

Liberty County, FL

Liberty County Board of County Commissioners - Regular Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, May 7, 2026 at 6:00 pm

ZOOM LINK AND CALL IN NUMBER

Liberty County Board of County Commissioners - Regular Meeting

Time: May 7, 2026 06:00 PM Eastern Time (US and Canada)

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81950027887?pwd=PkmY2apAKfwW9BuUcn8VUWulOaf87s.1>

Meeting ID: 819 5002 7887

Passcode: 969599

One tap mobile

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1. Call to Order

Minutes:

- Chairman Branch called the meeting to order in person and through Zoom at 6:00 EST. Present at the meeting are Chairman Branch, Vice Chairman Brown, Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Arnold, Clerk Ford, and Deputy Clerk DeLoach.

2. Invocation

Minutes:

- Invocation led by Commissioner Branch.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Minutes:

- Mr. Chad Smith led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Awards and Recognitions

Minutes:

- There are no awards or recognitions received.

5. Audience Concerns

Minutes:

- Mrs. Marie Maddox addressed the Board regarding concerns surrounding a

matter involving Mr. Brannan, stating that efforts had been made to have the item placed on the agenda for a name-clearing or due process hearing, but those requests were denied. Mrs. Maddox stated that she and Mr. Brannan were attempting to avoid litigation and requested that the Board hear the matter and consider mediation or another form of discussion to resolve the issue. County Attorney Ken Hosford advised that the matter was currently in a litigation posture and that public discussion was not appropriate in that forum, recommending against engaging in a due process discussion during the meeting. He noted that mediation may be an appropriate avenue moving forward.

- Mr. Levi Brannan completed a comment card but declined his time.
- Mrs. Miller addressed the Board regarding animal welfare concerns in Liberty County, noting that the county currently does not have animal welfare services or a local animal shelter. She requested approval to use a small area near the old sheriff's building on Main Street for a community pet food bank to be operated by Good Shepherd Ranch and Rescue, a local nonprofit organization. Mrs. Miller explained that the program would provide donated pet food free of charge to residents in need in an effort to reduce pet surrenders and abandoned animals within the community. Following discussion, the Board requested that Mrs. Miller coordinate with Mr. Ford to schedule a meeting and further discuss the proposal before bringing the matter back before the Board at a future meeting.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Monthly Department Briefing

- Brian Eddins – Fire Control Coordinator
 - Attendance over Zoom. All Commissioners gave their condolences and prayers for Mr. Eddins with his current cancer diagnosis.
- Marie Arick – Extension Director
 - No business
- Deanna Bryant – Recreation Director
 - No business
- Melissa Peddie – Ambulance Director
 - No Business
- Cole Maloy – Solid Waste Director
 - Not in attendance
- Boo Bryant – Road and Bridge Superintendent
 - Mr. Boo Bryant informed the Board that the Road Department service truck is currently out of service due to engine failure. He reported that repairs had been attempted to address leaks and other issues, but the engine ultimately failed. The department is moving forward with replacing the engine under warranty, which was identified as the most cost-effective option.
 - Mr. Bryant also requested that the Board review the county's private dirt sales program due to rising fuel costs. He explained that the current dirt hauling rates were established several years ago and no longer cover the department's expenses. He stated that the county is losing money on each load delivered and suggested either temporarily suspending private dirt sales or revising the pricing structure until fuel costs stabilize.
 - Commissioners discussed the increasing costs associated with producing and hauling dirt, including fuel, labor, and equipment expenses. Additional discussion focused on operational challenges at the county sand pit, where material must be moved multiple times before it can

be loaded and transported. Commissioners noted that the process requires significant labor and equipment time, further increasing costs.

- Mr. Bryant explained that material from the county clay pit must be mixed with sand at approximately a one-to-one ratio before it can be used on roads. He stated that straight clay is not suitable for road construction and that obtaining and blending materials from multiple locations adds additional expense to county operations.
- Discussion also included the quality of materials available at the county-owned pit, future excavation plans, and the long-term viability of producing road-building material from the site. Participants noted that soil conditions vary throughout the property and that future excavation may reveal different material compositions.
- Following discussion, there appeared to be consensus among Board members to temporarily suspend private dirt hauling until a revised pricing structure or fuel surcharge can be evaluated. Mr. Bryant thanked the Board for its consideration and concluded his report.
- Monica Welles – Transit Director
 - Ms. Monica informed the Board that the ISDA grant program has reopened and that staff are pursuing funding to expand local transit services. The proposed expansion would provide transportation opportunities for youth ages 14 and older to participate in after-school activities, sports, 4-H programs, and other community programs.
 - She reported that the state recently increased funding for the grant program and that staff are working with the regional planning council to complete the application. Ms. Monica noted that transit demand has increased significantly in recent months, and the additional funding would help meet growing transportation needs throughout the county.
- Tera Hinson - SHIP Director
 - Mrs. Hinson updated that they have used all of the 24-25 allocation money and are moving on to the 25-26 allocation money for SHIP. Everything has been going great!
- Ben Guthrie – Emergency Management Director
 - Mr. Ben informed the Board that Requests for Proposals (RFPs) will be issued for both debris removal and debris monitoring services, as the county's current contracts have reached their renewal limits. The Board is expected to review the proposals at the next meeting.
 - Mr. Ben also provided an update on local drought conditions and recent rainfall, noting that while some rain has been received, conditions remain very dry. He stated that updated forecasts from the National Weather Service are being monitored before any decisions are made regarding drought-related actions.
 - The Board discussed the process for lifting burn bans between meetings. It was noted that the Chair and Emergency Management Director have previously coordinated such decisions, with Board ratification occurring at the next regular meeting.
 - Mr. Ben also advised the Board that he will be attending required emergency management training in Orlando during next month's meeting.
- Kaly Barfield – Grants and Special Projects Coordinator
 - Kaly Barfield reported that the EMS project continues to progress. For the boat ramp project, Requests for Proposals for grant administration and engineering services are currently being advertised, with bid openings scheduled for June 3. Recommendations are expected to be presented to the Board at the June 4 meeting.
 - Mrs. Barfield also provided an update on the Veterans Park project, noting that the Board has already selected grant administration and engineering firms. The project is currently under review by Florida Commerce, and contracts can be executed once the review process is complete.
 - She advised that bi-weekly project meetings are being held for ongoing projects and that Board members are welcome to participate. The Board discussed appointing a review committee to evaluate proposals for the boat ramp project and provide recommendations. A committee consisting of Boo Bryant, Marie, and Monica was selected, with Kelly serving as

an alternate if needed

- Kaly Barfield - Building Department
 - Mrs. Barfield reported that the Building Department is running successfully.
- Dewberry - County Engineer
 - Not in attendance

6. Motion to Amend Agenda

Minutes:

- Mrs. Marie Arick requests that agenda item number 20 be moved from the action side to the consent side.
- Motion to amend the agenda made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

7. Adoption of the Agenda

Minutes:

- Motion to adopt the agenda made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion carried.

8. Motion to Approve Consent Items

Minutes:

- Motion to approve the consent items made by commissioner brown and seconded by Commissioner Johnson. 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. Resolution 2026-14 - BR #8
15. Resolution 2026-18 - Adoption of Local Mitigation
16. Resolution 2026-19 - BR #9
17. Resolution 2026-20 - ISDA Transit
18. Gold Star Academy - Fee Waiver
19. Marie Arick - Expenditure Request

ACTION ITEMS

20. ARPC - Amendment 1

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford informed the Board that the Apalachee Regional Planning Council (RPC) had submitted a proposed amendment to its existing contract with the county. He explained that the current agreement bills services at a flat rate of \$75 per hour, which was based on staffing rates in place when the contract was originally established. Clerk Ford stated that RPC staffing has changed, and many of the employees currently providing services to the county have lower billable rates. As a result, the proposed amendment would allow the county to be billed based on the actual hourly rate of the staff performing the work rather than the flat rate. He noted that the change would reduce costs to the county and provide greater transparency in billing.
- Motion to approve Amendment 1 for ARPC made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

21. Clerk Ford - Riparian Stakeholder Coalition

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford presented a request from the Apalachicola Riverkeeper stakeholder coalition seeking a \$5,000 contribution from the county. He noted that the request had been previously discussed but tabled, as it had not been included during prior budget discussions. Board members discussed the organization's recent efforts related to river restoration, dredging initiatives, and improving conditions within the Apalachicola River system. It was noted that Liberty County contains a significant portion of the river corridor and may benefit from the organization's ongoing work.
- Motion to approve the contribution made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

22. Clerk Ford - Procurement Policy

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford presented revisions to the county's procurement policy following issues identified during a recent emergency situation at Veterans Park. He explained that the county lacked clear authority to exceed normal procurement thresholds when immediate action was required during emergencies. The proposed changes establish procedures that allow the county to respond more quickly during emergencies involving public safety, natural disasters, or other urgent situations, while requiring appropriate documentation after the fact. Additional revisions clarify that contracts binding the county must be reviewed and approved by the Board before execution. Clerk Ford also explained that the policy addresses situations involving unknown repair costs, such as major equipment failures, where obtaining competitive bids may not be practical before repairs are authorized.
- Motion to approve the updated policy made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion Carried.

23. Clerk Ford - Fixed Asset Policy

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford presented a proposed revision to the county's fixed asset policy

based on recommendations from the county's auditors and finance staff. The change increases the capitalization threshold from \$1,000 to \$5,000, aligning the county with current best practices and reducing the number of lower-value items that must be tracked as capital assets. Staff also explained that the revised policy provides the Board with greater flexibility when disposing of county-owned assets. The policy allows the Board to consider transferring or donating certain lower-value assets to other governmental entities or qualifying organizations when deemed to be in the public interest, subject to Board approval.

- Motion to amend the fixed asset policy made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion Carried.

24. Transit - Car Sell

Minutes:

- Ms. Monica presented a request for Transit to sell a surplus special-needs bus to Gold Star Academy for \$2,500. She explained that the bus had previously been involved in an accident, was fully repaired, and returned to service before experiencing a transmission failure. Due to the vehicle's age and mileage, the state transferred the title to the county rather than funding additional repairs. Ms. Monica stated that Gold Star Academy has a need for a bus equipped with a wheelchair lift and other special-needs accommodations. The organization is aware that the vehicle requires a transmission and has agreed to purchase the bus in its current condition and assume responsibility for all repairs.
- Motion to approve the sale of the transit bus to Gold Star Academy for \$2,500 made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion Carried.

25. Emergency Item - 4th of July Parade

DISCUSSION ITEMS

26. Dewayne Branch, Chairman - District 1

Minutes:

- Commissioner Branch reported on the recent ribbon-cutting ceremony for the Rock Bluff Community Center, stating that the event was well attended and successful. He thanked county staff, including the Road Department, Clerk's Office, and others who assisted with preparing the facility and organizing the event. He noted that the project was especially meaningful to him and represented a significant achievement for the Rock Bluff community, which had not received a comparable public facility investment in many decades. Commissioner Branch also provided an update on plans to pave the facility's parking area. He explained that remaining project funds were insufficient to complete the paving work; however, through discussions with local industry representatives, arrangements were made for the donation of asphalt and paving services. He reported that CW Roberts and Anderson Columbia had agreed to assist with the project, with work anticipated to begin as soon as scheduling and weather conditions allow. Commissioner Branch expressed appreciation to the

companies, county staff, and community members who contributed to the project and stated that he hoped public recognition would be given to those assisting with the parking lot improvements.

27. Jim Johnson, Commissioner - District 3

Minutes:

- Commissioner Johnson informed the Board that the American flag at Center Cemetery is in poor condition and has become torn and tattered. He stated that he recently noticed the condition of the flag while attending a funeral and requested that the matter be addressed and the flag replaced.

28. Doyle Brown, Vice Chairman - District 4

Minutes:

- Commissioner Brown revisited a previous request regarding the removal of a large oak tree at Center Cemetery. He noted that although the tree had been trimmed in the past, it remains a concern due to its condition and the potential for limbs to fall during severe weather. Commissioner Brown expressed concern that falling limbs could damage headstones, grave markers, and other cemetery property. Following discussion, staff indicated that quotes would be obtained for removal of the tree so the matter could be further evaluated by the Board.

29. Derrick Arnold, Commissioner - District 5

30. Ken Hosford, County Attorney

Minutes:

- Nothing to discuss.

31. Dusty Arnold, Liberty County Sheriff

Minutes:

- Captain Chad Smith requested that an emergency item for the 4th of July Parade be added to the agenda.
- Motion to add the July 4th parade request to the agenda as an emergency item was made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Brown. Motion Carried.

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

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford informed the Board that Great Northwest, the regional economic development organization, had requested that the County again share the cost of annual membership dues for \$1,500, consistent with the arrangement approved the previous year. Clerk Ford stated that he had been pleased with the services provided by the organization, noting that its representatives had been responsive and actively engaged with the County's economic development efforts.
- Clerk Ford also advised the Board of the upcoming county commissioners conference scheduled for late June and encouraged any interested commissioner to attend. He stated that additional details, including lodging

arrangements, would be available for commissioners wishing to participate.

33. Motion to Adjourn

Minutes:

- Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

34. 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."