Consent Agenda Item #1
Revised Attachments #1 and #3
for the meeting of
September 15, 2025

CONSENT

1. Minutes: May 27, 2025 Special Meeting, June 10, 2025 Regular Meeting, and June 17, 2025 Budget Workshop
   (Clerk of Court)

   This update provides revised Attachments #1 and #3 to correct the minutes.

This document distributed on September 15, 2025.

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA
SPECIAL MEETING
May 27, 2025

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners met for a Special Meeting on Tuesday, May 27, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in Chambers with Chairman Brian Welch presiding. Present were Vice-Chairman Christian Caban and Commissioners David T. O'Keefe, Bill Proctor, Rick Minor, Carolyn Cummings, and Nick Maddox. Also present were County Administrator Vincent S. Long, County Attorney Chasity H. O'Steen, and Clerks to the Board Beryl H. Wood and Daniel J. Antonaccio.

Chairman Welch called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

The Pledge of Allegiance was provided by Chairman Welch.

AWARDS AND PRESENTATIONS

- None

Citizens to be Heard on CONSENT and Non-Agendaed Items

- None

CONSENT

- None

General Business

1. **Consideration of Rate Adjustments to the Five-Year Fire Rescue Assessments and Fees**
   (County Administrator / Office of Management & Budget)

   County Administrator Long introduced this item that sought Board consideration of rate adjustments to the five-year fire rescue assessments and fees to provide sufficient funding, based on expenditure increases identified by the City of Tallahassee (the "City") and reviewed by a professional third-party consultant, for fire rescue services in the unincorporated area of Leon County for the remainder of the five-year study period (FY 2028). He provided a brief presentation of this special meeting. He mentioned the June 17, 2025, Budget Workshop would provide a more complete fiscal overview as the Legislative Session should have concluded by that time. He began by listing the Federal outlook that has an impact on the County budget. He discussed the Legislative session and the impacts on Leon County, such as unfunded mandates. He mentioned Leon County is one of the most reliant counties on Property Taxes. He provided a brief overview of the fire assessment fees. He noted that the City has required that they raise the fire services fee to cover increased costs. He detailed the purposes of the funding method and the purpose of such fees. He mentioned the fee rates are for 5 years, expiring in 2028. He stated the fee rates were determined by the City's estimated expenditures for a 5-year period and the current fee levels are not enough to cover the remaining 3 years based on their identified additional costs. He stated the fee would need to increase by 22% for all properties for the remaining 3 years to meet demand and increased costs. He stated that if the Board doesn't approve the increase, there are mechanisms available to come to a resolution. He provided the following options:

1. *Direct the County Administrator to prepare an updated Rate Resolution to adopt the fire rescue assessments and fire rescue services fees at the July 8, 2025 meeting, based on all of the expenditure increases identified by the City and the assessable rates provided in the consultant study.*
2. *As required by Section 197.3632(4)(a) and (b), Florida Statutes, authorize mailing of first-class notices to property owners regarding proposed changes to the fire rescue assessments and authorize scheduling a Public Hearing on July 8, 2025, to impose the updated assessments and to place the assessments on the tax bill if applicable.*
3. *Direct the County Administrator to amend the Fire Rescue Services Interlocal Agreement with the City of Tallahassee to reflect the fire rescue assessments and fire rescue services fees approved by the Board and authorize the Chairman to execute the updated agreement, subject to legal review by the County Attorney.*

Or

4. *Direct the County Administrator, in consultation with the County Attorney, to initiate the formal conflict resolution process to address inflationary cost increases for expenditures contemplated in the 2023 Fire Assessment Study and other new costs identified by the City that were not included in the five-year study as follows:*
    - *The County agrees to the City's use of Fire Services Reserve Funds to support increased personnel costs resulting from the latest collective bargaining agreement, at the current staffing levels.*
    - *The County does not agree to additional personnel cost increases due to any future labor renegotiations within the current five-year study period.*
    - *The County disputes the new expenditures associated with enhancing TFD's ISO rating, which were not contemplated in the five-year study.*
    - *The County disputes the 2023 debt refinancing payments, which were not contemplated in the five-year study.*
    - *The County requests the City to explore all options to reduce the increased costs of construction and staffing for Fire Station #17 and Fire Station #15, which are both contemplated in the five-year study period.*
5. *Board direction.*

Public Speakers:

- John Gibby, 4887 Gum Road, Tallahassee, FL 32304. Discussed that pollution has been found at Fire Station #4 on Appleyard. He provided them with a letter from DEP regarding pollution.
- Chief Brian Caroll, Miccosukee Volunteer Fire Rescue, 13800 Moccasin Gap Road, Tallahassee, FL 32309. Stated his biggest concern was County ISO. He inquired how this fee increase will improve effectiveness and if they will reduce the county score, which is currently a 3x.

Commissioner Maddox moved, seconded by Commissioner Minor, to waive the rules in order to have discussions prior to making a motion.

The motion carried 7-0.

- Commissioner Maddox shared he would like to offer a compromise motion to see if they can work out the differences with the City prior to initiating a formal conflict resolution process. He believed that they would avoid unnecessary additional conflict and anguish, not only with their colleagues in the City, but in the community. He stated that he believed the Board is unanimous in the position not to raise fees on residents in the middle of the five-year fee. He reiterated that what has been heard today from staff, every five years, the City, County, and an outside consultant engage in a highly thorough process to develop a five-year fee to cover the City's anticipated costs for the next five years and based on this process, the County Commission adopted the rate that they currently have. He noted that none of the fees are retained by the County and that it all goes to the City.

  Commissioner Maddox moved, seconded by Commissioner Minor, to approve Options #1, #2, and #3 <u>as amended</u>: to impose and collect the fire services assessment rate increase based on the additional costs identified by the City, excluding all costs related to ISO ratings and that there will be no more increases in the remaining 3 years of the current five-year term. This motion also authorizes the use of the fire services reserves fund to pay for increased costs in FY 2025.

- Commissioner Proctor stated that what brings them here is option #4. He suggested not acquiescing to the City. He inquired about the fire service fee imposed in the unincorporated area.
  - Roshaunda Bradley, Director of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), stated roughly $11.5 million in the unincorporated area.
  - Commissioner Proctor asked the amount that the City is transferring from its total collection of fire services to its general fund.
  - Mrs. Bradley stated about $11 million.

- Commissioner Proctor stated that money is being taken from people living in the unincorporated areas and goes to the City's general fund.

- Mrs. Bradley stated that approximately $450,000 goes to the Volunteer Fire Department.

- Commissioner Proctor remarked that the volunteer firefighters get only roughly $450,000 out of the $11 million. He noted Station 17 has been all talk and no walk for about 9 years. He stated he will not support anything because there is still no fire station on the Southside. He stated the fee should be tied in part to the services needed. He stated they need a better overview of the $11 million. He stated it is their responsibility to save people's money. He shared that he is disappointed with the consultant's report.

  Commission Proctor moved, seconded by Vice-Chairman Caban, for a substitute motion for approval of Option #4.

- Commissioner Minor inquired how the $8.5 million would improve the Counties' ISO ratings.

- County Administrator Long stated they're using an estimate of what they believe it would take in terms of improved personnel and equipment to get them from a three to a two; the $8.5 million represents an estimate.

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- Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator, stated they didn't have any data from the City or the County on that issue.

- Commissioner Minor stated there is a partnership with the City to better the community and save money for residents in the unincorporated area. He noted that some unexpected increases are understandable, but some were not required for the operation of the Fire Department during the five-year period. He mentioned the City increased the ISO rating investment and decided to spend $8.5 million. He mentioned the ISO request for $8.5 million was initiated after the five-year agreement was made and adopted by both the City and the County, and now they're asking them to pay for it. He stated he does not know if the benefit is going to help unincorporated residents and that there's no guarantee of getting an ISO rating of 2. He stated that he supports the original motion on the table. He remarked that they need to stand up for the unincorporated residents of Leon County.

- Chairman Welch sought clarification on the current motion on the table.

- Commissioner Maddox stated they want to remove the ISO rating investment of $8.5 million, and if the City does not agree to their terms they send over, they will go to dispute resolution.

- Commissioner Cummings asked for the annual amount if they removed the ISO rating investment part.

- Mrs. Bradley stated that for zone 2, it will be $38.

- Commissioner Cummings asked County Attorney O'Steen if they chose to go with the conflict resolution route, what would be the course of action.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated this is a contractual dispute resolution process because they are both parties to the agreement, and they have a dispute. The City wants to increase the rates by a certain amount, if the County Commission does not agree, then no increase can occur. The increase cannot be unilateral. Both parties must agree. So that would initiate the dispute resolution process, which includes, but is not necessarily limited to, mediation. It's staff level, then County Administrator and City Manager level, then mediation. And if you reach an impasse in mediation, it goes to binding arbitration.

- Commissioner Cummings asked for the standard of proof from the County's standpoint so that the arbitrator and mediator can decide.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated there's no breach at this point, there's just a disagreement about what is the appropriate amount, if any, to increase the rates, that would be the scope of any negotiations and non-binding mediation to try to get the parties to agree. If that doesn't happen, the City lays out its case for the arbitrator, the County lays out its case for the arbitrator, and the arbitrator issues a determination and an award.

- Commissioner Cummings asked again for the standard of proof because it looks like all the cards would be on the table for the City going into arbitration, and the County will be the losing party.

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- County Attorney O'Steen stated these are policy determinations, the consultant only determines what's assessable, she doesn't make determinations about policy, whether it's appropriate that they did this mid-cycle, whether it's necessary for the operation of the fire stations or anything like that. All the consultant does is plug in the numbers given to her by the City and come up with a rate. That's according to the methodology; that's all that the report does. So, they would be arguing, as staff have articulated here, and it is in the agenda items that these were, in part, not anticipated, and they're not appropriate for a mid-cycle rate change. That's what they would argue and put before the arbitrator. Will they prevail over that? There's no guarantee, but that's what they are looking at.

- Commissioner Cummings stated she is just evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the County's position.

- Commissioner O'Keefe inquired if initiating the dispute resolution process would prevent them from continuing to cooperate and trying to negotiate with the City or is it just a structure and timeline to resolve the disagreements.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated that the process is all about negotiating and trying to reach a mutually acceptable resolution.

- County Administrator Long added that, if they trigger the conflict resolution process today, which has a very specific timeline and steps in the process, then they will follow at that point.

- Commissioner O'Keefe asked if they do not enter the process and try to negotiate outside of it, is there a time limit?

- County Attorney O'Steen replied no, but they have the issue of using the uniform method of collecting assessments, so they are required to have a public hearing no later than September 15th to adopt a rate to put on everyone's tax bill for the upcoming fiscal year.

- Commissioner O'Keefe asked if that is a legal obligation on their part.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated no.

- Commissioner O'Keefe shared his concern about not starting the agreed-upon process that they signed on to in the agreement. He asked if Commissioner Maddox's motion was to go, where they advised to work with the City, but don't trigger the dispute resolution process now, and if negotiation fails, would they already have the approval to go to dispute resolution, or would they have to come back for a vote?

- County Attorney O'Steen stated it's her understanding that they would present the proposal to the City for them to consider at the June meeting. If they agree to that, then they would codify that in an amendment to the existing agreement, but if they do not agree to that in all substantive respects, it would trigger the dispute resolution process.

- Commissioner O'Keefe asked if they entered the dispute today, could they still accept what they are proposing at their meeting.

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- County Attorney O'Steen stated yes, it would come back to the Board for consideration, and if it was timely at the June meeting.

- County Administrator Long added that it wouldn't be formally presented to them for their consideration because they will be engaged in the process.

- Commissioner O'Keefe asked if they were to vote to send notices of an increase today, would they actually be adopting the increase.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated no, the Board must hold a public hearing and would have to include the proposed amount to charge, and they could not exceed that amount at the public hearing. They can always lower the amount, but it can't be increased over what's put in the notice.

- Commissioner O'Keefe asked what made the costs unforeseeable two years ago.

- County Administrator Long stated they acknowledge that the City had not completed their collective bargaining agreement during the development of the five-year phase. Other things that were not known would include the construction costs, at the time they utilized an estimate from 2023, and the City has identified increased cost estimates based on construction documents with respect to Station 17, which they now have, and they do not have on 15 yet; that's still an unknown number. He also mentioned new costs were not contemplated in the agreement, which include the ISO and the debt refinancing. They were not known to the County or to the consultant in the development of the current five-year fee.

- Commissioner O'Keefe asked if construction costs have doubled.

- Mr. Morris stated that the 2023 estimate was what the City previously had. However, they didn't have the final construction documents, so they had a $17 million estimate for Fire Station 17. Now that they have the construction documents finalized, they're about to update it, and the cost estimate has doubled for that station.

- Commissioner O'Keefe asked if they had any input on the bid.

- Mr. Morris stated they discussed opportunities for delays, but the City is ready to move forward, at least with Fire Station 17. Fire Station 15 appears to be about a year away, if not more.

- Commissioner O'Keefe inquired what would prevent this from happening again.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated that under the original motion, it would be codified in the agreement. They could come back and ask, no matter what they put into an agreement, there is no guarantee that they will not come back again.

- Commissioner O'Keefe inquired if they could include a letter or wording to citizens as to why there may be a potential fee increase.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated yes, they can include it in the first-class notices to provide context for why there is a potential proposed rate increase.

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- Commissioner O'Keefe shared his discontent with the five-year agreement. He stated they shouldn't absorb new costs without clear input or control. He mentioned that he understands the desire to avoid unnecessary conflict and supports working fully with the City, but did not want to give up a process of mediation and arbitration, as is outlined in the agreement. He stated he supports Commissioner Proctor's substitute amendment and inquired about adding a friendly amendment to notify County residents of the proposed increase, explaining that it is due to a request from the City.

- Commissioner Proctor rejected Commissioner O'Keefe's friendly amendment. He stated they should not notify County residents about a tax increase that the City is forcing them to do. He stated that he would go to arbitration, then send a letter to the public, noting that they got punished for standing up for County residents. He asked County Attorney O'Steen for clarification on arbitration.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated that if they concede that the cost associated with the renegotiated or new union agreements is permissible, the reserve fund doesn't get them through the entire five-year period, it will get them through this year, because they already have a deficit for those costs. It will get them through FY 2026. They would still have to have an increase in the rates in the years 2027 and 2028 just to cover that portion of the cost.

- Commissioner Proctor stated they should not trigger County citizens with a letter of increase. He inquired why the consultant is not bonded or insured, and why it has to fall on the County. He stated they should have more pride and dignity.

- Commissioner O'Keefe clarified to Commissioner Proctor that Option #4 states that they accept and fund the increase in personnel costs, but it does not say they are not approving any increase in costs. He shared he is uncomfortable getting behind and not giving themselves the opportunity to do a minimum of protection for a smaller modified amount of fee increase. He asked for the deadline to send a notice for a fee increase.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated they will have to hold a public hearing by September 15th; the notices will have to go out at least 20 days before that.

- Commissioner O'Keefe asked for the possibility of a resolution through the process in time to know what increase would be needed for August 15th.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated they could try to accelerate it and get through mediation prior to August 22nd, which is the last drop-dead date they could send that 20-day mailed notice before they would have to hold a public hearing on the very last day, which is September 15th.

- Commissioner Maddox asked why they are talking about sending out notices now.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated that if they are going to move to increase the rate for FY 2026 above what is currently being charged, they will have to provide the first-class mail notice to everybody.

- Mrs. Bradley stated that Options #1 through #3 accept all of the costs, excluding ISO, which means they are accepting the costs also for fire stations 17 and 15. The reserves are not sufficient to cover those increases; they would still have to increase the rates.

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- County Administrator Long stated the cost, excluding the ISO, would take the increase down approximately $10 a month, which would be the minimum they would do because there are other components like exploring additional alternatives on construction, which could drive that cost lower. He clarified Option #4; the interlocal agreement requires the aggrieved party, which is the County, to put forward a good-faith resolution to the issue. Part of the good-faith resolution in 4A through B would be to accept certain things and dispute certain things even though they increase.

- Vice-Chairman Caban shared his discontent with the current situation. He stated this is essentially a tax increase for the residents in the unincorporated areas who cannot vote for City elected officials. He inquired who would own the new fire stations that are being built.

- Mr. Morris stated the City of Tallahassee.

- Vice-Chairman Caban inquired about taking the two proposed fire stations and paying for them through the BluePrint Intergovernmental Agency. He asked for the breakdown of the fire stations.

- Mrs. Bradley stated that according to the City's latest documents, there's an additional $17 million for fire station number 17, which is bringing the total to $34 million to fully construct. For fire station number 15, they don't believe those costs are final yet. Right now, there's a $10 million estimate for that expansion. The total cost of that amount will be $44 million.

- Vice-Chairman Caban mentioned they should not be increasing the fire services fee while they have a billion dollars in BluePrint money.

- Commissioner Proctor inquired if they could add to the list of voted upon projects to include fire stations.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated she cannot give any advice about BluePrint because the IA Board has Susan Dawson as their attorney, and because she does not have the answer to that.

- Commissioner Maddox stated this is not a good idea because there is no guarantee that when it gets to BluePrint, they will have the outcome they want.

- County Administrator Long clarified that any amendment to the interlocal agreement would have to be approved by both the City and the County.

- Vice-Chairman Caban stated this would be in line with other BluePrint projects and would at least be worth the conversation.

- Chairman Welch stated he agrees with everyone about this situation being frustrating and wants everyone to understand that they don't run the City of Tallahassee Fire Department. They do not set their priorities or their budget. He added that the County Commission simply passes the fee for service along to residents in the unincorporated area and does not have control over what they charge or how they want to charge it. He acknowledged Commissioner Proctor's comment about having a duty to protect their constituents and fight for them. He asked for clarification on Commissioner Maddox's motion.

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- County Attorney O'Steen explained that Commissioner Maddox's motion is different because the Board will agree to increase all costs except for the ISO. Option #4 is only agreeing to use the fire service's reserve funds to support the increased personnel based on the latest collective bargaining agreement. Under his motion, they would not dispute the 2023 debt refinancing payments, and they would agree to the increased cost of construction and staffing of Fire Station 17 and Fire Station 15.

- County Administrator Long stated that there would be no additional increases within the existing term, including a potential renegotiation of labor in 2027, and it is important to note that, even with Commissioner Maddox's motion, the City may very well not agree, and they may end up going to a conflict resolution process.

- Chairman Welch stated that Commissioner Maddox's idea is valiant, and he is inclined to support his motion, even though the City might reject it. He also acknowledged Vice-Chairman Caban's idea, but that is something that should have been considered in the past when the City was projecting these costs. He stated the timing for moving the costs to BluePrint is not appropriate at this time. He reiterated that he is frustrated with this situation and wants people to know that this is the City's Fire Department they are running, and they are asking the Board to pass this fee to their constituents.

- Commissioner Cummings suggested that they raise this issue at their next BluePrint meeting. She inquired about citizens in the unincorporated areas and the costs they would bear.

- County Administrator Long stated in Option #4, which would lead to the initiation of the conflict resolution process, that they would agree to use the fire reserve to support the increased costs from the latest collective bargaining agreement at the current staffing level, and they do not agree to any additional labor renegotiation during this period. If they are successful, they would avoid $8.5 million over the next three years. Under that scenario, they would dispute the debt refinancing, and then they would request the consideration to reduce the cost associated with the fire stations. It would depend on how this is arbitrated to determine what cost savings would be, they would have to make assumptions based on which of these would be successful. He believes Commissioner Maddox's motion is definitive.

- Commissioner Cummings inquired about the additional proposed FTEs for the new fire station.

- Mr. Morris stated under Option #4, they would seek to look for a delay in the staffing and the construction of those fire stations, which has been done in the past with Fire Station 16.

- Commissioner Maddox asked the consultant how she came up with the estimate and the methodology she used.

- The consultant stated it was based on what the City predicted the numbers to look like. She used what the City provided to her, and she did not determine if they are reasonable or not. Regarding the methodology, she stated they didn't use the entire fire department budget; they only used the assessable portion. She took their budget to determine what is assessable and then what portion gets funded by the government, what portion gets funded by zone one and zone two, then broke down the rates within zone one and zone two to each category, residential, and then with the tiers and the non-residential.

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- Commissioner Maddox inquired about the construction piece on Option #4.

- Mr. Morris stated their efforts will be to delay under 4E.

- Commissioner Maddox stated there will be some kind of increase regardless of whether it is going to arbitration or not. He inquired when the City is scheduled to go back and negotiate with the Firefighters Association, and the end of the five-year period.

- County Administrator Long stated negotiations are scheduled for the year 2027, and the five-year agreement ends in the year 2028.

- Commissioner Maddox stated he wanted everyone to think logically and send something reasonable back to the City. He commented that by waiting on Stations 15 and 17 for a few years, the odds are that the costs will increase even more. He stated he will vote against the substitute motion and support his original motion. He asked County Attorney O'Steen for clarification about lowering the amount but not exceeding the proposed amount.

- County Attorney O'Steen explained that if they go through the entire dispute resolution process, and they will end up with an arbitration award that exceeds the amount the Board approved in the public hearing, the County would have to tack the additional amount on next year and go back and assess it after the fact to collect the balance.

- Commissioner Maddox asked how they would be affected when talking about construction.

- County Attorney O'Steen stated that staff would have to run the numbers with the consultant to back out those costs associated with just the construction and come back with a revised rate number.

- Commissioner Maddox asked County Attorney O'Steen to describe the difference between a fee and a tax.

- County Attorney O'Steen replied that for non-governmental entities this is an assessment, there is a special test that they can only charge a property commensurate with the benefit received by that particular property, which is why there are different categories. A tax is entirely different legally.

- Commissioner Maddox stated his desire is to negotiate with the City before going to mediation. If they go to mediation and arbitration, everything is in the arbitrator's hands, and it's uncertain what that arbitrator may come back with.

- Commissioner Minor asked if they would send out another notice for FY 2027 letting citizens know about increased fees if Commissioner Maddox's motion prevailed.

- The consultant stated that because it is too expensive to send out letters every year, she suggested adding in the letter that they anticipate having a certain amount of increased fees, and in future years, they can go up to another rate without further notice, then they would be back on track, only noticing newly affected properties.

- Commissioner Minor confirmed that only one first-class notice will be sent out projecting for the next three years. He stated he supports Commissioner Maddox's motion. He

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believed it is the wise thing to do, and they should always try to compromise before they start getting into conflict resolution. He believed the City would accept the motion because it is better than going into conflict resolution.

- Vice-Chairman Caban stated he is not concerned about being collegial when it comes to forcefully imposing fees on their residents. He suggested including the friendly amendment to the City, voting in June, calling for a special meeting, and concluding it by July 1st. He withdrew his second from Commissioner Proctor's substitute motion. He stated he will vote no on the original motion because he cannot vote on a fee without exhausting all options.

  Commissioner Proctor's motion died for lack of a second.

- Commissioner Proctor stated the City has been hostile towards the fire department. He commented that the fire department endorsed the wrong candidate for mayor because he does not care about them. He noted that he cannot support Commissioner Maddox's motion because he's looking out for citizens' pockets. He inquired about why they can't add language to increase pay for firefighters.

- County Administrator Long stated he will advise the board immediately upon the City's action on June 11th.

  Commissioner Maddox moved, seconded by Commissioner Minor, for approval of Options #1, #2, and #3, as amended:

  Option #1: Direct the County Administrator to prepare an updated Rate Resolution to adopt the fire rescue assessments and fire rescue services fees at the July 8, 2025 meeting, based on all of the expenditure increases identified by the City and the assessable rates provided in the consultant study.

  Option #2: As required by Section 197.3632(4)(a) and (b), Florida Statutes, authorize mailing of first-class notices to property owners regarding proposed changes to the fire rescue assessments and authorize scheduling a Public Hearing on July 8, 2025, to impose the updated assessments and to place the assessments on the tax bill if applicable.

  Option #3: Direct the County Administrator to amend the Fire Rescue Services Interlocal Agreement with the City of Tallahassee to reflect the fire rescue assessments and fire rescue services fees approved by the Board, including language explicitly restricting any additional increases to the fire services assessment and fees within the current five-year study period, and authorize the Chairman to execute the updated agreement, subject to legal review by the County Attorney.

  The motion carried 4-3 (Commissioner Proctor, Commissioner O'Keefe, and Vice-Chairman Caban opposed).

2. **Consideration of Solid Waste Assessment Rate Study**
   (County Administrator / Office of Management & Budget)

   County Administrator Long induced this item. He stated that consistent with the County's fiscal policies and multiyear fiscal planning to reduce and eliminate general revenue subsidies for County enterprise programs, this item sought Board acceptance of the Solid Waste Assessment Rate Study Report and approval to implement a phased increase of the solid waste assessment over the next five years in unincorporated Leon County to support solid waste disposal services. Additionally, this item sought Board approval of the updated

Solid Waste Tipping Fee Resolution to establish tipping fee disposal rates at Solid Waste facilities for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026.

Public Speakers:

- John Gibby, 4887 Gum Road, Tallahassee, FL 32304, commented on the lack of time afforded to the public to allow for meaningful discussion on this rate study. He inquired if decisions are being made out of the public eye. He added that before raising the rates in Leon County, the Board should consider whether the public has the overall view.

Commissioner Minor moved, seconded by Chairman Welch, for approval of Option #5: Approve the updated Transfer Station Tipping Fee resolution, subject to legal review by the County Attorney; and

Option #6: Maintain the general revenue subsidy to the solid waste enterprise fund.

- Commissioner Minor stated that the State legislature could have a huge impact on local government revenues this year or next, which is why it is clever to take this measure so they will have more room to be able to fund essential services. He inquired how severe the implications would be if they passed option #6.
    - County Administrative Long stated the Board must consider that every decision they make on the budget has an impact on the available options.

- Commissioner Minor stated he wanted to show residents in the unincorporated areas that they have their backs and that they are doing everything they can to make it easier for them.

- Commissioner O'Keefe remarked that he believed this is the right thing to do considering what they voted on in the previous agenda item. He believed that this is not the year to impose additional fees.

- Commissioner Cummings stated they are all sensitive to raising fees and that she supports the motion not to raise fees this year. She praised staff for their report and how sensitive they were towards unincorporated residents.

- Commissioner Proctor remarked that it feels like they didn't support residents when they bowed down to the City and agreed to their fees. He inquired how long this agreement has been in place.
    - County Administrator Long replied since 1994.

- Commissioner Proctor sought clarification on whether they had workshops on Gum Road.
    - County Administrator Long stated that a lot of things have happened over the last 30 years, including the closure of the landfill, except for the amount of the fee increasing.
- Commissioner Proctor stated that they have denied themselves for 31 years, and for all those years, they have tried to offset the difference. He noted they are not allowing the City to feel any discomfort, but when the County is suffering, they suffer alone.

- Commissioner Maddox noted that Leon County is the lowest of 10 counties in terms of fees. He stated they are approximately $100 or less than what they should be recommending.

Commissioner Maddox moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, for a substitute motion for staff recommendation Options #3, #4, and #5.

Option #3: Direct staff to prepare an updated Rate Resolution to adopt the Solid Waste non-ad valorem assessment, as presented in Scenario #3, at the July 8, 2025 Public Hearing;

Option #4: Accept the Solid Waste Assessment Rate Study Report (Attachment #1) and, as required by Section 197.3632(4)(a) and (b), Florida Statutes, authorize the mailing of first-class notices to property owners regarding proposed changes to the Solid Waste non-ad valorem assessment and authorize scheduling a Public Hearing on July 8, 2025, to impose the updated assessment; and

Option #5: Approve the updated Transfer Station Tipping Fee Resolution (Attachment #2), subject to legal review by the County Attorney.

- Commissioner Proctor stated they have balanced their budget for many years, knowing they are running a deficit in the area. He shared that it's difficult to support someone else and not support themselves. He mentioned he is willing to support Commissioner Maddox's motion.

- Vice-Chairman Caban shared his frustration with this meeting and having to vote to increase the cost of living for residents in Leon County. He stated he did not support the substitute motion.

- Chairman Welch commented that Commissioner Minor and Commissioner Maddox are both right. He mentioned that this will need to be addressed at some point. He commented that this will be the first increase in 31 years, and that is something to be proud of. He commented that the fire services fee has put them in a tough spot and that they should hold until next year.

- Commissioner Maddox withdrew his motion. He stated that someday they will have to deal with this issue, and it will happen soon.

- Commissioner Minor praised all the points of his colleagues, and he agrees that this is not the best financial management practice. He commented that they have been paying the subsidy since the early 2000s. He agreed that they will need to deal with the issue someday, but not this year, until they find out how much the fire service increase will be.

- Commissioner Proctor asked for the cost of giving a 5% increase to County employees.

- Mrs. Bradley stated last year's increase was 5%, which is approximately $2.5 million. She confirmed to Commissioner Proctor that they are paying $3.8 million for the subsidy.

- Commissioner Proctor asked for a 5% increase for their employees.

- County Administrator Long stated that the amount will be considered for the Board's balancing at the June 17th Workshop meeting.

The original motion carried 7-0.

Commissioner O'Keefe moved, seconded by Commissioner Minor, to approve a proclamation recognizing June 2025 as Pride Month.

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The motion carried 7-0.

Commissioner Proctor moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, for an agenda item to create a citizen councils board in each district.

The motion carried 7-0.

Vice-Chair Caban moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Keefe, to adjourn the meeting.

The motion carried 7-0.

RECEIPT AND FILE

- None

ADJOURN

There being no further business to come before the Board, the meeting was adjourned at 6:10 p.m.

ATTEST:

BY: _____
Brian Welch, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

BY: _____
Gwendolyn Marshall Knight, Clerk of Court
& Comptroller, Leon County, Florida

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BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
LEON COUNTY, FLORIDA
BUDGET WORKSHOP
June 17, 2025

The Leon County Board of County Commissioners met for a Budget Workshop on Tuesday, June 17, 2025, at 3:00 p.m. in Chambers with Chairman Brian Welch presiding. Present were Vice-Chairman Christian Caban, Commissioners David T. O'Keefe, Bill Proctor, Carolyn Cummings, Rick Minor, and Nick Maddox. Also present were County Administrator Vincent S. Long, County Attorney Chasity H. O'Steen, and Clerk's to the Board Beryl H. Wood and Daniel Antonaccio.

Facilitators(s):

- Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator
- Shington Lamy, Assistant County Administrator
- Nawfal Ezzagaghi, Assistant County Administrator
- Roshaunda Bradley, Director, Office of Management and Budget
- Nicki Hatch, Assistant to the County Administrator for Legislative and Strategic Initiatives

Chairman Welch called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and welcomed everyone to the Budget Workshop.

County Administrator's Overview

County Administrator Long introduced the Budget Workshop. He thanked the Board for their guidance through this budget process. This budget discussion item sought Board guidance on the development of the FY 2026 Preliminary Budget.

He highlighted:

- This is the 14th consecutive year with no change to the millage rate.
- The County remains in a strong financial position due to long-standing fiscal responsibility.
- No two budgets are the same; each presents unique challenges.
- In recent years, the July workshop has not been needed because the Board provides clear direction in June.

FY 2026 Preliminary Budget Highlights:

- Balanced budget totaling $403,967,176 which is a 6.9%, or $26,080,183, increase from FY 2025.
- Nearly half of this increase ($12.7 million) is associated with increases in public safety funding for the Sheriff and Emergency Medical Services (EMS);
- 7.65% increase in taxable property values, resulting in an additional $15.3 million;
- 14th consecutive year with no increase in the Countywide millage rate;
- No increase in stormwater or solid waste special assessments;
- No new County Government positions requiring additional general revenue;

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- 10 new planned EMS employees to address increased call volumes within current EMS MSTU funding;
- Maintain high quality provision of essential services to citizens;
- Address inflationary increases to provide the current level of service;
- Fund public safety and statutory obligations of Constitutional and Judicial Officers;
- Fund Medicaid increase;
- Offset $1 million decrease in state shared revenues;
- Support Board strategic initiatives related to homelessness and affordable housing by providing funding for an additional LCSO HOST deputy and establishing a new program to invest in the development of rental units for low-income households;
- Balance the budget with no general revenue fund balance, while maintaining reserves;
- Address capital improvement needs to maintain the County's core infrastructure; and
- Provide adequate funding to support County personnel costs.

Item 1. Fiscal Year 2026 Preliminary Budget Workshop

Assistant County Administrator Ken Morris commented on the preliminary budget. He provided an economic and legislative outlook.

Economic & Legislative Outlook

- Continued economic uncertainty
  - Ongoing inflationary pressures
  - State and local governments have exhausted ARPA funding
  - Shifting tariff policies
  - Federal spending cuts recurring) to agencies, programs and grants
  - Immigration reform, chilling effect on Florida industry sectors
  - Annual growth in property tax revenues slowly returning to normal
  - Whispers of the "R" word, recession

Economic & Legislative Outlook

- Legislative budget negotiations concluded Friday evening
  - Added $750 million to the state's rainy-day fund
  - $23 million increase for Florida State Guard due to FEMA uncertainty
- Leon County appropriations included in the Legislature's budget
  - Crawfordville Rd: $2 million to accelerate road widening project
  - Lake Munson Slough Embankments $800,000
  - Leon Works: $25,000
- 2025 Legislative Impacts
  - Avoided most significant impacts ($100 million)

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        - No new property tax reform initiatives adopted in 2025
        - FY 2026 will be the first year the County budget is impacted by the 2024 constitutional amendments approved by voters ($300,000)
    - Relocation of telecommunications equipment ($300,000)
    - State shared revenue decline ($1 million)
    - Mandatory payments for Medicaid, Baker/Marchman, DJJ, etc. ($743,000)
    - New: Repealed business rent tax ($565,000)
- House Select Committee on Property Taxes
    - 37 House members to convene through 2025 and provide a final report to the Speaker of the House
    - The Speaker provided initiatives for the Select Committee to consider:
        - Require every local government to hold a referendum on the elimination of property taxes on homestead properties
        - Constitutional amendment to authorize Legislature to increase to increase the homestead exemption by general law.
        - Constitutional amendment to create new Homestead Exemptions: $500,000 for everyone, $1 million for seniors ($78 million impact on the County)
    - 17 Constitutional Amendments on Property Taxes since 2006 - 9 of the last 10 general election ballots
    - Expect another property tax measure on the ballot in 2026
    - Early meetings have focused on 'revenue diversification' and 'reliance on property taxes'

Roshaunda Bradley, Budget Director, shared that they approach FY 2026 the same as they have in previous years. She discussed the process, including cost avoidance and savings. Her team has discovered over $600,000 in cost savings. She shared the budget would go up by $16,581,860 from last year. In addition, she shared the following:

Cost Avoidance & Savings

- Deliberate approach occurs throughout the year
- Not only during the formal budget process
- Specific & targeted practices: LEAD's Listening Sessions, I² (squared), Leverage Partners
- Employees are continuously empowered to seek and implement cost saving measures
- Occurs prior to seeking any new taxes, fees, and positions
    - Current year savings of $3.4 million
    - Cumulative savings since 2013: $79 million
- General Revenue and Expense Changes
- Comparative County Information
- Support for Strategic Initiatives
- Budget Process Next Steps

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Staff Recommendation:

Option #1: Accept the overview of the FY 2026 Preliminary Budget.

Option #2: Approve the advance funding of capital projects in FY 2025 as reflected in the Resolution and Budget Amendment.

Option #3: Authorize the County Administrator to submit an application for the State FY 2025-2026 Florida Department of Environmental Protection Water Quality Improvement.

Grant to construct the second phase of the Woodville Sewer Project.

Option #4: Approve the Emergency Medical Service Fee Resolution.

Option #5: Approve the District Medical Examiner Fees Schedule.

Option #6: Accept the FY 2025 annual status report and recommendations on the Sidewalk Program implementation.

Option #7: Accept the status report on the FY 2022 – FY 2026 Strategic Plan.

Option #8: Authorize the County Administrator to engage a professional consultant to assess the County's revenue structure and available alternative revenue sources consistent with Florida Statutes.

- Chairman Welch expressed his appreciation to the staff and County Administrator Long for their outstanding work on the budget.

Commissioner O'Keefe moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, for Options #1 – #8.

Commissioner Maddox rescued himself from voting on Option #1 because of his employment and asked Commissioner O'Keefe if he would amend his motion.

Commissioner O'Keefe amended his motion to Options #2 – #8. It was seconded by Commissioner Cummings.

- Commissioner O'Keefe commended staff for their excellent work on the budget and voiced his support for its adoption.

- Commissioners O'Keefe, Cummings, Proctor, and Minor commended staff's work and fiscal responsibility.

- Commissioner Maddox acknowledged the contributions of previous staff in consistently producing excellent and responsible budgets each year. He expressed his appreciation for Ms. Bradley and her team, noting they were well taught and prepared. He commended the balanced budget and remarked on the difficult decisions ahead due to factors beyond their control at the state level. He also emphasized the importance of sustainability, noting that grants can disappear without self-sufficient funding models such as annual giving programs.

- County Administrator Long commented on the enterprise funds, noting that their stability is a result of conservative financial practices. He added that these funds are supplemented with general revenue support.

- Commissioner Maddox commented on the functions of revenue and emphasized the need to prepare constituents and neighbors for how the County will address the $500,000 shortfall.

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He raised questions about how to diversify revenue sources and to what extent the state has impacted enterprise funds.

- County Administrator Long stated that they have extended and deferred expenses as much as possible, but acknowledged that this remains a significant challenge.

- Commissioner Maddox commented on the need to shift costs and explore ways to diversify revenue, including legislative appropriations.

- County Administrator Long noted they remain hopeful and acknowledged Vice-Chairman Caban for bringing on an additional lobbying team, which has proven to be beneficial.

- Chairman Welch provided clarity regarding efforts to streamline the permitting process.

- County Administrator Long commented on the 50/50 governmental review process, explaining that without it, homeowners and business owners would have to bear the full cost of permitting.

- Commissioner Proctor commented on the solid figures provided by the Property Appraiser.

- Ms. Bradley noted that the numbers can vary from year to year, citing a decrease last year.

- Commissioner Proctor highlighted that this marks the 14th consecutive year the millage rate has remained unchanged and emphasized the importance of communicating that to Leon County residents.

- Nicki Hatch, Assistant to the County Administrator for Legislative and Strategic Initiatives, reported a projected 16% increase in Medicaid costs, equating to $600,000 over last year.

- Commissioner Proctor emphasized the importance of ensuring citizens understand the budget process. He discussed the potential need to increase the millage rate to meet community needs.

- Chairman Welch commented that the report would highlight the direct impacts and expressed his support for being transparent with the public about the challenges faced.

- Vice-Chairman Caban praised staff's work, referenced how other counties use sales tax revenue, and emphasized allocating funds to improve residents' quality of life. He identified the need for two additional fire stations, noted economic changes since the 2014 report, and requested that the Board revisit its needs list and explore all funding avenues.

- Commissioner Cummings stressed creative thinking and supported hiring a consultant to review the budget, noting a potential benefit in considering a millage rate increase if warranted.

- Commissioner Proctor suggested the consultant could explore the potential consolidation of City and County governments to streamline operations and reduce costs. He also inquired about the flexibility of the Blueprint fund and commented on the fire service budget over the past three years.

    - County Attorney O'Steen clarified that Blueprint funds are constrained and can only be used for specific, pre-approved projects that are voter-approved.

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- Commissioner Proctor also raised the idea of including an escape clause in any agreements related to the consultant or broader budget planning efforts. He emphasized the importance of maintaining flexibility in long-term commitments to ensure the County can adjust course if necessary.

- Vice-Chairman Caban commented on the use of infrastructure dollars for building fire stations.

    - County Administrator Long confirmed that such funding is an allowable use under current guidelines, including fire service fees.

- Vice-Chairman Caban also requested engaging a forensic accountant to review fire service finances for transparency.

- Commissioner Minor clarified that no one is proposing a millage rate increase this year or next year. He stated that they want the professional consultant to present well-developed, viable options for consideration.

- Commissioner Maddox inquired whether staff would bring forward an agenda item outlining the specific objectives for the consultant.

    - County Administrator Long responded that staff already has clear direction based on the discussion.

- Commissioner Maddox discussed the addition of the consultant, requesting that they be mindful of identifying both aggressive and less aggressive fee structures. He further commented on the Blueprint program, cautioning against relying on those funds for needs beyond their intended scope.

- Commissioner O'Keefe emphasized understanding the County's main revenue sources to make informed budget decisions.

- Commissioner Proctor expressed concerns about the fire services fee, stating that the Board did not formally agree to those fees.

Commissioner O'Keefe moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, to approve Options #2 – #8.

Option #2: Approve the advance funding of capital projects in FY 2025 as reflected in the Resolution and Budget Amendment.

Option #3: Authorize the County Administrator to submit an application for the State FY 2025-2026 Florida Department of Environmental Protection Water Quality Improvement Grant to construct the second phase of the Woodville Sewer Project.

Option #4: Approve the Emergency Medical Service Fee Resolution.

Option #5: Approve the District Medical Examiner Fees Schedule.

Option #6: Accept the FY 2025 annual status report and recommendations on the Sidewalk Program implementation.

Option #7: Accept the status report on the FY 2022 – FY 2026 Strategic Plan.

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Option #8: Authorize the County Administrator to engage a professional consultant to assess the County's revenue structure and available alternative revenue sources consistent with Florida Statutes.

In addition, this item seeks any other direction the Board wishes to provide in the development of the FY 2026 Preliminary Budget.

The motion carried 7- 0.

Commissioner Cummings moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Keefe, for approval of Option #1: Accept the overview of the FY 2026 Preliminary Budget.

The motion carried 6-0 (Commissioner Maddox recused).

Item 2. Leon County Sheriff's Office FY 2026 Budget Request

County Administrator Long stated this budget discussion item seeks Board consideration of the Leon County Sheriff's Office FY 2026 budget. As requested by the Board, this item also provided information on the Sheriff's plan to enhance the services provided through the Homeless Outreach Street Team Unit to address the needs of women and girls experiencing homelessness in partnership with local providers and stakeholders. This item also provided an update on the Board's strategic initiative to reduce graffiti and litter in coordination with the Leon County Sheriff and State Attorney's Office.

Sheriff's Office staff provided an update, and Ken Morris presented the proposed FY 2026 budget via PowerPoint. The key points included:

- Total budget request: $124,651,485.
- Represents 65% of the estimated growth in property tax revenue.
- 42% of the budget is allocated to operating the Detention Facility.
- 79% of the Sheriff's budget is personnel costs.
- Highlighted detention alternative programs.
- Noted the current 94-to-1 deputy-to-inmate ratio, emphasizing the need to reduce it by half.

Commissioner Maddox moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings to approve Option #1: Approve the Leon County Sheriff's proposed FY 2026 Budget as presented.

- Commissioner Proctor thanked the Sheriff's Office for their work but disagreed with the assertion that the jail facility has 25 years of life remaining. He referenced his recent visit to the jail, raising concerns about staffing levels and the high deputy-to-inmate ratio. He stressed the need to reexamine the county's mental health approach and questioned how $10 million in funding has been invested, particularly regarding officer training following the George Floyd incident and in serving a diverse community.

- Undersheriff Ron Cave noted the strong relationship with the County. He addressed high vacancy rates and recruitment efforts, including part-time hiring and salary increases. He also discussed diversion programs, mental health challenges among detainees, and the low percentage of citizen interactions resulting in arrest.

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- Dr. Argatha Gilmore, Chief of Staff, explained that training protocols are data-driven, particularly in de-escalation practices. She stressed the importance of community engagement and cultural sensitivity.

- Commissioner Proctor referenced recent incidents in Los Angeles involving a sheriff's office, asking about inter-agency relationships in Florida.

    - Dr. Gilmore provided background on the incident and emphasized leadership and cultural sensitivity in policing.

- Commissioner Maddox discussed staffing ratio issues.

    - Undersheriff Cave noted the facility was designed for a 1-to-45 ratio, but increased capacity has altered this balance.

- Commissioner Maddox thanked the Sheriff's Office for diversion programs, discussed deputy salaries, and asked about jail capacity, incarceration rates, and mental health data.

    - Undersheriff Cave stated that, with the recent salary increases, the Sheriff's Office is now very competitive with state-level agencies. He also discussed the key differences between county and state correctional facilities.

- Commissioner Maddox inquired about the current capacity of the detention center and how the current incarceration rates compare to previous years. He also asked about the population with mental health issues, specifically seeking data on the percentage of detainees facing mental health challenges.

    - Undersheriff Cave responded that approximately 60% of detainees face mental health challenges. He also discussed the role of Medicaid in addressing those needs.

- Commissioner O'Keefe thanked the Sheriff's Office for maintaining a strong working relationship and upholding a high standard of transparency. He inquired about the proposed 9% budget increase and how it compares to sheriff's office budgets across the state.

    - Undersheriff Cave responded that the increase is in line with budget trends seen in other counties, reflecting similar needs and operational demands statewide.

    - County Administrator Long commented that the County works to carefully manage budget increases, balancing public safety needs with overall fiscal responsibility.

- Commissioner O'Keefe inquired about any additional needs or priorities that were not included in the current budget proposal.

- Commissioner O'Keefe commented that he is happy to support the increase to get more deputies in pods, recalling his recent visit to the jail.

- Commissioner Cummings thanked staff, County Administrator Long, Mr. Morris, and Ms. Bradley for their work in preparing the budget. She emphasized that she would not want to compromise public safety by altering the carefully crafted sheriff's budget. She also inquired about recent citizen interactions and whether they involved recidivism cases.

- Commissioner Cummings expressed support for the proposed pay increase, emphasizing the importance of remaining competitive. She also inquired about measures to ensure the safety of children in schools, in light of recent school shootings.

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  - Undersheriff Cave stated that they have one of the oldest relationships with the Leon County Public Schools. He noted that two years ago, they started placing two deputies in schools and highlighted the benefits that have resulted from this initiative.

- Commissioner Cummings commented on the request for four new deputies and asked whether it was driven by increases in crime.
  - Undersheriff Cave responded that it is driven by population growth and the impact that comes with that.

- Commissioner Cummings commented on the request for one new HOST deputy to work specifically with homeless women and girls and address the issues they face. She expressed her desire to hire a HOST deputy for this purpose.
  - Undersheriff Cave responded that they do address the needs of vulnerable populations and noted that this position has a focus on homeless women and children, working in collaboration with their partners.

- Commissioner Cummings stated they would eventually like a report detailing the progress being made in addressing homeless women and girls.
  - Undersheriff Cave stated that it would be possible.

- Commissioner Cumming shared she would be supporting the sheriff's budget.

- Vice-Chairman Caban thanked the Sheriff for the relationship between his office and the County. He commented on their efforts to address illegal gambling in District 2 and stated that increased visibility on Pensacola Street and Highway 20 would be appreciated. He also inquired about the original funding for the Leon County Detention Center.
  - County Administrator Long responded that the project was funded through sales tax revenues.

- Vice-Chairman Caban inquired whether most of the interactions occur within City limits or outside.
  - Undersheriff Cave responded that he would have to get the official numbers, but most arrests happen in City limits.

- Vice-Chairman Caban stated that he appreciated all the work they do and believed they are being fiscally responsible.

- Commissioner Proctor inquired about the status of the re-entry program.
  - Undersheriff Cave stated that the re-entry program is making a positive difference.

- Commissioner Proctor requested an update on the inmate tablets and their removal.
  - Undersheriff Cave clarified that the restriction on electronic tablet access applies only to inmates in administrative custody.

- Commissioner Proctor thanked the Sheriff's Department for all their hard work and commented on the anti-DEI posture of the state of Florida.

- Commissioner Cummings recalled her visits to the detention center over the years in connection with her clients and praised the deputies for their professionalism.

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- Chairman Welch noted the extensive budget preparation process and emphasized public understanding of how revenue growth supports Sheriff's Office services. He cautioned that future budgets may face tighter constraints due to potential state legislative action.

The motion carried 7-0.

Item 3. Consideration of Affordable Housing Gap Financing Funding

County Administrator Long shared, as requested by the Board at the January 28, 2025, meeting, this item presented for Board consideration the utilization of general revenue for gap financing of affordable housing projects for very low-income and extremely low-income households. The item also acknowledged the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency's recent action to provide economic development funding for this purpose and sought Board approval of proposed revisions to the County's State Housing Initiative Partnership Local Housing Assistance Plan to better position the County's existing Rental Development Program to address the affordable housing need of rental housing development projects with gap financing.

Commissioner Maddox moved, seconded by Vice-Chairman Caban, to approve Options #1 and #2. Option #1: Approve the annual allocation of $250,000 in general revenue for gap financing of affordable housing projects for very low- and extremely low-income households.

Option #2: Adopt the Resolution approving revisions to the Leon County State Housing Initiative Partnership Local Housing Assistance Plan for the Rental Development Program.

- Commissioner Maddox recognized those from Capital Area Justice Ministry (CAJM) in the audience and thanked them for working with the Board on this item. He inquired whether SHIP dollars will be available in the future.
  - Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy responded yes.
- Commissioner O'Keefe thanked staff and CAJM for all their efforts and teamwork.
- Commissioner Minor thanked County staff for their hard work as well as CAJM for their communications over the past few years.
- Vice-Chairman Caban commended staff and Commissioner Maddox for their hard work, noting that Leon County is taking the lead on affordable housing.
- Commissioner Cummings echoed the comments of her colleagues, thanking staff and CAJM. She mentioned this shows the community's commitment to addressing affordable housing.
- Commissioner Maddox reflected on the evolution of the proposal and thanked CAJM for their flexibility throughout the process. He noted that this proposal could serve as a model for other counties to emulate.
- Chairman Welch praised the members of CAJM for their advocacy and their determination. He commended them for being flexible. He also thanked Commissioner O'Keefe for his advocacy.

The motion carried 6- 0 (Commissioner Proctor out of Chambers).

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Item 4. Annual Personnel Increases and Disaster Pay Adjustments

County Administrator Long reported that, as requested at the May 27, 2025, Special Meeting, this item provided an analysis of including a 5% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) for all Leon County and Constitutional employees for FY 2026. Consistent with Board direction at the May 13, 2025, meeting, the item also recommended disaster pay and personnel policy updates to align with FEMA best practices and maximize the County's reimbursement for federally declared disasters.

Commissioner Minor moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Keefe, to approve Options #2 and #3 as amended:

Option #2: Direct staff to bring back the recommended revisions to the Leon County Personnel Policies and Procedures, Section V, Subsection 5.14 – Emergency Guidelines for Compensation, Work Hours, and Work Assignments to match FEMA best practices and maximize the County's reimbursement for federally declared disasters.

Option #3: Approve a 0-5% performance pay increase with an average of 3% for all Leon County Government and Constitutional Officer employees in the FY 2026 Preliminary Budget; and:

To include red lined employees, as along as the County average stays at 3% and include a 5% across-the-board pay increase if the PAO values are greater than anticipated.

Discussion occurred among the Board.

- Commissioner Minor commented on the last three years. Inquired about the standard of personnel increases over the past few years.
    - County Administrator Long responded that Option #3 has been the standard and explained its process
- Commissioner Minor stated it makes sense to return to the policy from four years ago, stressing the importance of performance-based evaluations as a way to reward employees who excel.
- Commissioner O'Keefe noted this would revert to the standard policy, adding that it offers savings while still providing employee increases. He also referenced covering a state-imposed deficit.
- Commissioner Cummings inquired whether Option #3 means some employees might not receive raises. She offered a friendly amendment to include red-lined employees.
- County Administrator Long explained the definition of red-lined employees and noted the flexibility this policy would provide.
- Commissioner Minor stated he would accept Commissioner Cummings's friendly amendment.
- Commissioner Maddox inquired if all employees are paid above standard wage.
- Commissioner Proctor discussed the concept of "merit" and expressed concerns about potential bias in merit-based raises. He pointed to the Sheriff's budget increases and

suggested the County could find $1.4 million for a 5% across-the-board raise. He requested that if PAO values exceed projections, Option #1 be brought back to the Board.

- County Administrator Long responded that he and the County Attorney would be subjected to the same policy.

Commissioner Proctor moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, for a substitute motion for Option #1, with the caveat that this option comes back at the July meeting when they get the numbers from the PAO.

- Commissioner Maddox stated the motion could be changed at ratification.
- County Administrator Long stated that this decision is a policy decision of the board. Stating that this is more than just a budget balancing act.
- Commissioner Maddox stated he preferred Options #2 and #3 and began to instruct staff.
- Commissioner Minor and Commissioner O'Keefe both stated they could not support the substitute motion, noting that adjustments could be considered in July if funding becomes available.
- Vice-Chairman Caban expressed conditional support for the substitute motion if staff returned in July with a balanced budget that did not rely on general fund allocations.
- Commissioner Cummings emphasized the value of County employees and asked whether the budget would remain balanced with the raises.
    - County Administrator Long responded that the 5% increase is already included in the preliminary budget, which remains balanced.
- Commissioner Cummings noted that the budget was balanced until the state legislature released its budget, which resulted in an approximately $500,000 shortfall in the county's budget. She stated that the current budget remains balanced, including the 5% raise, and emphasized the meaningful impact this raise would have on county employees.
- Chairman Welch opposed using reserves to balance the budget, calling it poor public policy. He described a 5% across-the-board increase as fiscally irresponsible given current uncertainties and stated he could not support the substitute motion.
- Commissioner Maddox suggested reducing the increase to 2–3% and revisiting the 5% once PAO numbers are known, requesting Commissioner Proctor revert to his original friendly amendment.
- Commissioner Proctor withdrew his substitute motion, and Commissioner Cummings withdrew her second.
- They returned to Commissioner's Minor original motion.

Commissioner Minor moved, seconded by Commissioner O'Keefe, to approve Options #2 and #3 as amended: Option #2: Direct staff to bring back the recommended revisions to the Leon County Personnel Policies and Procedures, Section V, Subsection 5.14 – Emergency Guidelines for Compensation, Work Hours, and Work Assignments to match FEMA best practices and maximize the County's reimbursement for federally declared disasters.

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Option #3: Direct the County Administrator to provide an option for 5% raises for County and Constitutional Officer employees for Board consideration at the July 8, 2025, Board of County Commissioners Meeting, contingent upon final property values provided by the Property Appraiser on July 1, 2025, to include, at the supervisor's discretion, employees who are at the top of their respective pay scale.

The motion carried 6-1 (Chairman Welch opposed).

Item 5. Establishing the Maximum Millage Rate for the FY 2026 Tentative Budget

County Administrator Long stated that pursuant to Florida Statutes, the Board is required to establish the maximum millage rates for utilization in the Truth in Millage (TRIM) process.

Commissioner O'Keefe moved, seconded by Commissioner Cummings, to approve Options #1 – 2: Option #1: Establish the maximum countywide millage rate for FY 2026 at 8.3144; and

Option #2: Establish the maximum Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) for FY 2026 at 0.75 mills.

The motion carried 5-1 (Commissioner Maddox out of Chambers and Vice-Chairman Caban opposed).

Adjourn:

There being no further business to come before the Board, the workshop was adjourned at 1:24 p.m.

ATTEST:

BY: _____
Brian Welch, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

BY: _____
Gwendolyn Marshall Knight, Clerk of Court
& Comptroller, Leon County, Florida

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