FRANKLIN COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING
FORT COOMBS ARMORY
SEPTEMBER 3, 2026
5:15 PM
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, and Erin Griffith-Fiscal Manager/Grants Coordinator, Linda Philips-Finance Director

FY 2026/2027 Budget

1. **Call To Order**

   This is the 1st Budget Public Hearing to adopt the tentative millage levy and tentative budget for FY 2026-27.

Chairman Jones speaking, Franklin County Board of County Commissioners now in session for this budget public hearing. Today is Thursday, September 3. Thank you, everyone, for being here that is here, and we'll go ahead and get started. If we could, we're going to start with the invocation and pledge, Commissioner Amison.

2. **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

Commissioner Amison led the Board in prayer followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.
Chairman Jones speaking, Mrs. Erin, I'll turn it over to you.

3. **Budget Information**

   At this meeting, the Board must adopt the tentative budget and tentative millage rate to be advertised according to statutory requirements.

   Budget Documents
   2026/27 Budget Book

   a) It will take 5.4109 mills to fund this budget.
   b) The total of the tentative budget is $122,882,684.
   c) The tentative millage rate of **5.4109** mills is **12.74%** ***greater*** than the rolled back rate of **4.7994** mills.

   d) The tentative millage is 12.74% above the rolled back rate due to an increase in the FRS retirement contribution rate for the Special Risk Service Class as set by the Florida Legislature, an increase of 3.5% in the cost of health insurance, an increase in the cost of property insurance premiums, increases in constitutional officers budgets and departmental budgets due to inflationary cost increases in fuel, supplies, utilities and capital needs, increases in costs associated with additional services relative to code enforcement, legal defense, economic development, parking enforcement and IT, reductions in carry forward and state shared revenues, and a 4% inflationary adjustment to wages for all employees of Franklin County.

   e) The date set for the **FINAL BUDGET HEARING** to adopt the final millage rate and budget for Fiscal Year 2026/2027 is TUESDAY, **SEPTEMBER 22ND, 2026, AT 5:15 PM,** at Fort Coombs Armory, located at 66 4th Street, Apalachicola, FL.

Mrs. Griffith speaking, at this meeting, the Board must adopt the tentative budget and tentative millage rate to be advertised according to statutory requirements. It will take 5.4109 mills to fund this budget. The total of the tentative budget is $122,882,684. The tentative millage rate of 5.4109 mills is 12.74 percent

greater than the rollback rate of 4.7994 mills. The tentative millage is 12.74 percent above the rollback rate due to an increase in the FRS retirement contribution rate for the special risk service class, as set by the Florida Legislature, an increase of 3.5 percent in the cost of health insurance, an increase in the cost of property insurance premiums, increases in constitutional officers' budgets and departmental budgets due to inflationary cost increase in items such as fuel, supplies, utilities, and capital needs, increases in costs associated with additional services relative to code enforcement, legal defense, economic development, parking enforcement, and IT reductions in carry forward and state shared revenues, and a 4% inflationary adjustment to wages for all employees of Franklin County. And the date set for the final budget hearing to adopt the final millage rate and budget for fiscal year 2026-2027 is Tuesday, September 22, at 5:15 p.m. here at Fort Coombs Armory, located at 66 4th Street. And then I'll also be glad to actually read the budget narrative if you all feel that that would be helpful. Chairman Jones speaking, yes, let's do that. Mrs. Griffith speaking, each year, the Property Appraiser is required to certify to the county commission the taxable value of real property by July 1 of each year. The certified value is the basis for calculating a proposed millage rate. Franklin County's gross taxable value increased by 7.47% from 2025 to 2026. In the current budget, the millage rate of 5.0459 generated $19,102,706. At the budget workshop, commissioners were presented with a preliminary budget comprised of $28,134,536 in ad valorem proceeds, with a proposed millage rate of 6.9152 mills. Upon conclusion of the budget workshop, commissioners cut $5,817,335 from the proposed budget and move forward with a proposed millage rate of 5.4109 mills to appear on the trim notices in August. The rollback millage rate is the rate that nets the same ad valorem proceeds that a taxing authority operated on in the prior budget year. This considers the effect of the amounts transferred to the tax increment districts and omits the added value of new construction from the calculation. The rollback rate is 4.7994 and would generate $19,526,459 in ad valorem proceeds. The tentative millage 5.4109 with 22 million 14,359 in property tax proceeds is currently 12.74 percent over the rollback rate, or $2,487,900 over in Abalone proceeds. The total difference between budgeted property tax revenues from one year to the next, excluding the effects of the tax increment districts and the value of new construction, is $2,911,653. The preliminary budget totals $122,882,684. The change in the total budget can be attributed to the. Increases summarized on the next page, additional grant awards, and the county's assumption of EMS services. In 2026, homesteaded properties with just values exceeding taxable values saw an increase in the assessed value of 2.7 percent based on the Save Our Homes capital piece, which is the lesser of CPI or 3 percent. A homeowner with a house valued at $150,000 with a $50,000 homestead exemption would have paid $505 in county taxes in 2025. At the proposed 2026 rate and the 2.7% adjustment to value, that homeowner would pay $555 in county taxes. On page two, items which increase the county's budget funded by property taxes $1,762,073, coupled with summarized revenue losses of $760,894, result in a net increase that is approximately the difference in the ad valorem proceeds. And then you all, there is also some supplemental attachments which were also included, and that is the five-year millage rate comparison with the added pump years of market, the market valuation high in 2006 and 2007, and the market valuation low of 2013 and 2014. So that's just kind of a wild seven-year span of data, and then also a budget by fund comparison, which actually summarizes in total where the total budget figure comes from. Chairman Jones speaking, all right, Commissioner, you have any questions for Mrs. Griffith? So at this time, we'll open up for public comments. Anybody wish to comment publicly in the room? Please come forward. State your name for the record.

4. Public Comments

Mr. Paul Reigelmayer speaking, just a question. I'm looking at the page with the graph. I'm curious. Two questions. One, what is the general fund? What goes in there, and why is it about $10 million more this year? Mrs. Griffith speaking, that is actually an exciting answer. I'm glad to be able to answer this way. There are actually two very large grant projects in the upcoming fiscal year that we're very excited about. The first of which is the construction of the new EOC building. So that's roughly about 5.9 million dollars. That's a combination of state and federal grant revenues that's actually being used to construct that building, and we also have, I believe, a total of 6.2 million dollars for the landfill transfer station, which is actually being funded by federal RESTORE dollars. So that's the reason for the difference in the general

fund because that's where those grants are, and the general fund is also the county's, essentially the general operating fund. So when you go across this table, if you will look at the funds such as the general fund, the fine and forfeiture fund, the library, road and bridge and mosquito control, those are essentially the county's operating funds. Everything else is essentially special funds or proprietary funds. Those that are actually receive a lot of revenue, such as Weems Hospital, that's designated as proprietary fund. But as far as general operations of the county, those are the funds that you know you want to look at, and those are the ones that are supported by ad valorem. Mr. Reigelmayer speaking, okay, thank you.

Chairman Jones speaking, anyone else?

Mr. Jeff Betzal speaking, my name is Jeff Betzal. I'm a resident here in Franklin County. I've been coming here for probably since I was about six years old, and have owned real estate here for about 10 or 12 years. I've been paying property tax for a good while. I reckon my question is: is that how? How do we? How does? How do? And I reckon this is kind of a broad question because it's one of those questions where it's like seven years ago the budget was about $60 million, if I'm correct, and or something of that nature. You could get into that on that. There's a lot of this stuff you see on the SGI web page, and so I wanted to come to clarify to make sure that I had that information correct.

Mrs. Griffith speaking, that is likely correct. However, the county budget does grow primarily because of the special funds. You'll see a lot of our funds. We don't actually expend those funds each and every single year. They're kind of held in reserve. For example, the landfill management escrow. That fund is something that we've actually had to add, we add probably about I would say $300,000 to $400,000 a year because it's required of us by FDEP in the event that our landfill closes. So over time, the balance will continue to grow in that fund. We will not actually expend those dollars until the closure of the landfill. We also have TDC sales tax proceeds. That's another fund. You know, as the balance goes up, and then it comes down when we expend for projects. Trying to think of some other good examples. Also, we've added fund 401, which is actually the ambulance fund, and also Weems Memorial Hospital. Their revenues tend to fluctuate, and they become part of us, so we do have to include them in all of our budgeting.

Mr. Betzal speaking, right. Okay. That's. I appreciate that. I. You know, just seems I've run a, I run a home building and development business in Georgia for 32 years, and to see that type of an increase in a budget seems kind of exorbitant. You know, I mean, almost double. You know, so I there's my household budget hasn't increased that much. My salary income hasn't increased that much, but yet my property taxes keep going up, doubling and doubling and doubling, and I moved here to retire. Hopefully, back in 2019 when we moved here, moved into my commissioner's subdivision at the time in Whispering Pines, and you know, so I know that our governor Ron DeSantis, you know, is proposed. He proposed to cut property tax altogether. So this is not a foreign kind of a comment that I'm making that I would love to see our property taxes go down, because in my household, whenever my income is less, then I have to cut back. You know, I quit going out to eat. I quit making purchases. I drive a 2000 Ford F150. You know, I'd love to have a brand new pickup truck, but you know those kind of things aren't in my budget anymore because of property tax and insurance. And I know that you guys get hit with insurance, just like we do, you know. So, and one of those things that you know, just in the you know, it's like, and I'm one of these guys that I've always looked five years in advance. I barely got a high school education, but I became a successful business guy because I worked harder, and worked smarter, and worked long hours to achieve the American dream. So now I've achieved the American dream, and I'm trying to figure out if I can hold on to it. You know, in this county, because at some point in time, if the taxes get much higher, because as you get older, as each one of us knows, as you get older, your income sources and your income stream starts to be reduced because your marketability as a you know as a person or as a business person or whatever goes down. So you're not having the income that you once had, and that's not just speaking for me because I'm 68 years old. That's speaking for anybody that's over 65 years old, who you know. And I'm just echoing the words I reckon to Ron DeSantis, saying that you know people that 65 years old who worked their whole life like I have, because nobody gave me anything. I mean, I had to work for

everything I've got. I'm just trying to hold on to it, but with insurance and property taxes, it's becoming more and more difficult to be able to do that. And so, you know, when you see a budget that keeps increasing, so I'm sitting here saying, okay, I pay my taxes this year, you know, and if it goes up again next year, maybe I can pay next year. But if it doubles again and goes to 240 million dollars, I don't think I'm able to afford to live here anymore, and I'm hearing that from a lot of people in the community. I know that I know a lot of realtors in the community, you know, and they're saying that you know house values are going down, but yet our appraiser says house values have gone up. You know, I mean, I just talked to Sam Fortis the other day at church, you know, and I'm one of these people. Let me add that whenever I came here, I didn't just come here to live here. I got plugged in. I'm very active in my church, the United Community Church, United Baptist Church, whether it's Scott Shiver, and those guys there. A matter of fact, I cook breakfast every Sunday morning, and like to invite everyone here for Sunday morning breakfast at 9o'clock. If you're looking for a church, let me get that plug in, and then you know, and I do a lot of community stuff. I do stuff in our subdivision for our elderly people. So, and you know, and I'm trying to be civically you know minded and incorporate myself and my wife. She's the administrator at the nursing home at St. James. We're both you know, very, very, very plugged into the community, so to speak, you know. And I know that, you know, I know that as we get older, you know, we where our income sources are going to go down, and my taxes continue to go up. So I'm just wondering if there is a five-year plan to try to curve spending, or is it just going to continue to go up and up and up and up and up and up, you know, because that's what I always did. I always put a five-year plan in place, and I achieved those goals by working harder and working smarter. And so I just, you know, I know that we're you know fixing to vote this November on a proposal that the legislature put forth to reduce, you know, the homestead exemption for homestead people like myself by 250,100, 50,000 next year, and 250,000 the next, and then it looks like our and I have drawn a blank because I'm starting to get nervous now. Everybody's staring at me. Our candidates for the I know our candidate. For the Republican Party this year, somebody tell me his name. Chairman Jones speaking, Byron Donald. Mr. Betzal speaking, yeah, you know, and he's talking about doing away with property tax, you know. And I don't, I'm not opposed to paying property tax. Don't get me wrong. I mean, I've paid property tax my whole life. First house I built for myself, I was 17 years old, and I was you know paying property tax ever since, but you know, so it's not just me thinking this way. It's our elected officials that are thinking this way. So I'm hoping that these elected officials are thinking the same way, and so that that would be kind of I reckon it's kind of a open ended question in the fact that you know are there plans to try to cut spending or are we just going to continue to spend because it it's not? I mean, and don't give me, don't take it wrong because I know it's your money too, because y'all pay taxes. You know, and I looked into the tax digest, you know, and I see whatever I saw what every person on the board pays in taxes, and I've got one property here in the community that I pay more on that one property than you guys all play together, you know. I mean, and that's no reflection on y'all. I'm trying to ditch, you know, dish on you or whatever. But it's just the facts, you know, and the facts. You want to own. Chairman Jones speaking, that investment, so when you sell it, you'll have way more than I can get for mine. Mr. Betzal speaking, I can well, yeah. No, the problem is though, is that it's I know a lot of people who are equity investors into the real estate market, and they're starting to pull back because they know their cost to carry now will exceed any potential gains they may make in the future. So, in other words, if I bought a piece of property for $100,000 and I held it for 10 years and I've spent $100,000 in property taxes and I sell it for $200,000, I ain't made no money. So, why would I want to hold a liability for $100,000? I go to the you know so and so. So that's the thing is you can't is you know and then if you go out and improve your property, then the appraiser comes out and he says oh you improved your property so you worked hard you saved your money and you invested in yourself you invested in your home and you've made it more desirable but your taxes are going to go up, and I know that's the kind of the adjective is like what you just said. You know, it's kind of the mindset is oh well, you can sell it for a lot of money in the future and recoup, but that's not the way the real estate market works. I mean, you want to go. Chairman Jones speaking, that's the way investments are. That's why some people choose to do stock market and they don't fool with real estate. Mr. Betzal speaking, but there's a risk there as well, you know. And then also we saw what happened, and you know, and one of the things I'll add to this, I've been in the home building real estate business. My dad was a builder, my mother was a school bus driver. We owned a little house in Panacea when I was growing up,

so that's how I got introduced to Saint George Island, and I've been coming here ever since. I started bringing my kids from that; they were that high, and then now my son is 49, my daughter is 52. I'm 51. My granddaughter just got engaged over on the island this past May for her birthday. Chairman Jones speaking, so, but I also say is share some perspective with you, maybe to answer some of your questions because you've asked a lot of questions. Mr. Betzal speaking, well, yeah, I reckon they're. Well, it's really not even. It's really. I reckon my primary question is to narrow down to one question: Do you plan to cut the budget in the future and spending? Are we going to continue to see increases such as doubling in another five years? Chairman Jones speaking, okay, so this I will say this, a couple of things. So this is the first time since I've been on the board that we've not moved back something from what was originally proposed. Yes, this is the first time ever in the 10 years I've been here. Now we've not adopted a rollback rate every year, but we've not fully went forward with what a complete new number would be. Like even this one, we've already moved it back some from where it started at the workshop. Some important numbers I want to make sure you realize when you're looking at this, yes, the total overall budget is $122, but the ad valorem is what's being collected from the residents. So this number is a little bit higher than it historically has been at $22 million, but it's still in the teens for percentage of the total of our budget. Like Mrs. Griffith has said, most of our budget is funded with grants and special funds, either state or federal dollars. That obviously makes things move a lot slower. So it looks like we're not trying to approach things, but we're also trying to do things that aren't putting more tax on our residents. Yes, you know what I mean. So that's the way those numbers work. As far as the you know trying to roll back or vote for the tax, I will say this, and this is just informational. This is not trying to influence the way you're going to vote or anybody would vote. Some stuff with that tax proposal is actually shifting authority from counties to the state government because they're not only having that proposal to increase the homestead exemption, they also having that proposal to tell us of the money that's left, we can spend it on this, this, and this, and nothing else. Mr. Betzal speaking, right, and see that's information you're privy to. So I'm not. Well, I just know it's out there. Chairman Jones speaking people are reading the fact they're going to get lower taxes. Mr. Betzal speaking, so I need to look into that before? Chairman Jones speaking, before I read, and that's again, it's not trying to influence the way you vote, but there's more there than just a tax break. It's also a shift. Mr. Betzal speaking, yeah, but I'm just I'm speaking from the layman's place, you know. I mean, I talk to people who are you know wondering if they're going to be able to keep their homes because of property tax and insurance. I mean, it's not just property tax; it's insurance as well. Yeah, all I know, it's not just blanket. Just I mean, you know, whenever some guy, a friend of mine, for instance, you know, he bought a home 10 years ago and he paid $300,000 for it in the community from which I moved from, and then now then the home's valued at $750,000, and he's like, "Oh, that's great, but I don't want to sell my home. So there's really no real value there to him. Like just like with me, I want to retire, and so you know I don't want to sell my house. I want to live in my house for as long as I can live in my house until the good Lord calls me home. Chairman Jones speaking well, I can share another insight with you about that, if that's okay, sir. I can share another insight with you about that same scenario. Mr. Betzal speaking, well, let me finish. Okay. So what happens is, is when you've got a note on your house, as you know, the bank has to escrow the taxes. Just make sure. Chairman Jones speaking, trust me, I know. Mr. Betzal speaking, and so you know, so his house note he told me has gone up over $800 a month in just the last few years, and so he's like, Mr. Betzal, I'm struggling to hold on to my house anymore. You know, and I'm like, I get it, you know, and he's not the only one, you know, and you're hearing more and more stories, you know, and it, and I don't know, I just, I just feel like when I run my business, I was very, very frugal, very frugal. Matter of fact, I didn't buy anything unless I could pay for it. I just never, I never borrowed any money. Now I did borrow money for construction lending because I was building houses, or if I bought a tract of land to develop, you know, I'd have to borrow money because they two or three million investments. Yes, you know. But far as personally, I've been blessed to be able to buy my homes. I've been able to buy my vehicles and have them paid for. You know, but taxes and insurance are, you know, right now on my property on the island, I mean, it's like you know the taxes and insurance. It's like $1,600 a month, but I've got to come out of pocket to just keep my house. You see what I'm saying? Befre I paid electricity bill, buy groceries, buy gas, and of course, just like with everybody else, I mean, everybody's cost has gone up. You go to the gas pump, pay the same thing I pay at the pump. You know, you go to grocery store and pay same thing, you know. So it's just I just want to

know that I'm, you know, that the commissioners that that I'm looking up to or looking at right now are conscientious enough and mindful enough to know. And I know I know you are, and I'm not I'm not trying to blanket anything. It's just that you know I just I don't know I just I'm just afraid that you know in five years as the way that the rate of increases we're having, you know, where are we going to be in five years? You know, anyone's going to be able to afford to live. So you have to cut spending, and that's what I did in my business in 2008 when the housing market crashed. I owed 32 million dollars to five different lenders. Thank the Lord, I was able to do workouts and worked all that off and didn't have to bankrupt or anything like that, but I had to let 14 people go, you know, and that was a hard thing to do. I lost contractors and suppliers, lost everything during that time, you know, and so we had to make drastic cuts in our business to be able to survive, and you know, and thankfully we did, and we made it, you know, until I retired about in 2019 and moved down here. But anyway, that's not that's my. Chairman Jones speaking, so also, remember too, we have to do our best as a county to make sure there's a certain amount of expectation. So we can't do you justice as a citizen to cut corners to save money on a budget, and then when you really need us, something happened in a storm or some other thing that we need to do, and we, you know, we were coming on the dump truck and it breaks down on the way to fix something. You know what I mean? Mr. Betzal speaking, no, I understand. Chairman Jones speaking, we also have to look at that. We don't need to be running on, you know, bubble gum and band aids, as it were. One thing I will tell you, as far as the assessed value of houses, some of what's going on, especially here in Franklin County, you can go back and look, and it happened in 22, about 21-22, right during COVID. Right, in Hurricane Michael, we actually had some houses here. This is a federal law that's passed on to the state and counties have to enforce it. Yes, to do with the cosign. Yes, and the flood insurance program. So if you people in this county had a house that was a million dollar, they paid a million dollars for it. They were being assessed at $250,000. Okay, and their value, or say they're being assessed at $200 to keep it easy numbers. Yeah, they were being their value was 400, and they had to put $250,000 back into it because of damages, because of structural damages and they were not able do that because it was over the 50% threshold. So Mrs. Skipper, our property appraiser, I know because she told me personally. Our property appraiser at the time said, she said I just had a conversation with the governor's office, and his staff, and they said whatever you haven't been doing with moving your adjustments up as they're supposed to do incrementally, do it now, and it all went up pretty much in one year, and it was done that way because the state said we're not going to have this issue anymore. So don't keep that artificially low. And that's helped create part of the problem. But that was directed by the state to do. So a lot of things we have to do that really aren't us. We have to do whatever else we're told to do. But I mean, see, that's where some of those numbers are coming from. Mr. Betzal speaking, I don't know if I can read that on the web or not. Chairman Jones speaking, You know, no, but you can find it historically. It happened in one year in Franklin County. Mr. Betzal speaking, yes, and I was at the meeting yesterday when we was talking about the fire services and you know, and one of the things that was mentioned, like the sound was terrible. I was in the back with him. Sorry, Mason Bean. Yeah. Well, and you know, one of the things I was talking about was fairness. You know, with as far as the rates. You know, as far as like I think somebody even mentioned about you know the fact that this whether it's a trailer or a million dollar house, we need to get the same services, right? Well, to that I would say that if somebody's paying $500 a year in property tax, and somebody's paying $15,000 a year in property tax, they both drive on the same road. Yep, they get the same services. They get the same EMS replies, and they get the same EOC. So, that's you know, for me personally, I one of those things is we're like, how is it? How is that fair? How does somebody pay 500 and somebody pay 15,000? They live in the same county. Yeah, I don't, I know it says values. Chairman Jones speaking, I don't know if it's fair, but at the end of the day, we didn't direct where you should buy your house. Mr. Betzal speaking, oh well. Chairman Jones speaking, I mean. Mr. Betzal speaking, that's true too. Chairman Jones speaking, that was your decision. Mr. Betzal speaking, oh, absolutely. But I didn't buy my house. I built my house. Chairman Jones speaking, either way. Mr. Betzal speaking, these two hands, the money I earned by working my butt off my whole life. You know what I'm saying. So I didn't buy a house. I bought a raw lot back in 2000 and whenever at 10, right after 2008 in the crash, I bought it from Al Marabella out there on the island. You know, and I built my own house, my own two hands. Took me three years to do it because I wanted to pay for it as I went, and that's what I did. So I didn't. I chose to live here because I chose the community in the fact that whenever I

chose to buy the lot in 2011, property taxes was way lower. Chairman Jones speaking, so that was after the crash? Mr. Betzal speaking, well, it was. It was after the crash. It was, and we will see another. I can promise you that. Because in 50 years, I've seen five of them. Yeah, you probably everything that goes up comes back down. That's why I hope these numbers come back down. Only way you do that is by cutting, you know, something. I mean, have to cut something soon. I appreciate y'all. And don't double my taxes. Chairman Jones speaking, you're good. We definitely won't say we out either. Do you want to speak ?

Ms. Joni Bretz speaking, I do have a question, kind of on process, because I am very thankful the flock cameras were covered up. Chairman Jones speaking, yes, they are. Ms. Bretz speaking, but how is it that those were even budgeted for and established? Chairman Jones speaking, that was done by motion and vote of this board. The sheriff brought it to us at that time and asked for. Whenever they were instituted, the sheriff brought that recommendation to the county and asked us to do it. That was done through the sheriff's office. Ms. Bretz speaking, okay. So also, there's a digital push for cryptocurrency, and I'm wondering how that how we ensure that we can always pay cash for our services rather than. Chairman Jones speaking, I don't know how that, we don't have any. We don't. Chairman Jones speaking, no knowledge. Ms. Bretz speaking, can I use an AI crypto? As far as I know, I'm just putting it out there. Chairman Jones speaking, our AI is Erin Griffith. Ms. Bretz speaking, cryptocurrency is something that can bypass the constitution. So basically, I wanted to just put it out there that if we can somehow be assured that we can always pay cash. Chairman Jones speaking, I can assure you we have no say so in that is what I can assure you. Yes, ma'am. Anyone else?

Ms. Talley speaking, hi, my name is Carol Talley, and I live on St. George Island. I've lived there since 2004. Built my house or bought my house in '99, and it is my dream to continue to live there, my husband died six years ago, so I'm on my own. I have to pay for everything. I retired in 2004. I retired again in I think it was 2011, and I retired again a couple of years ago, probably three or four years ago. So you know, I continued to work after I retired from my major job, just so that I could accumulate some money for this point in time where it was just me, but that money's running out fast, and I want to say that Mr. Betzal was very eloquent in everything he said, and I agreed with everything he said. I agreed with every point he brought up. I have to say that was disappointed in you, Ricky, in that Mr. Betzal tried to get you to commit that the board, the commissioners would push for a reduction. You know, they would put some pressure on the department managers to lower their, you know, expenses. And your reaction was not yes, I'll will do that. Your reaction was just to kind of slough it off. And I was, I don't mean to be rude or confrontational at all. Not that kind of person, but I was very disappointed because I think that's a commitment that every one of you need to make is to try wherever you can, and starts with a hospital, but just whatever you can do to lower the expenses because they're rising too fast. And I'm a big believer in zero-based budgeting, where you don't add on to what you had last year. You start from scratch, and I'm a big proponent of that. And I would say that's what we need to do next year.

Chairman Jones speaking, yes, ma'am. Well, Ms. Talley, I'll say this. I'm sorry you took it that way. I thought I answered Mr. Betzal when I said this is the first time in the 10 years I've had the opportunity to sit in this seat and represent you and other residents in the county that we've ever even discussed going up on the millage rate. This is the first year that's ever happened. So if I seem trite in my answer, I apologize because that was not what I was trying to do. Thank you. Anyone else? Is anybody attended by Zoom, Michael? Mr. Moron speaking, yeah, let's not forget Zoom like I did the other day. Oh, I'm sorry. Anyone attending via Zoom who wish to speak? Please use the raise your hand feature. Unmuted. Hi, Ms. Brenda. You're unmuted.

Ms. Brenda speaking, good afternoon, commissioners, and I didn't hear the first part of the meeting, so I apologize. But with the budgeting process, I would just echo what I believe I've heard been said before. If appreciate you looking at any redundancy, or you know any way that we can have, I guess the priority services, like you know, our police and everything, but where you can reduce, I would ask that you do reduce. And I agree. You know, the impression has kind of been given that because of this amendment that is on the ballot, that and you know I kind of understand, but the county is looking for every which

way it can to spend whatever money it can get, And so, I'm not, you know, directly involved with this. And you have a difficult job, but trying to keep track of that, and also the property tax assessments, we do need a reduction. You don't really have too much to do with that overall, but other than the tax assessor, you know, goes out and property assessor goes out and assesses the property values, but then I guess y'all decide. But we do need tax relief. We do need spend. Relief and I think a point was made earlier. I'm not sure that. Just my observation is that if you're living on St. George like I am, or Alligator Point, or for the taxes that are being paid, I don't I don't see that it equates necessarily to services. You know, we recently got some roads paved, but you know, we still have stop signs that need to be replaced and issues like that. So, I appreciate the hard work that you do. I would agree with other people and ask that you look at the costs of things and look to reduce expenses where you can, where you can keep the true services that people need, and if there are things that you know the community can do and has done on its own through volunteer, whatever. People up here, you know, are very resilient and self-reliant, and it's one of the things that is so attractive about this area is the strength of the people. So, anyhow, that's my comment. I wish I could sit in and go line by line. I'm sure I'd have questions. Last time I looked at it, the budget was a lot of pages and a lot of lines. And so, if there's any redundancy or any, I guess I forget the other word I wanted to use, but if there's anywhere that you see that you can reduce the county's budget, then I appreciate that. Thank you.

Chairman Jones speaking, thank you. Is there anyone else, Michael? Anyone else via Zoom that would wish to speak?

Commissioner Ward speaking, Mr. Chairman, I've got a question, or well, just a statement to kind of answer some of the public comments. I was looking at the handout that Erin gave us, and I just want to take a note. I know cut, cut, cut! We cut $5.8 million off the proposed initial budget. Just so everybody is aware, that's a lot of money. Since I've been on the board, we have maintained the same mills. This is the first time I think I've been on the board that we had to increase our mills. But if you look at the employees, and this is from 2006-2007 budget fiscal year to now. If you look at our county employees, our county's grown. Anybody will tell you, you know, Mr. Betzal moved here in 2019. Some other people have moved here. Our county's grown a lot, but we still have the same amount of employees at the sheriff's office for the most part. Our planning and building office. I know that they get, our building permits I think have gone down, but they have been high. They have been, you know, people coming in and pulling permits. So Parks and Rec, all of these employees, we've kind of maintained the same amount of staff. So I know when it comes to cutting, you know, I know that going from 2006 to 2026, it's the same amount of employees. I know Miss Carne was talking about the same level of service. I don't see how we can cut anymore. Erin, help me out. I can't. I mean, I know that if this property tax amendment happens to pass, we will have to probably go back to the drawing board. But that's where you're going to look at starting to cut our libraries, our food banks, our gosh, Erin, help me out. A lot of different of our what they call non-GMO, quality of life services.

Mrs. Griffith speaking, quality of life, and human services are actually going to be those that you know when you read this, what was described with the statutory change in the proposals, you know it will be things such as the non-governmentals that the county supports. A primary example would be just like the federal funding for the Nest program that was just cut. You know that's unfortunate because it was a program that was you know that was so critical to our community and so appreciated by so many parents, you know, working families in the community. But that's a prime example where that was actually that would have been community of life or human services funding. You know, so those are the type of things where you're going to have. You're going in the future. You'll be faced with hard decisions of, you know, public safety. There are things that you have to fund, and also even disaster response, and the things that are not mandatory, such as code enforcement, or you know, as the county is trying to expand services, or even parks and recreation, you know, in the county being able to assist ball teams, you know, when they actually travel to tournaments, you know, so there's a lot of. A feel-good funding that you know is built into the county budget, and we are able to do at this point. But in the future, that that could look very different. So that's just something. You know, there is a trade-off, and to actually change your costs,

you're going to have to change your actions. So that's something to keep in mind. A budget is built, you know, it's not built on one day, the budget is built every single day of every single year. You know, so your actions that you make in in any department, you know, if all of a sudden that you know one of our parks gets vandalized and we have to add security cameras, that then increase the operational budget of that department. You know, we've had a lot of vandalism recently, so that's something that's also been added in some of our park locations. We've actually had to do security cameras just because we're continually getting vandalized. So that's a sad reality. Kind of keep that in mind.

Chairman Jones speaking, I have something else. Yeah, we're still no.

Mr. Betzal speaking, you know, one of one of the things that as a as a business owner that I did, I mentioned while ago I had to let 14 employees go during the 08 banking crisis is what I like to call it, but that's another story. But the you know is that I had 100 contractors subcontractors. We didn't build houses from within our business, so you know, and I know the state of Florida has gone to more you know subcontract labor, especially for the roads and the maintenance of the roads and the shelters of the roads. So you know, I mean, I don't know if that's one thing you know that you can look at in the future because when you go to a subcontractor labor, you don't have to buy equipment, you don't have to pay you know insurance, you don't have to match you know you don't have pensions. You don't have all these other things that go along with that. Just like with me, with my company, you know, I mean, we collected, made sure they had workman's comp, general liability, but they, you know, they took care of all that. You know, so that's, I don't know if that's some area within the county because I'm not being in the workings of the county. If there's possibilities of that in the future to be able to go, you know, of course, I know you would have to eliminate people. Of course, they could reapply wherever with the contractor was and take the job over. But you know, just suggestions. I mean, there's always ways to cut. Like I said, I quit going out to eat. Of course, it cost $100 to out eat these days. So anyway, thank you, Mr. Chair.

Commissioner Ward speaking, Mr. Chairman. We, you know, I thought about that myself at one point. However, we live in a rural county. We got to pay for someone to come over here, and if a road goes down like an emergency, we're going to pick up the phone. Are they subcontracting some other area where they can't get something here to us immediately when our road department's literally right there that can? And that's a great idea, Mr. Betzal. I appreciate the idea, but I thought about that myself, and then I got thinking, where are they going to be from? Do they have to drive get a crew from Tallahassee when the storm event and a roads closure? I had the road department the other day had to go clear out a tree from Highway 65 because it fell in one of the bad storms we had, and we, you know, it's nice we would pick up the phone and call that person and say, and I'm not saying we couldn't with a subcontractor, but to have them here where they can get in line really quick, like to be where they need to be to fix a problem. In my opinion, a pothole in the road, things like that. So future wise, that might be something this board. I may not be sitting in this seat, but it might be a future board and what they may have to come up with, but that's just kind of what my thoughts are on mine, personally.

Mr. Betzal speaking, I appreciate that. You know, but I reckon for me, it's just like I just you know my thing is the awareness and the consciousness of being able to look at the broader picture and looking into the future. I mean, this year is probably much not much we can do about it, but as we go forward, is there something we can you know that you can look at? Because yesterday, if I was correct, I think we spent $90,000 in the county for an assessment on the fire stuff. And forgive me for not knowing all the technical stuff that was with that. But you know, is that $90,000 gone? You know, is that just gone? I mean, is that is it gone? I mean, because y'all didn't vote what they did. Wait, y'all voted, but you didn't use the information that you got for the $90,000. Y'all came up with your own assessment and did that right then. And I commend you for doing that. I thought that was pretty fair what y'all did by adding a little bit here and a little bit there and leaving everything else the same, you know. And but that $90,000, does anybody really conscientiously think about? Man, that was $90,000 that we could have saved if we would have just done what y'all did yesterday and saved a lot of money, you know. And it's that's and I just you know when you spend money and it's other people's money. You know, I just feel like I've

always been the kind of person that you know. When even when I built custom houses, you know, I didn't I didn't go into the project and say, "Oh, you got to give me 50% up front. I waited till I got finished to get paid because I wanted to customer be satisfied. You know, and I say that just in the fact that I was always very conscientious about spending, whether I'm spending your money or my money, I'm gonna spend it the same way, and I'm gonna be very conscientious about it. As long as I know everybody's being conscientious about it and there's awareness of it to it, but like the $90,000, are y'all worried about that $90,000? Like I laid wait last night thinking about that's $90,000 that we could have given to the fire departments, you know, and that's $90,000. I don't know how it divides out because that's the way I think. You know, with how many how many taxpayers are there divided by $9,000, and that was my money. Just you know, it's gone.

Commissioner Amison speaking, well, the answer to that, I am too, and, I've had about maybe over the last two days, seven or eight hours total, and I feel the same way. But I will tell you this: this board, as long as I've been here, which hadn't been as long as some of the others, have been very conscientious. Whenever we've had, and we have not up until that point of yesterday had that type of incident where, as you feel that $90,000 is gone, because some of us kind of feel that way as well, I believe. But like I said, that's something that we've just really gotten a hold to. I know there was other things that wasn't specifically in our budget that's happened transpired over this 10 or my tenure, which would be the Weems rehabilitation. What I forgot what that was, you know, and I was pretty adamant on that about how much money was wasted, this and that. We're very conscious of it now. This is all just kind of happened with what transpired yesterday. Yes, so we do have a path forward, or we're going to discuss the path forward on that. So don't feel as though we're just you know, fearlessly. Well, I just want to make that clear because I'm, I'm just like you. I'm a business owner and I'm very numbers conscious. I don't like the idea of wasting anybody's money, my money or any of y'all's money. Yeah.

Mr. Betzal speaking, so yeah, the numbers don't lie. I mean, numbers do not lie. That's one thing you can offer. You know, numbers do not lie. You know, and I, you know, just you know, like if there's different areas within the county, you know, as far as like you know, just knowing that people are conscientious about it, you know, just hey, you know, can we cut a little bit out here at the road department? Can we cut a little bit here? Can we, you know, instead of just and some people just spend other people's money and don't even think about it. I'm not that type person. If you if you give me your wall $100 and I give it back to $100 there, you know I was never going to take anything that's not mine. I always want to make sure that that I'm being very conscientious about spending other people's money. You know when I get cuts and hours, I always give my clients a budget, and I always targeted coming in under that budget, and I always did. Now there were you know stimulating circumstances of lower prices, or they're a commodity. You know, we might bid the house, and the lower goes up, and then there's nothing I can do about that. But anywhere that I mean, I just I'm very money conscious, and I'm not a greed person because the love of money is the fruit of all sorts of evil. We learn in the Book of James, but I'm also one that knows that without the dollars, I can't pay my electricity bill too. So I just may be good, and it's you know, and I feel like you maybe just you telling me that basically some of the things.

Commissioner Amison speaking, I hope it does because I want you to read it. I want to reassure the hope of it. Yes, but I will tell you to echo what Commissioner Ward was saying earlier. You know, we I know I am and I know a bunch of them are because a lot of times when I'm trying to call some man, I'm sorry I was on the phone with Commissioner Jones, and that's a great thing, but you know our department heads and all they're very conscious about what they're doing. I can promise you that. I'll give you a great example. Last year in Parks and Recs, what was? Can you look and see what their increase on their budget was last year? If I'm not mistaken, I believe I was. Well, they even looked upon. I was like, you, You know what's going on here, and but somewhere now it's fine. It was it was much lower than what he had. I mean, it was mental, and you know, just me being in the business I'm in, I got big trucks. I know, you know, we don't even want to start talking about all that, but they experience that same issue that the county does over here with our with our vehicles, the death issues, trucks in and out of shops. I mean, EMS just got them a good dose of death, the death system. Yes, I mean we had we had ambulances down

everywhere, and it's astronomical to take that stuff over to a dealership because they're the only ones that can, you know, magically make that go back to working. But I mean, the cost of stuff that I feel in in my private business and I complain about is the same thing with the county. I mean, our. Expenses as far as the county are the same expenses, and a lot of times much higher. You in the contractor world, and I'm not. I've been honestly, that's been one of my big issues here because if you put government on it, that's an extra $50,000 plus that the bids come in at because they know they can, you know. And I'm not, and I'm not beating up on all contracts, but we can't control that, right? You know,

Mr. Betzal speaking, yeah, but that's the kind of stuff that I'm talking about. Yeah, it's the only problem in context because we see, you know, one guy named Nick Shirley has gone across the country exposing fraud, you know, and then of course Ron Sanchez, he appointed some people earlier in the year, found fraud all throughout the state of Florida, you know, within the municipalities, and I'm not saying that's going on.

Commissioner Amison speaking, we got DOGEd. Would you like to share results of that? I mean, honestly, I'd love to share that because I'm, and I'm in no way take this as me being confrontational. I'm just trying to have. I do not. But if you don't mind, I would love for that to go public.

Mrs. Griffith speaking, we actually had two inquiries. We responded to both, and then we never heard another thing.

Commissioner Amison speaking, no gender reveal studies. I mean we're fine here, frankly. And that's one of the things that I've been you know, talking to people about, especially with the ballot referendums coming up November. Yes, and again, like Commissioner Jones was saying, I'm not trying to advocate for or against it. I'm not promoting it or anything. I just want to get information out there. That way, people and I always call it buyer's remorse. Don't show up with buyers' remorse after the day, you know, they start seeing the impact on what the decision that they made had. It was like, well, that's not really what I thought I was doing, you know. And that's one of the things you got to kind of look because I hate taxes. Trust me, the IRS isn't listening to this or anything, but I try to sock it to them every chance I get. You know, make my CPA sweat sometimes. But what I'm getting at is uh you know with that particular thing, and I've told people this. You got we talk about quality of life services. You know what got me and I made a social media post here a while back, and I never do that if you ask anybody in here because exactly what happened. I got crucified, but you know that Wednesday of the budget hearing, we're sitting there with our non governmentals, and everything you were just talking about. Whenever you're going out finding all this wasteful spending through Doge, just happened statewide. It was absurd at some of the areas, and me as a citizen of Florida, as a citizen of the United States, even all this crazy spending we're seeing everywhere, it hits me hard too, just like it does everybody else. But that Wednesday, I was sitting there looking at our non governmentals, and not one of on that list. I think we had four food pantries. We had the rape advocate. You know, a lot of that stuff is that our contribution is really a match for federal money on some things. Elderly care, elderly transportation. None of our non-governmentals in Franklin County is wasted spending anywhere. It's all value of life, value services. I mean, it does good, and that's what it's meant to do. And what the problem is you have these bigger areas that have abused it, you know. And everybody watching the news, we see where it's at. But it's really saddened me. It that's why later on I went out and just kind of said, "Hey, look, you know, this is the deal. This is what potentially could happen down the road, and just laid it all out there the best I could because people need to realize that you know, and to go back real quick, I used to not sit here, so I was sitting out there and I was looking at, going, hold on. But I will tell you, once you get behind that curtain and you start looking, you're like, well, then that makes sense, you know. But again, got to be careful what we vote for, and at least understand what we're voting for, because you know potentially down the road we're gonna be forced to probably make some really hard decisions. But when we do have to do that, everybody needs to understand that the services that's been demanded of this commission are going to diminish, incredibly diminish. Because I was sitting here looking, you know, we've been on code enforcement since I walked in the door. Everybody in the community wants the service; they want that service, but that service comes

at a cost. And a lot of this, if you'll go through the itemized details of this, now of course the constitutionals not going to throw them under the bus. They come in with their justification. We all look at it, but at the end of the day, it's up to them to spend it appropriately. All we can do is approve it. Yes, but I guarantee you, anything that's under the umbrella of these five here or us five is being scrutinized, and our direct departments walk a very tight ship.

Mr. Betzal speaking, yes, but and I appreciate you going through all that. I really do because then I talk to other people. I can say that you know honestly, I sat before the floor and had a discussion, open dialog, and I really feel like that you guys are really doing the job that you've been voted to do. You know, is by scrutinizing everything, just like we just said. I trust every word you told me. You know, but I'm also I didn't notice, and I forget your name, young lady.

Mr. Betzal speaking, Carol. I knew she was even gonna be here, but I do worry about people like this because one day I'm good. My mother used to tell me all the time, Jeff. Now you know you're gonna get old too one day if you live long enough, and if we all live long enough, we all gonna get to this age. And like her, she loves her home. She's been on the island, and I'm sure whenever you bought back in 2000, whatever it was, you know it was probably like nothing as far as taxes and insurance and your bank. But she wants to stay in her home. I want to see her stay on, and that's what I'm. You know, I'm concerned about our older people because I want to get older one day. That's why I cut grass for some of the people in our subdivisions that can't cut grass anymore because one day I hope that somebody does the same thing for me, you know. And I appreciate, you know, I feel about them. I'm scared about coming.

Commissioner Ward speaking, when I first became a commissioner, I first thing one of the first things I did is sat down with Erin, and we went through. See that book that's on her desk? Yeah, we went through that whole book. That's the budget book, and because I needed to wrap my hand around if I'm making decisions based on money, I need to know what it's about, and we sat down. I don't know how many hours we spent. It was went through. It went. It was two days through everything because I wanted to understand how it all works, and it is confusing. I'll be honest with you. It blows, I mean, I went home that first thing, and my mind was blown. Now that little emoji with the mind blown thing. But if you have her and Erin's very good, and I'm not throwing you under the bus, Erin, but anytime you want to go look at this book and sit down with her, she's willing to do that. And because
you know we talk about transparency all the time.

Mr. Betzal speaking, yeah. You know, people, you know, used to when I was growing up, and you know, grew up in a lot of wealthy guys in there, and they never talked about their earnings or their finances or anything. I always did because you know, just always been an open book. You know, so I can tell that she knows what. Thank y'all so
much.

Ms. Talley speaking, first I want to compliment everybody because this is a small group today, but it's been very cordial and so forth. So it's been really good.

Commissioner Amison speaking, Miss Tally, we got to be real cordial because we can't run from y'all. Y'all too close, and.

Ms. Talley speaking, good point. I wanted to bring up just a couple more things, and I'm going to do them in the reverse order that I planned today. I spent a good bit of time looking at this, and I blew it up for myself, so I could read it. You know, so one of the things I noticed on here was the fishing pier on the Saint George Island. Fishing pier we're going to spend $2 million fixing the fishing pier. Is that right?

Mrs. Griffith speaking, actually, no. So that's actually going to be one of the special funds that we have, and I can actually run through that real quick. We typically I bore everyone where I discuss every single one of the special funds at the budget workshop, but the fishing care maintenance fund, the county

received when we assumed the ends of the bridges, we received settlement from the state, actually, of $1.55 million dollars, and that was actually to be set aside in a fund in the event that the fishing piers were to ever collapse or any major repairs. We were supposed to hold that money basically in perpetuity for that purpose. Now we did have an issue. Believe it was what hurricane was it? There was a hurricane that came through in the barge actually, took out a section of the bridge. That was a mediated settlement agreement with the barge company. We actually expended, I believe, 677,000. We got most of that back from the mediated settlement agreement. That money is still held in a fund. So that's a prime example of when you look at our total budget, we'll see the $122 million. But that St. George Island Fishing Fair Maintenance Fund has been growing by interest. You know, less than the expenses, but it's held in reserve there. So not necessarily that we're going to spend that entire amount. It's part of our budget. Okay. So when you look at our budget again. The operating funds are basically the ones that you can say, "Oh yeah, they're going to spend those, and that would be the general fund, fine and forfeiture, library, food and bridge, and mosquito controls. So those are the county's operating funds that we are going to; those are spent every year.

Ms. Talley speaking, okay, thank you. The next thing I'd like to just challenge you to is to think different, and when and I'll just give you an example of thinking different. When I lived in Atlanta in 1998, when you went to renew your tag, you stood in a line forever, you know. And then I came down here, and I went to the tag office, and there was nobody there, and I was waited on like that, and I was just totally amazed and pleased, and wow, what could be better than this? So, that's one thing. Recently, I went into a Publix grocery store, and in that grocery store, they had a kiosk. I guess is what you call it-a kiosk to renew your tag online at that kiosk. Now, I would think that kiosk costs a lot less than a person sitting in an office renewing tags all the time. When you pay their salary, you pay their insurance, you pay their retirement, you pay all that stuff. It seems like to me, for certain jobs, we could look at, you know, what could we do different because people are using that kiosk to renew their tax, so that's it.

Chairman Jones speaking, no, that's a great idea, Miss Talley.

Mr. Moron speaking, so the good thing is, actually, we're negotiating a spot in our East Point office for kiosks with the tax collector right now,
we're working on that. And if over the last few years, if anybody has followed, you know, the county commission meetings, you know, I am a big, big proponent for software over hiring employees. That's why when Erin and I can't remember which commissioner said we have not increased employees over the years, but we've increased services. That's how we're able to do it. I'm big on using software. If we can, our billing department, which by the way is not based on ad valorem taxes, is based on the fees we collect for the permits. Keep that in mind, so we don't collect taxes for that. That's we still have the same. In fact, we have less employees in the building department, and we process more permits because we use a we use software for that you can just go anywhere and find it on your phone, tablet, or computer. We're big and contractors love it because they can go on their phone and request an inspection. They can go in the phone and change something with their permit. So you guys know that's you know that's me. That's what I push for the county as much as we can within the county. I can't you know we could only do so much with the constitutional, but they have to do it based on what the state allows them to do because you know so just wanted to.

Commissioner Amison speaking, and that's why I was smiling when you was mentioning the kiosk and that's when I kind of looked down and said, "Do you want to take that or me? But and that you know, again, we can't control constitutionals, but that goes to show you that they are, looking at the very looking out for the very best intent of the citizens.

Ms. Talley speaking, I feel when people leave a position for one reason or another. That we should every time ask ourselves, do we really need to replace that person? Do we really need to replace that person?

Chairman Jones speaking, yes, ma'am. So we do address that also, Ms. Talley, to make sure everybody's

aware, in our administration office, we have administration, building permit, zoning, planning, financing grants. So we're running, code enforcement's not there, but so we're running around 10 or 11 departments with 13, and that's historically how we've kept it. Yeah, so I mean we appreciate all the comments today. We're good with all that, but you also need to understand that we have done our best every year to be real conscientious about any increases. Anywhere, whether it be the number of people adding the service, we did add money this year for economic development. We think that's going to actually help the county, so things maybe won't be hodgepodge coming before the board. We can actually try to direct how that flow is going. Then there's going to be a group that's going to help vet things. Then once they say okay yeah we think this might work then okay you talk to the planner see if you can work out what you want to submit so we've added some money for that we've added money for code enforcement something we've not historically done as a county and I think everybody would agree we need just at least a little bit of that so we're very conscientious and we really don't try not to add any new services, any new things, other than what we historically do, because we want to keep expectations the same.

Commissioner Amison speaking, and Mr. Chairman, with the code enforcement, we're subcontracting that out. I mean, well, in so many ways, that's the way that's working. Instead of us going and building a department, we're contracting the sheriff's department out, and they're you know it's an invoice service. So at any time, if this ain't really working or whatever, we can make appropriate changes versus having a department creating a new department along with employee and all the benefits and all that stuff. So we're trying our best to be as creative as we can moving forward. This and provide that service, like Commissioner, the Chairman said, that's much needed with that code enforcement. I mean, everybody can agree with that. I see two regular faces that's always here, and they can attest to the fact that that we have had multiple discussions, and we have had multiple people in about code enforcement issues. So we try to address it, and then we try to be as fiscally responsible with your money while doing so at the same time.

Chairman Jones speaking, any other public comment? There's one hand raised in there.

Ms. Carlin speaking, hi, Brenda Carlin again. Is the largest budget item salaries? Is the largest dollar amount on the budget salaries?

Mrs. Griffith speaking, yes, as far as being funded by ad valorem property tax proceeds, yes, that would be true.

Ms. Carlin speaking, okay, and how much is proposed? Or excuse me, yeah, how much? I don't know if you can tell me this. Let's say over the past five years have salary increases been budgeted. What percent?

Chairman Jones speaking, part of it was the pay plan.

Mrs. Griffith speaking, yes. So the county actually adopted a pay plan in 2021-2022 fiscal year. In that pay plan, it was basically we received an amount that we should have implemented in year one, and it was not possible for the county to fund that at that time. So we actually broke the pay plan apart, and we did end up being able to fully fund the pay plan within four years, whereas you know originally we had anticipated taking five, but that did actually address a lot of disparities, bringing employees up to market, kind of more comparable with other counties and peer groups. So we did do the five-year pay plan that was actually fully funded in 2024-2025, and that year we did an inflation plus an inflationary adjustment, and then we also did a 4% inflationary adjustment in this current fiscal year as well.

Ms. Carlin speaking, right, it's been at least 4% each year, right?

Mrs. Griffith speaking, correct.

Ms. Carlin speaking, and one of the things that's different from government in the private sector is that you can't have some of those salary increases if you're not, you know, if your expenses are too high or

you're looking for somewhere to cut. So although your budgeting has it actually, have you actually used the full amount of money that was budgeted for the salary increases over that period of time?

Mrs. Griffith speaking, yes, I'm not following the question.

Ms. Carlin speaking, what I'm saying is, is that giving yourself a raise at 4% each year, even though we taxpayers may not be, you know, seeing an improvement on their investments or whatever to be able to pay the taxes at that rate seems high. So, what I was asking is if it's budgeted to catch up with everybody else at market salaries. Did you did the county pay the full amount? Did you use the full amount or do you have like performance reviews or things like that and you didn't pay the full amount how much and did you use all the amount that was budgeted?

Mrs. Griffith speaking, yes, it was a 4% cost of living adjustment. So yes, that went to all employees.

Ms. Carlin speaking, okay, and so that's been happening each year, right? The full amount that's been budgeted, like for 4% or more, has been spent each year, right?
For every, in other words, every employee, every employee received like a 4% increase. Is that correct?
Mrs. Griffith speaking, that's correct. Ms. Carlin speaking, okay, I think that's an area that could be looked at. Not to say that the county employees do not work hard. I'm not saying that in a private business. Every well, it's called pay for performance. Everybody doesn't get the same raise just because there's a reason, and you look hard at what they're doing. I think the biggest area in the budget that needs to be looked at is salaries, and also, I know at one point you were looking at the insurance costs, and I hate to say this, but I when I first came down here, I had no health insurance, none, and yet when I came to the county commission meeting, the at least one of the commissioners at the time, heard me say I didn't have any health insurance, and yet willy-nilly they voted in 1000-dollar pay increase to pay for an increase in health insurance. So you've got people that don't have health insurance potentially being, you know, having to pay for county employees to have health insurance to keep up with healthcare costs, so I don't know if you're looking at potentially the healthcare programs or the insurance or the benefits that are being provided that the taxpayers provide to look at ways to improve on that.

Chairman Jones speaking, thank you, Ms. Brenda. Mr. Betzal, if you want to come up, please ask the question.

Mr. Betzal speaking, no, I'm just to her point. My wife's the administrator at nursing home, and her staff, and none of them haven't had a raise in three years, and then they have to match their. If they want insurance, they have to also match. And then if they want a 401k, then they have to match. So it's you know it's not a blanket. And I think that's what you see in the private sector more and more and more these days. As a matter of fact, you can look it up online. You know that private sector people aren't receiving all the benefits that government employees receive on a per year basis. Like she just said, everybody gets a 4% raise every year. That's not happening in the real world. I mean, in the world of private sector that I know of. Do you give your employees a 4% raise every year?

Commissioner Amison speaking, well, since the state of Florida or the residents of the state of Florida decided to vote for a minimum wage increase, I have had to, you know, basically do what the county's done on an Amison Green plan and get those salaries up because I was out there by myself back. I didn't have nobody, but I mean, yeah, it's not just here. It's in the private sector as well because there was a when I first got here, I was trying to understand this whole Evergreen, you know, this and that. And I'll be honest with you, it was all Spanglish to me until I started catching on. Obviously, asking questions from Erin and whatnot, but and a lot of that it made sense once I started looking at it because you know you're not going to have the same again that service people are not going to work for nothing,

Mr. Betzal speaking, right?

Commissioner Amison speaking, and whenever they can go somewhere else and work another job and get paid more, and that's where it was starting to kind of get at.
You know, it eventually got that way because it was just getting more competitive in the private sector, and we've lost. We've had a huge turnover within the counties' departments. The sheriff's departments has been a huge turnover rate. We've had a lot of turnover rate because of that. But now we have gotten those salaries to a more competitive stage where that's starting to slow down quite a bit.

Mr. Betzal speaking, right and I think what she was the point she was trying to make is something that you know we all think about as taxpayers is that you know there's a lot of taxpayers that don't have insurance. Paying for somebody else's insurance, but they don't have insurance because they can't afford insurance because they're paying taxes. You see what I'm saying? I don't understand that. As a taxpayer, you know. But just saying that, I was just trying to convey. I think what she was trying to convey was that you know, in the private sector, everybody's not seeing all the benefits that government employees do.

Commissioner Amison speaking, I understand. This is my fourth year here and the first couple years, I'm just going to go on a little personal thing right here. I had insurance that I was paying for through my business, health insurance, and it was Blue Cross Blue Shield, and you know, it's just me, not none of the kids, not my wife or anybody, so I'm an 11 or $1,000 next year. It's $1,100. The next year, I mean 1100 a month. But then the next year it was $1,200 a month, and that's when I finally sit over there, me being me, and slowed down enough and started doing some figuring, and I'm like, well, let's see. Since I've been elected, this is how smart I am. Sometimes I've lost about $30,000 because I didn't get, you know, the insurance that's offered to me as a commissioner. You know, and I'm sitting there, and to be honest with you, I didn't want this board holding anything. When I get ready to hit that door, I was walking out. You know, that's the way I've always had that sense of independence. I'll beat you both. So being stubborn, I decided to, you know, throw $30,000 away on insurance that kept going up, going up, going up. So I understand it. Trust me, I do.

Mr. Betzal speaking, and I think, and like I said while ago, you know, I've taken up enough y'all's time. You got other business take care of. I was just trying to, I think, you know, interpret so to speak, what she was trying to say because being in the private sector, you know, and I know you guys are all in the private sector. I mean, that's why.

Commissioner Amison speaking, we are. I know you are. I know you. You know, I hate to say this because it makes me feel kind of bad. Because I tell people all the time, I'm like, look, this isn't a full time job, but really, it should. It is. And I'm not just saying about the hours, but I look at it like it is because I'm trying to do, and I'm sure the other ones do as well. I'm just speaking for myself, but we do. We live in both worlds, you know. So we're kind of caught between, you know, what was I was telling Erin about how government should run like a business, and then I had to do a 180 and say there's no way to run this like a business. She was like, "Well, that's what I'm trying to tell you, but yeah, I mean we understand because we walk in both worlds as well.

Mr. Betzal speaking, I understand. I appreciate you all.

Chairman Jones speaking, thanks for all the information.

Ms. Miller speaking, hey, this is Krista Miller. I just had a couple of questions. I've tried to study the budget best I can with my limited knowledge, and I think that it would maybe be helpful. And maybe it's this way, and I'm just not seeing it. If we knew which bucket of funds that the money was coming from, for example, like waste man, you know, who pays the salaries for the landfill employees? What bucket does that come from, and is it just the general you know revenues? My concern is that just like with what happened with the school, you know, the after school program, I guess that got cut. That was federal funds. You know, what's going to make up for that money now. And if this was to happen, where we lost a lot of the federal funds or we lost a lot of the state funds, what's going to get cut? Do we have a plan for

that? Does that make sense?

Chairman Jones speaking, it's going to depend. Yes, ma'am. It's going to depend. Actually, Miss Krista, I don't know 100% the language of it off the top of my head, but it seemed like as part of the amendment that's being put out, there's also language in there that tells county governments of the monies that are collected what they can spend it on, and we really need to find out for sure how that definition is going to work out. So yes, it is something we're looking at. We've not made any decisions on it yet because even if it does pass, it's not going to affect the budget we're setting now. Would affect 2027. So, but yes, we're definitely having to look at that. That's a discussion every time we have any kind of state or regional meetings we go to. Commissioner Ward and I are going later this month to the Association of Counties legislative conference to talk about stuff that we're going to help fight for on behalf of Florida counties with the state legislature this upcoming session. You know, so it's definitely something's being talked about and discussed, and a way to approach it, so everybody will kind of know. So yes, we're definitely in the still trying to find out stage and make sure we know what ground it's going to be when it passes, if it passes. So we're not going to be caught flat-footed, and we're doing the best we can do.

Ms. Miller speaking, I understand. So, and I may have the numbers wrong on this side, just off the top of my head. It seemed like it was a 30% or something like that. We, Franklin County, ate the lion's share of those cuts when it trickled down through the from the federal you know cuts that came to Florida, and then once got to Florida, and then and then it was chopped again. From what I saw, it seemed like we took you know we ate 30% of that cut instead of it being divided out between the other you know 67 counties, we got a huge part of our money was taken, and so I'm just you know I have trust issues, especially when it comes to state and the federal monies that we're dependent on. We are the you know smallest county unincorporated and the number fourth smallest as far as you know incorporated areas. But when you look at some of the tax like from the tax watch information, as far as the total property tax levies per capita for 1000 of personal income, we're number one, you know, and then for total property tax levies, we're number eight, and county government property tax levies were number five. I mean, we're the fifth highest. So it's, but yet as far as income goes, you know, we're let's see, where's that number, you know, it's we're way down there, and the only reason why we're as high as we are for per capita income is probably because of the island and the you know the people who live here that are getting their retirement and that sort of thing. It's most likely not the local you know rent incomes, and I just want you know. I just wondering where are we going to cut because I we have the sheriff's department's doing great and we have the highest per capita deputies for the entire state of Florida. Yet, you know, if we lose funding, who's going to pay their salaries and whose heads on the chopping block? And how do we make those decisions? Chairman Jones speaking, we're definitely going to have those conversations and make decisions on through that. The some of the stuff too that's happening, Miss Krista, is when we're looking at the numbers and how the budget's going to fall. There's different things that are coming to play going on how those cuts are done, and again, what the language is tied to it, what we know those definitions to be when it's more clear cut, and you know we're just preparing for it to pass, and so you know you have to be realistic about that, and you know find a different way to make it work now. There's definitely going to be cuts. There's no way around that, you know. So at the end of the day, this whole structure that we're using-I mean, the county didn't institute the structure. It's the state has always had it this way based on millage rate. So we're doing the best we can do with the design of how everything is. So if the design changes, yeah, we have to change with it. We're gonna do our best to do that and make sure we can do as much as we can do. But you know, services are one of those things that you know there are other counties probably that do more than we do, but the residents probably pay more for it. Part of our demographics help drive some of our problem, though. So you realistically, Franklin County is 70 miles wide and two miles deep. You know everything north of anywhere, two miles up the road, you're in state land. It's not ever going to be developed in perpetuity, and we receive no monies for that at all. We don't receive tax revenue. We don't receive anything for all that land that's in perpetuity. There, you know, you go to other counties that don't have those, and I think we have the greatest amount of property off the tax roll in our county, any other county in the state of Florida. I don't think there's anybody even close. So that's some of the pressures what we have. I mean, you look, Kristen. We were growing up here. Yeah, it was it was one

thing to see a half million dollar home on St. George Island. That was kind of common back then, but. Now you got half million dollar and $600,000 homes in East Point, and I'm not talking about McMansions. I'm talking about 1500 square foot homes. That's just the going rate for them, and with it being based on millage, that's the way that works. So again, that's not a construct we made up. We're just having to deal with the hand we got dealt to us, so we're doing our best with it. I assure you that, though.
Ms. Miller speaking, oh no, I understand. I understand that. I just, you know, when that happened with the after-school program, it just kind of, you know, got me thinking. Like they're online asking us to do, you know, fish fries and make donations, and I'm like, what are we talking about here? These are the children. This is our youth. I don't mean I don't have kids personally, but you know, it still is a big deal, and losing that much money, you know, with no rhyme or reason, and for our county to be hit the hardest, it's like you know, and didn't see if I paid any recourse. So I don't know. I just wanted to know what there was any other. Am I looking at the budget correctly? Is there a way for us to look at that? And I know Erin's got. I mean, it's amazing. I don't know how she does it, but is there a way for us to see where that money like trickles? Like this comes from this one. I know it's not that you know that easy. I just like a visual in my head of how that's how that all works out. Chairman Jones speaking, where are we on the visual?
Mrs. Griffith speaking, the visual is in progress right now. I hope to actually have two years ready to go. Actually, before the next public hearing. But with the county's general fund, you know the five funds that were referenced earlier as being the county's operational funds. If you will actually look at you know what's available online now, the county's general fund. You will see that the general fund actually houses most of the county departments, with the exception of the sheriff's department, which is actually housed in the fine and forfeiture fund, the public library, mosquito control, and the road and bridge. As far as for where the county employees are, the general fund actually has all of your other constitutional officers. So that's going to be everyone that works basically in the courthouse. That's also going to be all of those that are you know working for your building department, your parks and recreation, your landfill. And one thing about the landfill, you know, of course, waste services is a very expensive service. So, granted, we do have the landfill tipping fee fund, but you will see that fund is essentially a wash, where there's tipping fees generated by the landfill. And because the landfill is only able to process construction and demolition debris as it is now, and we are quickly running out of space, at some point, we'll transition to a full transfer station operation. But as it is now, all waste that comes in, we actually have to pay for it to be transported elsewhere. You know, it's already going to a landfill that's you know up north, you know, farther inland, and that's actually that makes sense financially because you know that land up there, they have hundreds and hundreds of acres. That's not coastal property, so they're actually able to actually permit landfills of that size. So for us, the landfill tipping fee fund is essentially a wash. You know, so everything that's being funded for parks and recreation, the landfill, you know, basically then doing the knuckle gloom services, that's all being funded essentially by property tax proceeds. Now, granted, there's some other revenues that come in state shared revenues, but the lion's share in those funds is being provided for by property tax proceeds. And the sheriff's department is another example. You know, the sheriff's department has what is their total budget? But actually, the amount that's funded by the county would actually be the 8.99 3 million. So, out of the amount that's actually generated by property tax proceeds, you know, just to summarize, $22 million, and then 8.9 is funding the sheriff's department. So that's just kind of keep that in mind. And as far as operational grants, the sheriff department is funded by a law enforcement salary additive, which would be on top of this. But that's an operational grant. There's also operational grants in mosquito control, which is roughly $40,000 a year. The library fund is roughly $70,000 per year, maybe can't quite remember, and then the third one would be emergency management. So emergency management is another department where they've also talked about reducing some of our federal funding on that, and that was a program that started for the county. I think initially we had a part-time emergency management director, and that would have been Alan Pierce. You know, years and years ago, you know, and it was actually started with federal grant funds, and then all of a sudden the state started providing grant funds, so the department grew, and then now they're starting to pull those funds back. So that's just that is basically our operational grants and synopsis that actually funds employees.
Ms. Miller speaking, I guess that was my main question. What do we do when those funds get pulled back? So, anyway, just wanted to throw that out there, and thank you for your time.

Commissioner Sanders speaking, I'm going to ask Erin a question. Erin let's go back to your memory a little bit. Let me ask you something. Are we still getting any payment in lieu of taxes on the land that? your school. Mrs. Griffith speaking, no, we do get payment. We actually get Saint Vincent Island. Actually, so it's a federal refuge sharing, but it's um it's not much. Let's see here. Commissioner Sanders speaking, what it was when the state came in and wanted to buy that land. We made sure that they had to pay its payment with taxes for so many years, but then it sunset. And I know in 2019, St. Joe Company they bought 18,000 to 19,000 acres out there at St. John's Island, and I was wondering if they ever paid y'all any because that time I was retired. I was wondering if they had any the payment in lieu of tax because it was substantial once done. Mrs. Griffith speaking, yeah. The lion's share is actually coming from St. Vincent Island, so that's the refuge sharing funds, and that's 147. And then we do receive 65,000, but it is not much. Commissioner Sanders speaking, yes. That's what I'm saying. Mrs. Griffith speaking, that it's not much for 86% of our county to be in conservation land. It it's not much. Commissioner Amison speaking, I think it's higher than that. Mrs. Griffith speaking, really? Oh, okay. I got that from the Florida neighborhood. Commissioner Amison speaking, now that may be the conservation side because obviously there's other you know there's local government authorities. But Commissioner Sanders can I ask you a question. You said that St. Joe bought or St. Joe sold it to? Commissioner Sanders speaking, the state. Sold it to the state. Commissioner Amison speaking, okay. Commissioner Amison speaking, anyway, when there's some type of language in there, then y'all well, I don't even know if anybody's room can answer. You may, but the timber, whatever timber they got. Commissioner Sanders speaking, they go to school. And the thing about it is, I had an incident yesterday. I had a talk to some loggers down the road, and they said, "Oh, oh, but you got to remember, we pay Franklin County money from the timber, I said, "You don't pay Franklin County you pay Franklin County schools. That's difficult. So he was saying, "Well, I don't know why we got to keep up this road. I said, "Because it's a dirt road and tearing it up, and that's what we have the rule we have you tear it up and fix it. Mr. Betzal speaking, question, local sales tax. Where does that go? Mrs. Griffith speaking, our local sales tax is actually specific to purpose. So the county did enact a local option gas tax, and that was something that we do to be able to qualify for a lot of the state and federal transportation grants. So you'll see, I believe we have a what is it six cent, and that goes into the local option gas tax fund and that would be fund 141 if anybody's you know wanting to find it online. And fund 141 is actually where we actually do all of our transportation expenditures. So that goes there. We also have, as far as other taxes that are actually enacted by this board, there's also the healthcare trust fund, and that is actually 1% on all taxable transactions within the county, and that funds Weems Memorial Hospital, and also now the county's EMS service. So both of those services are being, you know, subsidized and funded through that sales tax. And then we also have the tourist development tax, and right now that is 3% and there is discussions on raising that, but that will be decided by the voters in November. And tourist development sales tax proceeds are very restricted. On they're not you're not able to actually subsidize operational expenditures, you know, for county government type functions. Now, granted, they did change statute recently, where we could spend up to 10% for public safety services. So that is some funding that has been able to help the sheriff's department with special event overtime, certain capital expenditures also funds two full-time deputies for the beach park areas, and then also some of the volunteer fire departments have also been able to receive capital equipment through that, and that's our only local option. There is local option taxes in different half. Chairman Jones speaking, there is that's under us. So the school also has a half cent. But that's going to the school. Is there anyone else, sir? Is that it? Chairman Jones speaking, okay, just wanted to make sure. Commissioner Amison speaking, school is a half or a full? Chairman Jones speaking, it's half. That's actually a tax. The other is a discussion about being able to with voters' approval to use half a penny from that to go to operations. Yeah, but that's again the voters vote on that. Okay, so we're past public comments. Do we have any more budget discussion we need to have? I do want to ask a question, just a thought and somebody else shared this, but it's not a regional meeting, and I so I don't. It's not a fully baked idea, okay? But let's just think about: Is there a way that we could, as a board, for even for our offices? I don't know if they're going to do it with constitutionals, but I'm fine with if y'all want to have that conversation. I know that there might be, there might exist. I'm not saying there is this idea, whatever's budgeted, we have to spend it every year to keep the budget the same. I'm not saying that's happening, but it's definitely the perception. So can we think about possibly saying, okay, whatever you could return minus your budget won't affect your budget

going forward. But if you, if whatever you turn in, we'll let you retain 10% of whatever you turn back, or some bonus for being able to turn money back to you, just a discussion item for whatever the budget is annual for departments or whatever, just a way to a way. Not saying that we don't do it already, but a way to keep us conscientious that we are trying to do it with yeah we have a budget we're trying to do it with the least amount of possible, but still do the job. That's what we thought. Something like that. Yeah, I mean, yeah, we're not deciding today about that. Do we have any that return? Mrs. Griffith speaking, there's a couple of them. I'm kind of worried about like having to come back to you all say. Oh my goodness, I don't think they made it. Yeah, it's um yeah. Chairman Jones speaking, it wasn't my view. Somebody was talking about it. Commissioner Sanders speaking, Mr. Chairman, you know we talked about the proposal for the property tax amendment, and will be a constitutional amendment for it. But Wakulla County went and made a paper, and they distributed around the county up there, and they're being eaten up by because the information's not corrected, and apparently there's something. I would not want to do that here. I would want to make sure that we have everything accounted for because well, it's kind of mediatable when get because complaining. All the time, worried about it. But I don't think we need to put anything out until we actually know what we got to put out. That's correct. You know, and I don't want to make the mistakes that the surrounding counties have done because it's been pretty bad with Walker County, from what I hear, but you know, it's like I always have said for years, years. We got essential services, non-essential services, and quality of life. Now, in that quality of life, in non-essential services, is your library. But in a county like Franklin County, your library is an essential service because that's for a large majority of the people has internet connection. They do their social security on there, their driver's license. You know now they've got the driver's license, but before they had that. So there's a lot of things that we're gonna have to be looking at, and I know we had this same discussion many years ago, and right after Hurricane Miss come through and caused a whole lot of damage, and the bottom fell out of the real estate market. We had the same talks that we're fixing to have the talks about, but nothing we were able to hold our weight, you know, all along with this. I don't know if we're going to be able to, and it concerns me greatly. And I'm like, I'm not going to tell nobody how to vote. You have to vote to conscience, but it concerns me greatly. To know that we may have to turn people away for services, like the people that leave the home and all the other services that we provide, and children. That that head start in the nest is about to worry me to death about that because that is for the children, and they're taken away from the children, so you know, and it's like we talked before. You know, that helps the mom and daddies out. They can keep on working while the kids are being taken care of. That's a good program. But anyway, like I said, I'm looking, I'm look, I'm hoping for the best, but being cautious going forward. Commissioner Croom speaking, oh, with that, you know, I think you know that referendum has been on the forefront of all of our minds here lately, and I too echo like what y'all said. You know, I'm not trying to tell people how to vote, but at the end of the day, you know, wherever you, whenever, whatever you vote for in November, you know this board is going to have to do what this board is going to have to do. I have a note here, a question mark, because Aaron presents some numbers about this this cola inflationary increase and what the percentages on there? Are we still as this board? Are we still planning to stick with the 4% or are we planning to modify that number? Chairman Jones speaking, we can definitely look at it. Commissioner Croom speaking, Erin, do you still have those numbers? Mrs. Griffith speaking, oh, absolutely. Mrs. Griffith speaking, I hope that I wrote myself better notes. Let's see. So let's see. A 2% across the board cola would be $290,585. 1% would be $145,292.50, and then 3% would be $435,877 versus the 4% which is $581,170. Commissioner Croom speaking, I was in my, so hypothetically, like on a 3% you know, savings of that from the five to five eight to one, 170 would be about $145,000. Mrs. Griffith speaking, yep. Commissioner Croom speaking, and with the 4% that is each person get that set amount, correct? That would be based on percentage. Okay. Mrs. Griffith speaking, yeah. Commissioner Croom speaking, some people get confused on that. They, you know, is based on a person get it higher, which I think I can't remember the term of it, but where you make more, you get it more. The percentage is higher. So across the board, if we did before tax, be you know if we did 4% it'd be roughly $2,600, correct? Something like that. Mrs. Griffith speaking, no, that is not how it works. It depends on what the employee's salary is. So it's based upon gross salary. Chairman Jones speaking, so, Mrs. Erin, isn't there starting to pay $15 an hour? Mrs. Griffith speaking, it is. Let's see where you are right now. Chairman Jones speaking, I mean, it's the minimum wage. Mrs. Griffith speaking, I believe we're already at the

minimums. Chairman Jones speaking, that was part of the reason we did the pay plan. Mrs. Griffith speaking, yes, it was quite the struggle. Chairman Jones speaking, that compression was huge. So we had people that had been working for the county for 20 years that was making $2,000 more than the guy we just hired. So that's what we're trying to address. Mrs. Griffith speaking, let's see. $15.78. We go as low as a pay grade three, so that would be a starting salary of $32,008 25. And of course, that depends on the position grade assignment.

Ms. Talley speaking, so the 4% is to get them up to a level, and then after that, then they're not all going to get 4% every year from here on out. Mrs. Griffith speaking, no, ma'am. The um, to get them up to the minimum level, that was actually part of the pay plan implementation. So the 4% is actually a cost of living adjustment. So that's basically what the 4% is. Ms. Talley speaking, so then, is it pay for performance after that? Mrs. Griffith speaking, so actually, at that point, we don't have another pay plan in the works, that may be something that we look at in the future to actually see what the steps would be for different grades. But at this point, we don't have another system in place. Ms. Talley speaking, do when I was working in the corporate world, you had a bell curve, and as a manager, you were given this bell curve, and the bell curve was 10% could be at the highest level, and 20% could be at the next highest, and then 40% was at an average level, and then you went down the other side, Belfort with Sunbank. So, so that your most valuable employee was making the most, and your least valuable employee was making the least. Chairman Jones speaking, well, ours is set up similar in that pay plan, so it's a graded system, but it's not really the most valuable employee, least valuable. A lot of it has to do with most experienced also versus somebody that's still learning the job because they do hire. Ms. Talley speaking, but most experience is your their experience is going to add into their value. Chairman Jones speaking, yes, ma'am. It's graded. It is the way it's set up. Ms. Talley speaking, great. This, I think, what we as taxpayers are trying to make sure is that everybody's not getting like the same raise, you know, every year. Chairman Jones speaking, no, it's not the same raise because it's based, it's percentage, and it's based on what they get paid. Ms. Talley speaking, that's good confirmation. We had performance evaluations, and your performance evaluation led to your pay, and that's how you determine based on your performance evaluation that was how you determined how much of a radius you got. Chairman Jones speaking, any other questions for Mrs. Erin? Commissioner Croom speaking, no, that was the only thing I brought up. So you know, initially I was for 4% I just make sure we had that discussion and we were still all in agreement. Chairman Jones speaking, good to know. I mean, we can think about it. You know, so after today, we can always go down at the final hearing. We can't go up. So if we changed it to a number today, you can't change your mind will go back to another, you know. However, you want to do that, but Commissioner Amison speaking, there's no oops there. Chairman Jones speaking, no, there's no oops factor. You don't, you don't get a redo.

Budget Discussion and Adoption

5. **Budget Discussion**
6. **Adoption of 2026-27 Tentative Millage Rate and Budget**

Attachments:

- **1st Public Hearing Resolution adopting Millage 54109** (1st_Public_Hearing_Resolution_adopting_Millage_54109.pdf)
- **1st Public Hearing Resolution adopting Budget 54109** (1st_Public_Hearing_Resolution_adopting_Budget_54109.pdf)

   a. **Board action to adopt the tentative 2026-27 millage levy resolution**
   b. **Board action to adopt the tentative 2026-27 tentative budget resolution**

Chairman Jones speaking, but I mean, there's no other questions, Mrs. Erin. Do we need to adopt that resolution today? Mrs. Griffith speaking, we do. We have two resolutions for adoption. The first one, you would actually have to do a resolution adopting the tentative millage levy, and the second would be a resolution adopting the tentative budget. And I will say, your budget, your final adopted budget will change because you all just adopted change for your MSBU rates. So, when you see the final budget that actually comes out of you know basically the final public hearing. That budget will differ slightly, and it will be due to the increase fees for MSB. So, and that'll be in a special fund. Chairman Jones speaking, so that 160 fund. So, okay. All right. So, but we need to do these separately, correct? Mrs. Griffith speaking, correct. Chairman Jones speaking, so the first one is to adopt the tentative millage resolution for 26-27. Don't you have to read it? Mrs. Griffith speaking, I do. All right, commissioners.

RESOLUTION

FRANKLIN COUNTY

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

RESOLUTION ADOPTING TENTATIVE MILLAGE LEVY

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF FRANKLIN COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE TENTATIVE MILLAGE LEVY FOR FRANKLIN COUNTY FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 - 2027

WHEREAS, the BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS of Franklin County, Florida, on September 3rd, 2026, adopted Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Tentative Millage Rate following a public hearing as required by Florida Statute 200.065; and

WHEREAS, the gross taxable value for operating purposes not exempt from taxation within Franklin County has been certified by the County Property Appraiser to the BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS as $4,068,520,845.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS of Franklin County, Florida that:

Year 2026-2027 tentatively adopted operating millage rate for Franklin County is **5.4109** mills which is greater than the rolled-back rate of **4.7994** mills by **12.74%.**

DULY ADOPTED at a public hearing this 3rd day of September 2026.

Time adopted 7:06 p.m.

On a motion to adopt the resolution by Commissioner Sanders, seconded by Commissioner Croom. Motion carried 5-0.

RESOLUTION

FRANKLIN COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

RESOLUTION ADOPTING TENTATIVE BUDGET

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Franklin County, Florida has determined the amount of funds required for a Tentative Budget for the 2026-2027 Fiscal Year and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners has given due notice as required by law, and has held a public hearing as required by Florida Statute 200.065, and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Franklin County, Florida, has set forth the appropriations and revenue estimate for the Tentative Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027 in the amount of $122,882,684.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Franklin County, Florida, that:

1. The Fiscal Year 2026-2027 Tentative Budget be adopted.

2. That copies of this Resolution containing the Tentative Budget be spread upon the records of Franklin County, Florida.

This Resolution duly adopted at a public hearing this 3rd day of September 2026.

Time adopted 7:08 p.m.

On a motion to adopt the resolution by Commissioner Sanders, seconded by Commissioner Croom. Motion carried 5-0.

7. Commissioners' Comments

Chairman Jones speaking, anything else, Mrs. Erin? Mrs. Griffith speaking, that's it. Chairman Jones speaking, any commissioner comments? Mrs. Griffith speaking, your final public hearing is actually set for September 22nd at 5:15, in this room. Chairman Jones speaking, any commissioner comments? Are we commented out? Commissioner Ward speaking, Mr. Chairman, I just will say what Commissioner Sanders was saying earlier about the whole property tax thing. I don't know if we might need to once, we, I know they're trying to change the language in the actual wording. We need to maybe have I don't know if we could do like a workshop. Chairman Jones speaking, now that we kind of know the definitions yes because I want to make sure it's productive. Commissioner Ward speaking, I agree. That's all I got to say. I think that's one of the problems Wakulla had, though, with basically selling it to the people, is they really didn't have nothing to go by, and the people were saying, "Hey, you know, these numbers are wrong. What's going on here? So, I think it's safe to say we need to just for control.

8. Adjournment

Chairman Jones speaking, all right, so we're adjourned. 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.