

**FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
COURTHOUSE ANNEX, COMMISSION MEETING ROOM
JULY 16, 2025
9:00 AM
MINUTES**

Commissioners Present: Ricky Jones-Chairman, Jessica Ward-Vice-Chairman, Cheryl Sanders, Office Amison, and Anthony Croom, Jr.

Others Present: Michele Maxwell-Clerk of Court, Michael Shuler-County Attorney, Michael Moron-County Coordinator, Erin Griffith-Fiscal Manager/Grants Coordinator, and Jessica Gay-Clerk to the Board

Call to Order

Chairman Jones called the meeting to order.

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Chairman Jones led the Board in prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the Agenda

Mr. Moron noted that his report was posted late to the agenda yesterday evening. The Board may feel you need to get public comments on my report, most of it is informational or consent.

On a motion by Commissioner Amison, seconded by Commissioner Croom, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the agenda as published. Motion carried 5-0.

Approval of Minutes and Payment of County Bills

1. Approval of Minutes
2. County Bill List for Payment

On a motion by Commissioner Sanders, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the FCBCC Regular Meeting Minutes from May 16, 2025, and July 2, 2025, and the Payment of County Bills. Motion carried 5-0.

Awards and Recognitions

3. Danny Gay -- Resolution of Appreciation

**RESOLUTION OF
APPRECIATION AND THANKS
Presented to
Danny Gay**

WHEREAS Danny Gay, Assistant Finance Director, has demonstrated exceptional leadership, dedication, and technical expertise in managing the successful implementation of a new phone system for the county offices and some constitutional offices; and

WHEREAS this complex and critical project required extensive planning, coordination, and problem-solving, all of which Danny carried out with professionalism, patience, and a tireless work ethic; and

WHEREAS the new phone system has significantly improved internal and external communication, streamlined operations, and enhanced overall workplace efficiency; and

WHEREAS Danny devoted countless hours – often beyond his regular duties – to ensure the project’s smooth execution, showing a true commitment to the success of the department and the well-being of his colleagues.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOVLED that we, the Franklin County Board of County Commissioners, extend our heartfelt gratitude and sincere appreciation to Danny Gay for his outstanding contributions, unwavering dedication, and exemplary service.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that this resolution be formally recorded, and a copy be presented to Danny Gay as a lasting expression of our thanks and recognition this 16th day of July 2025.

Ricky D. Jones, Chairman
Franklin County Board of County Commissioners

On a motion by Commissioner Sanders, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the Resolution of Appreciation and Thanks presented to Danny Gay. Commissioner Croom noted that your dedication to the Clerk's office and the county does not go unnoticed. **Motion carried 5-0.**

Commissioner Ward echoed Commissioner Croom's sentiments. Commissioner Ward noted that many of our employees where multiple hats that they do not necessarily have to wear. Thank you for your dedication. Commissioner Sanders echoed. Commissioner Amison noted that he deserves two awards because he keeps him straight. Chairman Jones noted that this is an extension of who he is. He is like this in everything that he is involved in. Mr. Moron noted that we started on this project years ago, salespeople say it is easy. Mr. Moron noted that what we have is really good. You guys will see the benefits of it. Mr. Moron noted that we have needed a new system for years. Mr. Moron noted that it is embedded in Microsoft Teams, and it is needed for the future. Mr. Moron noted that Danny is running the system and any issues are directed to him. Mr. Moron noted that a network for Mr. Davis' department had to be built before the installation of their phones. Thanked the Clerk for allowing him to invest hours into this project.

Clerk Maxwell noted that the phone system was at least twenty-one years. She noted that she appreciated Danny taking the lead. He was able to disconnect 4 phone lines. \$25K savings annually.

Danny appreciated all of the comments and noted that he could not have done it without Clerk Maxwell allowing him to and noted that Mr. Moron was his right-hand man.

Public Comments

There were no public comments.

Department Directors Reports

4. Jennifer Daniels – Emergency Management Director

1. Franklin County Emergency Management is requesting retroactive approval of the signing of the extension of the Local State of Emergency on Friday, July 11th, 2025, at 6:15pm on behalf of the city of Apalachicola.

On a motion by Commissioner Amison, seconded by Commissioner Croom, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the retroactive signing of the extension of the Local State of Emergency on Friday, July 11th, 2025, at 6:15pm on behalf of the city of Apalachicola. Motion carried 5-0.

2. Franklin County Emergency Management is requesting the board's approval to sign the extension of the Local State of Emergency on Friday July 18th, 2025 @ 6:15pm on the behalf of the city of Apalachicola.

On a motion by Commissioner Amison, seconded by Commissioner Croom, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the extension of the Local State of Emergency on Friday July 18th, 2025 @ 6:15pm on the behalf of the city of Apalachicola. Motion carried 5-0.

3. Franklin County Emergency Management is requesting the board's signature and approval of the MOA with Big Bend Transit to transport Special Needs Registrants to a shelter during an evacuation.

On a motion by Commissioner Croom, seconded by Commissioner Sanders, and by a unanimous vote

of the Board present, the Board approved the MOA with Big Bend to transport Special Needs Registrants to a shelter during an evacuation. Motion carried 5-0.

4. Franklin County Emergency Management is requesting the board's signature and approval of the Emergency Preparedness and Assistance Grant in the amount of \$105,806.00.

On a motion by Commissioner Sanders, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the Emergency Preparedness and Assistance Grant in the amount of \$105,806.00. Motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Ward noted that she received a call from Commissioner Newman out of Taylor County and he secured eighteen pallets of water for Franklin County. They delivered it on Monday. I want to thank Mrs. Daniels and her crew. Jennifer and I talked about doing a pop-up day at the EOC. Mrs. Daniels noted that she has been talking about they have a lot of water at the EOC and discussing doing a POD and let people drive thru. Working out details with the city and hopefully have something set up soon. I know they have been trying to give some to Head Start and the Matchbox. Commissioner Ward noted that we discussed ECCC. Commissioner Ward noted that she wanted to thank Commissioner Michael Newman, he is in Taylor County, and they have been hard hit by the hurricanes. She also thanked Blue Artic Water. Commissioner Ward noted that she appreciated Mrs. Daniels and her staff for coordinating and taking care of this delivery. Mr. Moron asked if the Board would like to make a motion to send a letter of appreciation. **On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Sanders and Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board directed staff to send a letter of appreciation to Commissioner Newman and the Taylor County Board of County Commissioners. Motion carried 5-0.**

County Staff & Attorney Reports

5. Erin Griffith – Fiscal Manager/Grants Coordinator **a. Request For Proposal -- Design Engineering Services**

The Franklin County Board of County Commissioners is seeking civil engineering services relating to the design of improvements for the Otterslide/Avenue A to Vrooman Park Sidewalks Project. The scope of the project will include the surveying, design, permitting and preparation of construction plans and bid documents for a new 5' sidewalk on the west side of Otterslide Road from Ridge Road to Avenue A and a 5' sidewalk on the north side Avenue A from Otterslide Road to Vrooman Park in Eastpoint, FL as identified in the County's Local Agency Participation contract with the Florida Department of Transportation. The scope also includes design standards to ensure the sidewalks will be ADA compliant. The complete scope of services can be found in Section 1.2 of the Request for Proposals Package. Consideration will be given to only those firms that are qualified pursuant to law and that are qualified pursuant to law and that have been prequalified by FDOT to perform the indicated types of work.

A. REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS: CIVIL ENGINEERING SERVICES OTTERSLLIDE/AVENUE A SIDEWALKS PROJECT

The County is opening responses today for an RFQ solicitation for civil engineering services for the surveying, design, permitting and preparation of construction plans and bid documents for a new 5' sidewalk on the west side of Otterslide Road from Ridge Road to Avenue A and a 5' sidewalk on the north side Avenue A from Otterslide Road to Vrooman Park in Eastpoint, FL as identified in the County's Local Agency Participation contract with the Florida Department of Transportation. The scope also includes design standards to ensure the sidewalks will be ADA compliant. *Board action to release the responses to the three-member ranking/review committee: County Planner Bree Robinson, Cortni Bankston, and Kimberly Raffield.*

Baskerville Donovan, Inc.	449 West Main Street, Pensacola, FL 32502
---------------------------	--

North Florida Professional Services, Inc.	PO Box 3823, Lake City, FL 32056
Dewberry Engineers, Inc	324 Marina Drive, Port St. Joe. FL 32456
Inovia Consulting Group	401 East 9 th Avenue, Tallahassee, FL 32303
J Brown Professional Group, Inc.	3530 NW 43 rd Street, Gainesville, FL 32606

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board authorized staff to release the responses to the three-member ranking/review committee: County Planner Bree Robinson, Cortni Bankston, and Kimberly Raffield. Commissioner Ward noted that she is happy to see this moving along. This is movement, progress. Motion carried 5-0.

Chairman Jones noted that he would like to speak on items 6, 11 and 12. Commissioner Croom noted that he would like to speak on item 8.

On a motion by Commissioner Croom, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved items 1-5, 7, 9 and 10. Motion carried 5-0.

The Board moved to item 6 at this time.

1. BOARD ACTION: NOTICE OF AWARD AND CONSTRUCTION CONTRACT: FORT COOMBS ARMORY & CONVENTION CENTER RENOVATION

At the June 18th meeting, the Board opened bid responses for the Fort Coombs Armory and Convention Center Phase II Renovations. These renovations will be funded by tourist development sales tax proceeds as authorized by Florida Statute 125. The project scope includes the following: 1) renovation of the existing multi-purpose room to install a new ADA compliant toilet room, small multi-purpose room and associated mechanical, electrical, plumbing and fire sprinkler systems, 2) renovations of the existing corridor hallway and ramp, installing a new ADA compliant ramp, trim work and doorway to the multi-purpose room, 3) renovations of the existing exterior windows, interior running wood trim, and wood doors in the main hall and offices on the first and second levels, demolition, repairs and installation of new shingle and membrane roof systems, 4) re-finishing the existing wood floors in the main hall, corridors and offices, 5) installation of new glass globes on the existing lighting fixtures and new electrical outlets in the main hall and renovations of the main entrance doors, 6) painting of the interior, other interior improvements, 7) cleaning and painting of the exterior brick facade, and 8) other work indicated in the contract documents. The architects have reviewed the bids that were received and recommend awarding the base bid \$920,768 and the alternate \$18,000 (new entry doors) to the lowest bidder, F&F Construction. *Board action to approve issuance of the notice of award to F&F Construction in the amount of \$938,768 and authorize the chairman's signature on the contract documents once available.*

2. BOARD ACTION: RESTORE COUNTY-WIDE DUNE VEGETATION PROJECT – NOTICE TO PROCEED

On July 8th, the county received the 'Notice to Proceed' from the U.S. Treasury for the County-Wide Dune Vegetation Project. After yesterday's pre-construction meeting with the turtle monitoring license holders for the project areas and discussion as to the quantity of nests, although it is possible to plant during nesting season, the contractor has agreed to hold the plants for the county and begin installation of the plants after the conclusion of sea turtle nesting season. The attached notice to proceed from the county to the contractor will have an official start date of November 1st, 2025 – the contractor expects to mobilize and be onsite by the end of the month. This project will have a low impact as the vendor will be moving quickly along beachfront areas planting the sea oats by hand. *Board action to approve and authorize the chairman's signature on the attached Notice to Proceed for the RESTORE County-wide Dune Vegetation Project.*

3. BOARD ACTION: RESTORE SGI STORMWATER PROJECT – NOTICE TO PROCEED

On June 30th, the county received the ‘Notice to Proceed’ from the U.S. Treasury for the SGI Stormwater Project. As reported previously, the county had opted to delay issuance of the notice to proceed to the contractor for the project until after Labor Day as the original intent was to do the project outside of peak summer tourism season (although the federal timeline moved at a different pace). On July 11th, the County, impacted utility providers, contractors, and the project’s CEI engineer Jack Husband of Southeastern Consulting participated in a pre-construction meeting (meeting agenda attached to this report) held by FDOT’s CEI contractors for FDOT’s SR300 Resurfacing Project (from the intersection of Highway 98 and Island Drive, Eastpoint, crossing the St. George Island Bridge to the intersection of Franklin Boulevard and CR300 Gulf Beach Drive, SGI). FDOT’s project includes the milling and resurfacing of roadways in this area, bridge restriping and sidewalk construction. FDOT’s intent was to start construction on their project at the end of this month. After much coordination between the county’s CEI Southeastern and contractor North Florida Construction with FDOT’s contractors and staff, FDOT has reluctantly agreed to delay their project start as well until after Labor Day to allow the county time to rework the retention pond areas on St. George (so as to not damage FDOT’s new pavement).

FDOT will now begin their resurfacing project in October to allow the county to complete the stipulated work along Franklin Boulevard in September. If there is any major relocation work/box construction that needs to occur in the vicinity of Franklin Boulevard before that date to avoid conflict with the water utility, the county may need to revisit and issue a limited NTP with an earlier date. In August, the county will provide a tentative construction schedule and work zones by approximate date range to the public. Local contractors and the CEI engineers will make every effort possible to minimize disruption during completion of the county’s project. *Board action to approve and authorize the chairman to sign the attached Notice to Proceed with contractor North Florida Construction with an official NTP date of Wednesday, September 3rd.*

4. BOARD ACTION: NOTICE OF INTENT TO AWARD AND CONTRACT HEALTH DEPARTMENT SIDING REPAIR PROJECT

At the last meeting, the Board opened bids for the siding repairs at the Apalachicola Health Department. The bids were released to the project architects BFBS for their review and recommendation. BFBS has reviewed and recommends issuance of the attached notice of award to low bidder OliverSperry at \$141,900 with unit costs for damage/rot repair items (material and labor included): insulation: \$150.00 / unit, sheathing \$138.00 / unit, wood studs \$4.50 / linear foot. *Board action to approve and authorize the chairman to sign the attached notice of award and construction contract documents with OliverSperry Renovation once available.*

3. BOARD ACTION: DISTRICT 3 STRIPING CHANGE ORDER

Contractor Emerald Coast Striping has completed the contracted striping work for Districts 2 and District 3 except for several roads in District 3 which proved to be too narrow for the contractor’s striping equipment: Sawyer Lane, 18th Street, 21st Street, 23rd Street, Morris Cannon and Whispering Pines. The attached change order is for a contract price reduction of \$9,160 for the removal of the roadway sections that were not possible for the contractor to stripe. *Board action to approve and authorize the chairman to sign the attached deductive change order for contractor Emerald Coast Striping.*

4. BOARD ACTION: SHERIFF’S DEPT LAW ENFORCEMENT SALARY ASSISTANCE AGREEMENT

The Florida Legislature has approved the fourth-year funding of law enforcement salary assistance for fiscally constrained counties in efforts to bring the pay of law enforcement more in line with larger/better funded counties and state law enforcement. As part of the grant agreement, the Sheriff’s Department is required to submit a spending plan to FDLE to outline how the funds will be allocated to eligible employees. In the attached spending plan from the Sheriff’s Office, the \$659,604 annual allocation will be distributed as follows (excerpt pasted below):

The Franklin County Sheriff's Office has been allocated \$659,604 in LESA funding for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. These funds will be used to increase the annual base salaries of our Deputy Sheriffs and Correctional Officers. Base salary for each employee is different, due to the number of years, level of experience, and other contributing factors. All Deputy Sheriffs and Correctional Officers will receive \$6,000 per year plus benefits for a total of \$8,570.83 in LESA Payments.

Officers ranked at Sergeant or below will receive an additional \$2,190 per year plus benefits for a grand total of \$11,699.02 annually LESA funding.

Board action to grant approval and authorization to the chairman to sign the attached Law Enforcement Salary Assistance Agreement with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for the Franklin County Sheriff's Department.

Chairman Jones asked if this went up from last year. Mrs. Griffith noted that it did go up, last year it was \$500k something. Chairman Jones confirmed that anyone who is a sergeant or below will get the additional \$2190.

On a motion by Commissioner Amison, seconded by Commissioner Ward, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the Law Enforcement Assistance Agreement with the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for the Franklin County Sheriff's Department and authorized the Chairman to sign. Commissioner Ward noted that she wished they would do this for everyone. **Motion carried 5-0.**

5. BOARD ACTION: USDA LIBRARY LOANS ASSUMPTION AGREEMENT

In June, after many months of silence from the USDA, the county executed letters of intent for the Eastpoint Library USDA Loan Assumption (attached for reference). The letters of intent attested that the county 'intended' to meet the conditions that were originally stipulated for the loans. Upon receipt of the signed letters of intent, the USDA prepared the attached assumption agreement. The two loans originated in 2013 will be assumed for the current outstanding principal value for loan #97-01 \$125,759.15 at 4%, and #97-03 \$26,508.30 at 3.50%, both loans to be paid in full in 17 years. *Board action to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the attached loan assumption agreement pending review and approval from County Attorney Michael Shuler.*

6. BOARD ACTION: EMERGENCY REPAIRS WEEMS HOSPITAL ER PARKING AREA STORM WATER & SEWER PIPE COLLAPSE

After the last meeting and the torrential downpour which occurred earlier that week, an old stormwater pipe collapsed beneath the Weems Hospital ER parking area. The Stormwater Pipe ran from behind the health department, across the parking area, under the CT trailer to a distant storm sewer inlet. Upon emergency excavation, it was noted that the large Duke Energy transformer will also need to be stabilized as the base was impacted by the collapse. That repair will be coordinated by Duke at a later date. The county contacted King's Plumbing and Coastline Clearing and Development for the emergency repairs, suction pump service, excavation work and necessary pavement patch work. King's Plumbing submitted the attached \$2,380 invoice for their portion of the emergency repair and excavation, pavement patching and vac truck service will not exceed \$15,000. It was urgent that the repairs be made immediately as sediment from the collapsed pipe was infiltrating the City's storm sewer system. *Board action to approve payment for the emergency repair from the county's Health Care Trust Fund.*

Mr. Moron noted that we received a call yesterday and there is another hole near the transfer station. Commissioner Croom noted that is why he wanted to bring this up because he was notified of the additional hole as well. **On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Croom, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved payment for the emergency repair from the county's Health Care Trust Fund.**

Commissioner Ward noted that this is not undermining anything at the hospital. Mr. Moron noted that he believes everything is taken care of, but he will check this afternoon. **Motion carried 5-0.**

7. BOARD ACTION: US ARMY CORP OF ENGINEERS REQUEST FOR PLANNING ASSISTANCE STUDY – CRITICALLY ERODING BEACHFRONT SHORELINE SEGMENT IN THE ST. GEORGE ISLAND PLANTATION

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has classified the 1.7 miles of shoreline east of Sike's Cut as "Critically Eroded". FDEP defines a "Critically Eroded" shoreline as a shoreline "where natural processes or human activity have caused or contributed to erosion and recession of the beach or dune system to such a degree that upland development, recreational interests, wildlife habitat, or important cultural resources are threatened or lost." This range of shoreline falls within the St. George Plantation Homeowners Association.

In October, the county sent a Section 111 relief request to the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers. This request resulted in an on-site visit by USACE staff at the end of June. During the meeting, the USACE relayed that the Section 111 program would not be the best fit for a path forward as the erosion was likely not caused by the Corp channel (and even mentioned that it was likely that the channel with the jetties that extend off the beach were actually slowing the loss of sand) and the Section 111 relief request would most likely never advance as the channel was a pre-existing condition, i.e.. development occurred after the channel was constructed. The on-site visit summary is attached to this report for reference.

During discussion, the USACE suggested instead that the county pursue a study of the sediment transport and current through the USACE's Planning Assistance to States Program. This summary report would also include recommendations for how erosion could be mitigated in the future (a variety of possible solutions mentioned could be an extension in the length/size of the jetties, construction of offshore beach groins, or other forms of beach restoration efforts). This summary report will also provide the scientific data needed to be able to pursue grant opportunities and permits for the recommended solutions. The cost share for this type of planning assistance is 50%, and the attached letter of request includes the statement that the county "is committed to this effort and are willing to support the study if a funding source for the county's 50% cost share can be identified/secured in the future." Once the Army Corp responds with an estimate of the cost of such a study, Franklin County can then begin efforts to find/secure funding for the 50% match through various grant programs or possibly seek a Legislative Line-Item Appropriation Request during next year's session to assist with the match.

An excerpt from the request letter to the USACE is pasted below:

"This letter is in reference to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' (USACE) Planning Assistance to States (PAS) Program. The Franklin County Commission is requesting the USACE provide technical services in accordance with Section 22 of the Water Resources Development Act of 1974.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has classified the 1.7 miles of shoreline east of Sike's Cut as "Critically Eroded." FDEP defines a "Critically Eroded" shoreline as a shoreline "where natural processes or human activity have caused or contributed to erosion and recession of the beach or dune system to such a degree that upland development, recreational interests, wildlife habitat, or important cultural resources are threatened or lost." This range of shoreline falls within the St. George Plantation Homeowners Association.

There is a need to study the cause of erosion on the beaches adjacent to Bob Sike's Cut, located within the coastal community of St. George Island in Franklin County, Florida. This effort will include working with the Franklin County Commission to gather information and develop a sediment transport model to better understand the movement of sediment in the system. The modeling efforts will evaluate hydrodynamics, existing bathymetry, native sediment characteristics, and historic hydrologic data. The data will then be used as inputs into the Coastal Modeling System (CMS) numerical model.

Deliverables will be the results of the CMS model, which will allow the determination of how particles move within the system. In addition, a summary report of findings will be developed to document recommendations on minimizing adjacent shoreline impacts.

The Franklin County Commission intends to serve as the sponsor for the project. We are aware that the study would be 50/50% cost-shared with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and that the project is limited to investigations and technical assistance only. We are committed to this effort and are willing to support the study if a funding source for the county's 50% cost share can be identified/secured in the future. Thank you for your assistance with this much needed project. Please contact Erin Griffith at erin@franklincountyflorida.com for further information or assistance." *Board action to approve sending the attached Planning Assistance to States Program request letter for the US Army Corp of Engineers to review/study the erosion along the beachfront areas near Bob Sikes Cut.*

8. BOARD ACTION: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR ST. GEORGE ISLAND STAKEHOLDERS GROUP FOR BEACH RESTORATION GRANT APPLICATIONS

Last week, I met with two members of a nonprofit group called the St. George Island Stakeholders. This group of independent property owners in the St. George Island Planation have asked for a letter of support from the county for their group to be able to pursue various grant opportunities as a nonprofit for beach restoration efforts within the area of critically eroding shoreline. The county does not specifically support or endorse any one group or another or any particular path forward concerning beach restoration. However, the county does usually support requests from other agencies and groups in their pursuit of state and federal funding assistance for various grant programs, which are often highly competitive and difficult to secure. The body of the draft letter of support reads as follows:

"The Franklin County Board of County Commissioners supports the efforts of the St. George Island Stakeholders to seek state or federal funding assistance for shoreline and dune restoration efforts between the monuments R52 and R63, a critically eroded segment of shoreline as designated by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection." *Board action – does the BOCC approve issuance of a letter of support for the group in their request to seek funding opportunities?*

11. BOARD ACTION: BUDGET WORKSHOP SCHEDULE

The budget workshops have been scheduled for Thursday, July 24th and Friday, July 25th. Upon conclusion of those meetings, the BOCC will authorize a millage rate that will go out on the TRIM (Truth in Millage) notices. The proposed millage rate that appears on the TRIM notice will be the maximum rate for the upcoming fiscal year, barring rare circumstances. Currently, budget requests are still coming in. The 2025 taxable value as certified by the Franklin County Property Appraiser increased by approximately 9.34% over the prior year. This year will prove to be especially challenging as there is a lot of economic uncertainty and large reductions in some state and federal program funds. The board will also be assuming operations of the ambulance service which will entail the creation of a new county department and the assumption and/or hire of approximately twenty employees. The tentative budget workshop schedule is attached, and I would like to poll the commission to see if you like the change whereas existing non-governmental agencies would only be asked to attend if they have an increase and will be included for discussion in the afternoon on the first day. The second scheduled day would be left open, to be filled only if needed.

All preliminary budget requests will be uploaded to the county website for review in the agenda link for the workshop. The Franklin County School Board receives priority for their public hearing dates. The Franklin County School Board has their final public hearing set for September 17th, 2025, Franklin County is the second priority taxing authority as far as setting public hearing dates for the budget.

Board action to approve (make selection) Monday or Tuesday, September 8th or 9th, for the first public hearing and Monday or Tuesday, September 22nd or September 23rd, 2025, as the final public hearing dates for the 2025/2026 county budget. Both public hearings will begin at 5:15 in the afternoon, Monday, September 8th and Monday September 22nd at 5:15 pm.

Chairman Jones noted that he is okay with handling the NGOs on the Thursday. Mr. Moron noted that the

workshops coming up on the 24th and the 25th are the board's time to interact with each department that you fund. The public hearings are when the public has time to interact with the board and ask for any changes. Mrs. Griffith noted that the workshops are also public, and the public can speak. Mrs. Griffith noted that all of the NGOs are the same this year. Mrs. Griffith noted that some were funded a one-time amount, and they will not be recurring. Commissioner Ward noted that she recently attended a class, and they are looking closely at NGOs. Mr. Moron asked if it was because of accountability? Commissioner Ward noted that it is basically an indebt audit like they do with counties. Commissioner Ward noted that they are looking at everyone. Mr. Moron noted that we may need to ask for more detailed information from our NOGs in the future.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Sanders, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved Monday, September 8th for the first public hearing and Monday, September 22nd for the final public hearing for the 2025/2026 county budget and to approve NGOs to be heard on Thursday, July 24th. Motion carried 5-0.

9. BOARD INFORMATION/DISCUSSION: BUDGET REQUESTS FROM DEPARTMENTS – NUMBERS TO DATE

The budget request letter sent to all constitutional offices and county departments read as follows:

“Franklin County is beginning preparations for the fiscal year 2025/2026 Budget. All budget requests must be submitted utilizing the forms provided by July 1st, 2025. At the direction of the Board, please keep your request to the minimum that your department can operate while providing the same level of services with the same number of employees. Funding requests for additional capital outlay beyond your current allocation is also discouraged. The State has extended the legislative session to address issues with the State's budget and proposed property tax reform. The financial impacts to the county's revenues are unknown at this time due to the pending legislative changes and uncertain national economic conditions.

In the current 2024/2025 budget, the county funded year five (in year four) of the five-year pay plan implementation and provided a 4% inflationary adjustment to bring salaries to current market rates. The five-year plan offered a statistical peer-data-based solution to address wage disparity, market value discrepancies, some wage compression issues and provided a gradual escalation in base salaries to meet the \$15.00 minimum wage mandate in 2026. The pay plan has addressed many of the county's issues with compression and has also resulted in improved employee retention and recruitment. A full pay plan re-evaluation is recommended every 5-7 years, and a full re-evaluation will be planned during the upcoming year. An inflationary general wage adjustment for all employees will be utilized for planning purposes in the upcoming budget. “

Please see the summarized budget requests received to date from constitutional offices and county departments:

CONSTITUTIONAL OFFICE / COUNTY DEPARTMENT	5 APPROVED BUDGET	5 REQUESTED BUDGET	CHANGE
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT	\$8,092,246.00	\$9,318,514.00	\$1,226,268.00
PROPERTY APPRAISER	\$891,443.00	\$988,224.00	\$96,781.00
TAX COLLECTOR	\$836,699.00	TBD	TBD
CLERK OF COURTS	\$464,565.00	TBD	TBD
SUPERVISOR OF ELECTIONS	\$589,591.00	\$618,927.00	\$29,336.00
ROAD DEPARTMENT	\$2,292,672.00	\$2,292,672.00	\$0.00
SOLID WASTE	\$1,727,500.00	\$1,727,500.00	\$0.00

ANIMAL CONTROL	\$293,700.00	\$341,351.00	\$47,651.00
PARKS & RECREATION	\$1,217,298.00	\$1,217,298.00	\$0.00
LIBRARY BUDGET INCREASE	\$589,591.00	\$618,927.00	\$29,336.00
COURTHOUSE MAINTENANCE	\$362,042.00	\$362,042.00	\$0.00
BUILDING DEPARTMENT	\$525,280.00	\$525,280.00	\$0.00
PLANNING & ZONING	\$177,436.00	\$212,838.00	\$35,402.00
ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES	\$212,411.00	\$213,911.00	\$1,500.00
FISCAL MANAGEMENT	\$181,968.00	TBD	TBD
EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT	\$369,814.00	TBD	TBD
VETERAN'S AFFAIRS	\$94,497.00	\$94,497.00	\$0.00
EXTENSION OFFICE	\$105,729.00	\$107,904.00	\$2,175.00
SENIOR SERVICES	\$0.00	\$39,041.00	\$39,041.00
AMBULANCE	PENDING	PENDING	TBD

Chairman Jones asked what the normal range is we would be doing for our employees. Mrs. Griffith noted that we were thinking 3-4%. Chairman Jones asked if this has been sent over to all of the departments. Chairman Joens noted that he is okay with 3-4% but that is where he is at. If we are doing everybody then we are doing everyone. Mrs. Griffith noted that we were thinking 4%. Mr. Moron noted that you did not ask anyone to put the increases in their budgets. Chairman Jones noted so that if we are asking them to redo them, we are asking them to take all of their raises out. Commissioner Ward noted that she thinks if one gets it, then they all should get it. If one office is asking for 15%, then all of our county offices should get that. They all work hard and do their jobs efficiently. So, if one department gets it then they all should. Commissioner Croom noted that we have to keep in mind that we are taking on a new department. We also have to look at healthcare. Commissioner Croom asked do we need to resend a letter? Mrs. Griffith noted that is at the discretion of the Board. There is only one department that has included the raises. Commissioner Ward noted that she does not think it is a bad idea to resend a letter and let them know where we are. Chairman Joens noted that he thinks it would be a good idea to send them something letting them know that they need to resend without raises. Commissioner Croom asked about the other increases, are those for raises? Mrs. Griffith noted that those seem to be operational.

10. BOARD INFORMATION: MISCELLANEOUS PROJECT UPDATES

- Lanark EMS –groundbreaking ceremony on July 11th was well attended – a folder of photos from the ceremony and open house is included as an attachment to this report.

EXCERPT OF TRIM PROPERTY TAX ADVERTISEMENT SCHEDULE – FOR PUBLIC HEARING DATES:

DAYS 65-80	
Sept. 3 – 18	<p>Within 65 to 80 days of certification of value, the taxing authority holds a public hearing on the tentative budget and proposed millage rate (final hearing for school districts). The TRIM notice, which the property appraiser mails, publicizes this hearing. At this hearing, the taxing authority:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amends the tentative budget • Re-calculates the proposed millage rate • Publicly announces the percentage, if any, by which the re-calculated proposed millage exceeds the rolled-back rate • Adopts a tentative millage and budget <p>If the tentatively adopted millage rate is greater than the proposed rate used for the TRIM notice, each taxpayer in the jurisdiction must receive notification of the increase by first class mail at the taxing authority's expense (s. 200.065(2)(d), F.S.).</p>
DAY 95	
Sept. 18 – Oct. 3 (Could be as early as September 4 depending on the tentative hearing date)	<p>Within 15 days after the tentative budget hearing, the taxing authority advertises its intent to adopt a final millage and budget.</p> <p>The taxing authority must advertise a</p> <p>Notice of Proposed Tax Increase if the tentatively adopted millage rate is greater than the rolled-back rate. The advertisement must be a quarter page and headed, "Notice of Proposed Tax Increase" (s. 200.065(3)(a), F.S.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">or</p> <p>a Notice of Budget Hearing if the tentatively adopted millage rate is equal to or less than the rolled-back rate. This advertisement does not have a size requirement and will be headed, "Notice of Budget Hearing" (s. 200.065(3)(b), F.S.)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">and</p> <p>a Budget Summary advertisement, which must be adjacent to the advertisement for the final hearing and meet the requirements of s. 129.03(3)(b), F.S. (s. 200.065(3)(l), F.S.)</p>
DAYS 97-100	
(Could be as early as September 6 depending on the advertisement date)	<p>Hold the public hearing to adopt the final millage rate and budget two to five days after the advertisement appears in the newspaper or publicly accessible website (s. 200.065(2)(e), F.S.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss the percentage increase in millage over the rolled-back rate first. • Adopt the millage before adopting the budget by a separate vote. • Do not adopt a final millage rate that exceeds the tentative millage rate. • Before adopting the millage levy resolution or ordinance, publicly announce: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The name of the taxing authority • The rolled-back rate • The percentage increase over the rolled-back rate • The millage rate to be levied

The Board moved to the following item at this time.

7. 10:00 a.m. (ET) Jon C. Creamer (Northwest Regional Director) -- FWC -- Update

This is a time certain agenda item. It cannot be heard prior to the agenda time but should be heard at that time or as soon thereafter as possible. FWC staff will provide an update on the Apalachicola Bay Oyster Restoration project and discuss what information will be presented at the upcoming FWC Commission meeting.

Ms. Erica Burgess presented a PowerPoint.

Apalachicola Bay Oyster Management and Statewide Rule Development

Overarching Goals for Apalachicola Bay

Overarching goals

- Restore 2,000 acres by 2032
- Re-establish oyster fishery with long term clutching program

Path forward

- Short-term steps:
 - Limited opening of the fishery
 - Conduct restoration (contingent on funding)
 - Continue to keep some areas closed
- Near and long-term steps:
 - Secure funding for restoration and maintenance
 - Annual budget between \$30-\$55 million (contingent on funding)

Why is FWC Considering Rulemaking?

- Old harvest regulations do not match the current state of the resource
- Many estuaries in Florida have lost 80-90% of oyster reefs
- Apalachicola Bay's oysters collapsed in 2013
- Apalachicola Bay's oyster fishery closed in 2020
 - Closure is scheduled to sunset on January 1, 2026

Public Workshops to Inform Rule Development

- Apalachicola – April 15
- Pensacola – April 16
- Cedar Key – April 22
- St. Augustine – April 29
- Virtual – May 1
- Apalachicola – June 3
- Virtual – June 5
- Virtual – June 26

Objectives for Proposed Rules

Apalachicola Bay

- Create a new management framework for oyster harvest
 - Establish ecological threshold to open reefs
 - Allow conservative harvest levels to support long-term success
 - Provide commercial and recreational harvest opportunities
 - Resume clutching program for harvested reefs

Statewide

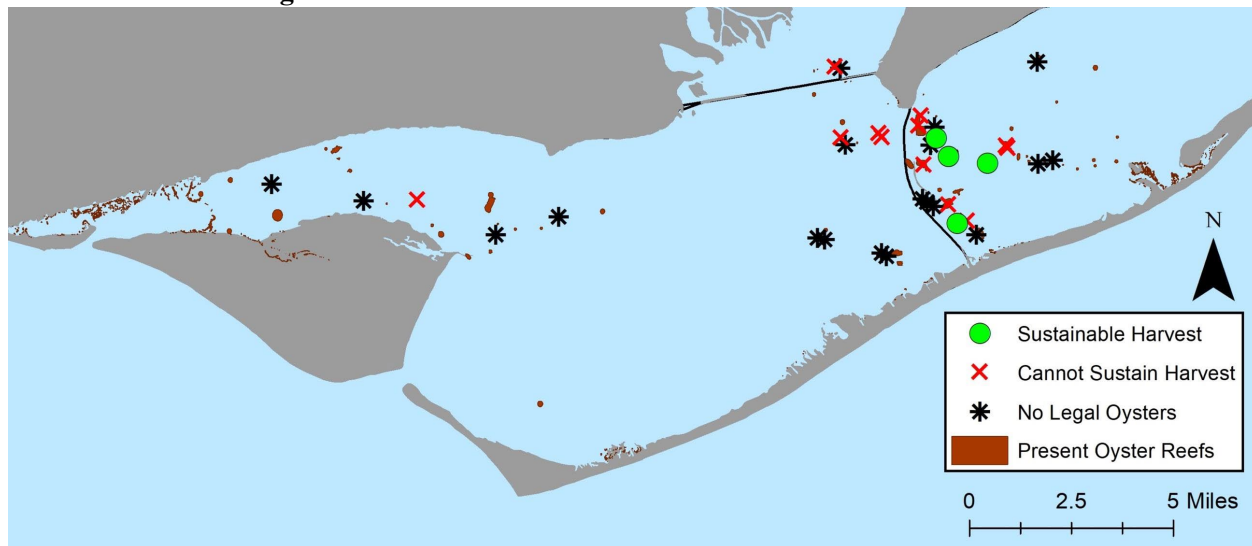
- Reduce removals of undersized oysters and substrate from reefs to minimize reef loss

Recommendation for Proposed Management Framework

- Establish a process for determining when to open a reef and setting reef-specific harvest limits
- Establish a procedure for distributing annual harvest limits (bag tags) to participants
 - Commercial
 - Recreational
- Season: Oct. 1 through end of February (first season Oct. 1, 2026)
 - Commercial: Monday-Friday
 - Recreational: Saturday-Sunday
- Establish Commercial Apalachicola Bay (AB) endorsement
 - Option 1: Maximize individual opportunity
 - Option 2: Maximize number of participants
 - Qualifications: Individual or Crew SPL, Shellfish (BV) endorsement, Florida resident, prior landings (year 1 only)
- Establish Apalachicola Bay Recreational Oyster (ABRO) permit

- Issued through lottery each year
- Mandatory reporting and landing locations
- Re-establish clutching program (dependent on funding)
- Update statewide culling requirements and undersized oyster tolerances
- Rule clean-up

2025 FWC Monitoring Results



Next Steps

Proposed Rule Hearing

- August 13-14 FWC Commission Meeting in Havana, FL
- Learn more: [MyFWC.com/about/commission/commission-meetings/](https://www.MyFWC.com/about/commission/commission-meetings/)

Ways to Comment

- Submit comments online (www.MyFWC.com/SaltwaterComments)
- Email us at Marine@MyFWC.com
- Attend August 2025 Commissioner meeting

Commissioner Ward stated that before the governor signed the budget y'all were asking for \$30 million and I asked you at the time where we stand if we do not get the money. We did not get that money. Where does that leave us? Ms. Burgess noted that we have \$2.1 Million. Our agency will continue to ask for funds. It is up to the legislature to determine if they are going to give it to us. We could use everyone's help letting everyone know how important it is for the funding. Commissioner Ward noted that her frustration with not getting the money is there is going to be a time when people are going to stop the funding. Just do not want our citizens and this board to be left with the empty bag. Commissioner Croom asked if there had been anymore discussions about additional workshops. Ms. Burgess noted that we will be back to Franklin County to let you know what the commission approves, and we will ask for continued engagement. So that we can share the opinions with our commission and open to suggestions. It was noted that they have spoken with the school about holding a meeting there sometime in 2026. Commissioner Croom asked if the presentation today what will be presented to the FWC commission in August. Commissioner Ward asked if this would be heard on the first day or second day? She said that she is going to be there. Ms. Burgess noted right now it is slated for day two, but they are always making changes. I can let Michael know as soon as I do so that he can let you all know. Commissioner Sanders asked if you have reached a number on the number of permits allowed. Ms. Burgess noted that we have two options: ten people or anyone who is qualified to apply in the first year. If they get it in the first year, then they get to keep it. In order to retain the ability to harvest, you have to use your quota. If not used, it would be surrendered to the state. Commissioner Sanders asked which one is the staff recommending? We are not recommended one over the other. Commissioner Sanders asked about the oysters being qualified as restricted species. Ms. Burgess noted that we have decided not to do that. The commission can always change their mind, but we are not recommended. Commissioner Amison said just for clarity you said ten people for qualifications, or just

open it up to whoever qualifies. Yes, and put a cap on it after the first year. Commissioner Amison noted that 2.1 million was approved by the house and senate? What about the NITWIF? That gives us about 12 million? Yes, but we do not anticipate they release that until the end of the year because they are waiting for pilot studies. Commissioner Amison noted that without material that bay is not coming back. That is what is aggravating and frustrating, we have spent millions of dollars to prove that the bay is recoverable. We get to the point that this is where we are, then we are not getting the funding? The governor is behind the funding, but the house and legislature block it. They have just put us back on the oyster fishery growing and bringing in new participants. We spend more time as a community fighting each other instead of pushing the legislature and senators. Chairman Jones noted that in what you presented to us there is the reduction of overall catch for oysters in the state of Florida. My question is other areas before this closure have a bag limit of twenty bags, before the bay closed, we were down to two? 80-90% reefs have been lost. The reason the rest of the state has been able to surpass, is because Apalachicola went to 0%. Chairman Jones noted that the entire structure of the bay has changed over this time. Ms. Burgess noted that each system seems to have its challenges and they are trying to tailor the regulations to each area. Chairman Jones said now would be a good time to have the discussion to use this 2.1 million to crush up the concrete in the landfills and put this in the bay. It would help these counties, and the bay. If there is clean concrete here, Gulf County, Wakulla County, I am sure they would not mind getting that out of their landfill. Chairman Jones noted that if you have two recommendations then there would not be an establishment of a lottery. How are you going to do the lottery? Ms. Burgess explained the commercial endorsement and noted that the ARBO would be for those who like to recreation harvest. Ms. Burgess noted the quota would be divided for example 95 to commercial and about 5% to recreational. Chairman Jones noted that I think if we set this up like that, we are setting ourselves up to fail. The contractor hired by FWC to put the material in the bay, put it in the wrong areas. It is very frustrating to know that we can tell how many are on the bars when we cannot find where the rocks were placed. Chairman Jones inquired about the limited quota at 40. Chairman Jones noted that he was there at the meeting and spoke on behalf of the county about the detrimental effects it was going to have on the county when they wanted to close the bay. Chairman Jones noted that they stated at that meeting that in January 2026 the bay would be open for harvesting. Ms. Burgess noted that their consideration is that it open in October 2026. Chairman Jones noted that he is trying to be straightforward. The last thing I want to mention is the extreme need for our bay to be open for economic diversity. He noted that it has affected his business as well as everyone else. There is not a lot left here. Everything is based on tourism. If Hurricane Michael had hit Franklin County, we would not be here today. What we do have we need, and we need to be able to utilize it. These people need to be able to get back to work. Sure, it is different, but it does not mean they cannot continue to make a living in the Apalachicola Bay. Commissioner Amison asked for clarification on mandatory landing. Are you going to have a check station? Ms. Burgess noted that they are recommending an app that harvesters have this on their phones and use to report. Commissioner Amison noted that recreational and commercial will have to report? Yes. Chairman Jones noted what would happen if they do not report it? Ms. Burgess noted that they would be in violation.

Chairman Jones called for public comments. Ms. Frances Estes spoke to the Board noting that she has oystered all of her life. She noted that they need to be able to go back to work. She asked what if they do not have a phone to do the check station. She noted that could put a check station in if they are so worried about it. She noted that there is oysters out there to be caught. She noted that it has been almost five years that we have been put out of work. She noted that a bag of day is better than none at all.

Mr. Wayne Williams noted that we need to create as many jobs as possible and economic output that we can. We do not need to let them limit the license. Why cannot we go ahead now and carry on with some Blue Kentucky limestone and use the funds we have now. We need to get the ball rolling; the oysterman is who is suffering, and our community is too. Chesapeake Bay has come back after years, and they have record numbers. We do not need to limit the amount of people who can go out there on the bay. Everyone who wants to go out there should be able to. Commissioner Amison said you basically just regurgitated what I said. Without the material, this is not going anywhere. Without the material, we might as well just go home. He noted that years ago the restoration of the bay was done everywhere and not in small scale. He noted that we have missed the boat on this year's funding as far as getting material in the bay. Mr.

Williams noted that he believes if we had data to show he believes it would have been different. Is there any data on the concrete that we could get to NITWAA? Mr. Williams noted that we need more workshops on this. It is important that we have oysterman attend at these workshops. What the problem is, there is things that only commercial oysterman would understand that the general public would not. It is important that we have them so we can sit down and discuss. There is no way to do this in three minutes.

Commissioner Ward noted that his position on the bay is that we need to get this bay open. My fear is if we do not open, it is never going to open. The State overall is making the decision on what our bay looks like. If we do not get that floodgate open, it is never going to open. Chairman Jones noted that when he was told that the drop-dead open date was January 2026, then that is what I was looking for. If they roll it to another date, what is to say they do not roll to another date. Commissioner Amison noted that there was a lot of feedback of what is the best time to get the biggest value, and it has always been in the fall. Commissioner Sanders noted that she wants to see the bay back open. Once it is opened, it will replenish itself as long as you go within the guidelines. They have to get out there to work it or it is going to die. Commissioner Amison noted that we are going to still have to have material in the bay. Commissioner Ward thanked FWC for taking time out of their conference today. Chairman Jones said thank you for taking time to present today and provide us with what is going to be presented to FWC commission. Ms. Burgess noted that I think we all want the same thing, we want the bay opened and want a long-term success.

The Board moved to the public hearings at this time.

9. 11:00 a.m. (ET) Land Use Change

Notice

Draft Ordinance

A 10-acre parcel of land at 75 Highway 65, Eastpoint, Florida, lying in Section 22, Township 8 South, Range 6 West, Eastpoint, Florida, be changed from conservation to commercial.

10. 11:05 a.m. (ET) Zoning Change

A 10-acre parcel of land at 75 Highway 65, Eastpoint, Florida, lying in Section 22, Township 8 South, Range 6 West, Eastpoint, Florida, as shown on the attached map, be changed from P1 preservation to C2 commercial.

Mr. Justin Stiell presented the request to the Board. He provided the following answers for previously asked questions from the public.

Staff received the following questions regarding the proposed amendment this morning:

I assume that zoning maps are still valid, and we must follow Countywide land use Guidelines, but does this mean that the Gramercy Development no longer exists?

Gramercy Plantation still exist as developed. The proposed amendment would change the land use only on the parcel subject to the amendment.

Are any parts of the Development Orders still in effect?

The development order only provided direction as to how gramercy could be built. There are similar to the terms contained in the land development code and comprehensive plan. when the original development order was approved in 1989 there was a sunset of 18 years. The original development agreement only prior to any amendments only contemplated the development order being in place for 18 years.

6. If at any time after the effective date of this Order, all development, as defined in Chapter 380, F.S., ceases for more than three continuous years, the Order shall expire and substantial deviation review shall be completed prior to a renewal of construction activity.

7. Franklin County shall not subject the development to down-zoning, unit density reduction or intensity reduction, for a period of eighteen (18) years following the effective date of this Order, unless the County demonstrates that substantial changes in the conditions underlying approval of the Order have occurred or that the Order was based on substantially inaccurate information provided by the Applicant, or that the change is clearly essential to the public health, safety or welfare.

13

As the development was abandoned and amended in 1996 without an update to the duration of the order then we look to Florida statute at that time the amended development order was put into place which was 10 years.

163.3229

1989- 2007 18 years

1996-2006

1998-2008

2000-2010 or 2020

Will the County now take over our roads and infrastructure? There must be several old developments in the County that no longer exist.

The county would not take over any roads or infrastructure. An application could be made to the county for consideration of taking over any roads or infrastructure and the county requirements would need to be met. The developments still exist. The development orders may have expired and would be eligible to follow the standards established in the current land development code and comprehensive plan.

Does the county intend on renewing these Orders?

An application could be made by the developer, and a public hearing would need to take place for any consideration of extending the timeline of a development order.

And, after ten years, if the Developer fails to comply with the requirements of the orders, such as not putting in Sewer Lines so the lot owners can hook up, does the County intend to just allow the developer to default on the Orders and will the County continue to do nothing about it?

If there was an expectation of sewer lines being put in, then the purchasers of the property would need to work that out with the developer. The development order from 2000 allowed for aerobic systems until such time that central sewer was available. As central sewer is not yet available the homeowners have not been able to connect to central sewer.

Is there an enforcement person in the County?

The county does have Code Enforcement. However, if this is a civil matter then the property owners will need to speak with the developer.

Commissioner Ward asked Attorney Shuler to elaborate of the development order time limit. Attorney Shuler noted that the development order expired approximately fifteen years ago.

Mr. Travis Wade spoke for Inovia Consulting Group on behalf of applicant. The applicant intends to build an office for his contracting company. The building will honor all setbacks and not encroach on wetlands. The applicant has been running a contracting business since 1998. He asked the Board to approve the land use and zoning change.

Chairman Jones called for public comments at this time.

Mr. Ted Rufner spoke to the Board on behalf of the Gramercy Plantation owners. He spoke about the zoning being residential. He noted that just because the county sent out incorrect information does not mean this is right. Referred to the development order. He agreed that the wording in the development order and final plat probably does give leeway and he knows the board can modify things. He noted the land was sold illegally. The developer illegally sold the property. Mr. Rufner asked the Board to deny the request.

Mr. Mark Shane, president of Gramercy Plantation HOA spoke as a homeowner. He purchased and moved here in 2022 because this area is one of few that is old Florida. It is a way of life for us. I believe this is a mistake. As Mr. Rufner mentioned the applicant was misinformed, it is part of Gramercy. I strongly recommend this not be changed to commercial. I would like to see the county do the right thing.

Mr. Scott Somero spoke noting this property abuts his property. He noted that his grandmother lives in the Gramercy Plantation. He said he thinks it would be terrible to approve this. There is plenty of commercial property in Eastpoint. This could diminish the value of other commercial properties and residential properties. He asked the board to vote against it.

Ms. Gail Riegelmayr asked if she is understanding correctly that there is a sunset or timeline that the Gramercy Plantation development order would exist and then things change? Gramercy is a PUD, when it was initially development there was specific plans. Now what I hear is there was a timeline where those things would be developed, and then it would go away.

Mr. Steil noted that Gramercy Plantation was never referred to as a PUD. The previous development was a PUD called Green Point, and it was rescinded in 1996 and replaced by straight zoning and the Gramercy Plantation.

Ms. Riegelmayr noted that her concern if this is approved, we are going to open ourselves up to future changes. If this is allowed to happen, then other owners of P1, this decision will set the precedence. I urge you not to allow this zoning change. We have to look at the big picture. We cannot just wheely-kneely change our zoning codes. We have to protect what is zoned preservation.

Chairman Jones asked Mr. Moron to check Zoom for public comments. There were none.

Mr. Travis Wade noted that the intention of the applicant is build an office. The wetland area is not going to be touched. Gramercy Plantation was not always residential; at one time it was agricultural. All of those houses were built on land that was zoned as agriculture. There is a lot of conservation land in the county. This is a three-acre area for a development. This will be an office building, not a huge development.

Commissioner Croom asked how many acres would be used, Mr. Wade noted that only three acres. Mr. Rufner noted that we just found out yesterday there is a statute of limitations on the development order. Commissioner Ward noted that there are different maps. Looking at the map, where exactly is the property on this map? By my eyes it looks as if it is. We have multiple maps that we are looking at. She noted that the applicant bought the property based on a letter received from our staff that the property was commercial. I have spoken with our staff and noted that we need to make our maps look better. We need to get better maps. I appreciate the applicant doing their due diligence. I know in 2024 this came before our planning and zoning. Commissioner Ward noted that it is very confusing, it is hard for me to make a decision based on five maps. I am looking at county staff to help us make this decision. I feel like we have to honor if we stated it was commercial. Chairman Jones noted that there is no process where we are splitting up the property. He noted that if it is approved it would be the ten acres.

Attorney Shuler said procedurally where you are, I believe Mr. Stiel has presented this to you, and confident that the current planner has identified the property. Procedurally speaking I do not think there is a question as to what the zoning and land use currently is. Commissioner Amison noted that the highlighted area they

gave us is actually further south than the property in question. Attorney Shuler noted that the wetlands area and guidelines has arisen maybe Mr. Steil can give us some rules etc. Mr. Steil noted that the original wetlands portion of the property was designated as conservation. As a parcel as a whole, you would want to designate the entire property. There is no development within 50 feet of wetlands without a variance. Should an applicant request a variance, the county has stated that it is only the minimum amount needed for development. There would be no need for a variance, as they intend to use the three acres. Any development that would take place you would want to buffer from residential. Mr. Rufner asked to speak again. Chairman Jones noted that this is a public hearing, and we always allow the public to speak. However, we are not going to continue doing this. Mr. Rufner gave the Board a copy of the signed approved development order for Gramercy Plantation and noted that the Board required the preservation.

Commissioner Ward asked Mr. Steil what his thoughts are. Mr. Steil noted that the original development agreement stated that only a portion of the wetlands had to be put in preservation. I do not see any reason that you would not allow a land use change on that property. It is on Highway 65 and eventually there is going to be development. This may be a less intrusive use of the property. **Commissioner Ward made a motion to approve the land use change from conservation to commercial, seconded by Commissioner Amison. Motion carried 5-0.**

The Board moved to the zoning change hearing on the same property at this time.

Mr. Steil presented the zoning change request. Chairman Jones asked if the applicant had anything they would like to say. He did not. Chairman Jones asked if there were any public comments at this time. Mr. Rufner asked for clarification on the zoning and land use being two separate matters. **On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the zoning change request. Motion carried 5-0.**

Mr. Moron noted that next Friday you have a hearing for a PUD ordinance. There is a difference between a PUD and a development order. I am trying my best to clarify the difference. Chairman Jones noted that he believes that Mr. Steil clarified that. Chairman Jones noted that there was a point of time in the past when Ms. Allara Mills mentioned that development orders are issued, they go away once a certain amount of property is sold or developed.

The Board moved to the Weems item at this time.

Chairman Jones noted that last week we received an email from DOGE, and they are asking that the county provide four- or five-years' worth of information by the 21st. I think that we should ask them for an extension. We need to ask the state to give us an extension. Chairman Jones called for public comments since this was not included on the agenda. There were none. Attorney Shuler asked does Erin know how much time she is going to need. Chairman Jones noted that he believes they will only give us a couple weeks.

On a motion by Commissioner Amison, seconded by Commissioner Sanders, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board authorized staff to submit a letter to DOGE requesting an extension of time to provide information requested. Motion carried 5-0.

Mr. Walker spoke to the Board to give an update EMS financials and staffing. Mr. David Bowling noted that they wanted to give an overview of where EMS is at from a financial and operational standpoint.

Operating Indicators:	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May
Ambulance Runs (Billable)	100	109	125	90	93	78	82	105	94	109	122	129

Ambulance Runs (Unbillable)	69	58	50	50	44	48	35	40	35	33	35	56
-----------------------------------	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----	----

Operating Indicators:	YTD 2022	YTD 2023	YTD 2024	YTD 2025
Ambulance Runs (Billable)	863	912	793	812

It was noted that in looking at the comparison to last year, about 78% of the total runs is billable vs 65% billable from last year. Chairman Jones asked what factors cause unbillable instances. Patient refusal, law enforcement related, standby for structure fire, etc. Commissioner Ward is unbillable an individual who does not have insurance? No, those are not included under those. Commissioner Amison noted that unbillable technically we do not have any cost except for staff going out and gas. So, our cost for unbillable is minimal.

George E Weems Memorial Hospital EMS FYTD Gross Margin



	Year-To-Date			
	May-25	Budget	Variance	Var %
Gross Patient Revenue	\$ 916,876	\$ 992,345	\$ (75,469)	-7.61%
Operating Expenses:				
Salaries & Wages	\$ 1,287,749	\$ 1,209,551	\$ 78,198	6.47%
Professional Fees	\$ 16,000	\$ 13,599	\$ 2,401	17.66%
Supplies	\$ 111,627	\$ 103,710	\$ 7,917	7.63%
Purchased/Contract Services	\$ 66,020	\$ 64,057	\$ 1,963	3.07%
Other Expenses	\$ 38,725	\$ 49,648	\$ (10,923)	-22.00%
Total Operating Expenses	\$ 1,520,121	\$ 1,440,565	\$ 79,556	5.52%
Gross Margin before EMS Subsidy	\$ (603,245)	\$ (448,220)	\$ (155,025)	34.59%
Non-Operating Revenues:				
EMS Subsidy	\$ 507,815	\$ 504,000	\$ 3,815	0.76%
Total Non-Operating Revenues	\$ 507,815	\$ 504,000	\$ 3,815	0.76%
ADJUSTED GROSS MARGIN	\$ (95,431)	\$ 55,780	\$ (151,211)	-271.08%

Year to date perspective – when you look at activity this is a gross margin chart. You can see that from an eight-month snapshot EMS has been able to charge \$900k+.

Commissioner Ward asked what category fuel cost were under. Mr. Bowling noted that he believed it would be listed under other expenses. Mr. Moron asked are we going to be paying more for the medications that they use because they are not under Weems? Mr. Bowling noted that fuel is under supplies. As far as medications, currently supplies, all pharmaceuticals are under Alliant. We can look to extend some of that to the county. That can be provided, it would be a separate relationship. You would still fall under the tier pricing.

Commissioner Croom inquired about overtime costs. Mr. Bowling noted they are seeing a higher percentage of overtime. I will let James clarify from a staffing standpoint and the numbers they have presently. Current year is 526k, prior year was 446k for overtime. Mr. Walker noted that this is the same model you are moving to. Hopefully moving under the county, you will have more staff and less overtime. Mr. James noted that

we purchase our pharmaceuticals through Weems. We will have to get our own vendors. Mr. Walker noted that the county can participate as part of our GPOs and get the discount. Chairman Jones asked what the profit is being made from the EMS purchasing medications from the hospital. Mr. Bowling noted there is no markup, they are using the purchasing power of Weems. Mr. James noted he is seeking four full time paramedics. One of EMTs is a paramedic student. How many FTEs do you have now? Eighteen and I need twenty-one. Once everyone was plugged into their schedules, I started the schedule out with 520, it still left me with 217. Commissioner Ward asked if they alternate staff to prevent the overtime. Mr. James noted that if it is non-emergent, we will try to put off shift change. We do try to minimize that if it happens. Mr. Bowling noted that utilities, software fees, etc. is listed in other fees. Chairman Jones noted that in the future we really need to get these handouts ahead of time not just for us but for the public. So, if at all possible, we need to get the handouts beforehand.

Michael Morón – County Coordinator

Chairman Jones called for public comments on Mr. Moron since he added it to the agenda late. There were no public comments.

1. Discussion/Action Item: TDC Administrative Contract

At your last meeting, I reminded the Board that the TDC Administrative contract extension expires on September 30, 2025. Will the Board approve another extension or direct staff to advertise? Keep in mind that TDC vendor contracts expire on December 31, 2025, so to avoid any delays due to the holidays, you will be asked to make the same decision next month. Board discussion and possible action.

Commissioner Ward noted that she would say advertise. We have other people that we advertise for. **Commissioner Ward made a motion to advertise, seconded by Commissioner Amison.** Commissioner Amison noted that we require the vendors to resubmit it is only right that we require the admin to do the same. Commissioner Croom asked are we still staggering with the vendor contracts? Mr. Moron said he plans to stagger those to put it back on track. Commissioner Amison noted that we could extend the vendors out like six months. Commissioner Sanders asked what the term would be on the contracts. Mr. Moron noted that he would say two years, so that it would never be the vendors and admin at the same time. Commissioner Amison noted that he believes it is the fairest way to make them both two years. **Motion carried 5-0.**

2. Discussion/Action Item: TDC Member Applications

Recently, the Board advertised for candidates interested in the vacant TDC Board seat. The submission deadline was last Friday, July 11, 2025. The county received 8 applications, and you will receive a link to a folder with the applications for your review. Candidate selection will be in my August 6th report. Unless I am told differently, the Board will follow the same process used during the last selection of TDC Board candidates. Each Board member will select and score their top three candidates and the candidate with the most points will be appointed to the seat. Board discussion and possible action.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Croom, motion to receive these submissions after today's meeting and add to the August 6th agenda for a vote. Commissioner Croom noted there are a couple boards that he receives complaints on, one being the TDC board. He believes all of the boards should mirror the county commission board. Chairman Jones noted that as the chair of the TDC board, the last three meetings have lasted thirty minutes. Commissioner Croom asked Attorney Shuler if we are having issues with a board, can we create a new board. Attorney Shuler noted that he has always advised the board that the power to appoint comes with the power to dismiss. There is a process to removing someone. Commissioner Amison noted that sometimes people have a hard time asking or answering hard questions. We do not want to potentially muzzle anyone. As long as we are not having personal attacks, if we are having legitimate questions. Commissioner Croom noted that he was not trying to attach Chairman Jones in anyway. Commissioner Sanders noted that we all have our opinions. When you serve you must have the public's best interest in mind. Chairman Jones noted that we are doing the same as last time? Mr. Moron noted that the vote will not be anonymous this time.

Motion carried 5-0.

3. Discussion/Action Item: Letter of Support

As the Board is aware, there are two vacant seats on the Triumph Board. One will be appointed by the Governor and the other by the Attorney General. Mr. Tom Morgan, a local business owner, is interested in one of those appointed seats and has asked for a letter of support from the Board. If appointed, Mr. Morgan would be the first Triumph Board member from Franklin County. Attached to my report is a letter of support for your review and the Chairman's signature. Board discussion and possible action to authorize the Chairman's signature on the letter of support.

Chairman Jones noted that there are two openings, if the Board is inclined to do so, let's send a letter of support for both available seats. Commissioner Ward noted that she would like to see two people appointed.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Croom, to provide a letter of support for both vacant seats on the Triumph Board. Commissioner Amison noted that we have no perception of what we need on the Triumph board and do not have anyone on the board that knows what we need. Commissioner Amison noted that the sheriff has already sent a letter. Commissioner Sanders asked if we knew if someone from Gulf County had been recommended. She noted that we really need to have someone on the board from Franklin County. **Motion carried 5-0.**

4. Discussion/Action Item: Upcoming FAC Conferences

The FAC Innovation & Policy Conference is scheduled on September 17th and 18th. The FAC Legislative Conference is scheduled from November 19th to the 21st. Both conferences conflict with scheduled meeting dates, so the Board will need to reschedule those meetings. Additionally, Commissioner Croom would like to discuss any policies the Board may consider submitting to FAC for any of the upcoming conferences. Board discussion and possible action.

Commissioner Sanders said the only thing about legislative policies is to keep held harmless. The SCRAP, SCOP, all of those programs, we always asked that they keep funding these programs. Commissioner Ward asked how many of us are going to both? Mr. Moron asked the Board to look at their calendars and he will bring back some options at the next meeting. Commissioner Ward inquired about sales tax. Chairman Jones noted that with the current situation in Tallahassee, we are probably asking in vain. Mr. Moron inquired if we are going to have the fight with TET again this year. Chairman Jones noted that there was discussion about using tourist tax to replace property taxes. Chairman Jones noted that we did get the language amended or added so we are not held by the ten million dollar. He noted that we need to get the projects underway.

5. Informational Item: Streetlights

For the Board records, a streetlight was added on Jacobi Oneal Lane in District 3.

6. Informational Item: Upcoming Public Hearings and Workshops

Your Budget Workshops are scheduled on Thursday, July 24th and Friday, July 25th at 9:00 am. (ET). The PUD enabling ordinance public hearing is scheduled on Friday, July 25th at 6:00 p.m. (ET)

7. Informational Item: Next Meeting Date

Your next regular meeting date will be **Wednesday, August 6, 2025**, at 9:00 a.m. (ET).

6. Michael Shuler – County Attorney

1. Request for Cost Estimate from County Engineer Related to Proposed Land Swap with Duke Energy

Last meeting, the Board authorized me to obtain a time and cost estimate to prepare engineered plans for construction of a road passing underneath Duke Energy's transmission line easement. I have recommended written assurance from Duke Energy that they will approve the road that the county will need to access the land proposed for the land swap. Duke Energy informs me that it requires engineered road plans to make

that decision. Attached is a two-page document from Dewberry Engineering. They estimate that it will take approximately 2.5 months to prepare the plans and for Duke Energy to review them. The \$11,500.00 estimated cost is designated as "Design I have marked it in yellow highlight and with an asterisk. Board action requested: Board authorization to proceed with the road design for \$11,500.00.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Sanders, and Commissioner Croom, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board authorized proceeding with the road design for \$11,500.00. Commissioner Croom asked could we request Duke Energy to cost share in this expense. **Commissioner Ward amended her motion to approve the cost estimate and direct Attorney Shuler to request Duke Energy to share in the cost, seconded by Commissioner Croom. Motion carried 5-0.**

2. Ratification of Mr. Moron's Placement of No Parking Signs for Commissioner Sanders

At your July 2nd meeting, Commissioner Sanders publicly discussed her desire for no parking signs at Spring Street in Lanark Village next to the Lanark Fina Station. A copy of the parking ordinance 2024-5 is attached for your convenient review. Mr. Moron authorized the placement of the no parking signs. Board Action Requested: Ratification for the no parking signs placed at Spring Street in Lanark Village next to the Lanark Fina Station.

On a motion by Commissioner Sanders, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board ratified the placement of the No Parking Signs placed at Spring Street in Lanark Village next to the Lanark Fina Station. Motion carried 5-0.

*Additional Item:

Letter of Support: U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Planning Assistance to States Program Sike's Cut, Franklin County, FL

On a motion by Commissioner Amison, seconded by Commissioner Ward, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the letter of support for the US Army Corps of Engineers Planning Assistance Program Sike's Cut, authorizing Chairman Jones to sign. Motion carried 5-0.

Information Items and Possible Discussion

3. Public Hearing on July 25, 2025

A copy of the draft PUD Evaluation ordinance is attached.

4. Executive Session Draft

Attached is an initial draft of proposed changes to the executive session statute proposing that the county commission be allowed to meet in executive session after it has received a Bert Harris claim notice, but before the litigation is filed. Commissioner Ward may have more discussion on this item as she is now a member of the F AC legislative proposal committee. Board discussion.

5. Draft Ordinance Banning Fires on the Public Beach

Attached is an initial draft of the ordinance banning fires on the public beaches. Does the Board have any corrections or additions to the draft ordinance?

Commissioner Ward inquired if this is going to be year-round? Attorney Shuler noted he is proposing a year-round ban and then if you decide to do something less than that you would not have to readvertise. Commissioner Ward noted that on the draft it says turtle season. Attorney Shuler reread and noted that it would be year-round. If the Board's direction is for turtle season, then I can amend. Chairman Jones noted that he is fine with how it is now.

6. E911 Address Ordinance

Board direction on rescheduling this public hearing.

Consensus of the Board to move forward with rescheduling public hearing on the E911 Address Ordinance.

7. MSBU Ordinance Amendment to Remove Referendum Requirement

Does the Board want me to reschedule this public hearing or wait until the Board has entered into contracts with all of the volunteer fire departments and the Board has received the financial information it requested?

8. Bridge Clean-Up Contract with Franklin County Sheriff's Department

The bridge clean-up contract with the Sheriff automatically renews each fiscal year unless terminated by either party upon ten days written notice of cancellation. I have attached a copy of the relevant part of the Sept. 6, 2022, minutes and my unsigned copy of the addendum approved that date. I have this afternoon (7/15/25) requested a copy of the signed addendum.

Chairman Jones asked what if you had individuals who may be interested in. Attorney Shuler noted that it renews every fiscal year. Commissioner Ward asked was there not an insurance requirement. Attorney Shuler noted there are safety requirements and insurance. Chairman Jones noted that we may need to renegotiate with them to do more cleaning. Mr. Moron said he would like to have a discussion with the sheriff first. Chairman Jones noted that it is supposed to be for all four bridges.

Commissioner Croom noted that the deadline to submit the policies is August 8th and we will meet again on the 6th. Mr. Moron noted that he will add that back to his report.

Commissioner Croom asked is there a way to provide what a PUD is. As far as rebuttal, Mr. Moron and I have discussed a fact sheet. Our problem is Ms. Allara is not available. She will not be home until the evening of the 22nd. I can certainly get with Bree and Justin and see if they can come up with a fact sheet of what a PUD is. Commissioner Croom noted that there is a lot of false narratives out there. Attorney Shuler noted that he has always advised commissioners to not respond to things like that. It is at your discretion. Commissioner Ward noted that we cannot respond on social media due to Sunshine law violations. Attorney Shuler noted that he will work on getting a fact sheet and have Mr. Moron post. Mr. Moron noted that you do not want to get yourself in a position where you could be accused of trying to persuade another commissioner via your post. Commissioner Amison noted that it is best not to respond because if more than one of us have commented on a post it is a violation.

10:00 a.m. (ET) Presentations/Updates/Requests

7. 10:00 a.m. (ET) Jon C. Creamer (Northwest Regional Director) -- FWC -- Update

This is a time certain agenda item. It cannot be heard prior to the agenda time but should be heard at that time or as soon thereafter as possible.

FWC staff will provide an update on the Apalachicola Bay Oyster Restoration project and discuss what information will be presented at the upcoming FWC Commission meeting.

Item addressed earlier in the meeting.

8. David Walker (Weems CEO) & David Bowling (Alliant CFO) -- Weems -- EMS Financial Update

11:00 a.m. (ET) Public Hearings

This is a time certain agenda item. It cannot be heard prior to the advertised time but should be heard at the advertised time or as soon thereafter as possible.

Item address earlier in the meeting.

9. 11:00 a.m. (ET) Land Use Change

A 10-acre parcel of land at 75 Highway 65, Eastpoint, Florida, lying in Section 22, Township 8 South, Range 6 West, Eastpoint, Florida, be changed from conservation to commercial.

Item addressed earlier in the meeting.

10. 11:05 a.m. (ET) Zoning Change

A 10-acre parcel of land at 75 Highway 65, Eastpoint, Florida, lying in Section 22, Township 8 South, Range 6 West, Eastpoint, Florida, as shown on the attached map, be changed from P1 preservation to C2 commercial.

Item addressed earlier in the meeting.

Commissioners' Comments

There were no further Commissioner comments at this time.

Adjournment

There being no further business before the Board, the meeting was adjourned.

Ricky Jones – Chairman

Attest:

Michele Maxwell – Clerk of Courts

The audio is available upon request. Please e-mail jgay@franklinclerk.com, call 850-653-8861 to speak with the Administrative Assistant, or submit a request in writing to obtain audio of this meeting.