

JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Regular Session

Thursday, February 19, 2026

6:00 PM

The Board met on this date in Regular Session. Chairman Ben White, Commissioners Austin Hosford, Jessica Gramling, and Gene Hall were present. County Manager Shannon Metty, Deputy Manager Ron Russo, Clerk of Court Trey Hightower, and County Attorney Evan Rosenthal were also present.

The Board of County Commissioners meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. with invocation and pledge, followed by unanimous approval of an amended agenda that added items on the County Manager's next steps, an ARPA update, and a janitorial contract. Public input included presentations from the Madison Senior Citizen Center on a new utility assistance program, citizen concerns regarding a proposed Land Development Code amendment, and comments on agenda posting timelines. The board unanimously approved the Consent Agenda and addressed several General Business items, most notably extensive discussion on Animal Control operations, culminating in a unanimous vote to separate Animal Control from Solid Waste as both a standalone department and facility. Additional actions included final adoption of the Comprehensive Plan, approval of SCOP/SCRAP roadway signage, approval of an Old Jail Tours lease, authorization to proceed with hiring a Special Magistrate, initiation of the hiring process for a new County Manager, and receipt of updates on ARPA funding, county engineering matters, and courthouse renovations. Commissioner discussions also covered budget procedures, burn ban communications, the upcoming 250th celebration, employee appreciation, and a potential joint meeting with the City, after which the meeting was unanimously adjourned.

1. 6PM Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance (00:00:03)

2. Approval of the Agenda (00:01:18)

- a. Commissioner Hosford adds item under General Business (Item G) regarding the County Manager's next steps.
- b. Commissioner Gramling adds General Business (Item H) ARPA Update.
- c. Commissioner Hall adds General Business (Item I) Janitorial Contract.
- d. Commissioner Hosford motions to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**

3. Public Announcements, Presentations & Awards (00:02:30)

4. Citizens Request & Input on Non-Agenda Items (00:03:22)

- a. Lisa Burnham
 - i. Executive Director of Senior Citizen Center in Madison, FL. Lists the services she provides as Director; introduces a new program assisting seniors with electricity bill funding. Provides flyers to promote the service.
- b. Catherine Sorensen
 - i. Addresses the Board regarding the proposed amendment to the Land Development Code, stating she is speaking in a personal capacity and

JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Regular Session
Thursday, February 19, 2026
6:00 PM

expressing concern for protecting Jefferson County and preserving its rural identity; requests the Board not approve the amendment as written.

- c. Kimberly Odom – Vice Chair Planning Commission
 - i. She is a licensed professional surveyor with expert knowledge in Florida Statutes and boundary laws. She expresses concern that enforcing mandatory residential subdivisions makes Jefferson County susceptible to development similar to The Villages in Sumter County.
- d. Commissioner Hosford clarifies with counsel that the portion of the Comp Plan the public commenters are referencing is not included in the proposed amendment before the board tonight.
- e. John Honesely
 - i. Concerning the timeliness of agendas being posted on the Board of County Commissioner’s website.

5. Consent Agenda (00:17:41)

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

6. General Business (00:18:00)

a. Animal Control Updates (00:18:01)

- i. Commissioner Gramling introduces the topic, emphasizing it as an initial conversation rather than the last.
- ii. Shannon Metty provides operational updates, including live-feed cameras, a hydrometer, real time reporting systems, Connecteam software, sign-in log sheets, stringent schedules, and building upgrades. She introduces a work group including volunteers from the Humane Society and community members.
- iii. Commissioner Gramling thanks the volunteers and asks about next steps. Only one board member can attend the work group meetings at a time. It will be held on Tuesday, February 24 at 5:00 p.m.
- iv. Commissioner Hall asks about the Animal Control Advisory Committee, and whether that is separate from the work group being established at the present meeting.
- v. Commissioner Hosford emphasizes that Animal Control has obvious issues, which will continue to grow if they are not solved. While he appreciates the board’s efforts tonight, he hopes the issues are addressed sincerely. He does not believe the discussions tonight will scratch the surface. He recommends that Animal Control and Solid Waste be separated, with a dedicated department head for Animal Control. He also recommends they not only be separated as a department, but also as a physical facility. He proposes using

JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Regular Session
Thursday, February 19, 2026
6:00 PM

the Mosquito Control building for the new Animal Control site. He supports locating a plot of five acres for the land swap as a potential option.

- vi. **Commissioner Hosford motions to separate Animal Control as a department and as a facility, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously approved by the board.**
 - vii. Citizens to be Heard: Georgia Ackerman, Cay Curtis, Wendy McCarrick, Rachel Herman, Bonnie King, Cassandra Griesheimer, Connie Small, Bobby Pigott
 - viii. Commissioner Gramling asks about the feasibility of moving the new kennels to a new facility.
 - ix. Deputy County Manager Ron Russo details his visit to Madison County. \$80,000 current Animal Control budget.
 - x. Counsel Evan Rosenthal explains the implementation of Commissioner Hosford's motion.
- b. Comprehensive Plan Final Adoption Hearing (00:58:55)**
- i. Counsel Evan Rosenthal introduces the item and provides a brief history of the process leading up to the present hearing.
 - ii. **Commissioner Hosford motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
 - iii. Commissioner Gramling clarifies that this does not include Chapter 177.
- c. SCOP/SCRAP Priority List (01:01:38)**
- i. Shannon Metty introduces the item and explains the tentative plan, encouraging board input.
 - ii. Commissioner Gramling states that large signs have been ordered due to an ongoing issue of semi-trucks going down Ashville which has compromised the road. She asks the board to designate Fulford road because they are preparing to commence on Boston soon.
 - iii. Discussion regarding the allocation of SCOP project(s).
 - iv. **Commissioner Gramling motions to approve the signage at Fulford road, seconded by Commissioner Hosford and unanimously approved by the board.**
 - v. Citizen to be Heard: Beth Young, Clayton Tolbert
- d. Old Jail Tours Lease (01:15:08)**
- i. **Commissioner Hosford motions to approve the Lease, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- e. Special Magistrate (01:16:06)**
- i. Counsel Evan Rosenthal approached attorneys to gauge their interest in providing services, naming Steve Carter with Henry Buchanan as his recommendation, with a proposed contract included in the packet.

JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
Regular Session
Thursday, February 19, 2026
6:00 PM

- ii. **Commissioner Hosford motions to approve seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
 - f. **Updated Pre-Approved Vendor List (01:17:12)**
 - i. Clerk Trey Hightower introduces the item. (Board vote taken during Item 7, Clerk of Court)
 - ii. **Commissioner Gramling motions to approve the Updated Pre-Approved Vendor List, seconded by Commissioner Hosford and unanimously approved by the board.**
 - g. **County Manager Next Steps (01:17:40)**
 - i. Commissioner Hosford urges to begin the hiring process now.
 - ii. **Commissioner Hosford motions to begin the hiring process for a new County Manager, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously approved by the board.**
 - iii. Commissioner Gramling inquires about the costs involved. Evan Rosenthal that the cost the last time was roughly \$5,000.
 - iv. Counsel Evan Rosenthal inquires about advertising for the position.
 - h. **ARPA Update (01:21:34)**
 - i. Shannon Metty provides the update, stating that ARPA funds are being processed through FEMA.
 - i. **Janitorial Contract (01:22:52)**
 - i. Commissioner Hall proposes that the Janitorial Contract needs to be properly advertised and put through the bidding process.
- 7. Clerk of Court (01:25:07)**
 - a. Needs a motion for Item F. He also notifies the board that the audit was submitted.
- 8. County Engineer (01:25:52)**
 - a. Met CW Roberts on Waukeena Highway—currently waiting on proposal.
 - b. Commissioner Hosford emphasizes the importance of a board member being present at the meeting with FDOT on March 2, 2026.
- 9. County Attorney (01:27:45)**
- 10. County Manager (01:27:49)**
 - a. Shannon Metty introduces the retirement of the building official, Jim Kaufman. JT Ward will be new building official and will be working under a provisional license under the Madison County Building Official. There was a meeting on February 13th with the NFEDP regarding the opportunity zones that David Wheeler attended. Courthouse renovations are out to bid. An RFP to rebid for engineers will be going out soon.
- 11. County Commissioners (01:31:41)**
 - a. Commissioner Gramling inquires about the procedure for budget allocations to various organizations. She also brings up a potential communication policy for the

JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Regular Session

Thursday, February 19, 2026

6:00 PM

Burn Ban. Asks about the status of the 250th celebration. Shannon Metty responds that the TDC will hear about the fireworks on the first week in March. Commissioner Gramling also suggests an Employee Appreciation Day for Jefferson County employees.

- b. Commissioner Hosford proposes reaching out to the City of Monticello for a joint public meeting. Board consensus.

12. Adjourn (01:40:00)

- a. **Commissioner Hosford motions to adjourn, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously approved by the board.**



ATTEST
Cecil Trey Hightower
Clerk of the Circuit Court



ATTEST
Ben White
Chairman