

**FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
REGULAR MEETING
COURTHOUSE ANNEX, COMMISSION MEETING ROOM
OCTOBER 1, 2025
9:00 AM
MINUTES**

Commissioners Present: Ricky Jones-Chairman, Jessica Ward-Vice-Chairman, Cheryl Sanders, Ottice 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

Commissioner Ward led the Board in prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of the Agenda

Chairman Jones noted that Attorney Shuler added an item regarding the fire department. Mr. Moron noted that we have two bill runs – one for end of fiscal year and one for this month, we will need two motions for this.

On a motion by Commissioner Amison, seconded by Commissioner Sanders, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the agenda as amended. 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 Croom, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the minutes from the FCBCC Final Budget Hearing 9/22/2025 and Regular Meeting 9/16/2025 and the Payment of County Bills for the current bill list. Motion carried 5-0.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Sanders, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the payment of county bills from the last fiscal year. Motion carried 5-0.

Public Comments

Mr. Bean reported on the town hall on St George Island. He noted that he believes the consensus was that we do not need a special district, we just need to enforce what is on the books.

Mrs. Barbara Sanders noted that what we learned last night was that there is no procedure to bring up tabled items since the Board does not go by Roberts Rules and Orders. There are three items that have gotten laid down, ask that in commissioner comments you bring those back up.

1. Rehearing of PUD
2. Fill ordinance
3. Camper ordinance

Mrs. Sanders asked the Board to instruct staff to bring those items back. There are several things about the fill ordinance, that you may want to bring in Mr. Nabors and see how those are going to affect roads. Water quality good going into bay. Tell the planner to go fix these ambiguities in our policy and make these easy for our staff to apply. Ask them to bring those back to the board for their final decision. Commissioner Ward noted that she is the one who tabled the PUD hearing due to the outcry of the public and being Chairman Jones was going to have a public hearing on St. George Island. She noted that since she became commissioner all she has heard is that St. George Island wanted to be a special district. She noted that now we are hearing that they do not. We tabled to do a town hall. The RV ordinance we put that off so that we do not make our citizens

homeless. Mr. Curenton left and that put a kink in it. We do need to stop kicking the can down the road, but we are trying to do things in a way to avoid harmful effects on our people. We do need to get it back on the table. I know that Commissioner Sanders wanted to hold a townhall, so I am not sure if she wants to hold off. Commissioner Sanders noted that she does not want to hold off.

Chairman Jones noted that Mrs. Sanders and Mrs. Rieglmayer have filled out speaker cards for all items on the agenda. He requested they just let him know if they come to an item, and they would like to speak on it so they could speak on it before Commissioner comments.

Department Directors Reports

3. Howard Nabors – Superintendent of Roads and Bridges

No action items.

4. Fonda Davis – Solid Waste Director

No action items.

5. Jennifer Daniels – Emergency Management Director

1. Starlink

Commissioner Croom asked where the funds would come from. Mrs. Griffith noted that it will likely come from the professional services budget. Mrs. Daniels noted that each unit cost around \$300.

On a motion by Commissioner Croom, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved purchasing Starlink units and paying monthly service to install Starlink at each of the seven fire departments in the county. Motion carried 5-0.

Mrs. Daniels noted that Mr. Moron would also like to add one at the county admin office. **On a motion by Commissioner Sanders, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved purchasing a Starlink unit and paying monthly service to install Starlink at the county administrative office. Motion carried 5-0.**

Mrs. Daniels noted that we have been extremely lucky so far but continue to pray and stay prepared. Chairman Jones asked if we have had any response from federal government on the EOC property. Mrs. Griffith noted that the updated plans were received from Dewberry, as they were waiting on approval from DOT for the driveway. She noted that she sent the site layout to Jenny. Chairman Jones asked if we would have any flexibility to change anything on it. If there is, anyway, we can make space for an EMS station on the property, he wants to entertain that. He noted that he believes with three acres we could make the space, and we could house them on a county property. Commissioner Croom noted that he has been spending his evenings at the Eastpoint fire department. He noted that this may be a discussion to have with them also.

6. Dewitt Polous – Mosquito Control Director

No action items.

7. Erik Lovestrand – Extension Office Director

No action items.

8. Whitney Roundtree – Library Director

No action items.

9. James Osteen – EMS Director

Gulf Coast State College reached out and they would like to renew their MOU for students to ride with them. Mr. Osteen noted that we have nineteen and need two paramedics.

10. Steve Kirschenbaum – Interim Airport Manager

No action items.

Commissioner Amison asked Mr. Moron to share with the other commissioners the write up about TANGO flights.

Other Reports

11. Renee Brannan -- Sheriff's Office -- Director of Communications & 911 Coordinator

Update on County Fire Department's communication systems

Commissioner Ward noted that she is inclined to go with the option two. Mrs. Griffith noted that option two would be fully grant funded in the future. The option one is the stop gap. If you chose option two now, it would not be reimbursable by Triumph. We did talk to Omnicom about doing one tower kind of earlier. Mrs. Brannan noted that right now we do not have any communications. Chairman Jones noted that with what we have on the horizon, I think the fix would be the way to go. Commissioner Sanders asked how long do they think it will last, will it last for the two years? Yes. She noted that she is for anything that gets us better than what we have. Are we putting up a new antenna? We are going to utilizing the existing lease with Oyster Radio and the one in Alligator Point. We are going to add additional antennas to link them together. Commissioner Sanders inquired about how long the process will take, about two months. Chairman Jones asked if everything is included in this quote. Everything should be pretty much covered, there may be some outliers.

Attorney Shuler noted that if they Board is going to move forward with the \$185k quote, you will need to determine this to be an emergency to preclude the bid process. Commissioner Croom inquired about the pagers on option two. It would need to be addressed. Mr. Moron asked Omnicom to come up and let us have a group discussion.

Mrs. Griffith presented action item number one from her report.

1. BOARD ACTION: TRIUMPH FIRST RESPONDER COMMUNICATION SYSTEM DESIGN CONSULTANT RANKING RESULTS

We are proposing two options to address Franklin County's Fire Radio Systems:

Option One: Provide and install a single VHF simulcast analog channel for county-wide fire communications-utilizing existing Oyster Radio site and leased SBA site at Eastpoint with installed point to point connectivity and relicensing. Programming of all radios and pagers would be required.

Advantages:

- Will allow common process for notification of all fire agencies.
- Would allow common interop between all fire districts.

Disadvantages:

- Limited coverage area and no direct interop with EMS and Sheriff's Office
- Equipment purchased would not be re-usable with new P25 700/800 system procurement.

Cost to County: \$185,000

Option Two: Purchase all new Multi-band Portables (166 total) and Mobiles (30 total) that would operate on the SLERS new P25 Phase 2 technology. Includes all accessories, programming, and installation services.

Advantages:

- All users on one single communications platform.
- Multi-band radios include VHF, UHF and 700/800 MhZ frequencies.
- Would carry county into new radio system procurement without loss of any hardware investment, as radios would work on new standalone P25 system also.
- Would allow direct interoperability with Wakulla and Liberty County.
- Tower sites would be maintained by the State of Florida and Williams.

Disadvantages:

- Higher Up-Front Cost now (could early Triumph funding support this purchase?)

- \$9/radio/month fee
- Will need to address paging separately

Cost to County: \$1.665M

At the last meeting, the Board voted to accept the rankings of the review committee and issued a notice of intent to award and authorized staff to begin contract negotiations with respondent firm Omnicom Consulting Engineers. The procurement documentation, consultant's RFQ response, \$172,581.80 fee proposal (proposal begins on page 18 of the attached contract) and contract has been reviewed and approved by Triumph. Omnicom will advise the county on the development and implementation of a new countywide first responder communication system used by Franklin County EMS and Volunteer Fire Departments, Franklin County Sheriff's Office, Franklin County Road Department, Franklin County School Board, Weems Memorial Hospital, Carrabelle Police Department, City of Apalachicola Police Department, and all as further described in the County's Application for Funds and grant award agreement with Triumph Gulf Coast project #333. Once this contract is approved and a notice to proceed is issued, county staff will assist Omnicom in setting up the kickoff meetings with the user groups for the design of the new system. Board action to approve and authorize the chairman to sign the attached contract with Omnicom Consulting Engineers for the design of the Triumph First Responder Communication System Upgrade. I would also like to introduce the President of Omnicom Tim Barrentine and Vice President Chris Monzingo as they are in attendance this morning and will be glad to answer any questions you all may have for them at this time regarding their approach to the design and the projected timeline for the project.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Amison, to approve and authorize the Chairman to sign the attached contract with Omnicom Consulting Engineers for the design of the Triumph First Responder Communication System Upgrade. Commissioner Ward asked if Mr. Barrentine could provide a timeline. Hopefully, we can get you into contract by mid-July. Once you are under contract, eighteen months to two years to build the new system. Chairman Jones asked did not it take about the same time in Wakulla. Mr. Barrentine noted that towers have federal and local permitting. Commissioner Croom asked are they using existing towers. The first thing we will do is needs analysis. We would rather use what is there than build new, but we have to have a certain number of towers to provide the service. Commissioner Croom asked about towers and radios, will that be two projects. Commissioner Croom noted that we do not want to prolong it. We need to do it in the quickest and most efficient way. Chairman Jones noted that he believes we should cover the entire county even though it is state and federal lands, it would need to be covered. Mrs. Griffith, the failing tower at the sheriff's tower, we did talk about excelling that tower. VHF can be used as a backup once new system in place. **Motion carried 5-0.**

The Board moved back to Ms. Brannan's report regarding the County Fire Department's communication systems. **On a motion by Commissioner Croom, seconded by Commissioner Amison, to approve option one with a cost to the county of \$185,000. Commissioner Croom amended his motion to declare this as an emergency purchase, seconded by Commissioner Amison.** Commissioner Ward asked where the funds would come from. Mrs. Griffith noted that this would come from reserve for contingency, and we did increase it for this budget year. Mrs. Brannan noted that she is taking over 911 addressing. **Motion carried 5-0.**

County Staff & Attorney Reports

12. Ms. Robinsone Robinson -- County Planner

Isolated Wetlands Report

Previously, staff consistently honored a 0' setback from isolated wetlands for development; however, this was based on administrative practice, not on any adopted language in the Franklin County Land Development Code or Comprehensive Plan. Both documents require a 50' Critical Habitat Zone buffer for all land within 50 feet landward of waters or wetlands of the state. The code does not differentiate between isolated and non-isolated wetlands – both are subject to the same buffer requirement. Chairman Jones asked when you are talking about wetlands, you are not necessarily talking about wet areas. Doesn't it have more to do with vegetation? Yes, most of the time if you see a pond it is going to be wetlands. Chairman Jones noted that he is alright with continuing what we have been doing and amending the code. Chairman Jones asked does not the state have 0 setback. Ms. Robinson noted yes. Chairman Jones noted that he does not know of a time when the state has denied fill.

Mrs. Sanders said that you have rules in place already. Over the years you have not enforced your rules. I do not think that is the option you want to take. I think you want to enforce the rules you have on the books. Well as I understand it you have people complaining. It is a big issue. Here to advocate that you let your planner enforce the rules on the books. The person who

bought the wetlands, needs to come forward and request a variance. Please enforce the rules on the books. Chairman Jones noted that several young people have purchased three-acre properties and they are having an issue putting a home due to multiple isolated wetlands.

Mrs. Gail Riegelmayr echoed everything Mrs. Barbara said, said with SB 180 with the codes on the books you want run a foul. Let us stick to what is on the books.

Commissioner Croom asked Ms. Robinson to explain coastal and isolated. Isolated is typically a pond or ditch, it does not have a stream to the big water. Commissioner Ward noted that she has always been an advocate of following what we have on the books. That is the problem we have now, is we have rules on the books, and we have not been enforcing them. Chairman Jones noted that there is a difference in coastal wetlands and isolated wetlands. Commissioner Amison noted that the whole county is a wetland. If it is not affecting the coastal or river, I do not know why we have to have a setback. Chairman Jones noted that we have the health, safety, welfare of our citizens and policies and procedures. If we do not address it, it stays like it is, it is already written down. Commissioner Amison asked Ms. Robinson to define critical habitat zone. Ms. Robinson defined the critical habitat zone.

On a motion by Commissioner Amison, seconded by Commissioner Croom to schedule a public hearing to amend the Zoning Code and Comprehensive Plan. Ms. Robinson asked what is proposed. **Commissioner Amison amended his motion to propose ten foot from isolated wetlands, seconded by Commissioner Croom.** Commissioner Amison noted that ten feet would give some buffer. Commissioner Sanders noted that she does not agree with the one plant from growing on a ten-acre parcel, but I also believe that if we develop the land as allowed in the plan, it would be best. She noted that she is really leery of changing the comp plan. Chairman Jones noted that it is not infallible. Ms. Robinson noted that she will continue following the rules in the current policy until it is amended. She noted that it would not be a quick process.

Attorney Shuler noted that SB 180, which he gave the Board a copy of the Jackson County plan being voided because it was being more burdensome. He recommended adopting a policy which is the existing policy which is 0. In terms of the 1000 sq foot, people in the 90s were getting variances to build in the critical habitats. The Board as part of the variance procedure, you put conditions on people if they wanted to build in that 50-foot critical habitat zone. The Board said we are not going to allow these large structures to be built, we are going to restrict them to 1000 sq ft. If the Board wanted to go back and reconsider it, I think that is at the discretion of the Board. Attorney Shuler noted that the state may consider the code amended void since the policy has been zero. The thing to do may be let Ms. Robinson and I discuss this and bring it back to the Board. Commissioner Amison said so you are saying if we went from 50 to 10 the state would have an issue? Yes, because our policy has been 0. Attorney Shuler noted that SB 180, recall that there is some language that includes policies and practices. Ms. Robinson said I think we need to discuss this more, but I have not seen anything in writing about the precedence. We can talk about it more. Attorney Shuler noted that he knows there is language in there that references procedures. Attorney Shuler recommended the Board withdrawing the motion and let him and Ms. Robinson discuss. Chairman Jones noted that it has just been jurisdictional wetlands and not isolated wetlands and noted that would need to be changed also. Attorney Shuler noted that his assumption would be that it was jurisdictional. Chairman Jones noted that currently with the way it is written we are following it. If I asked for a variance, mitigate twice, replacement of what you have destroyed. What most people do is pay in a wetland's mitigation bank. Chairman Jones noted even in the current way it is written down, they could do it, it would just cost them more. **Commissioner Amison and Commissioner Croom withdrew their motions.** Attorney Shuler noted that they will bring this back at the October 15th meeting. Ms. Robinson noted that she believes she has rejected three. Ms. Robinson noted that she will get with Attorney Shuler, and they will see what procedures need to be changed. Is there any appetite on the 1000 sq foot? Attorney Shuler noted that the board by policy adopted the 1000 sq ft within the critical habitat zone. The condition for granting a variance, the practice was to push everyone as far as possible from the CHZ. It was policy of board to limit that structure to 1000 square feet. Chairman Jones asked staff to review the policy and if it does not pertain to CHZ and isolated wetlands. If it does not apply to the isolated wetlands, we need to stop enforcing it. Chairman Jones noted that if it is not written down, we should not be inferring it on isolated wetlands.

Mrs. Gail Riegelmayr noted that people with specific problems with their property, have a mechanism to come to the planning and zoning, ask for a variance. My concern with it creates a slippery slope, where you are going to have developers coming in, and unintended consequences.

Chairman Jones noted that staff has been operating at zero, so if we were going to have negative consequences, we would have them.

13. Erin Griffith – Fiscal Manager/Grants Coordinator

1. BOARD ACTION: TRIUMPH FIRST RESPONDER COMMUNICATION SYSTEM DESIGN CONSULTANT RANKING RESULTS

At the last meeting, the Board voted to accept the rankings of the review committee and issued a notice of intent to award and authorized staff to begin contract negotiations with respondent firm Omnicom Consulting Engineers. The procurement documentation, consultant's RFQ response, \$172,581.80 fee proposal (proposal begins on page 18 of the attached contract) and contract has been reviewed and approved by Triumph. Omnicom will advise the county on the development and implementation of a new countywide first responder communication system used by Franklin County EMS and Volunteer Fire Departments, Franklin County Sheriff's Office, Franklin County Road Department, Franklin County School Board, Weems Memorial Hospital, Carrabelle Police Department, City of Apalachicola Police Department, and all as further described in the County's Application for Funds and grant award agreement with Triumph Gulf Coast project #333. Once this contract is approved and a notice to proceed is issued, county staff will assist Omnicom in setting up the kickoff meetings with the user groups for the design of the new system. Board action to approve and authorize the chairman to sign the attached contract with Omnicom Consulting Engineers for the design of the Triumph First Responder Communication System Upgrade. I would also like to introduce the President of Omnicom Tim Barrentine and Vice President Chris Monzingo as they are in attendance this morning and will be glad to answer any questions you all may have for them at this time regarding their approach to the design and the projected timeline for the project.

Item addressed earlier in the meeting.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approve items 2, 3, 4, and 5 from Mrs. Griffith's report. Motion carried 5-0.

2. BOARD ACTION: AIRPORT OBSTRUCTION REMOVAL PROJECT PHASE 2

Contractor Collins Land Services was awarded \$501,150 for the Airport Obstruction Removal Phase 2 Project. Collins only completed and earned \$391,750 of that contract value. The balance of the work was not completed due to the clearing being shut down by FDEP due to wetland concerns. The balance of uncleared areas will need to be properly permitted before the project can move forward. AVCON engineers recommend the attached change order to reduce the contract price from the \$501,150 to the \$391,750 which will then close the contract with Collins and the county can then re-bid the project once the permitting is complete.

A. Board action to approve and authorize the chairman to sign change order #1 with Collins Land Services to reduce the awarded contract value by \$109,400 and close the contract for the Airport Obstruction Removal Project Phase 2. The attached task order amendment #1 from AVCON authorizes the additional \$8,560 in environmental permitting work that the FAA requested late in the grant application process.

B. Board action to approve and authorize the chairman to sign the attached amendment #1 for AVCON's Airport Obstruction Removal Phase 2 task order.

3. BOARD ACTION: AIRPORT WEST HANGAR DEVELOPMENT

Avcon has prepared the 60% design drawings for the West Hangar Area Development and are progressing to the 90% design documents. During the 60% design phase, Avcon contacted the City of Apalachicola to request drawings of the existing water and sewer lines under the proposed T-Hangar area. Avcon was told that the city did not have any drawings or details. There are existing utilities in the T-Hangar area because there are fire hydrants and sewer cleanouts at the surface. Avcon will need to know exactly where the underground utilities are to not damage the utilities during construction and will need to tie into the utilities for the hangar's proposed restrooms. Avcon received a \$8,400 quote from a sub-contractor to perform a ground penetrating detailed radar survey of the six-acre site. The attached task order amendment with AVCON increases their task order price by \$8,400 and this amount will be 100% reimbursed by the FDOT grant for this project. Board action to approve and authorize the chairman to sign the attached amendment #1 for AVCON's Airport West Hangar Development Project.

4. BOARD ACTION: DW WILSON AND KENDRICK SPORTS ARENAS – BATTING CAGE CARPETING

As requested by the board, attached are two quotes for the outdoor carpeting for the batting cages at DW Wilson and Kendrick Sports Arenas. The price will not exceed \$13,153.25 for each batting cage. Cates Electric has completed the batting cage electrical work at both TDC funded sports arenas and Vrooman Park this past week. Board action to approve sending the two quotes as a project funding request to TDC for their review and recommendation.

5. BOARD ACTION: CEI TASK ORDER FISCAL YEAR 25/26 DUNE WALKOVERS CEI SERVICES AND

PERMITTING AND PLAN SETS FOR UPCOMING

As part of the planned replacement of the existing dune walkovers on St. George Island, the plans and field permits have now been issued for this season's replacement of dune walkovers: 8th Street East, and the Lighthouse Park Dune Walkover. Dune walkovers are slated for replacement by order of condition. It has become necessary to replace the deteriorated structures as the county parks and recreation department is no longer able to repair and keep the walkovers safe in their current condition. Dune walkovers serve as effective methods for erosion control by aiding in the preservation of natural dune topography and native vegetation. Florida Statute 125 authorizes the use of tourist development sales tax proceeds for erosion control measures. The attached amendment proposal from the County's coastal engineers MRD and Associates will cover the bidding and contract award, on site construction engineering and inspection services for the two already permitted replacements occurring this season: 8th Street East, and the Lighthouse Park Dune Walkover – also, as permitting efforts do take a good bit of time, an additional task order was requested to cover the permitting, development of construction plans, bidding and construction inspection contract services relative to two additional dune walkovers which appeared to have deteriorated rapidly from the previous season (10th and 11th East). It is important for the county to pursue early issuance of the permits, as this allows for all elements to be completed outside of sea turtle nesting season: demolition of the existing dune walkovers, construction of replacement dune walkovers, and the parking stops and post and rope barricade to prevent forward encroachment onto the dune structures. The rise and run of each dune walkover is permitted within DEP guidelines and all will be unique to the specific site conditions and topography. Board action to approve and authorize the chairman to sign the attached \$12,985 task order amendment with MRD and Associates for construction contract administration and inspection for the 8th East and Lighthouse Park Dune Walkover and the attached \$54,330 task order for the permitting, bid specifications, construction contract award and inspection services for the two late add dune walkovers due to deterioration 10th East and 11th East, both task orders to be paid by TDC sales tax proceeds.

6. BOARD INFORMATION: DRAFT TDC SPENDING PLAN UPDATE

As reported during this year's budget discussions, there was a change in the 2025 statutes which authorized the expenditure of the county's TDC sales tax proceeds for 'section 6' public facilities infrastructure projects. Before this can occur, the county must amend the TDC spending plan to reflect the change. A rough draft of the revised plan is attached to my report for the Board to review before sending the draft to TDC for their review and recommendation. The attached plan adopted in 23/24 clearly outlined the goals and objectives for Tourist Development and served as a reference for budgeted revenues and expenditures going forward. The 2023/2024 plan budgeted the current year's revenues as % totals: a maximum of 9% could be spent for administrative activities, 40% in advertisement and promotional activities, 21% towards objectives e & f of the plan (museum improvements and operations, erosion control efforts, maintenance dredging and visitor center activities), 10% for public safety services, 10% for beach park facilities, and 10% as a reserve. Interest revenues were dedicated to offset the cost of projects and carry forward funds were proposed to be allocated to a variety of projects which fit with statutory guidelines. The changes and necessary updates in the attached updated draft 2025/2026 spending plan are highlighted yellow. The updated draft plan will be presented at the next TDC meeting for their review and recommendations – once approved by TDC, the county can then move forward with scheduling the public hearing to adopt the plan. There is also a draft list of section 6 concepts attached to this report which could be pursued in the future, these conceptual improvements include:

- SGI Seawall Repair at SGI Boat Ramp
- Patton Drive Boat Ramp and Dock Improvement Patton Drive
- Old Ferry Dock Boat Ramp Parking Area Improvement
- Dock and ADA access improvements at Indian Creek Park
- Sylvester Williams Park Improvements – sports lighting, basketball court, pavilion, pickleball court
- Vrooman Park Improvements– new surface for basketball court, path resurfacing, property acquisition
- Gene Sewell Park Improvements-Pickleball Court, Picnic Pavilion
- City Playground Improvements
- City Boat Ramp Improvements
- Other County Boat Ramp Improvements
- SGI Multi-Use Path Resurfacing – and additional phases – 3rd to 12th West, 3rd to 11th East, 11th to State Park (Section 6)
- Resurfacing of roads in high tourism areas – commercial dist. SGI, downtown corridor areas other areas (Apalachicola, Eastpoint, Carrabelle, Alligator Point)

- SGI Auditorium and Visitor Center (RIF design grant applied for)
- Parking Improvements – downtown areas, beach areas
- Drainage Improvements – downtown areas, commercial districts

7. BOARD INFORMATION: MISCELLANEOUS PROJECT UPDATES

- Apalachicola Health Department Siding replacement in progress
- Lanark EMS – Interior finishing/sheetrock in progress
- RESTORE SGI Stormwater Project in progress – work focusing on retention pond areas at center of island for first 30-days of project to be ready for FDOT’s resurfacing of Franklin Boulevard
- District 1, District 3, and District 5 Road Paving Segments are out to bid, originally bid separately due to concerns regarding the availability of funds and quantity of roadway segments, re-bid as single project with disclosure that not all segments may be awarded due to budgetary constraints, bids to be opened at the next meeting
- RESTORE County Wide Dune Restoration Project – dune construction at Carrabelle Beach Park and St. George Island’s Lighthouse Park is now out to bid, 45-day solicitation period required by RESTORE, bids to be opened at the 1st meeting in November.
- Courtroom Renovation Project is now out to bid, mandatory pre-bid meeting was held yesterday, bids to be opened at the next meeting
- Fort Coombs Armory Convention Center renovation project began on Wednesday the 17th, attached is the schedule of completion, the final inspection is anticipated to occur early in March of 2026.
- SGI Multi Use Path – awaiting concurrence / commencement authorization from FDEP to award construction contract to low bidder
- Kendrick Sports Arena Pickleball Courts – Surfacing applied this past week, open for play by the end of this week.
- DW Wilson Sport Arena Pickleball Courts – received amended site layout, stormwater permitting necessitated some changes from original layout to still be able to fit (6) courts, see new layout below: Pickleball courts to be located between the multi-use path and the soccer field – permitted stormwater retention area to be located along east side of soccer field.

14. Michael Morón – County Coordinator

Chairman Jones asked Mr. Moron to provide the cost of each home.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Croom, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved items 1 and 2. Motion carried 5-0.

1. Action Item: SHIP Certification

- Attached to my report is the SHIP Annual Report and Local Housing Incentive Certification for the Chairman’s signature.
- This certification is for closeout year 2020/2021 and interim years 2021/2022 and 2022/2023.
- This certification is part of the close-out process for SHIP funding and reviews.
- Board action to authorize the Chairman’s signature on the SHIP Annual Report and Local Housing Incentive Certification.

2. Action Item: SHIP Approval

- Attach to my report is a first payment (40%) request from Mrs. Cortni Bankston (SHIP Administrator) for three SHIP Demolition/Reconstruction applications.
- Like the CDBG replacement home process, the manufactured home companies require an upfront partial payment to process the order.

- Board action to approve the first payment request for the three Demolition/Reconstruction SHIP applications.

3. Discussion/Action Item: SHIP Administrative Contract

- As the Board is aware, your SHIP Administrator, Mrs. Cortni Bankston, last day with the County is October 10th.
- To minimize any gap with the program, I met with Apalachee Regional Planning Council to discuss administration of the program. Currently, ARPC provides SHIP administrative services to Jackson, Calhoun, and Gulf Counties.
- We were able to agree to a process, which includes the use and access to their database that manages their SHIP clients, and compensation.
- Board discussion and action to approve the ARPC agreement for SHIP Program administrative services contingent on Attorney Shuler's review.

Chairman Jones asked did the state increase funding this year. Mr. Moron noted that Rural Renaissance did not get approved but that would increase SHIP if approved. Mr. Moron noted that the county used to deduct the audit fee from the SHIP funds, but I would like to transfer that to professional services. I will talk to Linda about that and come back at the next meeting. Board approval for the administrative fee and software for ARPC, with Attorney Shuler's review.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board approved the ARPC agreement for SHIP Program administrative services contingent on Attorney Shuler's review. Commissioner Amison noted that he does not want the program to fall back like it was before. Mr. Moron explained that Ms. Boone will help the applicants with applications. The software will allow Ms. Boone to login and see what the applicant is missing, and she will be your Franklin County point of contact. **Motion carried 5-0.**

4. Discussion/Action Item: Vacant Position Advertisement

- Attached to my report is the Vacant Position advertisement.
- The primary role of this new hire will be to provide administrative support to the Building and Compliance Departments.
- The closing date will be on Friday, October 24th.
- Board action to authorize advertising for the vacant clerk position.

Sissy who handles sanitary nuisance complaints. Chester Reese uses him to check all of our zoning violations. They are separate now but hoping to cross train and have them working together. The plan is to have two code enforcement officers for Franklin County.

Commissioner Ward noted that Angela is the point of contact for complaints at this time.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Sanders, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present the Board authorized advertising for the vacant clerk position. Motion carried 5-0.

5. Discussion/Action Item: New PZA Member

- Mr. Jim Thompson, an Eastpoint resident, expressed interest in serving on the Planning and Zoning Adjustment Board as an at-large member.
- Mr. Thompson retired from Duke Energy, worked with Mr. Alan Pierce as Director of Administrative Services, and knows some of the county zoning codes. A short bio is attached.
- Ms. Ms. Robinsone Robinson, County Planner, interviewed Mr. Thompson and recommends appointing him to the PZA Board.
- Board action to appoint Mr. Jim Thompson to the Planning and Zoning Adjustment Board.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Amison, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board appointed Mr. Jim Thompson to the Planning and Zoning Adjustment Board. Motion carried 5-0.

Commissioner Ward asked how many vacancies does that leave? Just one.

6. Discussion/Action: Gun/Firing Range One-Day Closer

- Commissioner Ward received a request from the Animal Shelter to close the gun range on Saturday,

November 2nd for a free rabies clinic event at the shelter.

- This event will include a rescue group from Wakulla County that will provide free vaccinations and free microchips. Gulf County's Humane Society may also attend.
- With the potential of having all three counties there, a big turnout is expected with overflow parking and other traffic consideration.
- The firing of guns, at a close proximity to the shelter, may create some anxiety with the crowd and animals.
- Board action to close the gun range on Saturday, November 2nd.

On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Croom, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board authorized closing the gun range on Saturday, November 2nd. Motion carried 5-0.

7. Discussion/Possible Action: Mandatory Garbage Pick-up Workshop

- Last month, the Board agreed to schedule a workshop to discuss mandatory garbage pick-up on Tuesday, October 14th at 6:00 p.m.
- I originally scheduled the workshop at 2:00 p.m. because the Planning and Zoning Adjustment Board regular meeting is scheduled on that same day at 5:30 p.m.
- During the Board discussion, I forgot about the PZA meeting schedule conflict.
- Would the Board be in favor of changing the workshop time to 2:00 p.m. on the 14th or reschedule to another day?
- Board discussion and possible action to reschedule the mandatory garbage pick-up workshop.

Chairman Jones noted that he would recommend canceling the workshop for October 14th. Chairman Jones noted that Commissioner Ward can coordinate with Mr. Moron on her schedule and bring this back up at the next meeting.

8. Discussion/Possible Action: Riparian County Stakeholder Coalition

- Chairman Jones would like to discuss the continued funding of this non-governmental agency.
- Board discussion and possible action related to the continued funding of the Riparian County Stakeholder Coalition.

They are making statements regarding things they would like to do in ACF, and they are not asking any input from the member counties. I have asked Mrs. Griffith, and you will notice it is not included on your bill pay, I asked Mrs. Griffith to withhold the check until the Board had a chance to discuss. Mr. Moron asked do you want Mr. Jones to come before you? Commissioner Ward noted that she was designated as the member for the county, and she has not heard anything from them. Chairman Jones said we are potentially making a motion to withhold the funds up until we can have Mr. Jones present to the Board. **On a motion by Commissioner Ward, seconded by Commissioner Sanders, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present.** Commissioner Sanders said they have been on here a long time. We have not even gotten a report from them each year. Commissioner Amison noted that he has been getting those invitations, so we may need to clarify to them who the representative for the county is. **Motion carried 5-0.**

9. Informational Item: FAC Legislative Conference

- As a reminder, the Florida Legislative Conference is scheduled from Wednesday, November 19th to Friday, November 21st.
- This FAC Conference will be held in Hillsborough.
- If you are planning to attend, please contact Mrs. Angela Lolley so you can be registered as soon as possible.

10. Informational Item: 911 Address Assignment

- Effective today, Mrs. Renee Brannan will be responsible for issuing 911 addresses.
- Up until today, Mrs. Cortni Bankston was responsible for issuing the addresses.

11. Informational Item: FWC Workshop

- There will be another FWC workshop on Tuesday, October 7th at the Chapman Auditorium (155 Avenue E, Apalachicola) from 6-8 pm (ET).
- The purpose of the workshop is to gather input on proposed rules for the regulation and management of commercial and recreational oyster harvest in Apalachicola Bay.

12. Informational Item: AP VFD Open House
 - The Alligator Point/St. Teresa is hosting an open house event on Saturday, October 11th from 10am to 2pm.
 - Attached is a flyer with additional information.
13. Informational Item: Weems Foundation Fundraiser
 - Attached is a flyer for a Weems Foundation fundraiser.
 - Feel free to distribute and circulate the information.
14. Informational Item: Upcoming Meeting Dates
 - Your next regular meeting will be Wednesday, October 15, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. (ET).
 - An Executive Session is scheduled that same day at 1:30 p.m.
 - In November, the Board regular meetings will be on Tuesday the 4th due to the scheduled November 5th FWC meeting in Clewiston, where the final rules on the Apalachicola Bay opening will be considered, and on Tuesday the 18th due to the Florida Association of Counties Legislative Conference that starts on Wednesday, November 19th.

Commissioner Sanders asked Mr. Moron to discuss the interaction with St Joe Paper Company and the flooding issues at Lanark. She noted that she was hoping they were going to do what they said they were. Mr. Moron noted that at first the intent was to have a round table meeting, then he received a phone call, they had talked amongst themselves and did not feel anything they had done had caused the flooding problems. Commissioner Sanders noted that she has since contacted her contacts at St. Joe. Commissioner Ward asked Mr. Moron to put on his agenda at the next meeting the PUD ordinance. Put on your report for us to discuss at the next meeting. Commissioner Amison asked if Mr. Moron was able to get in touch with the railroad and he noted that he has not yet.

15. Michael Shuler – County Attorney

1. MSBU

Chairman Jones called for public comments due to this being added to the agenda at the beginning of the meeting.

Attorney Shuler recommended the Board authorize him to draft and negotiate a contract with Acentura to perform a professional MSBU rates study that are charged with all our fire districts. Attorney Shuler reached out to three companies. One was in Tampa, there fee was about 3k. There was an outlier company in Maine, they did not provide any info regarding legal, and they may not have been as up on Florida law. Discussion of the board, they are caught between the two. Commissioner Amison asked where the funds were coming from? They will be paid from Professional Services and not from MSBU funds.

On a motion by Commissioner Sanders, seconded by Commissioner Ward, and by a unanimous vote of the Board present, the Board authorized Attorney Shuler to draft and negotiate a contract with Acentura to perform a professional MSBU rates study. Motion carried 5-0. Attorney Shuler noted that he spoke with Erin about the rate study in Alligator Point almost twenty years ago was approximately \$40k.

Commissioner Ward what do we do in a code enforcement situation where we send a letter the homeowner does not get it, and it gets sent back? How do we proceed from there? Commissioner Ward noted that the homeowner does not live in the state.

Attorney Shuler asked if we know if the certified mail has been returned or refused. Attorney Shuler noted that if cannot get actual service we can get constructive service. Chairman Jones noted that we have had some discussion about Tammi, City of Carrabelle has not named anyone yet. EEC – need recommendation from the board on what the expectation is for this board before we can move forward.

RFP/RFQ/Bid Opening

16. Professional Executive Administrator Services for Franklin County TDC

The Respondent awarded an Agreement shall provide Executive Administrative services for the Franklin County Tourist Development Council (TDC)

[Notice & Request for Competitive Solicitation](#)

Mr. Moron noted that we received one packet submitted by Apalachicola Bay Chamber of Commerce. Commissioner

Sanders noted that she does not have a problem accepting the packet. Mr. Moron noted that the Board is the review committee. Commissioner Sanders noted that we can review the packet and vote on it at the next meeting. Commissioner Amison noted that Mr. Moron could review and let the Board know if there are any changes. Mr. Moron said he would like to distribute to the Board for their review.

Presentations/Updates/Requests

17. David Walker (CEO) & David Bowling (CFO) -- Weems Memorial

Emergency Department Doctors Contracts

[ED Proforma and Malpractice Premium estimate](#)

Chairman Jones noted that by purchasing the malpractice insurance, we are taking them on as employees. Mr. Walker noted that we do this for other positions, such as EMS, Dr. Conrad, etc. Chairman Jones noted that we are looking at saving \$11k. Taking from this, if we are saying the only thing that Dr. Hart was doing was paying the insurance? Commissioner Ward asked who the hospitalist was. Commissioner Ward noted that she was responsible for her own malpractice insurance. It is not on Weems it is on their medical license. Commissioner Amison are y'all entertaining hiring some mid-levels to come in and cover the floors? Commissioner Ward asked if the doctors would be Weems employees or Alliant employees? Commissioner Amison noted that they will technically be subcontracts. Commissioner Croom asked how does it break down? Is it per doctor? Mr. Walker noted that it is depending upon the medical history of each doctor. Mr. Bowling noted that this is an extension of the malpractice policy already in place. This is the incremental increase to our current policy in place today. Commissioner Sanders noted that she had a conversation with Mr. David a couple weeks ago. She was concerned when he told her that the doctors coming outside of the Southland Group are being approached by other facilities around here. Are you going to put anything in the contract as far as a non-compete clause? Mr. Walker noted that he does not think we can do a non-compete in a contract? Commissioner Ward explained a non-compete. Commissioner Amison noted that he believed a lot of our doctor's work at other facilities. Attorney Shuler noted that you do not have full time doctors, they are working ten days a month. Legally courts do not really favor non-compete clauses. I would not recommend at this point putting a non-compete clause in part because it may inhibit our ability to obtain physicians. Commissioner Sanders asked where you plan to obtain the funds to pay the additional insurance premium. David Bowling presented the proforma and how they anticipate increasing revenue. Commissioner Croom asked why Southland did not disclose the proforma or the insurance situation. Mr. Bowling noted that the insurance total was not known at the last meeting. Commissioner Ward you said earlier that Weems is already paying malpractice but that is on Weems. Is this total an additional amount we will pay on top of our current policy? Yes, this is the incremental increase for adding the providers. Why should we have to pay their independent insurance? Mr. Walker noted that the doctors will not be billing on their own. When they work for us, we will get 100% of the billing. Mr. Bowling explained the billing process. We will be able to capture the providers time through the critical access cost process. That is not factored into these numbers at all. Southland did their own billing and received their own payments. Currently Southland provides the malpractice insurance. Commissioner Ward noted that as subcontractors they should incur costs. I am just trying to make sure that we are not paying something that we should not be paying. Chairman Jones noted that it is a whole different situation, Southland is a private company, where Weems is a subsidized hospital funded by tax dollars. Mr. Moron noted that it is like you are paying the insurance on the vendors who you do services with? That is part of them doing business. Commissioner Amison asked if we were going to need to hire someone for coding and billing. Mr. Bowling noted that we are not going to be out any more monies by moving forward with this than we were when we were with Southland.

Ms. Gail Riegelmayr noted that the federal government dictates who is an employee and independent contractor. There have been companies who have been fined for treating 1099 companies as employees. She compared the other individual vendors the board contracts with and how we do not pay their cost of doing business.

Chairman Jones asked what the termination clause of this contract is. Attorney Shuler noted that it is thirty days from written notice. Attorney Shuler noted that the contract states termination by agreement 30 calendar days' notice in writing by either party. We have not received a thirty-day notice. There is a five-day notice for termination for cause. Attorney Shuler checked the 2023 amendment to make sure it does amend anything regarding the termination. Chairman Jones noted that we are still under contract with Dr. Hart based on not receiving a written notice. Chairman Jones asked Attorney Shuler to please notify him if they receive a written notice. Mr. Moron said how do you want me to proceed with scheduling meetings with each of you and the hospital. Mr. Walker noted that he will speak with Dr. Hart tomorrow.

18. Ken Weeks & Robby Lewis Drone Presentation

Mr. Weeks and Mr. Lewis presented the request to the Board via zoom.

This is a joint partnership of local sUAS SMEs to plan, coordinate, develop, execute, and manage the operations of the public sUAS range and operations in NW FL. Unmanned systems integration into Franklin County has become essential for commercial, government, and public use. Franklin County is positioned to become a leader in the state of Florida as FDOT, USDOT, and EDA actively seeks to fund counties who demonstrate a readiness for these capabilities. Franklin County currently lacks a unified framework, training range, and program management structure, limiting its ability to access these opportunities and prepare for future aviation integration. Action items requested are as follows: establish AAM Node at the work camp/airport; establish dedicated sUAS range on county land; establish formal county-wide sUAS program. What is AAM? Next-generation aviation using small electric or hybrid aircraft. Vertical takeoff/landing for missions like disaster response, medical delivery, and rural access. Why it matters for Franklin County? Positions the work camp AAM node as a regional hub for testing and training. Opens eligibility for FDOT, USDOT SMART, and EDA funding. Signals county leadership in Florida's growing aerospace sector. Economic growth and workforce development for Franklin County. Airport located AAM node: location is agnostic if the following criteria are met - Class G Airspace County owned land; utilities (power, water, sewage) structures (usable for manufacturing and office space); space to support eVTOL operations. Ask: Letter of Support from BOCC to explore potential vendors. What is an sUAS range? A dedicated, controlled site for drone training, testing, and innovation which provides safe airspace for county departments, public safety, and partners. Why it matters for Franklin County? Ensures standardized training and FAA compliance; eligible for FDOT, USDOT/FEMA, and EDA funding; attracts universities, agencies, and commercial partners as additional funding sources for the county. sUAS range at future EOC location: Currently an open field could be used. Future EOC facilities would drive more traffic as a desired location to train. Driving factors for a range – water, power, internet, open launching area. Location is agnostic if the following criteria are met Class G Airspace and county owned land. Multi-Use Operation area: schools, agencies, commercial clients, manufactures. All looking to train, test and demo. Asking for letter of support from BOCC to explore potential vendors. What is program management? A county-wide framework for drone operations. Standardizes training, compliance, and safety across departments. Why it matters for Franklin County? Ensures FAA compliance and reduces liability. Improves efficiency and eliminates duplication of effort. Saves money by consolidating training, equipment, and operations. Expands capabilities across departments (EM, public safety, GIS, infrastructure). Builds a local training pipeline and reduces contractor dependence. Opens access to state and federal grants for public safety and workforce.

Ground Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sUAS Program Management Intro Class • Audit and compliance • Program setup • Audits and compliance • Range development 	Bundles <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Starter-\$10K (Training + Aud • Growth-\$20K (Setup + 2 Aud • Enterprise-\$40K (Setup + 6m
Air Services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Airborne Security (local events) • Training and certification (Part 107, flight time) • Operational Support Flights (inspection, survey) 	Subscriptions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SME Retainer - \$1.5K-\$3K/m • Flight Desk- \$250-\$500/mont

Ask: Letter of Intent from BOCC to explore sUAS capability growth for Franklin County.

Today's Ask:

TFS/GCAC is requesting:

- A letter of support from the Board to advance these initiatives, AAM clients/initiatives, unlocking grant eligibility, economic development, and county readiness.
- A letter of support from the Board to advance these initiatives, sUAS clients/initiatives, unlocking grant eligibility, economic development, and county readiness.
- A letter of intent from the Board to advance these initiatives, Franklin County sUAS integration/management, unlocking grant eligibility, economic development, and county readiness.

This letter of support will allow TFS/GCAC to confidently share with UAS companies Franklin Counties goal to advances UAS integration.

The Board recommended the team speak with each board member one on one and meet with the AEOD board to get their recommendation. Once this is done, possibly set up a workshop to discuss and get public input.

Commissioners' Comments

There were no further commissioners' comments.

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.