

JEFFERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Regular Session

Thursday, April 2, 2026

9:00 AM

The Board met on this date in Regular Session. Chairman Ben White, Commissioners Jessica Gramling, JT Surlles, Austin Hosford, 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 was called to order at 9:00 AM, and the agenda was approved with the addition of a Four Wheelers presentation. During public announcements, a proclamation was presented for Florida Public Health Week, updates were shared on a newly awarded Big Bend Transit grant providing free transportation services, and a regional transportation safety plan was introduced. Public comment included concerns about narcotics issues in the county. The board approved the consent agenda before moving into general business, where significant discussion centered on the County Manager transition. The board ultimately appointed Ron Russo as Interim County Manager while continuing the formal hiring process. Additional items approved included the TDC Budget Resolution, pursuit of an affordable housing policy, the BSCOP Resolution, contracts for SHIP consulting and janitorial services, road department equipment purchases, an MOU for advanced aging services, and the purchase of two ATVs with procurement waived. A proposal to increase nonprofit grant funding was discussed but did not receive a second. Updates from the Clerk included new requirements for electronic payments and advertising tax deed and foreclosure sales, while the County Manager reported on upcoming office closures, active bids and RFPs, and plans for a new ADA-compliant website. The meeting concluded with commissioner discussion and adjournment.

1. **9AM Call to Order (00:13:25)**
2. **Approval of the Agenda (00:13:30)**
 - a. Commissioner Surlles requests to add an Item J: Four Wheelers Presentation.
 - b. **Commissioner Surlles motions to approve the agenda, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
3. **Public Announcements, Presentations, and Awards (00:14:36)**
 - a. Proclamation for Kimberly Albritton with the Department of Health for Florida Public Health Week presented by Ron Russo.
 - b. Big Bend Transit Update. Jefferson County was awarded a transportation grant, free of charge to the county with no limitations on who can ride and where they can go.
 - c. Christian Levings, Apalachee Regional Planning. Regional Transportation Safety Action Plan intended to identify projects to reduce the risk of serious obstructions on roadways.
4. **Citizens Request and Input on Non-Agenda Items (00:24:05)**
 - a. Clayton Tolbert speaks to the alleged narcotic issue in Jefferson County. He mentions a statement made about his character in the newspaper, clarifying his stance on law enforcement.

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5. Consent Agenda (00:28:15)

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

6. General Business (00:28:28)

a. Transition Plan (00:28:28)

- i. Shannon Metty expands on her transition plan, requesting formal approval as May approaches that she takes a further step back and allow Ron Russo to accept more responsibility.
- ii. Commissioner Surles wishes not to prolong this issue, suggesting we appoint Ron Russo as acting County Manager.
- iii. **Commissioner Surles motions to appoint Ron Russo as interim County Manager, seconded by Commissioner Gramling.**
- iv. **Commissioner Surles amends his motion to appoint Ron Russo as interim County Manager while maintaining the interview process, appointing the Chairman to negotiate the contract, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- v. Evan Rosenthal provides an update on the application status of potential candidates. He requests board directions with the motion on the floor should he need to suspend the current hiring process.
- vi. Commissioner Hosford urges the board to consider continuing with the formal hiring process rather than suspending it.
- vii. Citizen to be Heard: Hines Boyd, Clayton Tolbert, Vivian Hall, Fred Beshears
- viii. Evan Rosenthal states that Shannon Metty voluntarily resigned and the board signed it, waving all her claims against the county.

b. TDC Budget Resolution (00:59:25)

- i. Evan Rosenthal details the items and requirements necessary to demonstrate statutory compliance as it relates to the attraction of tourists with the use of the TDC funds.
- ii. Commissioner Hosford asks about the role of the Chamber of Commerce in keeping the trailer.
- iii. Counsel Evan Rosenthal clarifies that the stage will be county owned. The use of it has to be related to tourism. The terms of another entity utilizing it would require an agreement.
- iv. Commissioner Surles reiterates the importance of scoreboards, suggesting possible funding sources.
- v. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**

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- c. Affordable Housing Discussion (01:04:45)**
 - i. Shannon Metty requests board direction if they would like to pursue the creation of a policy and standard procedure for affordable housing designation in the county.
 - ii. **Commissioner Hall motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Surles and unanimously approved by the board.**
- d. BSCOP Resolution (01:07:23)**
 - i. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- e. SHIP Consultant Services Award (01:07:55)**
 - i. DSR Consulting and Management was the only applicant.
 - ii. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Hall and unanimously approved by the board.**
- f. Janitorial Services Contract Award (01:08:26)**
 - i. Mitchell Brothers LLC
 - ii. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- g. Small Non-Profit Grant Funding Discussion (01:10:31)**
 - i. \$15,000 for our nonprofit grant will be split between however many applicants qualify; most of them are asking for \$2,000.
 - ii. Commissioner Hall asks to double or increase the amount offered for the nonprofit grant.
 - iii. Commissioner Hall motions to increase small the nonprofit grant amount by \$10,000. No second is made nor vote taken. He withdraws his motion.
- h. Road Department Equipment Purchases (01:18:51)**
 - i. Shannon Metty explains that this item includes an excavator and a machete attachment for a mower, utilizing the leftover restitution funds meant for road bonds.
 - ii. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- i. MOU Advanced Aging (01:19:48)**
 - i. Shannon Metty has partnered with Advanced Aging and the US Extension Office to allow the Advanced Aging group to utilize the extension Annex 2 building. They have ordered the door replacement and will begin full construction once it arrives.
 - ii. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- j. Four Wheelers Presentation (01:20:40)**

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- i. The purchase price for two ATVs is \$13,278. She requests the board approve the invoice.
 - ii. Clerk Trey Hightower asks that the board approve his signature for the payment.
 - iii. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve the invoice, waving the procurement process and authorizing the Clerk to sign, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**
- 7. Clerk of Court (01:24:08)**
 - a. We are going to start advertising Tax Deed and Foreclosure Sales at the courthouse via the app and social media. Senate Bill 1612 and HB 967 require local governments to accept electronic means of payment.
- 8. County Engineer (01:26:04)**
 - a. Chairman Ben White presents on behalf of the County Engineer, stating that his department found a void roughly 10-12 feet deep underneath Waukeelah Highway. They are going to try to remain within budget while factoring in repairs.
- 9. County Attorney (01:26:30)**
 - a. Provides follow-up statement to the County Manager search process.
- 10. County Manager (01:27:12)**
 - a. Reminds the board of office closures for Good Friday. The Shrimp property is now out for bid. There is another piece of property in the city that is located off First Street out for bid. We have also posted an RFP for the County Engineer and County Attorneys as requested. We are putting an RFQ out for a new website to ensure ADA compliance as well as an RFQ for windows for the Health Department. At the next meeting, NFEDP will give a presentation on opportunity zones. The Sheriff will be passing down two vehicles to provide assistance to the County.
- 11. County Commissioners (01:34:45)**
 - a. Commissioner Hall asks who is managing the office for Angela Gray.
 - b. Commissioner Hosford asks about the website and the IFIS budget.
- 12. Adjourn (01:36:25)**
 - i. **Commissioner Surles motions to approve, seconded by Commissioner Gramling and unanimously approved by the board.**



ATTEST

Benjamin White, Chairman

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ATTEST

Cecil "Trey" Hightower, Clerk of Court