

June 17, 2025
Regular Session
Bonifay, Florida

The Holmes County Board of Commissioners met for a Regular Session on the above date with the following members present: Commissioners Clint Erickson, Wilmer Stafford, Mitch Johnson, Brandon Newsom and Earl Stafford, Chairman of the Board.

Nate Nolin, County Attorney, and David Corbin, Project Director, were present.

Angie Purvee, Finance Director, was present and kept the minutes.

Chairman Stafford called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. David Corbin, Project Director, led the prayer and pledge.

The first agenda item was Agenda Additions and Deletions. The following changes were made to the posted agenda:

- Agenda Item D) City of Bonifay - added
- County Attorney Item C) Lake Cassidy - added
- Commissioner Item A) Employee Handbook Policy - correction
- County Attorney Item A) EMS Building RFP - deleted

Commissioner Newsom offered a motion to adopt the amended agenda with Commissioner Wilmer Stafford offering the second. The motion passed unanimously.

Commissioner Newsom offered a motion to adopt the minutes from the June 3, 2025 Regular Session. Commissioner Johnson offered a second and the motion passed unanimously.

Becky Marsh, Holmes County Library Director, discussed the recent repairs to the Holmes County Library's air conditioning units. She advised that only one of the three air conditioning units work properly and the temperatures in the Library are exceeding 80°. The Board acknowledged that new air conditioning units for the Library have been placed on the 2025-2026 budget.

Becky Marsh, Holmes County Library Director, discussed the children's programs made available at the Library in previous years with grant funding. She advised that the grant funding was not available this year which has limited the Library to presenting four children's programs.

Becky Marsh, Holmes County Library Director, advised that the denial of pay increase requests for her staff has resulted in them receiving minimum wage. Ms. Marsh requested that the Board seriously consider the pay increase request during the 2025-2026 budget process.

Anthony Register, North Holmes Creek Road resident, expressed his appreciation of the road work recently performed in District 3.

Heather Shelby, Dogwood Lakes Golf Course, advised that the bid for the siphon system in the Dogwood Lakes small lake has not been advertised. John Feeney, Alday-Howell Engineering, stated that the advertisement will go in next week's newspaper.

John Feeney, Contracted Planner, presented a subdivision application from Harry Bell for Parcel Number 0434.00-000-000-002.000. The proposed subdivision will consist of 11 new parcels out of 23.26 acres with the remaining 29.30 acres to remain as an intact parcel. Mr. Feeney advised that the request satisfied all requirements, and the Planning Commission approved the application. Commissioner Erickson offered a motion approving the subdivision application. Commissioner Newsom offered a second and the motion passed unanimously.

(Application)

John Feeney, Contracted Planner, presented a subdivision application from Cheryl Cheasty for Parcel Number 1218.00-000-000-012.000. The proposed subdivision will consist of an 11.91-acre parcel and an 18.43-acre parcel. Mr. Feeney advised that the request satisfied all requirements, and the Planning Commission approved the application. Commissioner Erickson offered a motion approving the subdivision application. Commissioner Newsom offered a second and the motion passed unanimously.

(Application)

John Feeney, Contracted Planner, stated that Dewberry Engineering has handled the survey work for planning applications free of charge. Applications have become so frequent that Dewberry will start charging an hourly rate that should be covered by the application fees. Mr. Feeney requested permission to include Dewberry's surveying rate in the monthly planning invoices. Commissioner Newsom offered a motion approving the request with Commissioner Wilmer Stafford offering a second. The motion passed unanimously.

Angie Purvee, Finance Director, presented Budget Amendment #2 for the 2024-2025 fiscal year for approval. She advised that the amendment brought on grant revenue, transferred money for items approved by the Board and moved money within departments for overspent line items. The budget amendment also transfers money from Board Contingencies for the \$7,000 monthly increase in the County's Medicaid Sharing payment and the unexpected increase in Baker Act expenses. Commissioner Erickson offered a motion approving Budget Amendment #2. Commissioner Wilmer Stafford offered a second and the motion passed unanimously.

(Budget Amendment #2)

Mayor Larry Cook, City of Bonifay, presented a proposal from the City to purchase the old Sheriff's Office building on Oklahoma Street. The City proposes that while the Government Efficiency

Center (GEC) impact fees for the Ag Center and EMS building could not be waived that an even exchange of funds could be negotiated for the property. Commissioner Erickson offered a motion for County Attorney Nate Nolin to work with the City's attorney to negotiate a contract for the exchange. Commissioner Newsom offered a second and the motion passed unanimously.

(Proposal)

Sierra Smith, City of Bonifay, discussed the City's plan to put a parking lot in place of the old jail portion of the Sheriff's office. She also discussed the collaboration between the City, the Sheriff's office and the County on multiple projects. Ms. Smith stated that an open house for the renovated City Hall will be scheduled for September. She expressed appreciation for Building Official Keith Bennett's work to ensure the City Hall is ADA compliant and accessible to the entire community.

David Corbin, Project Director, stated that the County received a \$390,000 advance from the State for the May tornado damage. As this advance is only half of the money allocated by the State, Mr. Corbin recommended paying half of the debris removal invoice and half of the debris monitoring invoice while reimbursing the Sheriff and the County in full. Barry Lee, Emergency Management Director, advised that the debris removal company, D & J Enterprises, and the debris monitoring company, Wheeler EMC, are agreeable to the recommendation and will accept the balance of their invoices when the remaining funds are received from the State. Commissioner Erickson offered a motion approving the recommendation with Commissioner Wilmer Stafford offering his second. The motion passed unanimously.

(Invoices)

John Tate Holmes County Sheriff requested approval of the letter for the disbursement of the 2024 Edward Bryan Memorial Jag program funds. Commissioner Erickson offered a motion for the Chairman to sign the letter with Commissioner William Stafford offering a second. The motion passed unanimously.

(Letter)

David Corbin, Project Director, presented an email from Finance Director Angie Purvee regarding 2025-2026 budget concerns. He recommended placing a hiring freeze on non-essential County employees until October 1st. Shawnda Langford, Holmes County Library, requested procuring grants for the Holmes County Library's new air conditioning units and roof to help with the 2025-2026 budget. The Board directed Liberty Partners to research such grants. Ms. Langford discussed making minimum wage as the Holmes County Library Assistant Director. Discussion also included consolidating the Road Department positions to save money. Commissioner Newsom offered a motion to place a hiring freeze on all non-essential personnel until October 1st with the exception of the two vacancies that are currently posted. Commissioner Johnson offered a second. Commissioners Wilmer Stafford, Johnson, Newsom and Chairman Stafford voted yes with Commissioner Erickson voting no. The motion passed.

(Email)

Tim Parson, Liberty Partners, advised that House Bill 7031 did pass which included sales tax holidays and permanent sales tax exemptions. He also advised of the following legislative actions:

- A study on property tax relief was approved
- \$1 million for the Holmes County Jail expansion was approved
- The Rural Renaissance legislation did not pass
- The Board should begin work on the 2026 appropriations request in October

Nate Nolin, County Attorney, presented a proposed Lake Cassidy amendment to Ordinance 19-01 which included defining citations, the penalties and enforcement provisions. Commissioner Wilmer Stafford discussed instituting the following program for Lake Cassidy:

- Monthly lottery drawing for fifteen \$20 passes each weekend
- Passes to allow five vehicles with boat trailers and ten without
- Passes will be transferable
- Trash cans should be removed
- Full access Monday through Thursday during the day with a \$20 annual pass
- Gate will be locked at sunset
- Violators will be banned from drawings for two years.

David Corbin, Project Director, advised that the Fountain of Youth Ranch owners were not agreeable to creating the dirt wall proposed by the County. Commissioner Newsom rescinded his motion for \$100 annual pass for Florida residents plus \$40 per fob. Commissioner Newsom offered a motion for Holmes County residents to pay \$5 for an annual pass and all other citizens to pay \$100 for annual passes. Commissioner Newsom later rescinded that motion. Discussion continued on this issue and included the following:

- Night fishing at Lake Cassidy
- Cost of property and taxpayers' concerns
- County's history with the Fountain of Youth Ranch, the private property owners at Lake Cassidy
- Facebook video of a private landowner at Lake Cassidy being threatened
- Entrance road to lake has been widened against property owners wishes
- Appraisal of property not done before the County purchased the property
- Private property owners threatened with eminent domain
- Private property owners are willing to buy back the County's Lake Cassidy property
- Workshop to hear from the public on the matter
- Funds needed to run the park properly
- Power not available to the property
- Liability to the County
- County being held to the event ordinance requirements

The following citizens discussed this matter:

- David Brannon, private citizen
- Garrett Valcourt, private citizen

The Board agreed by consensus to schedule a public workshop at a Ponce de Leon school soon and tabled the amendment to the ordinance until further notice.

(Proposed Amendment)


Commissioner Erickson requested scheduling the workshop to discuss the employee handbook and policies. Attorney Nate Nolan advised that the policy is in compliance with State and federal laws. The Board agreed by consensus to schedule the employee handbook workshop for July 1st at 5:00 p.m.

Clayton Joiner, a Road Department employee, advised that he was representing some of the County employees concerning the denial of lunch breaks. He also stated that positions were not being listed in house as required by policy. The Board advised Mr. Joiner that County employees were welcome to the July 1st workshop to discuss their concerns.

Commissioner Newsom presented a written complaint against Building Inspector Keith Bennett concerning an electrical permit request. Discussion included Mr. Bennett's efforts to inspect the property. Project Director David Corbin advised he had investigated the incident and the permit has since been issued. Nina Nallick, Building Department Certified Tech, cited Florida building codes and statutes granting the building official the authority to enter the premises before issuing a permit to verify safety. Becky Marsh, Holmes County Library Director, discussed the written notice on permit applications that give the building official the right of entry. Commissioner Wilmer Stafford discussed Mr. Bennett's efforts to protect the County with his proposal to limit miscellaneous pole permits and stated that the complaint should have been handled through Mr. Corbin.

Angela Dockery, Dockery Land Holdings, stated that she has closed on the Pilot Travel Center property. She discussed future plans and helping the Holmes County Library with her charitable trust. She also advised that the money spent to purchase Lake Cassie property could have been used elsewhere to benefit the County.

There being no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 11:08 a.m.



Clerk



Chairman