

JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Regular Session

Thursday, June 19th, 2025

5:30 PM

The Board met on this date in Regular Session. Chairman Austin Hosford, Commissioners JT Surles, Jessica Gramling, Ben White, and Gene Hall were present. Clerk Trey Hightower, County Manager Shannon Metty, Budget Officer Gus Rojas, and Assistant County Attorney Kirsten Mood were also present.

The board approved several agenda items including a major FDOT project, a private road grant extension, a tourism contract extension, and the A Building preservation effort tied to local heritage. A significant point of contention arose around the County Manager versus County Coordinator form of government, leading to a failed motion to revert to the latter due to procedural issues. Public input was heard throughout the meeting, and concerns were raised over misinformation, staff communications, and community service transparency. The board also approved land swaps for future kennel expansion, surplus property discussion, and transportation service adjustments, while commissioners shared updates and concerns from their respective districts before adjourning.

1. Approval of the Agenda

- a. Clerk Hightower proposes two late additions to the voucher list—EMS special payments.
- b. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**

2. Public Announcements, Presentations & Awards

- a. Allyn Childress- Conservation Director, Florida Wildlife Corridor
 - Presentation informing the board about the duties of the FWC and partnership with Jefferson County.
 - Proclamation signed by the board thanking the FWC for the mural project. Read by Chairman Hosford and presented to Allyn Childress.

3. Citizens Request & Input on Non-Agenda Items

4. Consent Agenda

- a. **Commissioner White motions to approve the Consent Agenda, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**

5. General Business

a. Budget Amendment

- Gus Rojas requests to amend the 2024-25 budget to reflect several line-item changes. We will consolidate all the debt service funds into one revenue and one debt service fund--debts and revenues will be paid out of the same fund. Recognizing restitution funds. Request and approval of the property appraiser's budget request.
- Commissioner Gramling asks about the status of line items we spoke about in a previous meeting regarding restitution funds.

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- Clerk Hightower states that there was never a formal vote on that so it would have to be brought back to board.
- Gus Rojas recommends making the purchase directly out of the general fund.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve Gus' recommendation, funding the Chief's request to purchase his equipment, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**
- Counsel states that this motion was not previously on the agenda.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the initial budget amendment, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**

b. **Proposed Allocation of Court-Ordered Restitution**

- Clerk Hightower explains the informational item concerning the \$718,376.49 in restitution funds and provides a brief history. No board action required.

c. **FDOT Project Award**

- Gus Rojas awards the Old Lloyd project. CW Roberts Contracting was the lowest cost bidder at just over \$474,000. There will be improvements to signage and striping. If approved, work will start on Wednesday June 25th.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**

d. **Private Road Grant Change Order**

- Gus Rojas brings back the formal request to extend 90 days to complete various work consisting of six change orders. The first is the removal of east and west Osprey Lane and Murmuring Creek Road, the second is the removal of Sweet Field Road lime rock and construction. They are also requesting to add Deer Run Road, Shady Briges Road, Aucilla Plantation, and repairs to certain parts of Vista Road. He requests authority for the County Manager to sign a letter to make the formal request and Chairman the authority to execute the amendment.
- **Commissioner Gramling motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously approved by the board.**

e. **Careersource ILA Addendum**

- Shannon Metty explains the amendment to the Careersource ILA.
- **Commissioner White motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**

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Chairman Hosford verifies with County Manager Metty at the next meeting a recommendation of the Capital City CareerSource representative.

f. **TDC Marketing Services Contract Extension**

- Lillie Schvier – Tourism Development Station Coordinator
 1. Requesting support for extending the current contract with DeBerry Marketing on behalf of the TDC Council. Scope of work is nearly complete, requesting a six-month extension. Due to delays beyond the contractor's control, we are asking for an extension to provide those outstanding deliverables.
 2. **Commissioner Hall motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**

g. **A Building Discussion**

- JJ Scott provides a budget and states that this is a worthwhile project. Discusses the covenants related to grant projects and an obligation to continue to maintain that building and the site. He mentions its historical significance and the people who find value in that building.
- Chairman Hosford confirms that it is five million to maintain the building versus eleven million to do a brand-new building.
- Shannon Metty reiterates the importance of the historical value of the building and its place in Jefferson County. We should preserve our sense of place and allow newcomers to buy into the history. The governor is giving us a statue of Thomas Jefferson to display in our county.
- JJ Scott states that the goal is to preserve our cultural heritage and show that we are a county that is mindfully preserving its growth.
- Commissioner Surles expresses his excitement and willingness to move along.
- JJ Scott replies that it will require minimal taxpayer dollars.
- Commissioner Surles asks about the status of current preservation.
- JJ Scott visited the site a couple weeks ago to assess its state. The water intrusion issues are on the surface. Discusses other various maintenance line-items, such as the elevator pit.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve JJ Scott's plan, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously approved by the board.**

h. **Manager Performance Evaluation**

- Kirsten Mood brings forth a policy for the Commissioners to place evaluations on agendas. NGN used the samples provided by

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Commissioner Gramling, brought today in the form of a policy, for the Commissioners to have, beginning after October 1st every year and whenever all the written evaluations are received. They will be placed on the agenda to be discussed at public meetings. There is a resolution before the board approving the policy. NGN selected the third form of evaluation provided by Commissioner Gramling.

- Commissioner Surles and Chairman Hosford requests clarification from counsel regarding the board action.
- **Commissioner Gramling motions to approve the Manager Performance Evaluation, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously approved.**
- Citizens to be Heard: Mike Willis, Kay Curtis, Michael Schwart, Clayton Tolbert.
- Commissioner Surles comments that he and Commissioner Hall can remember the years of having a County Coordinator, and it was a confusing transition to a County Manager. Mrs. Metty has done tremendous things for this county. He is in support of putting forth a motion to revert to a County Coordinator. It will not change her pay.
- Counsel reminds Commissioner Surles there is a motion on the floor to approve the Manager Performance Evaluation Resolution.
- Commissioner Gramling addresses a discrepancy with a misleading advertisement in the newspaper, which was also spoken about at the last meeting. She takes responsibility for seeing it in the paper. She brought it to the attention of Shannon Metty and the County Attorneys. She emphasizes that the only person the board can evaluate is the County Manager.
- Counsel Kirsten Mood speaks to the legality of operations. County staff made a mistake and published a notice before it was appropriate to do so. She concludes that it is due to a lack of experience more than ill intent. NGN works with county manager forms of government in small counties in the panhandle. An Evaluation Committee consisting of various professional managers in other counties helped hire Mrs. Metty; she recommends this structure. It allows for clear policy contract between the board and the County Manager, including a clear description of how she will serve the board at will, the terms of her severance, and an HR policy that governs the rest of the county employees. It does not prohibit the Commissioners from speaking to other county employees, but it does

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require direction to funnel down through the County Manager's Office from the board.

- Chairman Hosford interprets her language as stating that instead of decisions belonging to the board, they are deferred to the County Manager.
- Counsel rebuttals that if the County Manager does not respond to the direction she has been given, she may be removed from office. It is her job to be responsive to the direction she is given. She receives her direction from the votes at a public meeting.
- Chairman Hosford states that not everything should come down to a public meeting.
- The County Attorney's official recommendation is to keep the position of County Manager. There is a consensus for counsel to conduct research on the procedural approach and bring this item back at a future meeting.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to revert to a County Coordinator from a County Manager, seconded by Commissioner Gramling. Commissioner Hall votes in opposition. Item does not pass since it was not on the agenda beforehand and was not unanimous.**

i. Big Bend Transit

- Gus Rojas presents. On July 1, 2022, the board entered into an agreement with FDOT to contract with Big Bend Transit to fund the Jefferson Express transit service route. This agreement is expiring; we compiled some analytics and were provided with a proposal to cut the costs of this service. Our current 12-month average has been just under \$13,000. The new proposal would cut that cost down to \$21.61 per passenger. This proposal does cut the service line down to five days a week from six days a week.
- Chairman Hosford asks for clarification regarding financial figures.
- Commissioner Surles asks why a daily trip to Tallahassee is necessary.
- Citizen to be Heard: Shawn Mitchell, Starling Gamble, Kwenton Eastberg, John Nelson, Cay Curtis
- Commissioner Gramling asks when he would be applying for a grant.
- Board consensus for Gus Rojas to find a line item and fund it and reenter the contract and bring it back at a future meeting.

j. Surplus Property

- Shannon Metty speaks regarding the Mosquito Control property. It will be a sliver on the north side where the road department is located. It will

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be about 40 feet wide. The property we would potentially swap it with is behind solid waste and animal control. It adds another half-acre to the animal control area. She wants to confirm that this is the will of the board. The space could be used for more kennels.

- Chairman Hosford confirms the status of the process and the amount of land.
- Shannon Metty states we are giving them approximately the same amount of land.
- Chairman expresses his dissatisfaction with this process. The board did vote to pull it off the surplus.
- Commissioner Surles believes it is a good deal for the county.
- Counsel clarifies the options before the board.
- Citizen to be Heard: Kay Curtis, Clayton Tolbert, Michael Schwart.
- Counsel explains that the direction was for Shannon Metty to provide the board with a plan on how to move forward without disposing of the property and investigating the land swap situation, providing you with some options. There is a resolution prepared, but we are waiting to provide that with the additional land swap which requires notice in the paper.
- Commissioner Gramling requires clarification regarding the Counsel's statements. She mentions amending the motion, with subsequent board discussion about the motion on the floor.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the land swap, seconded by Commissioner Gramling. Chairman Hosford votes in opposition. Motion passes 4-1.**

k. SCOP Award

- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner White.**
- **Commissioner Surles amends his motions to approve all three awards, seconded by Commissioner White and unanimously passed by the board.**

6. Clerk of Court

7. County Engineer

- a. Provides update on DOT projects.

8. County Attorney

9. County Manager

- a. Provides an update on kennels: bids for fencing coming in tomorrow. Tractors were delivered today. She states that although things were done out of order, the intent

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was always to come back to the board. She tries to have integrity in her job, even though not everyone believes that.

- b. We only have one meeting in July.

10. County Commissioners

- a. Commissioner Hall

- He served on the Monticello Ecological Committee. We were debating applying for a grant for a splash pad. He has been receiving requests for it. He references neighboring counties that have splash pads.

- b. Commissioner Gramling

- References an uncomfortable situation in which many people received emails containing incorrect information. She has not and did not give any direction whatsoever pertaining to Miss Cassie and whatever post was made yesterday, June 18th. Some statements were made, but she was not aware of a Facebook post. She has been an advocate for the animals in our community. Several citizens were hurt by it. She wants to caution employees to refrain from making incorrect statements.
 - Citizen to be Heard: Clayton Tolbert, Kay Curtis.
 - Chairman Hosford thanks the volunteers that do so much for the county behind the scenes.

- c. Commissioner White

- d. Commissioner Surles

- Asks for the VA appointments to be posted on social media and in the newspaper.

- e. Chairman Hosford

- Addresses the comments made at the last meeting directed toward the TDC counsel. As Chairman of the TDC, he recognizes the volunteers' work and thanks them.

11. Adjourn

- a. **Commissioner White motions to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Surles and unanimously passed by the board.**