

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA
BUDGET MEETING
JULY 29, 2025

NOTE: If any person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at this meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record is made.

PRESIDING: Donna Jackson, Vice-Chair

RECORDING: Kellie Hendricks Rhoades, Clerk & Comptroller

ATTENDING:

- | | |
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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Willie Croft | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kellie Hendricks Rhoades, Clerk of Courts & Comptroller |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Channing Dobbs | <input type="checkbox"/> Russell A. Wade III, County Attorney |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Donna Jackson | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jimmy Williams, County Coordinator |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Mac Johns | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamela Woodington, Finance Director |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Melissa McNeal | <input type="checkbox"/> Dianne Hannon, Board Secretary |

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Jackson called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

Vice-Chair Jackson noted that she would like to ask the Board that when adopting the agenda, that a discussion of health insurance be added after Public Comments.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Commissioner McNeal offered the prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner McNeal moved to adopt the agenda, with the addition of Health Insurance added after Public Comments. Commissioner Croft seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Seeing no requests to speak, Vice-Chair Jackson closed the floor to public comments.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Vice-Chair Jackson updated the Board regarding Insurance Committee discussions and recommendations. She stated that the increase on the base rate of the plan in which the large majority of employees are on has a single member increase of \$222.79 per month. The committee heard an option from BCBS, and ultimately decided it was best not to switch companies but liked the plan. They noted that the increase is 24.9%, and the cap is 25%, and therefore a better coverage plan would be only a slightly higher rate. However, this would result in a higher pay-out of benefits, which could result in a larger rate increase next year. She then reviewed several different plan options, including making the Gap Plan from Colonial optional, reducing the HRA/HSA benefit, shifting costs between the employee and county portion of the expense, and a higher-benefit buy-up plan. Vice-Chair Jackson noted that committee members agreed that employees will have to bear some of the increase but emphasized her the entire increase should not be passed on to employees either.

REVENUES AND FUND BALANCES

Vice-Chair Jackson turned the floor over to Clerk Rhoades, who shared revenue updates in the General Fund for the current year, and projections for the next year. She concluded that revenues are increasing by approximately

\$200,000, noting that she is very conservative when projecting revenue numbers that are not provided from an outside source. Clerk Rhoades continued to provide a projection of the Ending Fund Balance for the General Fund. She noted that currently, the General Fund is projected to use \$750,000 in fund balance during the current fiscal year. She expressed that while this decrease in fund balance is not a good sign, it is significantly less than what the budgeted decrease in fund balance is for Fiscal Year 2025.

EXTENSION BUDGET

Clerk Rhoades suggested that the Board review the Extension Office and Library budgets first, as these would be relatively shorter than the other budgets on the agenda. Mr. Jim DeValerio, UF/IFAS Union County Extension Director, stood before the Board and asked the commissioners if they had any questions.

Mr. DeValerio had requested a 4% COLA, which prompted discussion among board members regarding a COLA versus a “raise”. Vice-Chair Jackson noted her opinion that raises without a defined meritorious reason or increase in duties is unfair and could result in tension throughout county employees. Commissioner McNeal agreed and offered similar thoughts. Vice-Chair Jackson also pointed out that Constitutional Officers’ employees are just as much county employees as those who work directly for the Board, and giving a higher COLA would mean that those offices would need additional funding for the higher increase as well. Clerk Rhoades noted that she was relatively certain that the Board had provided a 3% increase every year since at least 2016, and ran calculations analyzing the long-term effects of a 3% per year increase over the last ten years, and compared that to inflation. She shared that the results would put pay rates slightly above inflation over that time. The Board agreed by general consensus to use a 3% COLA for all budgets, and noted that if that figure is to change, that it would also be adjusted across the entire county.

Clerk Rhoades then asked the Board what number should be used for insurance cost, adding that the amount that was used in budget requests was worst case scenario, assuming a 25% increase with no change to employee cost. There was discussion among the commissioners, and ultimately they agreed that \$1,100 for the county cost should be used. Clerk Rhoades asked that the rounding be shifted from what was presented to make the employee cost a whole dollar amount, shifting the pennies to the employer contribution. The Board agreed to this, noting that it will be a minimal amount, and to use \$1,100 per employee per month for current budget deliberations.

LIBRARY BUDGET

Mrs. Priti McNutt, Library Director, stood before the Board and presented the budgets for the Union County Public Library. She noted that she is asking for a \$1 per hour raise for all employees, but that they have absorbed additional duties by not replacing the part-time position.

Commissioner Johns noted that time was running short, and asked that the EMS Director and Road Superintendent be excused. Clerk Rhoades interjected, noting that she had a piece of information to share regarding the Road Department. She presented the Board with graphs showing trends for Revenues & Expenditures over the last ten years. She summed them up by saying that the trend shows revenues in the department have remained flat for the most part, but expenditures have steadily increased. She further pointed out that while projected expenditures for the current fiscal year are projected to slightly decrease, and operating expenditures have only slightly increased, there has been a rapid increase of personnel expenditures over the last several years. She then said that if commissioners had any input as to how this could be improved or had any questions, that they contact her. Commissioner McNeal said that this chart was very helpful and asked that it be done for all departments. Clerk Rhoades agreed that she could do this in the future.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Williams brought to the Board's attention that the air conditioner unit for the Providence Community Center needs to be replaced and asked the Board to waive the Purchasing Policy as he has been unable to get three quotes. Vice-Chair Jackson stated that she does not think it is a good idea to waive the Purchasing Policy, but answered that the two quotes that have been obtained and the notation of the inability to get three quotes would comply with the policy. **Commissioner Johns moved to replace the A/C unit with the two quotes that have been obtained, and Commissioner McNeal seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

Clerk Rhoades then brought to the Board's attention that the Sheriff's Office reverted \$130,134 for the previous fiscal year and they requested that it be assigned to the Jail Construction Fund. Commissioner McNeal asked for more information, and Vice-Chair Jackson answered that over the past several years, the Sheriff's Office has made this request in anticipation of the construction of the new jail, knowing that this will result in additional funding needs for furniture and other items, and that the Board has honored this request for the past few years. **Commissioner Johns moved to amend the budget to transfer the amount of the reversion from the Sheriff's Office for the previous fiscal year to the Jail Construction Fund, and Commissioner Croft seconded the motion. It passed unanimously.**

DISCUSSION OF DATE FOR NEXT BUDGET MEETING

The Board agreed to hold the next meeting on August 5 at 4:00 P.M. Clerk Rhoades noted that she would not be able to have any charts prepared for that meeting, as she has two deadlines leading up to that day.

Given the inability to advertise for another meeting with such short notice, Vice-Chair Jackson recessed the meeting to be reconvened on August 5 at 4:00 P.M.

RECONVENED AUGUST 5, 2025

PRESIDING: Channing Dobbs, Chair

RECORDING: Kellie Hendricks Rhoades, Clerk & Comptroller

ATTENDING:

- ☒ Commissioner Willie Croft
- ☒ Commissioner Channing Dobbs
- ☒ Commissioner Donna Jackson
- ☒ Commissioner Mac Johns
- ☒ Commissioner Melissa McNeal

- ☒ Kellie Hendricks Rhoades, Clerk of Courts & Comptroller
- ☐ Russell A. Wade III, County Attorney
- ☒ Jimmy Williams, County Coordinator
- ☒ Pamela Woodington, Finance Director
- ☐ Dianne Hannon, Board Secretary

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Chair Dobbs reconvened the meeting to order at 8/7/2025.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Commissioner Johns offered the prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner Jackson noted that this meeting is reconvened from July 29 when the agenda was already adopted, but that an addendum agenda has been added. **Commissioner Jackson moved to adopt the addendum agenda. Commissioner Johns seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.**

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Seeing no requests to speak, Chair Dobbs closed the floor to public comments.

RESOLUTION 25-07, SUPPLEMENTAL AGREEMENT FOR CR238N

Mr. Williams noted that the funding for the shortage of 238N has been made available, and this Resolution and Supplemental Agreement is the acceptance of those funds. **Commissioner Jackson moved to adopt Resolution 25-07 with the Supplemental Agreement with FDOT to accept the additional funding for the CR-238N Project. Commissioner Croft seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.**

HEALTH INSURANCE

Chair Dobbs turned the floor over to Michaela Clemons who presented two options for health insurance plans. Mrs. Clemons presented multiple options, including two different plan options, along with funding of HRA and HSA plans and the Hospital Confinement Benefit from Colonial. Commissioner Jackson noted that employees are accustomed to these additional benefits, and they are being utilized. She further gave cost information assuming an employee cost of \$40 per paycheck. Clerk Rhoades provided total cost increase to the county in the amounts of \$170,645 and \$150,988 for the options presented. After much discussion, the Board agreed to use the cost of \$1,159.62 per employee per month for the departmental budget discussions on the agenda, and make a final decision at the end of the meeting.

ROAD DEPARTMENT BUDGET

Chair Dobbs called Chris Griffis, Road Superintendent, to present his budget request. Mr. Griffis noted that he has additional raises for his staff to get them to a \$1 per hour raise, and that performance evaluations have been completed to justify them. Discussion ensued about losing staff due to competitive wages at the prisons. Clerk Rhoades informed the Board that since his budget was originally presented on July 1, \$40,000 for the sale of the Kubota tractor has been added to next year's budget, and \$220,000 was added in this year's expected revenues from FEMA reimbursement for Hurricane Debby. She praised Mr. Griffis and the department staff for their thorough documentation of the work performed in repairing county roads after the storm, stating that without this, the county would not have received these funds. Commissioner Jackson noted that Mr. Griffis put \$2 an hour raise for himself, and that she agrees with this as he did not get the full raise that the Board felt was appropriate when he assumed the position and it was promised to be re-evaluated during the budget process. Other commissioners jokingly objected, but promptly agreed to her thoughts.

Further discussion ensued regarding the purchase of a skid steer of \$51,000 to be split with the Solid Waste Department. Mr. Williams noted that this is the total cost over a three-year lease. Clerk Rhoades asked what the outright purchase price would be, noting that interest is likely imputed over three-year lease and it may or may not be in the county's best interest to buy it rather than leasing it, depending on the cost. Commissioner Jackson expressed that she was more inclined to purchase it outright if the budget allows this year to prevent obligating future years' funds in case those budgets are more limited. There was additional discussion regarding the split with Solid Waste, and Clerk Rhoades noted that ultimately, the entire amount would come from the General Fund, but if both fund would use the equipment, it was appropriate to split the cost.

EMS BUDGET

Chair Dobbs called Brent Allen, EMS Director, to present his budget request. Mr. Allen brought to the Board attention that a \$100,000 grant that was budgeted for was not received, but he has found that the county was enrolled in a PEMT Program which will require a payment of \$69,000, but that amount plus \$92,000 will be

returned to the county. Mr. Williams noted that there was a \$12 stipend on his request, and Mr. Allen answered that it is being paid to compensate an employee for their work in ensuring compliance with this program. Mr. Williams asked how it was being paid, and Mr. Allen answered that a single employee was performing the duties and receiving it.

After the Board heard the EMS Budget, discussion ensued regarding Special Assessments, and that only a small increase has been implemented since 1989. There was a general consensus that this revenue needs to be increased, but the public should be well-informed as to the necessity to fund the services. Commissioner Jackson stated that a public information campaign should be launched. Commissioner McNeal stated that she has been shocked at the cost of the solid waste department, and most citizens are simply unaware of the cost to run that department, with some telling her that they think that since they take their garbage to the collection site or the landfill, there is no cost to the county. Clerk Rhoades also suggested a public awareness campaign to encourage composting or other disposal of waste that is vegetative or otherwise does not need to go to the landfill. Commissioner McNeal agreed, stating that after she became aware of the cost of tipping fees and the fact that they are paid by weight, she now does simple things like making sure her children empty drinks in the sink before throwing them in the trash.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Chair Dobbs brought up the item of Health Insurance for the Board to make a decision. After some discussion regarding the plan choices and employee cost **Commissioner Croft moved to select the newer, higher coverage plan design, with a total cost of \$1,239.62 for the HRA single-coverage plan, with the Board contributing \$1,159.62 per month, and if allowable, that the Colonial Hospital Confinement Plan be made optional to lower the cost of the employee's portion. Commissioner Jackson seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.** It was noted that this plan structure will cost an employee \$40 per payroll for the HRA single-coverage plan.

FURTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Williams relayed to the Board that after the last meeting, Commissioner Jackson asked him to gather more information about some state revenues, and he would like to report that back to the Board. He stated that the Amendment 1 Offset was established in 2004 to offset the increase in homestead exemptions, and that the ½ Cent Fiscally Constrained Revenue has decreased, is based on a very complicated formula is set to be addressed by FAC this year. He also answered that the new conservation easement will result in a Payment in Lieu of Taxes, and the Property Appraiser will perform the calculation. He noted that he is currently fighting for it to grow in current years.

BUDGET MEETING SCHEDULES

Chair Dobbs asked for discussion regarding the next budget meetings. Everyone agreed to meet on August 12 at 4 pm, with Emergency Management and 911 Call Center to be first, and then Solid Waste, Animal Control, Mosquito Control and Parks & Recreation. An additional meeting was set for August 18 at 4 pm. Clerk Rhoades noted that all department budgets are ready to be discussed.

Adopted by vote of the Board of County Commissioners on August 18, 2025.