Liberty County, FL

Liberty County Board of County Commissioners - Regular Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, June 4, 2026 at 6:00 pm

ZOOM LINK AND CALL IN NUMBER

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83519859937?pwd=7yllbGsZfaULSnPURmw1aKqwgklBa3.1

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1. **Call to Order**

   Minutes:
   - Chairman Branch called the meeting to order in person and through Zoom at 6:04 EST. Present at the meeting were Chairman Branch, Vice Chairman Brown, Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Arnold, Clerk Ford, and Deputy Clerk DeLoach.

2. **Invocation**

   Minutes:
   - Invocation led by Commissioner Jim Johnson.

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:
   - There are no audience concerns.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Monthly Department Briefing

- Brian Eddins – Fire Control Coordinator
  - Not present
- Marie Arick – Extension Director
  - No business

- Deanna Bryant – Recreation Director
    - No business
- Melissa Peddie – Ambulance Director
    - No business
- Cole Maloy – Solid Waste Director
    - Mr. Maloy discussed the county's cardboard recycling containers, noting that some locations are used more frequently than others. Commissioners reviewed the current container locations and expressed support for keeping the program in place due to positive public feedback and the convenience it provides residents for disposing of cardboard from deliveries and packages.
    - The Board also discussed the possibility of accepting recyclable materials from neighboring counties. Commissioners favored taking a cautious approach and evaluating the current program before expanding services. Cole was asked to research the feasibility, costs, capacity, and potential fees for out-of-county users and bring the information back to the Board for future consideration.
- Boo Bryant – Road and Bridge Superintendent
    - No business
- Monica Welles – Transit Director
- Oliver Sperry is starting construction on the transit building on Monday and has a 10-week timeline moving forward.
- Tera Hinson - SHIP Director
    - Mrs. Hinson stated that two SHIP rehabilitation projects are currently under construction, two additional homes are scheduled for eligibility walk-throughs, and two projects were completed during the month. Homeowners were pleased with the completed work, and staff noted the goal is to complete approximately six homes each funding year to stay on schedule.
    - During a recent ARPC meeting, Commissioner Brown learned that Liberty County receives the same annual SHIP allocation as many neighboring counties despite having a significantly smaller population, resulting in greater funding impact per resident. It was also noted that discussions are underway at the state level regarding a potential increase in SHIP funding allocations for counties statewide.
- Ben Guthrie – Emergency Management Director
    - Not present, at a conference.
- Kaly Barfield – Grants and Special Projects Coordinator
    - Not present
    - Clerk Ford reports that EMS Building remains the county's primary active non-road construction project and is progressing on schedule. A pre-construction meeting is expected soon for the CR 379/Mary Branch Bridge project, and work has already begun on that project; Clerk Ford also noted that a change order for the EMS Building project was included in the meeting packet for Board consideration.
- Kaly Barfield - Building Department
    - Not present
- Dewberry - County Engineer
    - No business

6. Motion to Amend Agenda

7. Adoption of the Agenda

Minutes:

- Motion to adopt the agenda made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carries.

8. **Motion to Approve Consent Items**

Minutes:

- Motion to approve the consent items made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried.

CONSENT ITEMS

9. **Motion to Approve Board Minutes**
10. **Motion for the Clerk to Pay the Bills**
11. **Human Resource Management**
12. **Next Month Meeting Schedule**
13. **Culpepper - EMS Change Order #PCC0 03**
14. **Transit - Resolution 2026-21**
15. **Ben Guthrie - Mosquito Budget**

PRESENTATIONS & UPDATES

16. **John Hallas - Talquin**

Minutes:

- John Hallas, Director of Water Services for Talquin Electric Cooperative, provided a detailed update on the Liberty County water systems approximately two and a half years after Talquin assumed operations. Hallas reported that the first major initiative was a system-wide metering upgrade, which included replacing meters, service lines, and metering assemblies with modern automated systems designed for easier maintenance, fewer outages, and compliance with current lead and copper standards. He noted the project took longer than expected due to severe weather events including hurricanes, tornadoes, and a winter storm, but was completed in March 2025. He also stated that Talquin purchased 1,145 accounts but has only identified 1,053 services, with efforts ongoing to locate the remaining accounts. Hallas reported approximately $1.3 million invested in system improvements over the first two years, with an additional $100,000 spent this year and nearly $500,000 budgeted for future upgrades.
- Hallas also provided updates on water plant operations and distribution improvements, including replacement of the Sumatra generator, installation of a new well pump in the Telogia system, and operational adjustments to improve water quality and reduce hydrogen sulfide and disinfection byproducts. He discussed an outage in the Rock Bluff system caused by a missing spare motor, and efforts to improve redundancy and reduce downtime. Distribution system upgrades include new isolation valves, flushing stations, and continued meter standardization to improve reliability and reduce complaints. Future projects

include a full replacement of the Estiffanulga and Telogia water plants and storage tanks to meet fire flow requirements, staged construction to avoid service interruptions, and additional upgrades such as three-phase power at Sumatra and maintenance on Blue Creek wells. Commissioners also discussed potential water main expansions, grant funding opportunities, erosion concerns near the Estiffanulga facility, and coordination with other agencies on regional issues. Hallas confirmed Talquin's willingness to partner with the county on funding opportunities and encouraged residents to report service issues for review.

17. Bobby Shiver - County Roads

Minutes:

- Mr. Shiver addressed the Board regarding county-maintained private roads and drives, expressing concern over how certain private drives have historically transitioned into county maintenance under Florida statutes. He suggested that the County adopt a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) or written agreement before accepting maintenance responsibility for any private roads or drives in the future. He stated this would ensure all property owners have clear expectations regarding ownership, maintenance responsibility, and public access, and could help avoid future disputes between neighbors and the County.
- Mr. Shiver specifically referenced concerns involving Boykin Road in the Rock Bluff area and emphasized that many of these issues stem from longstanding private property disputes that should remain between landowners rather than becoming county matters. He encouraged the County to apply consistent policy moving forward, avoid case-by-case exceptions, and clearly document agreements to prevent misunderstandings or disputes later. He concluded by urging the Board to establish a clear, standardized process for any future road acceptance or maintenance agreements to ensure transparency and consistency across all property owners.

18. Clerk Ford - Workshop Planning

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford advised the Board that County Attorney Ken Hosford is currently working on an ordinance but has requested additional information to complete the draft. To move the process forward, Clerk Ford requested scheduling a workshop on June 16 to review the ordinance and begin preparing for the July meeting, where the item would be advertised for formal consideration. He proposed holding the workshop at 6:00 p.m., which the Board indicated was preferred.
- Clerk Ford also noted he intends to use the workshop to begin the budget process by presenting year-to-date financial figures, current fund balances, and revenue/expenditure trends to help guide early budget planning. The Board expressed general agreement with the proposed date and time, and it was noted that staff would confirm scheduling and coordination.

ACTION ITEMS

19. **Kaly Barfield - Boat Ramp Bid Awards**

Minutes:

- Kaly, appearing via Zoom and reported that bids were received for the Bristol Boat Ramp CDBG-DR project, including four proposals for grant administration services and one proposal for engineering services. A review committee consisting of Bill, Marie, and Monica evaluated and scored all submissions. For grant administration services, the highest-ranked firm was Management Experts, followed by Fred Fox Enterprises, Insight, and HGA. For engineering services, Dewberry was the only proposer and was also reviewed and evaluated by the committee.
- Based on the committee's recommendation, Kaly requested Board approval to award grant administration services to Management Experts and engineering services to Dewberry.
- Motion to approve grant administration services to Management Experts and engineering services to Dewberry made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

20. **CLCU - Fee Waiver**

Minutes:

- Representatives from Calhoun–Liberty Credit Union requested a waiver and approval to use the Civic Center in January for their annual financial literacy "Reality Fair" event. The program serves Liberty County High School, Blountstown High School, and eligible juniors and seniors, providing students with a hands-on financial simulation experience where they are assigned life scenarios and must manage a monthly budget, expenses, and financial decisions through interactive community booths staffed by volunteers. Also noted, coordination had been made with Civic Center personnel and, as of the time of discussion, no conflicts were known for the proposed dates in late January (either the 20th–21st or 27th–28th), pending final calendar confirmation. The Board discussed availability and agreed to proceed with the request.
- Motion to approve waiver of rental fee for Calhoun–Liberty Credit Union Reality Fair in January made by Commissioner Brown and seconded by Commissioner Johnson. Motion Carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

21. **Dewayne Branch, Chairman - District 1**

Minutes:

- Chairman Branch discussed plans for development and cleanup of county-owned property in the southern part of Liberty County in preparation for the upcoming fall festival and other community uses. He referenced prior coordination with staff regarding a parcel purchased with fire tax funds for potential relocation of a fire station and noted interest in further clearing and improving the site to create additional usable space. He explained that the property could help support festival expansion and potentially move certain activities away from the Highway 65 area to improve safety and accessibility. Chairman Branch also mentioned coordination with staff regarding utility access, noting that applications for both power and water service have already been submitted and are pending response. He requested consideration of additional cleanup of the property, including removal or disposal of existing debris, and discussed whether materials could be evaluated for disposal as construction debris or burned depending on classification. Staff discussed reviewing the site and determining appropriate disposal methods and costs. Chairman Branch also suggested the property could be used for multiple purposes, including staging equipment and potentially serving as a helicopter landing zone during events if properly maintained. He further referenced prior discussions about mowing and maintaining the area, coordination with Road Department staff, and past use of nearby areas for landing and festival-related support. Additional comments included brief discussion of prior striping work at the Rock Bluff precinct and appreciation for volunteer efforts and possible future funding support for similar improvements.

22. Hannah Causseaux, Commissioner - District 2

23. Jim Johnson, Commissioner - District 3

Minutes:

- Commissioner Johnson discussed maintenance and improvement needs at the Estiffanulga Boat Landing, specifically noting that parking lot striping and pavement markings are faded and need repainting to improve visibility and safety. He referenced that design work for related improvements has already been completed and noted that future construction or maintenance work would depend on available funding through grants or appropriations once the project advances beyond the design phase. Additional discussion included general coordination with staff regarding permitting and ongoing project status updates for boat landing facilities. Commissioner Johnson also emphasized the importance of keeping public recreation and boating access areas properly maintained and suggested identifying funding sources in the upcoming budget cycle or through eligible grant programs to address striping and minor site improvements.

24. Doyle Brown, Vice Chairman - District 4

Minutes:

- Commissioner Brown discussed upcoming striping and paving considerations for September funding opportunities and raised concerns about the condition of the Civic Center parking lot, noting that faded markings make parking difficult and create safety and spacing issues during events. He suggested identifying funding in the upcoming budget cycle to improve or restripe the Civic Center lot to improve visibility and functionality.
- Commissioner Brown also requested that Clerk Ford reach out to the Liberty County Senior Citizens regarding the former senior center in Hosford, which is currently up for sale. He expressed interest in exploring a potential agreement for the county to acquire or utilize the facility as a community center, noting its

proximity to the fire department and potential value for community use. He encouraged staff to explore whether a viable deal or arrangement could be developed.

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

Minutes:

- No business

26. **Ken Hosford, County Attorney**

Minutes:

- Via ZOOM, No business.

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

Minutes:

- Invites everyone to the Junior Deputy Day camp on June 25th at Tolar.

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

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford discussed an upcoming June meeting in Bainbridge and the need for Liberty County to designate a representative to attend. It was noted that several commissioners and staff members would be unavailable due to other conference obligations, including travel to Orlando. The discussion referenced participation in a regional or engineering/repair coalition group and the importance of maintaining county representation on the board. Staff indicated that the county had been asked to provide a specific attendee name, and a representative had been tentatively placed on the list to ensure participation, with coordination ongoing regarding the appropriate designee. Commissioner Arnold will be attending the event.

29. **Motion to Adjourn**

Minutes:

- A motion was made by Commissioner Johnson to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried. Adjourned at 6:54 PM.

30. **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."