

# JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

## Regular Session

Thursday, March 19, 2026

6:00 PM

The Board met on this date in Regular Session. Chairman Ben White, Commissioners Jessica Gramling, JT Surles, 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 meeting opened with standard formalities and approval of the agenda, followed by presentations and updates from Connexon, county staff, and Clerk Trey Hightower, who addressed unspent budget funds and operational needs. Public comments included concerns about meeting times, community service needs, and calls for greater transparency on development projects. The Board approved the consent agenda and multiple general business items, including a budget amendment, funding for the America's 250 Celebration, a Level II background check policy, a grant award for the Sheriff's Office, SHIP awards, and Waukeelah repairs. Significant discussion surrounded proposed updates to the Land Development Code, with the Board opting to seek a Florida Attorney General opinion before proceeding. Additional updates were provided on animal control staffing, county projects, and administrative matters, including clarification on false property fraud alerts caused by an ongoing digitization effort. The meeting concluded with commissioner comments, including a request to consider holding all meetings at night, and adjournment.

- 1. 6PM Call to Order, Invocation, Pledge of Allegiance (00:00:09)**
- 2. Approval of the Agenda (00:01:14)**
  - a. Shannon Metty adds a repair to Waukeelah Highway \$31,680 as Item I.
  - b. Commissioner Surles states that Hunter will provide his update during Public Announcements so he may leave early.
  - c. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- 3. Public Announcements, Presentation, and Awards (00:02:20)**
  - a. Connexon provides a brief presentation and establishes a point of contact.
  - b. Ron Russo summarizes the Black History Month Proclamation, recognizing significant contributions of African Americans in shaping our history and culture.
  - c. County Engineer provides a quote from CW Roberts, suggesting that the option before us tonight is the best fix. He received the last third of the survey for Ashville Highway, with plans to DOT by mid-April. DOT will not fund a certain phase on Old Lloyd Highway for construction due to it being resurfaced in 2014/2016. They are working on securing funding through a BSCOP project for Old Lloyd/Lloyd Creek Road. They are preparing to begin Waukeelah and Boston Highway phases I and II.
  - d. Clerk Trey Hightower provides an update regarding the unspent budget funds of \$258,916. In the budget amendment, he requests \$100,000 back due to courthouse

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repairs, exterior camera issues, website ADA compliance, internal control audits, and security issues.

#### 4. Citizens Request and Input on Non-Agenda Items (00:17:58)

- a. Lisa Burnham, Executive Director of Madison Senior Center, speaks about clients in need of services. She encourages the board to share the flyer she has provided to recruit services.
- b. Lynn McGrady makes an official complaint on behalf of citizens that the Thursday morning meetings are unfavorable.
- c. Carly Peary requests that the Lamont Truck Stop project, now renamed, warrants a public hearing. The DOT did not have proper representation at the town hall meeting with the applicant; she has now sent a formal records request.
- d. Commissioner Hall addresses Lynn McGrady's comment, citing a previous motion he made that died due to lack of a second.

#### 5. Consent Agenda (00:28:32)

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

#### 6. General Business (00:28:49)

##### a. Budget Amendment (00:28:50)

- i. Shannon Metty explains that this item includes \$30,000 for the Property Appraiser's office for the continuing lawsuit and the Clerk's Office request, which totals \$130,00. The whole total for the budget amendment is \$205,000 due to \$75,000 in restricted funds that the Clerk has already collected. He mentions a project with Kofile, which digitizes official records dating back to the 1900s.
- ii. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**

##### b. Budget Workshop (00:31:04)

- i. Shannon Metty outlines the tentative workshop schedule with combined departments, with the adoption of the budget taking place in September.

##### c. America's 250 Celebration (00:32:22)

- i. Shannon Metty states the City of Monticello has donated \$10,000 for fireworks. The TDC mentioned a match with local vendors, however, no formal vote has been made. After meeting with the 250 group, they concluded they need more money for advertising. The proposed recommendation is \$30,000. The attorney's opinion on utilizing TDC is also presented before the board.
- ii. Evan Rosenthal explains the use of TDC funds, in which the county must show legislative findings in connection with tourism.
- iii. Commissioner Hall asks for clarification on funds.

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- iv. Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hall.**
  - v. Citizens to be Heard: Rose Marie
  - vi. Board discussion about the status on the stage and firework vendor, as well as the allure of small-town firework shows.
  - vii. Counsel explains that the stage can be placed into the Resolution.
  - viii. Commissioner Surles amends his motion to include the stage and utilize the full \$30,000, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously approved by the board.**
- d. Jefferson County Land Development Code Updates (00:45:33)**
- i. Evan Rosenthal explains the adoption of the proposed ordinance, introducing the item and citing several issues with the land development code. He references SB 180, which limits the changes the county can make. The ordinance addresses internal inconsistencies with the code, lack of clarity in several areas, and inconsistencies with state law, as the code has not been updated since 2015. The proposed changes to platting requirements have received a lot of attention.
  - ii. David Wheeler comments on the implementation feasibility, referencing changes to public notification and the issuance of online notices. There will also be notifications sent out to property owners when a variance is applied for. He speaks to the platting requirements in other fiscally constrained counties.
  - iii. Counsel clarifies the limitations imposed by SB 180. The Planning Commission's recommendation is to approve the ordinance and seek attorney general opinion due to interpretative subjectivity.
  - iv. Commissioner Surles requests that David Wheeler make the information more accessible. Board consensus is to wait until the Attorney General opinion is provided to make a more informed decision.
  - v. Citizens to be Heard: Kim Odom, Vivian Hall, Leslie Wilkinson, Katherine Sorenson, Greta Case
  - vi. Commissioner Hall motions to pursue the Florida Attorney General's opinion, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- e. Level II Employee Background Check (01:22:07)**
- i. Shannon Metty explains the request to implement Level II background checks for the county.
  - ii. Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- f. FDLE Grant Award Agreement (01:22:54)**



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- a. Commissioner Hall requests that at the next nighttime meeting, an item be placed on the agenda to have all meetings at night.
- b. Commissioner Gramling sent the email to RESTORE regarding the funding requests.
- c. Chairman White highlights an eventful meeting with Congress and his upcoming meeting them and the Department of Education.

**12. Adjourn (01:47:39)**

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

  
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ATTEST

Benjamin White, Chairman

  
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ATTEST

Cecil "Trey" Hightower, Clerk of Court