

JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Regular Session

Thursday, August 7th, 2025

9:00 AM

The Board met on this date in Regular Session. Chairman Austin Hosford, Commissioners JT Surles, Jessica Gramling, and Gene Hall were present. County Manager Shannon Metty, Clerk of Court Trey Hightower, County Attorney Evan Rosenthal, and Assistant County Attorney Kirsten Mood were also present.

At the August 7th meeting, the Jefferson County Board of Commissioners addressed public concerns, notably from Anita Howard regarding a proposed propane farm near her home and flooding issues. Citizens also voiced concerns about land use decisions, ethics, and communication surrounding the Thomas Jefferson statue. The board approved several items, including courthouse repair funding facilitated by state representatives, a CareerSource appointment, comprehensive plan updates in compliance with new legislation (SB 180), and multiple grant opportunities. Discussions also included Big Bend Transit's contract extension, a resolution supporting Winn-Dixie, insurance rate adjustments, and human resources duties being moved to the Clerk's Office. Updates were provided on infrastructure projects, internet issues, and pending litigation. The meeting concluded with a commitment to improving recreational facilities and addressing private road grants, with all motions passing unanimously.

1. 9AM Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance (00:00:10)

2. Approval of the Agenda (00:01:20)

- a. **Commissioner Hall motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- b. **Commissioner Surles motions to allow Commissioner White to participate via Zoom, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**

3. Public Announcements (00:01:34)

4. Citizens' Request & Input on Non-Agenda Items (00:01:43)

- a. Anita Howard
 - There is a proposed propane farm to be 200 feet from her home. The board should not place petroleum facilities without notifying the residents. She wants something done about the flooding because hurricane season is upon us.
- b. John Broadway
 - He speaks about the alleged mismanagement at the HR Director's office. He encourages the board to evaluate its actions moving forward.
- c. Michelle Strawbridge-Gutch
 - Speaks to the placement of the Thomas Jefferson statue. She urges more transparency from the board.
- d. Cindy Forehand

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- Why is the County Manager involved in the meeting today with the attorneys? She speaks to the alleged unbecoming conduct of the newly hired code enforcement officer.

5. Consent Agenda (00:32:47)

- a. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve without the minutes, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**

6. General Business (00:33:22)

- a. **Courthouse Repairs (00:33:22)**

- Clerk Trey Hightower provides an update regarding the Courthouse Repairs. He introduces John Costello, the lobbyist who secured our funding. John Costello thanks the board for trusting him to represent the county in Tallahassee. He was able to secure \$375,000.
- Shannon Metty introduces the resolution that memorializes the efforts of Representative Tant, Senator Simon, and Governor Desantis. She also requests a match, which will cover the roof and the ceiling in the courtroom. We also have \$350,000 from investments that we could utilize, for a total of \$855,000.
- **Commissioner Hall motions to approve the resolution and grant agreement and permit the County Manager to utilize the funds discussed for the courthouse repairs, seconded by Commissioner Surles and unanimously approved by the board.**

- b. **CareerSource Appointment (00:47:09)**

- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**

- c. **Comp. Plan Transmittal Hearing Continued (00:48:18)**

- Counsel speaks to SB 180, which includes restrictions on burdensome language in Comprehensive Plans. His recommendation is to leave the language as it currently is regarding clustering.
- Chairman Hosford states that it is not the intention of the board to make the comp plan restrictive. The mural project that was unveiled has led to a strong relationship with two companies: FL Corridor and Tall Timbers. He would like us to have a nice Comp Plan when that portal opens so we can drop it on the desk. He commends David Wheeler for his work and asks that he works with FL Corridor and Tall Timbers to collaborate on the land development code.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to begin Chairman Hosford's proposed process, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously passed by the board.**

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- Counsel suggests starting the process now and conducting workshops so that everyone is comfortable with the changes. SB 180 also contains a provision about future storms.
 - Shannon Metty posts the Capital Improvements Plan and highlights the major improvements.
 - **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the Comp Plan Transmittal, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved.**
 - Citizen to be Heard: Arun Kundra, David Brown
- d. **Big Bend Transit (01:14:26)**
- Shannon Metty introduces a six-month extension.
 - **Commissioner Surles, motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved.**
- e. **Winn-Dixie Resolution (01:14:58)**
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved.**
- f. **Executive Session August 21 (01:15:22)**
- Pursuant to 286.011, Evan Rosenthal is advising the board that he desires advice in the following pending litigation matters: Case 25-CA-55. All five Commissioners, a certified court reporter, Shannon Metty and Counsel will be in attendance. It will be held on August 21st at 4:30, at which point we will then roll into the regularly scheduled meeting.
 - **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- g. **Direction for Restitution, R. Long (01:17:36)**
- Chairman Hosford asks if it makes sense that we do not discuss this item due to the active investigation.
 - Counsel speaks to his question and proposes the option of civil recovery against Mrs. Long.
 - Chairman Hosford asks that the board wait until we recover more information. All other members agree.
- h. **EMS Grant for LifePak (01:18:46)**
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously approved by the board.**
- i. **Grant Opportunity Discussion (01:19:18)**
- We have three opportunities that the board may move forward with. The first is a rural infrastructure fund grant, with a September 5th deadline. The other option is Rebuild Florida, which is for the guardrails

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- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve both grants, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- Citizen to be Heard: Arun Kundra

j. Updated Pre-approved Vendor List (01:27:53)

- Clerk Hightower introduces the item.
- **Commissioner Gramling motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hall.**
- Shannon Metty mentions a vendor, Conrad Yelvington, from our rock mine that is not on the list. She asks that it be added.
- **Commissioner Gramling amends her motion to include Shannon Metty's proposed changes, seconded by Commissioner Hall and passes 3-0. Commissioner Surles is not present for the voting.**

k. Insurance Rates (01:29:10)

- Shannon Metty introduces the item. We would take on all the costs. The broker worked a 5.4% increase. Specialist visits, behavioral health and substance, outpatient hospital, ER and urgent care, and rehabilitation copays will increase.
- We originally wanted you to budget for 9.7%. It will not impact too many people: it will only increase \$15. The increase to move forward with the plan is \$112,000.
- **Commissioner Surles motions to approve option one, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**

7. Clerk of Court (01:34:22)

- a. We are currently working with all employees to rectify incorrect deductions. With open enrollment next week, we will print out a summary of the benefits for each employee that they have selected, and they will sign off to verify the accuracy.
- b. He believes that consolidating HR and Payroll under the same office could reduce errors. He is seeking directions from the board to see if the Clerk's Office would absorb these duties.
- c. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the HR duties to be delegated to the Clerk's Office, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously approved by the board.**

8. County Engineer (01:39:34)

- a. Provides updates on Boston Highway Phase I & II, guardrails, and work authorization to move forward with Asheville Highway. Chris Morris provides updates on paved roads and Old Lloyd Road.

9. County Attorney (01:41:26)

10. County Manager (01:41:29)

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- a. Provides an update on kennels. The pickleball court was not on the agenda due to chaotic deadlines and lack of staff. The Deputy Manager is set to be advertised on the county website and in the paper. She thanks Trey Hightower, Angela Gray, and the other constitutional officers for their support.

11. County Commissioners (01:45:22)

- a. Commissioner Surles requests an update on the funds and extension for the private roads grant.
- b. Chairman Hosford speaks to the lighting at the rec park. He thanks Mrs. Metty and Lily Schwier for the event last Friday.

12. Adjourn (01:48:00)

- a. **Commissioner Surles motions to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved.**

ATTEST

Cecil Trey Hightower
Clerk of the Circuit Court

ATTEST

Austin Hosford
Chairman