



Polk County Board of County Commissioners (Budget)

Meeting Minutes - Final

September 08, 2025 Public Hearing on FY 25/26 Budget

In accordance with the American with Disabilities Act, persons with disabilities needing special accommodations to participate in this proceeding should contact the Communications Office not later than 48 hours prior to the proceeding. Their office is located in the County Administration Building, 330 West Church Street in Bartow. Telephone (863) 534-6090 or TTY (863) 534-7777. If hearing impaired dial 7-1-1 for Florida Relay services or call (800) 955-8771 (TTY); dial (800) 955-1339 if you are using a computer.

Any invocation that may be offered before the official start of the Commission meeting shall be the voluntary offering of a private citizen, to and for the benefit of the Commission. The views or beliefs expressed by the invocation speaker have not been previously reviewed or approved by the Commission, and the Commission is not allowed by law to endorse the religious beliefs or views of this, or any other speaker.

If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the board with respect to any matter considered at such meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

1st Hearing - Tentative FY25-26 Budget

Rollcall

Present	Commissioner Becky Troutman, Commissioner Rick Wilson, Commissioner Bill Braswell, Commissioner Martha Santiago, and Commissioner Michael Scott
----------------	---

CALL TO ORDER (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

A. FINAL ASSESSMENT RESOLUTIONS AND NON-AD VALOREM ASSESSMENT ROLLS (RANDY MINK, COUNTY ATTORNEY)

A.1. Public Hearing to consider adoption of the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 Street Lighting Assessments. (No fiscal impact)

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov discussed the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 Street Lighting Assessments. He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Becky Troutman
SECONDER:	Martha Santiago
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

A.2. Public Hearing to consider adoption of the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 Master Inwood Street Lighting Municipal Service Benefit Unit ("MSBU"). (No fiscal impact)

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov discussed the Final Rate Resolution

for the 2025-26 Master Inwood Street Lighting Municipal Service Benefit Unit ("MSBU"). He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Martha Santiago
SECONDER:	Bill Braswell
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

A.3. Public Hearing to consider adoption of the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 Skyview Utility Municipal Service Benefit Unit ("MSBU"). (No fiscal impact)

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov reviewed the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 Skyview Utility Municipal Service Benefit Unit ("MSBU"). He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Bill Braswell
SECONDER:	Becky Troutman
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

A.4. Public Hearing to consider adoption of the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 Island Club West Utility Municipal Service Benefit Unit ("MSBU"). (\$68,534.14 estimated assessment revenue)

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov reviewed the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 Island Club West Utility Municipal Service Benefit Unit ("MSBU"). He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Martha Santiago
SECONDER:	Michael Scott
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

A.5. Public Hearing to consider adoption of the final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 East Bimini Bay Utility Municipal Service Benefit Unit ("MSBU"). (\$65,369.88 estimated assessment revenue)

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov reviewed the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 East Bimini Bay Utility Municipal Service Benefit Unit ("MSBU"). He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Becky Troutman

SECONDER:	Martha Santiago
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

A.6. Public Hearing to consider adoption of the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 Fire Services Non-Ad Valorem Assessments. (\$92,529,673.00 estimated assessment revenue)

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov reviewed the Final Rate Resolution for the 2025-26 Fire Services Non-Ad Valorem Assessments. He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

Anthony Higa said in 2024 and 2025 there was a 39.5% increase for fire. He said from 2014-2024 the average was 5.86% per year. He asked if it can be lowered because property taxes are getting higher and higher. He asked the Board to help the seniors and said that they live frugally. He said the property taxes are increasing.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Becky Troutman
SECONDER:	Michael Scott
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

A.7. Public Hearing to consider adoption of the Residential Waste Program Services Final Assessment Resolution and Setting the Assessment Rate for Fiscal Year 2025-26.

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov reviewed the Residential Waste Program Services Final Assessment Resolution and Setting the Assessment Rate for Fiscal Year 2025-26. He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Michael Scott
SECONDER:	Martha Santiago
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

A.8. Public Hearing to consider adoption of the Final Rate Resolution and Assessment Roll for the 2025-26 Nuisance Abatement Assessments.

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov reviewed the Final Rate Resolution and Assessment Roll for the 2025-26 Nuisance Abatement Assessments. He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Becky Troutman

SECONDER:	Michael Scott
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

A.9. Public Hearing to consider adoption of the Final Assessment Resolution and Assessment Roll for the 2025-26 Excessive Bulk Waste Assessments

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov reviewed the Final Assessment Resolution and Assessment Roll for the 2025-26 Excessive Bulk Waste Assessments. He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Becky Troutman
SECONDER:	Bill Braswell
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

A.10. Request the Board designate Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov to certify the 2025-26 Final Assessment Rolls to the Tax Collector.

Minutes: Assistant County Attorney Noah Milov requested that the Board designate him to certify the 2025-26 Final Assessment Rolls to the Tax Collector.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Becky Troutman
SECONDER:	Bill Braswell
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

B. PURPOSE OF PUBLIC HEARING

B.1. Discuss the purpose of the Public Hearing for the FY 25/26 Budget - Randy Mink, County Attorney

Minutes: County Attorney Randy Mink discussed the purpose of the public hearings.

B.2. Budget Presentation - Bill Beasley, County Manager

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley said these past 12 months continue to reflect challenging growth dynamics. He said it is also occurring in other surrounding counties. He said coupled with continued labor shortages and tariff inflationary impacts there continues to be a strain being placed upon local governments throughout the state including Polk County. He said that Polk County continues to be a stabilizing factor in providing core services to both businesses and citizens. He thanked staff, the Constitutional offices, the State Court System, and the Polk County Medical Examiner's office. He said all of these entities have worked cooperatively over the past several months to prepare their portions of the proposed budget. He thanked the citizens who have participated in helping to shape this budget. He said by serving on advisory committees, participating in public hearings, making phone calls, sending emails, or through other social media contacts; he said those voices have been heard. He said the proposed Fiscal Year (FY) budget totals \$3,464,631,333. He stated that this budget

maintains the countywide general fund millage rate. He said this budget reflects receipt of and continued community distribution of federal and state funds associated with our Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), the Emergency Solutions Grant funds, the HOME/SHIP investment partnership funds, and American Rescue Plan funds. He said that this budget reflects the Board's commitment to public safety, public health, infrastructure, technology, tourism and community support by way of adding critical positions and maintaining current priority programs and services. He said this budget maintains a general fund operating reserve at current levels which reflects on our financial solvency. He said this budget will continue to make investments in technology upgrades and associated staffing in order to improve operational efficiency and strengthen system security protocols. He stated that this budget maintains the commitment to capital infrastructure to support public safety, public health, public water supplies, transportation capacity, intersection improvement projects, stormwater management, water quality improvement projects and environmental stewardship. He said this budget continues to address quality of life issues that relate to community health care, behavioral health, opioid abatement, recreation and leisure services, economic development, affordable housing, and Medicaid contributions. He said this budget expands the annual cost indexing of select fees for services and special assessments in order to avoid the larger periodic increases. He said this budget will allocate \$68 million of one-time funds to address capital project needs towards public safety, transportation, recreation and related support facilities. He said this budget reflects an increase in the residential and commercial waste collection and disposal fees after many years of no adjustments to address increasing operating expenses and planned capital improvements. He said this budget continues to invest in our employees by way of a 4% salary increase. He said there will be no increase in health insurance premiums for the fourth consecutive year.

Budget and Management Director Christia Johnson showed slides and discussed the \$3.464 billion proposed budget. She stated that the total proposed general fund budget is \$726 million. She said there is a 8.83% county wide property value increase with the unincorporated area having an increase of 6.69%. She said there was no change to the millage. She said the Fire Assessment increases to \$393 per single family residence, the Solid Waste assessment increases to \$346.05 for collection, and a 6% increase water/wastewater rates. She reviewed one-time funding projects. She discussed FY 2024/2025 and the FY 2025/2026 ad valorem budget revenue. She showed a chart and gave a breakdown of the total proposed budget. She reviewed the 2025/2026 proposed tentative budget by fund and said the total budget increase was 1.7%. She gave a breakdown of the general fund operating budget revenue and expenses. She said the general fund days of operating reserves is fully funded at the maximum of the policy which is 45 days. She said this shows good fiscal stewardship, planning, financial solvency, and that we are well-poised should there be an emergency. She reviewed the five-year CIP. She discussed the 191 new positions for FY 2025/2026. She discussed the historical position count at 2,426. She said the population has outpaced staff. She said the total proposed tentative budget is \$3,464,631,333.

Mr. Beasley said that Polk County continues to change. He said it is a direct reflection of the demands for services by a growing population and the increase cost of goods and services. He said these increased demands will remain a significant challenge. He discussed the growth dynamics. He thanked the Board for providing policy guidance,

for allowing staff to think creatively, and for having confidence in staff to rise to the occasion during unprecedeted growth years. He said the budget is a formal expression of our plans, goals and objectives of the upcoming year and is a reflection of the promises to our citizens.

Upon question, Ms. Johnson said that the reserves are included in the general capital fund. She said that the new position count includes the new ones that are being added.

C. DISCUSS PROPOSED TENTATIVE MILLAGE RATES FOR FY 25/26 (CHRISTIA JOHNSON, BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES DIRECTOR)

C.1. Discuss the FY 25/26 Board of County Commissioners proposed tentative operating millage rate.

Minutes: Budget and Management Director Christia Johnson reviewed the proposed tentative operating millage rate and the tentative budget. She discussed the current year millage rate and said the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 proposed tentative millage rate is 6.6348 and there is no difference from the prior year. She reviewed the rolled-back rates.

C.2. Discuss the FY 25/26 proposed tentative millage rate for the Polk County Parks Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU), Polk County Library MSTU, Polk County Stormwater MSTU, and Polk County Rancho Bonito MSTU.

Minutes: Budget and Management Director Christia Johnson reviewed the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 proposed tentative millage rate of 0.5286 mills for the Polk County Parks Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) ; the proposed tentative millage rate of 01.985 mills for the Polk County Library MSTU; the proposed tentative millage rate of 0.0941 for the Stormwater MSTU. She said there are no differences in these rates from Fiscal Year 2024/2025. She said the proposed tentative millage rate for Rancho Bonito MSTU is 9.1272 and there is no difference from the current year. She reviewed the rolled-back rates and the revenue for the millage rates.

County Attorney Randy Mink confirmed that the Stormwater millage is 0.0941 mills.

D. DISCUSS PROPOSED TENTATIVE BUDGET FOR FY 25/26 (CHRISTIA JOHNSON, BUDGET AND MANAGEMENT SERVICES DIRECTOR)

D.1. Discuss the FY 25/26 proposed tentative budget totaling \$3,464,631,333.

Minutes: Budget and Management Director Christia Johnson said the proposed tentative budget totals \$3,464,631,333.

D.2. Discuss the FY 25/26 Polk County Parks MSTU proposed tentative budget totaling \$46,013,519, Polk County Library MSTU proposed tentative budget totaling \$12,074,224, Polk County Stormwater MSTU proposed tentative budget totaling \$14,370,652, and Polk County Rancho Bonito MSTU proposed tentative budget totaling \$67,564.

Minutes: Budget and Management Director Christia Johnson discussed the Fiscal

Year 2025/2026 Polk County Parks MSTU proposed tentative budget totaling \$46,013,519, the Polk County Library MSTU proposed tentative budget totaling \$12,074,224, the Polk County Stormwater MSTU proposed tentative budget totaling \$14,370,652, and the Polk County Rancho Bonito MSTU proposed tentative budget totaling \$67,564.

E. PUBLIC HEARING ON FY 25/26 PROPOSED TENTATIVE BUDGET AND MILLAGE RATES (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

E.1. Requests from the public to speak regarding the FY 25/26 Proposed Tentative Operating Budget and Millage Rates, which include the Parks MSTU, Library MSTU, Stormwater MSTU, and Rancho Bonito MSTU.

Minutes: The Chair opened a public hearing.

Mark Platz asked what last years total budget was. He asked about the capital improvement plan.

County Manager Bill Beasley responded to Mr. Platz's questions.

Daniel Wolf asked if it is fair to say that majority of the residential property taxes will increase. He discussed his market value going down and said the millage rate went up. He asked if he is reading that correctly.

Mr. Mink confirmed that there is not a millage rate increase for unincorporated Polk County.

Mr. Wolf reviewed his rates.

Chair Wilson said the last three years we lowered the millage rate and this year there was no increase.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

F. SET THE TENTATIVE MILLAGE RATES FOR FY 25/26 (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

F.1. Recommend Board adopt the resolution establishing the FY 25/26 tentative operating millage rate of 6.6348 mills, which is a 4.3% increase over the rolled-back rate of 6.3607 mills; the tentative millage rate of 0.5286 mills for the Polk County Parks MSTU, which is a 3.8% increase over the rolled-back rate of 0.5092 mills; the tentative millage rate of 0.1985 mills for the Polk County Library MSTU, which is a 3.8% increase over the rolled-back rate of 0.1912 mills; the tentative millage rate of 0.0941 mills for the Polk County Stormwater MSTU, which is a 3.9% increase over the rolled-back rate of 0.0906; and the tentative millage rate of 9.1272 mills for the Polk County Rancho Bonito MSTU, which is a 1.9% increase over the rolled-back rate of 8.9594 mills.

Minutes: Budget and Management Director Christia Johnson recommended the Board adopt the resolution establishing the FY 25/26 tentative operating millage rate of 6.6348 mills, which is a 4.3% increase over the rolled-back rate of 6.3607 mills; the

tentative millage rate of 0.5286 mills for the Polk County Parks MSTU, which is a 3.8% increase over the rolled-back rate of 0.5092 mills; the tentative millage rate of 0.1985 mills for the Polk County Library MSTU, which is a 3.8% increase over the rolled-back rate of 0.1912 mills; the tentative millage rate of 0.0941 mills for the Polk County Stormwater MSTU, which is a 3.9% increase over the rolled-back rate of 0.0906; and the tentative millage rate of 9.1272 mills for the Polk County Rancho Bonito MSTU, which is a 1.9% increase over the rolled-back rate of 8.9594 mills.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Becky Troutman
SECONDER:	Martha Santiago
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

G. SET THE TENTATIVE BUDGET FOR FY 25/26 (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

G.1. Recommend Board adopt the resolution adopting the FY 25/26 tentative budget of \$3,464,631,333, the FY 25/26 tentative budget of \$46,013,519 for the Polk County Parks MSTU, the FY 25/26 tentative budget of \$12,074,224 for the Polk County Library MSTU, the FY 25/26 tentative budget of \$14,370,652 for the Polk County Stormwater MSTU, and the FY 25/26 tentative budget of \$67,564 for the Polk County Rancho Bonito MSTU.

Minutes: Budget and Management Director Christia Johnson recommended the Board adopt the resolution adopting the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 tentative budget of \$3,464,631,333, the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 tentative budget of \$46,013,519 for the Polk County Parks MSTU, the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 tentative budget of \$12,074,224 for the Polk County Library MSTU, the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 tentative budget of \$14,370,652 for the Polk County Stormwater MSTU, and the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 tentative budget of \$67,564 for the Polk County Rancho Bonito MSTU.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Bill Braswell
SECONDER:	Michael Scott
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

H. SET THE FY 25/26 SECOND PUBLIC HEARING DATE/TIME (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

H.1. Recommend the Board set the date, time, and place for the Public Hearing to adopt a final millage rate and budget on September 15, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Commission Boardroom.

Minutes: Budget and Management Director Christia Johnson recommended the Board set the date, time and place for the Public Hearing to adopt a final millage rate and budget on September 5, 2025, at 6:00 p.m.

County Manager Bill Beasley thanked staff here in the audience. He said their presence means a lot personally and professionally. He said it means a lot to the process and the outcome.

Chair Wilson thanked Christia and her staff and said we appreciate them.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Bill Braswell
SECONDER:	Michael Scott
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott

ADJOURNMENT (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

Minutes: Meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.