Liberty County, FL

Liberty County Board of County Commissioners - Regular Meeting

Minutes

Thursday, July 9, 2026 at 6:00 pm

ZOOM LINK AND CALL IN NUMBER

Join Zoom Meeting
https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81418263236?pwd=ZR0azJcw6ObBTDmbkSK8Ujp5bmvIrq.1

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1. **Call to Order**

   Minutes:

   - Vice Chairman Brown called the meeting to order in person and through ZOOM at 6:01 PM. Present at the meeting were Vice Chairman Brown, Commissioner Johnson, Commissioner Arnold, Clerk Ford, and Deputy Clerk DeLoach.

2. **Invocation**

   Minutes:

   - Invocation led by Judge Hosford.

3. **Pledge of Allegiance**

   Minutes:

   - Pledge of Allegiance led by Commissioner Johnson.

4. **Awards and Recognitions**

   Minutes:

   - There are no awards or recognitions received.

5. **Audience Concerns**

   Minutes:

   - Mrs. Fran provided an update on recent meetings with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers regarding the Lake Seminole dredging project. She stated that the Corps presented the same information previously shared at the Veterans Memorial Center. She noted that Commissioner Arnold requested the Corps consider using dredged material to restore the riverbank near Estiffanulga, approximately one mile upstream from the boat landing. She advised that no funding has been identified, no project timeline has been established, and the Corps has one remaining public meeting before presenting its final plan.

- Mrs. Fran also informed the Board that the commercial solar lighting installed at the Estiffanulga boat landing intersection had been stolen by vandals. She explained the lights were valued at approximately $500 and were originally installed to improve safety at the intersection following a fatal accident several years ago.
- She further reported that the permit obtained by Dewberry from the Corps of Engineers is limited to improvements at the boat landing and remains valid for another year; however, the required matching funds are not currently available to move the project forward.
- Mrs. Fran distributed copies of an alternative proposal prepared by the riparian stakeholders group, led by Jim McClellan, as an alternative to the Corps' dredging plan. She encouraged the Board to review the document and offered to provide the full report upon request. Following her comments, Commissioner Brown asked Road & Bridge Superintendent Boo Bryant whether a light currently exists at the Highway 333 and Highway 12 intersection, to which Mr. Bryant responded that there is not. Commissioner Brown suggested Mr. Bryant look into getting a streetlight on the pole or on the road.

COUNTY DEPARTMENT UPDATES

Monthly Department Briefing

- Brian Eddins – Fire Control Coordinator
  - Clerk Ford provided an update on behalf of Fire Control Coordinator Brian Eddins. He reported that he recently spoke with Mr. Eddins, who is recovering well and hopes to return to work within the next couple of months. Clerk Ford also informed him that the County was awarded a $550,000 appropriation through the Governor's Office for the purchase of a new fire pumper truck. He encouraged everyone to keep Mr. Eddins in their thoughts and prayers and noted that he appears to be doing better.
- Marie Arick – Extension Director
  - Nothing to address.
- Deanna Bryant – Recreation Director
  - Not in attendance.
- Melissa Peddie – Ambulance Director
  - On agenda.
- Cole Maloy – Solid Waste Director
  - Cole Maloy discussed the possibility of allowing waste from other counties to be accepted at the County's solid waste facility. He reported that he contacted the Executive Director, who advised that Liberty County has the authority to establish its own disposal fees. During the discussion, County Attorney Ken Hosford clarified that the County cannot operate the service for profit or at a loss and may only recover its actual costs. Mr. Maloy acknowledged the potential challenges with accepting waste from other counties and indicated the topic could be discussed further at a later date.
- Boo Bryant – Road and Bridge Superintendent
  - Nothing to address.
- Monica Welles – Transit Director
  - Monica Welles provided an update on Transit operations, noting several upcoming staffing

changes. She reported that Sterling Owen plans to retire in October, and the department will begin advertising for his position due to the qualifications required. She also advised that Melissa and Marian have left the department, requiring additional hiring efforts, and noted that employee retention has been challenging as staff have accepted higher-paying opportunities elsewhere. Mrs. Welles also updated the Board on the progress of the new Transit building, stating that construction is projected to be completed by August 17, with only the installation of backordered doors expected to delay completion. She praised the contractor for staying ahead of schedule, noting that painting, drywall, HVAC installation, and other major work have already been completed. Mrs. Welles informed the Board that the grant funding intended to expand next-day transit service and provide transportation for after-school programs in Bristol was vetoed by the Governor. She explained that the grant was supplemental to the department's regular funding, so Transit operations will not be impacted, although the additional services would have been beneficial. She added that while the veto affected Liberty County's request, she understood the decision based on the size of funding requests submitted by some larger counties.

- Tera Hinson - SHIP Director
    - Everything is going well.
- Ben Guthrie – Emergency Management Director
    - At a training but on the agenda.
- Kaly Barfield – Grants and Special Projects Coordinator
    - On the agenda.
- Kaly Barfield - Building Department
    - Nothing to report.
- Dewberry - County Engineer
    - Noah stated that Roberts & Roberts started construction on HWY 3798 with the widening resurfacing project.

6. Motion to Amend Agenda

Minutes:

- Agenda does not need to be amended.

7. Adoption of the Agenda

Minutes:

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

8. Motion to Approve Consent Items

Minutes:

- Motion to approve consent items by Commissioner Arnold 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. Human Resource Management

12. **Budget Resolution 2026-22 (BR #10)**
13. **Road & Bridge - Nextran Trade-In**
14. **Kaly Barfield - EMS PCCO #4**

PRESENTATIONS & UPDATES

15. **Tax Collector - 2025 Tax Roll Errors & Insolvencies**

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford presented the 2025 Tax Roll Errors & Insolvencies Report submitted by the Tax Collector's Office as a Receive and File item. He explained that the report is for informational purposes only and reflects adjustments made to the tax roll after tax collection, including corrections for bankruptcies, foreclosures, and other qualifying changes, as well as early payment discounts. No Board action was required.

16. **Clerk Ford - Update on Waste Pro Services**

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford informed the Board that the Clerk's Office has received several calls regarding trash collection issues and has been working directly with Waste Pro to help resolve resident concerns. He emphasized that although the County no longer handles solid waste billing, it still has a responsibility to assist citizens and serve as an advocate when problems arise. Clerk Ford noted that Waste Pro representatives were present to answer questions and suggested that, if directed by the Board, the Clerk's Office could prepare a formal letter to Waste Pro regarding ongoing concerns.
- Waste Pro Regional Manager Lloyd Childrey acknowledged the recent service issues, explaining that they have primarily been caused by labor shortages and equipment problems. He assured the Board that Waste Pro is committed to improving service and introduced Divisional Vice President Rick Chancy to discuss corrective actions.
- Waste Pro Divisional Vice President Rick Chancy thanked the Board for its partnership with Waste Pro and outlined several steps being taken to improve service. He announced the implementation of a new complaint tracking system, TrackEZ, which will provide the Clerk's Office with direct access to enter and monitor service complaints. The system will allow both the County and Waste Pro to track complaints from submission through resolution and generate regular reports for accountability.
- Mr. Chancy also explained that temporary service interruptions can occur when accounts are placed on hold for nonpayment or when specialized equipment is unavailable. He reported that staffing levels have improved and that a new specialized collection truck has been approved and is expected to arrive later this year. He stated that complaint numbers have already begun to decrease.
- During Board discussion, Clerk Ford requested that Waste Pro consider providing bill credits to customers when trash collection is missed through no fault of the customer. Mr. Chancy responded that Waste Pro already issues

credits when appropriate and typically attempts to return for missed collections within 24 hours.

- Board members expressed appreciation for Waste Pro's responsiveness and willingness to address concerns. During public comment, Mrs. Fran reported that a collection truck had spilled debris near the Estiffanulga Boat Landing. Mr. Chancy apologized for the issue, stated that Waste Pro would clean the area, and provided his direct contact information to report similar incidents in the future.

ACTION ITEMS

17. County Attorney Hosford - Data Center Moratorium

Minutes:

- County Attorney Ken Hosford presented additional information regarding a proposed temporary moratorium on hyperscale data centers following the Board's authorization for him to draft an ordinance. He explained that hyperscale data centers can reach up to 15 million square feet and referenced the proposed 1,300-acre facility in Fort Meade as an example. Mr. Hosford stated that concerns surrounding these facilities include significant water consumption, electrical demand, noise, and potential impacts on surrounding properties. He noted that recent state legislation requires future facilities to use reclaimed water rather than groundwater for cooling systems. Mr. Hosford informed the Board that numerous Florida counties have already adopted or are considering one-year moratoriums to allow time to study the impacts and develop local regulations. He also explained that Liberty County's Land Development Code does not currently address hyperscale data centers, making it important for the County to evaluate appropriate regulations before any proposals are submitted. Board members discussed the need to better understand the potential impacts of these facilities, particularly water usage, power demands, and compatibility with rural communities. Mr. Hosford estimated that water consumption could range from 500,000 to more than 1 million gallons per day, although newer facilities are increasingly utilizing reclaimed water, geothermal cooling systems, and other technologies to reduce environmental impacts.
- Motion to authorize the County Attorney to draft an ordinance establishing a temporary moratorium on hyperscale data centers made by Commissioner Arnold and seconded by Commissioner Johnson. Motion Carried.

18. Kaly Barfield - OVID Administration Contract

Minutes:

- Kaly Barfield presented the recommended contract with Ovid for the Veterans Park Improvement Project. Ovid was selected as the top-ranked bidder by the committee during the previous bid review process. The contract will provide administration services for the Veterans Park grant-funded improvements.
- Motion to approve the Ovid Administration Contract for the Veterans Park Improvement Project made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by

Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

19. Kaly Barfield - Veterans Park CDBG CEI

Minutes:

- Kaly Barfield presented the recommended contract with Dewberry for Construction Engineering and Inspection (CEI) services for the Veterans Park Improvement Project. Dewberry was selected to provide CEI services for the grant-funded project improvements.
- Motion to approve the Dewberry CEI Contract for the Veterans Park Improvement Project made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

20. Dewberry - Safety Action Plan

Minutes:

- Noah Byler presented a task order with Dewberry to develop a Safety Action Plan for Liberty County as part of the U.S. Department of Transportation's Safe Streets for All (SS4A) grant program. The Safety Action Plan will evaluate roadway conditions throughout the County, identify safety concerns, document potential improvements, and use data-driven analysis to support future grant applications for roadway safety improvements. The plan will serve as the first step toward eligibility for future SS4A implementation funding, which may provide construction funding for identified safety improvements such as roadway widening, culvert improvements, guardrail enhancements, and other safety-related projects.
- Motion to approve the Dewberry Task Order to perform the Safety Action Plan for Liberty County as part of the U.S. DOT Safe Streets for All Grant Program made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

21. Melissa Peddie - Firetruck Trade

Minutes:

- Ambulance Director Melissa Peddie presented a request for the County to consider an equipment exchange with Sycamore Volunteer Fire Department. Sycamore has offered to trade their 2005 Ford F-350 brush truck for an older County truck currently located at the Road Department that is no longer in service and is scheduled for auction. The Sycamore brush truck has some minor issues but can be repaired and would provide a needed working brush truck for the department.
- Motion to approve the exchange of the unused County truck with Sycamore Volunteer Fire Department for their 2005 Ford F-350 brush truck, contingent upon Sycamore's approval, made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.
- Ambulance Director Melissa Peddie addressed the Board regarding the upcoming budget process and requested the Board consider allowing a portion of available funds from the school zone camera program to be used to supplement the Ambulance Department's budget. Director Peddie stated the

additional funding would assist with balancing the department's budget and supporting operational needs. No action was taken; the request was presented for Board consideration during the budget process.

22. Ben Guthrie - Debris Monitoring & Removal Recommendations

Minutes:

- Debris Monitoring and Collection Post-Storm RFP Update: Staff provided an update regarding the Request for Proposals (RFP) for post-storm debris monitoring and collection services. The RFP period has closed, and the County received numerous responses. Staff will review the submitted proposals and develop a recommendation for the Board's consideration at a future meeting.
- No action was taken.

23. Apalachee RRTP - Central Avenue Multi-Use Path

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford presented a request to add the City of Bristol's proposed eight-foot multi-use path project to the Appalachian Regional Planning Council's (ARPC) Rural Regional Transportation Plan (RRTP). The project would extend from the Red Barn area in Bristol to the Bristol Motor Speedway area. Clerk Ford explained that projects included on regional transportation plans receive additional consideration when applying for grant funding, including the Transportation Alternatives Program. Liberty County has an available project slot within its five allotted RRTP projects, and adding this project would support future funding opportunities for the City of Bristol and improve regional pedestrian connectivity.
- Motion to approve adding the City of Bristol multi-use path project to the Appalachian Regional Rural Transportation Plan made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

24. Clerk Ford - Meeting Schedule

Minutes:

- Staff discussed the need to schedule additional meetings due to the upcoming budget season and to address the previously discussed moratorium topic. Staff recommended holding a budget workshop with Constitutional Officers on July 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. due to upcoming budget deadlines, with additional discussion regarding the data center moratorium topic to be scheduled separately. The Board discussed holding a special workshop on August 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. prior to the regularly scheduled 6:00 p.m. Board meeting to discuss the moratorium topic and receive additional information regarding data centers.
- Motion to approve the July 23, 2026, meeting at 6:00 p.m., and a special workshop on August 6, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. prior to the regularly scheduled 6:00 p.m. meeting for moratorium discussion made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion Carried.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

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

Minutes:

- Not in attendance.

26. **Jim Johnson, Commissioner - District 3**

Minutes:

- Nothing to address.

27. **Doyle Brown, Vice Chairman - District 4**

Minutes:

- Nothing to address.

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

Minutes:

- Nothing to address.

29. **Ken Hosford, County Attorney**

Minutes:

- Nothing to address.

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

Minutes:

- Nothing to address.

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

Minutes:

- Clerk Ford provided an update regarding state budget appropriations approved by the Governor. Liberty County received funding for several projects, including $150,000 for a plan update, $750,000 for a site purchase near GP, and $550,000 for a new fire tanker truck. Additionally, the Sheriff's Office received $350,000 for radio equipment, and Talquin received $300,000 for fire flow protection improvements within Liberty County. In total, Liberty County-related appropriations totaled approximately $2 million, including County, Sheriff's Office, and Talquin-related funding.
- Staff provided an update regarding the upcoming ethics and HR training previously scheduled for August 6, 2026. The training has been postponed due to scheduling conflicts with the presenters. Once new dates are provided, the training will be rescheduled for elected officials and department heads to satisfy required ethics training hours.

32. **Motion to Adjourn**

Minutes:

- Motion to adjourn made by Commissioner Johnson and seconded by Commissioner Arnold. Motion carried; meeting adjourned at 6:53 PM.

33. 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."
