



MINUTES
WASHINGTON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
Thursday, August 20, 2026, 9:00 AM, Commission Board Room
1331 South Blvd., Chipley, FL 32428

DISTRICT 1	DISTRICT 2	DISTRICT 3	DISTRICT 4	DISTRICT 5
Ashlynn Marquez	David	Joey Brock	Wesley	David Corbin
Vice-Chairwoman	Pettis Jr.		Griffin	
	Chairman			

1. PROCLAMATION

- 1.1 Call to Order - Chairman Pettis
- 1.2 Invocation - Chairman Pettis
- 1.3 Pledge

2. ADOPT THE AGENDA

Removed

7.3 - Washington County Community Wildfire Protection Plan

7.5 - Davidson Road Paving Improvements - This item was removed due to pending clarifications from the Department of Transportation.

Added

7.6 - Chipley Library Expansion Technology Purchase

7.7 - Defense of Lawsuit for Sexual Offenders - Attorney

Commissioner Marquez requested that item 6.9 be moved from the consent agenda to the regular agenda for discussion.

Motion to approve the agenda as amended.

Moved by: Wesley Griffin; seconded by: Joey Brock

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

3. PUBLIC HEARING

3.1 TDT Increase Ordinance-Heather Lopez, TDC Director

The ordinance must be approved before the referendum vote in November. It addresses the proposed 2% increase to the tourist development tax. As required by statute, the ordinance has been reviewed by the Florida Department of Revenue. If the referendum passes, the ordinance will be executed and submitted to the Department.

The public hearing was closed.

Motion to approve the TDT Increase ordinance.

Moved by: David Corbin; seconded by: Joey Brock

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

3.2 .77 Ministries, Inc., Small Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment-Dawn McDonald, Senior Planner

The 8.39 acres are located at 4135 Pine Log Road, which is approximately 8.39 acres. The request is to change the FLUM from residential-low to general commercial. Public notice requirements were met, and a neighborhood information meeting was held, which had no attendance. At the planning commission meeting on August 3, staff recommended approval, and the planning commission recommended approval 7 - 0.

The public hearing was closed.

Motion to approve staff's and the planning commission's recommendation.

Moved by: Wesley Griffin; seconded by: Joey Brock

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

3.3 Data Center Moratorium-County Attorney Milton

County Attorney Milton read the ordinance by title.

Updates have been made based upon discussions with the economic development director along with some of the Board members.

- The definition section of data center had a reference to 5KW utility usage was removed in an attempt to make it more specific to data centers.
- In section 2, subsection c. 5., a facility where computer service or related equipment is incidental and subordinate to the principal use of the property occupies no more than five percent of the gross floor area and has a combined nameplate electrical demand not exceeding 250 KW. This was excluded from the

definition of data center. Anything above that would be included in the definition of data center.

Efforts are being made to avoid turning away beneficial development and to limit any unintended consequences of the moratorium. The intent is to keep its focus primarily on data center and computer-related uses.

Ken Attard, a citizen, spoke in support of the data center moratorium; however, he suggested strengthening it.

Larry Zezula, a citizen, spoke about partnering with FPL to explore the possibility of constructing a power facility that would serve the general public, not just the data center.

Donna Jo Kent, a citizen, commented that items should be addressed and corrected at the Planning Board meeting before being presented to the Board. The Planning Board needs more control regarding when citizens are allowed to speak. She further noted that if the public does not want data centers, that preference should be upheld. She asked the Board to consider the overall needs of the county and questioned why unincorporated areas are included.

Commissioner Marquez spoke on the Board not having control over the actions made by the City of Chippley, Wausau, or Caryville, or any of the other entities.

Janet Foran, a citizen, requested that technology/AI be increased to help find loopholes.

Nan Thompson, a citizen, questioned what prevents a company from building multiple buildings at the same location since the kilowatts have been lowered.

County Attorney Milton responded. Section 2, Subsection C5 also incorporates any development that would occupy more than five percent of the gross floor area for computer systems or computer hardware. It is not just the electrical uses. The focus is more on the data center definition.

Chairman Pettis added that under Section 2, Subsection A, data center means any building structure, campus facility, or group of facilities used primarily for. Those two combined cover those smaller uses and the combining of those facilities at the lower consumption as well.

Benita Crittendon, a citizen, spoke about the planning meeting held earlier this month. The agenda on the website had a topic to discuss future land use changes. There was an attached document with the land development code, and much of that red writing in the code for review was about data centers. When citizens showed up to discuss what was in the attached document, they were told that data centers were not a topic at that meeting and it wasn't on the agenda. The planning committee chairman denied that there was anything on the agenda to be discussed about data centers; however, it was included in the county's document on the website. He was not pleasant to the citizens who wanted to speak about data centers. There are certain members on the Planning Board who need to be reviewed, and the planning chairman owes many citizens an apology at the next meeting regarding his behavior/denying that it was on the agenda. The planning chairman mentioned that he had just received the document. They should receive their packets in a timely manner for review in order to be familiar with it.

Jim Futch, a citizen, questioned if solar farms and battery storage facilities should be added to the document.

Dawn McDonald, Senior Planner, addressed the Board. She explained that the land development code is updated annually during this time of year, and a working document is typically provided to the Planning Commission for review. She stated that a new document has since been created because the Planning Board voted against allowing data centers. The Board of County Commissioners had directed staff and legal counsel to research moratoriums, which is why the Board did not discuss the matter at that time.

Ms. McDonald noted that a new draft document has been prepared reflecting issues that have arisen and recommendations submitted by citizens. She emphasized that it is an informal draft meant to allow staff to be proactive before tentative advertising begins in October for public hearing. This is also why Mr. Gay did not address the document. She clarified that it was not included in the Board's packets, which are normally provided approximately two weeks in advance. She added that staff were under significant stress. They were not prepared to present it, and no action was expected on the item.

Chairman Pettis added that solar farms have their own state regulations.

Commissioner Griffin asked what the situation would be if a solar farm sold to a data center.

County Attorney Milton added that state statutes will not allow solar farms to be prohibited. There is nothing that prevents them from selling to them; however, for the

use to be changed, it would have to come before planning and zoning and the BOCC. It is an allowable use in an agriculturally designated property. The county can't override a state statute.

Commissioner Marquez confirmed that, at this point that affects solar farms and cell phone towers.

Chairman Pettis added that the moratorium will be in place to allow the BOCC time to fix the land development code and issues that have been discussed. He questioned if an extension would be optional if the code isn't updated in a year. He added that there will be time for public input throughout the process.

County Attorney Milton responded that it is under the Board's control. However, the reason for the extension and its length could become a possible problem.

The public hearing was closed.

Motion to approve the moratorium ordinance.

Moved by: David Corbin; seconded by: Wesley Griffin

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

4. ADOPT PREVIOUS MINUTES

Motion to approve the minutes listed as 4.1, 4.2, and 4.3.

Moved by: Wesley Griffin; seconded by: Joey Brock

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

- 4.1 Board Workshop for July 9, 2026
- 4.2 Regular Board Meeting for July 16, 2026
- 4.3 Special Board Meeting for July 28, 2026

5. NON-AGENDA AUDIENCE/PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

-Alexander Jones congratulated Commissioner Griffin and Lee Cope. He also thanked Chairman Pettis for four years of service.

-Troy Cunningham, Country Oaks VFD, provided an update on the Kids Fire Camp. The sheriff's office and One Blood were also a part of the event.

The following are updates for Country Oaks VFD.

- Acquired a new snap dump tank that holds 2,500 gallons, which can be set up by one person.
- Awarded the State Farm Good Neighbors Grant for \$10,000.00, which will be used to purchase radios and pagers.
- Applied for a FEMA Grant, a Florida AFG Grant for bunker gear, and for new firefighters going through their training at this time.
- Another Florida AFG Cancer Grant for an extractor for cleaning bunker gear.
- Country Oaks is currently renovating their interior.

Larry Lomax, a citizen, addressed the Board about not receiving a water update. A survey within the Sunny Hills area was done on August 15, which reflected that 95% wanted US Water treated as a high priority; 89% reported more breaks, more boil notices, allergies, or a combination of the two since June. 94% reported that service was unchanged or worse. 6% reflected improvement. They are opposed to adding customers to a failing system. Twenty-five new homes are being added monthly. Brown water makes many daily uses unusable. It is a health, safety, and quality of life issue.

Janet Foran, a citizen, informed the Board that Verizon has been notably charitable within the community. Anything Verizon asked for would be granted. The Board should have negotiated for paving on Gilberts Mill Road. She requested that the Board pave 1.5 miles from Alford Highway to Jewel Road.

Ken Attard, a citizen, requested a public response or action to an email he sent them on July 23 titled, Notice of Non-Compliance with Concurrency Requirements Request for an Immediate Moratorium on Sunny Hills Single Family Homes Permits Tied to US Water. The land development code requires a concurrency certificate before a final development order or permit unless exempt. It also requires a permit state evaluation, proof from the water provider of sufficient capacity at the adopted service level, and the annual report. The county has not produced any as he requested.

Records were requested about that process, including certificates, exemptions for June Sunny Hills permits, water capacity documentation, capacity and use reports, and annual concurrency reports. The county responded that no records were found and that annual concurrency reports are not produced.

The following is requested.

- Identify the development administrator or designee responsible for Sunny Hills concurrency reviews.
- Produce the certificate, the exemption, and evidence of current water capacity supporting each new approval.
- Place an immediate temporary administrative hold on county-controlled approval that adds demand on the water system until capacity, pressure, reliability, fire flow, and water quality are independently verified.
- Place this on the next agenda for a written staff and county attorney response and a recorded vote.

Donna Kent, a citizen, expressed concern that the manner in which individuals were addressed by the Planning Commission Chairman was disrespectful.

She also requested the commissioners hold town hall meetings, suggesting that more communication may make things easier.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

- 6.1 Approval of Agreement with Washington County and Allstate Construction, Inc. for Jail Repairs Totaling \$672,770.00
- 6.2 Approval of Satisfaction of Mortgage Through SHIP Program (Hood)
- 6.3 Approval to Seek Construction Bids for CDBG and EDA Grant Work for Industrial Park
- 6.4 Approval of Updated Ag Center Rental Contract Agreement
- 6.5 Approval of Amendment #5 to the Federally Funded CDBG Disaster Recovery-Hazard Mitigation Grant M0132
- 6.6 Approval of Surplus of Wilder Park Playground Equipment
- 6.7 Approval to Donate Wilder Park Playground Equipment to Grace and Glory Christian School of Chipley, Florida with Signed Liability Waiver
- 6.8 Approval of Washington County Chipley Library Expansion Project Change Order #2 for Wood Trusses Credit Adjustment Totaling \$3,140.00
- 6.9 Approval of Value Adjustment Board (VAB) Reappointment of Gary Hartman (**This item was previously transferred to the regular agenda.**)
Motion to approve consent agenda items 6.1 - 6.8.
Moved by: Joey Brock; seconded by: Ashlynn Marquez

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

Larry Zezula requested the Board approve funding for the sheriff's department.

7. AGENDA ITEMS

- 7.1 Request Approval: Amended SHIP -Local Housing Assistance Plan (LHAP) 2026-2029-Carol Underwood, Grants and Procurement Specialist

The amendment is on Page 11 of Section E for the manufactured housing, which states that the maximum award will be \$10,000.00 for relocation assistance, \$5,000.00 for lot rental assistance, and \$15,000.00 for rehab emergency repairs. The amendments are for the 2026 - 2029 plan.

Motion to approve the amendment to the 2026-2029 plan.

Moved by: David Corbin; seconded by: Wesley Griffin

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

- 7.2 Request for approval of FY 2026-2028 Small Quantity Generator Agreement for Professional Staff Services with Emerald Coast Regional Council-Carol Underwood, Grants and Procurement Specialist

The cost is \$4,000.00 annually. The deliverables listed on page 5 must be met between June 30 - September 30.

Chairman Pettis clarified small scale-generators are places the state must watch and regulate. Some examples are oil change facilities and tire repair facilities. It is anywhere that may potentially generate hazardous waste.

Motion to approve the 2026-2028 Small Quantity Generator Agreement with Emerald Coast Regional Council.

Moved by: David Pettis Jr.; seconded by: Joey Brock

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

- 7.3 Regional Support for Bay County Courthouse Reopening-Andrew S. Fleener, County Administrator

A letter of support is requested for the reopening of the federal courthouse in Bay County, which was open many years before closing. Reopening the courthouse will allow the citizens to be served better.

Motion to approve the letter of support for the Bay County Courthouse reopening.

Moved by: David Corbin; seconded by: Joey Brock

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

7.4 Davidson Road Paving Improvements-Jonathan Sims, Dewberry Engineering - This item was previously removed.

7.5 Chipley Library Expansion BB201 Technology Purchase - Renae Rountree, Library Director
A requirement for the expansion grant is to promote workforce development and telehealth, along with additional access to broadband. Approval is requested for the following:

1. 30 Laptops to teach classes on core skills needed for the workforce.
2. 7 additional computers for specific rooms to be used as designated meeting spots, such as Zoom meetings with the VA, telehealth, or court, etc.
3. Upgrade to large, curved screens

The purchases totaling \$68,995.00 will be covered under grant BB201 (Chipley Library Expansion).

Motion to approve the purchases requested above totaling \$68,995.00 as presented, which will be covered under the Chipley Library Expansion Grant.

Moved by: Joey Brock; seconded by: Wesley Griffin

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

7.6 Defense of Lawsuit for Sexual Offenders-Matt Fuqua, County Attorney

A statewide class-action lawsuit has been filed against all counties regarding various ordinances that restrict where sexual offenders may reside and travel. The Florida Association of County Attorneys contacted Attorney Gwen Adkison of Cochran & Monroe in Tallahassee. Approval is requested to contact Ms. Adkison and join the coalition with other counties, which would be a more efficient approach. The retainer would fall under County Administrator Fleener's spending authority until the Florida Association of Counties determines its course of action. The estimated cost is between \$2,000.00 and \$3,000.00.

Attorney Fuqua recommended that attorney scoring be conducted after the new Board is seated; however, he noted that the decision rests with the Board.

Motion to approve of County Attorney Fuqua contacting Attorney Gwen Adkison regarding a retainer on the county's behalf regarding item 7.6.

Moved by: David Corbin; seconded by: Wesley Griffin

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

Jim Futch, a citizen, clarified the motion.

7.7 VAB Appointment - Commissioner Marquez

Commissioner Marquez previously requested to remove this item from the consent agenda due to multiple citizens expressing interest.

Commissioner Brock added that he has received emails regarding the position and how it is handled.

County Attorney Milton informed the Board that it is an appointed position that meets a couple of times a year regarding valuations by the property appraiser.

Motion to advertise the Valuation Board appointment.

Moved by: Ashlynn Marquez; seconded by: Joey Brock

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

8. CLERK

8.1 Clerk Bell - July 2026 Vouchers Totaling \$4,714,101.98

[July 26-vouchers.pdf](#) 

9. OTHER BUSINESS

Johnny Evans requested approval for George Swauger to purchase two SCAG lawnmowers for \$13,769.45 each, totaling \$27,538.90. The funds are in the budget.

Approval is requested to surplus the two old machines.

Motion to approve the purchase of two SCAG mowers totaling \$27,538.90 and surplus two old machines.

Moved by: Joey Brock; seconded by: Wesley Griffin

Aye: David Corbin, David Pettis Jr., Wesley Griffin, Ashlynn Marquez, and Joey Brock

Carried 5-0

10. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Marquez provided the Board with information reflecting how many people Tri-County Community Council helped during the last quarter.

The Brickyard Fund that the Tri-County Community Council holds has \$13,456.03.

11. ADJOURN

Summary of Minutes Prepared by Risha Brantley