated work has not resolved the problem.
- Boo shared that DOT provided 5 flashing solar-powered stop signs. Proposed locations to place the new signage included Blue Creek, County Road 20, County Road 12 (cutoff), the Y intersection, and along County Road 67/State Road 67.
- Monica Welles – Transit Director
 - Not in attendance.
- Holly Shuler - Building Department
 - Not in attendance.
- Ben Guthrie – Emergency Management Director
 - Not in attendance.
- Kaly Barfield – Grants and Special Projects Coordinator
 - Kaly reported that bids for administrative and engineering services for the Veterans Park project are due March 3. The board approved forming a three-member committee (Mr. Boo, Mrs. Marie, and Mrs. Lisa) to open and score the bids, with a recommendation to be presented at the March 5 meeting.
 - Updates were also provided on the Rock Bluff Community Center, which is nearing completion and will have a final walkthrough and ribbon cutting. Biweekly EMS building meetings are ongoing, the County Road 67 project design is complete and moving toward construction, and the EMS project is expected to take approximately one year.
- County Engineer - Dewberry
 - Not in attendance.
- Code Enforcement - Adam Walker
 - Not in attendance.
 - Clerk Ford gave an update on Mr. Walker's behalf regarding county code enforcement and public safety concerns. It was noted that there is currently no ordinance prohibiting overnight camping at county parks or other county property. Several instances of transient individuals camping, building fires, and using power at county facilities were reported, particularly at Rock Bluff and the Bristol boat landing. It was suggested that an ordinance be drafted or amended to prohibit unauthorized camping on all county property to provide enforcement authority.
 - Additional code enforcement issues were discussed regarding trash and fencing ordinances. Some property owners are bypassing existing requirements by using inadequate fencing materials, which reduces enforceability. It was recommended that the ordinance be revised to specify fence types and standards to give enforcement personnel clearer authority.
 - Clerk Ford proposed working with Mr. Walker and other relevant parties to review and strengthen the ordinances, including addressing specific problem properties on Highway 65. The board was asked to confirm agreement with reviewing and updating these ordinances to improve enforcement and public safety.

6. Motion to Amend Agenda

7. Adoption of the Agenda

Minutes:

- Motion to Adopt the Agenda made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Causseaux. Motion carried.

8. Motion to Approve Consent Items

Minutes:

- Motion to Approve Consent Items made by Commissioner Causseaux, 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. Monica Welles - Updated Transit 2nd Chance Policy

15. Emergency Management - Generator Project

16. Emergency Management - Extension of Interlocal Agreement

17. Chamber of Commerce - Banquet Fees

ACTION ITEMS

18. FY 25-26 Resolution 2026-02 (BR#5)

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford stated that a request for a budget increase had been previously discussed. The full documentation is now available. The request is for an \$11,330 increase to cover state-required equipment purchases and associated training, noting that delays increase costs.
- A motion to approve Resolution 2026-02 was made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

19. FY 25-26 Resolution 2026-03 (BR#6)

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford reported that the most recent legislative session approved an additional \$3 million in state funding for the jail project. Resolution 2026-03 was presented to adjust the jail budget and authorize spending of these funds. It was emphasized that this is state funding, not local dollars.
- Motion to approve Resolution 2026-03 was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

20. Culpepper - Change Order #17

Minutes:

- Brock Gholsten explained that Change Order Number 17 corrects a previous accounting error identified by Justin in one of the chambers. The change order is a \$0 adjustment that corrects the contract records to reflect the correct amounts; it does not involve any change in the scope of work. The correction addresses a software error that had incorrectly carried over amounts to the next change order.
- Motion to approve Change Order#17 by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Causseaux. Motion Carried.

21. Culpepper - Change Order #18

Minutes:

- Brock Gholsten reported that Change Order #18 corrects a software issue in the project management system. The system had incorrectly deducted the voter's risk bond, general liability insurance, and CM fee from a sales tax savings change order. This corrective change order restores those amounts. No changes to the scope of work are involved.
- Motion to approve Change Order #18 made by Commissioner Arnold, seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion Carried.

22. Culpepper - Change Order #19

Minutes:

- Brock Gholsten presented Change Order #19 for the jail expansion. This change order reflects the additional funding recently received for the project and does not alter the scope of work.
- Motion to approve was made by Commissioner Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

23. School Zone Camera Proposals

Minutes:

- The board reviewed proposals for school zone traffic safety cameras from Altumint and RedSpeed, with both proposals included in the board's agenda packet and on iPads for review. Updated traffic study data for Hosford Elementary School was also provided, reflecting increased traffic volumes and speeding violations in both the eastbound and westbound directions.
- It was noted that the Altumint cameras are not license plate readers but are capable of capturing speed violations. The cameras are provided and maintained by the company at no cost to the county, and the system operates independently, with the county having no access to the data. The program includes a 30-day warning period, after which studies have shown a 90% or greater reduction in violations, with some programs in Florida reporting up to a 98% decrease. Cameras operate during school hours when children are present, including mornings and afternoons, but are inactive on weekends, holidays, or announced half-days; summer school enforcement is optional.

- Funds generated from citations are allocated by statute, with a portion available to the county for public safety initiatives, such as crossing guards, emergency services, or safety-related improvements. The program is cost-neutral for the county, with a 60-day termination notice allowing cancellation without penalty.
- The board discussed strategic placement of cameras to target high-risk areas without unnecessary coverage elsewhere and emphasized the safety benefits, noting increased traffic through certain school zones due to GPS routing and citing incidents in other jurisdictions where crossing guards were injured. After discussion, the board determined that the Altumint proposal provided the most comprehensive solution, including additional flock cameras and partnership support.
- Motion to approve the Altumint School Zone Cameras was made by Commissioner Causseaux, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Commissioner Johnson opposed. Motion carried.

24. HWY 12 S - Resolution 2026-04

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford presented Resolution 2026-04 regarding the Highway 12 sidewalk project. The board previously approved a sidewalk extending from the Bristol Library to Veterans Park, a project initiated prior to the current staff. The purpose of the project is to improve pedestrian safety, particularly for children traveling between the civic center, library, and park, as the existing sidewalk requires pedestrians to cross Highway 12 multiple times. Concerns were raised about children navigating this area safely. The project is being managed by the Florida Department of Transportation, and approval of an agreement and resolution is required to proceed.
- Motion to approve Resolution 2026-04 was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion carried.

25. Little Gully Creek - Resolution 2026-05

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford presented Resolution 2026-05 for the Little Gully Creek project, noting it is another FDOT-managed project requiring a resolution and agreement for the project to move forward.
- Motion to approve Resolution 2026-05 was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Causseaux; the motion carried.

26. FDOT Roadways - Resolution 2026-06

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford presented Resolution 2026-06, referencing prior discussions with staff and board members regarding known roadway issues previously presented by Noah. Input was gathered from board members, with significant coordination from Boo, who is familiar with roadway concerns and funding priorities. Based on those discussions, five road projects were identified for submission for funding this year: County Road 12 South Phase III, County Road 270, County Road 333

Phase II, County Road 67 Phases IV and V, and County Road 12 over the Little Gully Creek Bridge. The resolution outlines these projects for funding consideration, and a motion to approve Resolution 2026-06 was requested.

- Motion to approve Resolution 2026-06 was made by Commissioner Arnold and seconded by Commissioner Johnson; the motion carried.

27. **Melissa Peddie - Rock Bluff Polling Building**

Minutes:

- Mrs. Melissa Peddie addressed the board regarding the Liberty County food pantry, noting it is the only food pantry in the county and operates in partnership with the Rock Bluff Fire Department and Second Harvest. She explained that food distributions are now held twice monthly, with a drive-through food drop previously conducted at the polling station. She also operates a 24-hour emergency pantry listed through 211, providing food assistance at all hours. Mrs. Peddie stated she has been notified she must vacate her current storage location and requested permission to use the vacant former polling station building to house the 24-hour pantry.
- Additionally, she requested permission to use the old sheriff's office trailer behind the former health department for climate-controlled storage of items used for the annual Love for Liberty program, including toys, clothing, and other donated items. She explained that long-term storage costs have been a financial burden and emphasized the value of the donated items and the number of children served annually. Board members discussed the condition and availability of the trailer, confirmed that it is climate-controlled, and acknowledged the urgency of securing and relocating the items. Staff indicated assistance would be provided to help move materials and address door and security issues. Mrs. Peddie expressed appreciation and reiterated the immediate need to relocate items to prevent loss or damage.
- The Board expressed their support for both requests, so no vote was necessary.

28. **Charles Stewart - Annual IT Exercise**

Minutes:

- Charles Stewart informed the board that it is time for the annual cybersecurity tabletop exercise and requested permission to use the Civic Center stage, as was done the previous year. A date has not yet been set and will depend on feedback from department heads and participating agencies. He stated that coordination would be handled through Miss Kathy or Miss Marie to avoid scheduling conflicts and asked that at least one board representative be designated to attend if the full board does not participate.
- Mr. Stewart noted that last year's exercise had strong agency participation, particularly from the Sheriff's Office, though some attendees had to leave due to a county emergency. He also provided an update on cybersecurity compliance, stating that only two individuals remain without two-factor authentication enabled, both being commissioners, and that coordination will continue to complete setup. No action was required from the board at this time, and Mr. Stewart thanked staff and board members for their time and cooperation.

- The Board supported the annual exercise, so no vote was necessary.

29. Stan Whittaker - Old Sheriff's Office

Minutes:

- Mr. Stan Whitaker addressed the board regarding the potential use of the former Sheriff's Office building to establish an expanded medical clinic. He stated the building is already configured for healthcare use and could support primary care services currently offered, along with proposed additions including psychiatric services, women's health, and diabetic nutritional counseling through a possible partnership with Florida State University. He noted the facility's size, existing generator, and suitability for disaster preparedness, as well as the significant permitting requirements that would take several months to complete. Mr. Whitaker reported that his current clinic has served approximately 2,700–2,800 patients, many regularly, including patients from surrounding counties, and emphasized efforts to provide affordable care without turning patients away. Board members spoke in support of Mr. Whitaker's services, citing firsthand experiences and his role in providing care during emergencies and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Commissioner Causseaux also acknowledged that other individuals and organizations had expressed interest in the building for healthcare-related uses, and that a formal process should be followed to ensure fairness and transparency. It was noted that the building is currently vacant and underutilized, but Commissioner Brown stated that he thinks any decision should follow proper procedures, including advertising the opportunity and allowing interested parties to present proposals.
- A motion was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Commissioners Causseaux and Brown opposed, while Commissioner Branch served as the tie breaker. Motion carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

30. Dewayne Branch, Commissioner - District 1

Minutes:

- Nothing to discuss.

31. Hannah Causseaux, Chairwoman - District 2

32. Jim Johnson, Vice Chairman - District 3

Minutes:

- Nothing to discuss.

33. Doyle Brown, Commissioner - District 4

Minutes:

- Nothing to discuss.

34. Derrick Arnold, Commissioner - District 5

Minutes:

- Nothing to discuss.

35. Ken Hosford, County Attorney

Minutes:

- Nothing to discuss.

36. Dusty Arnold, Liberty County Sheriff

Minutes:

- Sheriff Dusty Arnold announced that all inmates will be moved to the new jail next week. Additionally, when the old jail is handed back to the county and the clerk, he requested that the holding cells on the lower level be maintained for court purposes. He explained that this would allow individuals to be temporarily held during court proceedings, eliminating the need to transport them back to the new jail.

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

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford provided several updates to the board. He advised that the Department of Revenue is requesting notice if the board intends to reauthorize the fire tax for placement on the ballot, as the ordinance must be reviewed and approved prior to the election process; this item may be brought back as an action item next month.
- He informed the board that the county is entering the renewal phase of its comprehensive plan, which must be completed by the end of 2026, and noted that workshops may be needed to discuss desired changes.
- An update was given regarding correspondence with Talquin Electric, stating the company will not add fire hydrants as part of system improvements but is willing to participate in grant-funded projects.
- Clerk Ford stated that Monica texted during the meeting to report an update on the building renovations. He explained the project has been advertised twice, with no contractors responding the first time and only one contractor responding the second time. Because the state does not allow awarding a project with only a single bidder, the project is required to be re-advertised to a broader audience, potentially including Tallahassee and Panama City publications.
- Lastly, he announced the SHIP director has resigned, and the Clerks staff will temporarily manage the program until the board addresses the vacancy.

38. Motion to Adjourn

Minutes:

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

39. 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."

Contact: Jace Ford (jford@libertyclerk.com (850) 643-2215) | Minutes published on 02/13/2026 at 4:36 PM