



# Polk County Board of County Commissioners

## Meeting Minutes - Draft

### March 03, 2026 Regular BoCC meeting

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.

### CALL TO ORDER - 9:00 a.m. (MARTHA SANTIAGO, CHAIR)

### INVOCATION

Murphy Hanley, Polk County Fire Rescue Chaplain

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (MARTHA SANTIAGO, CHAIR)

### A. PRESENTATIONS and RECOGNITIONS

### B. PUBLIC COMMENTS CONCERNING AGENDA ITEMS

B.1. Comments.

**Minutes:** There was no one from the public wishing to speak.

### C. COUNTY COMPTROLLER (STACY M. BUTTERFIELD, CPA)

C.1. Disbursements.

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|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>APPROVED</b>                                 |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Becky Troutman                                  |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Michael Scott                                   |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott |

C.2. Minutes of Regular Board meeting held on February 17, 2026.

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|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>APPROVED</b>                                 |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Becky Troutman                                  |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Bill Braswell                                   |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott |

**D. APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA**

D.1. Approve Consent Agenda.

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| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>APPROVED</b>                                 |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Rick Wilson                                     |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Bill Braswell                                   |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott |

**G. COUNTY MANAGER (BILL BEASLEY)**

G.1. Confirm appointment of Mr. Brian Cogswell to serve as Polk County's Solid Waste Division Director.

**Minutes:** County Manager Bill Beasley recommended the Board confirm the appointment of Brian Cogswell to serve as Polk County's Solid Waste Division Director effective today, March 3, 2026. He reviewed his qualifications.

Commissioner Braswell said we have made a good choice. He said after hearing the resume he cannot understand how he has time to go fishing.

Commissioner Troutman said you have heard Mr. Beasley say that there are three things in Polk County you don't mess with my kids, don't mess with my dogs and don't mess with my trash. She said he just got one third of our problems. She thanked him.

Mr. Cogswell thanked the Board and staff for the opportunity and he said he is honored and humbled. He thanked God and his family for their support. He said that Solid Waste Services are essential to public health, environmental protection, and the daily quality of life for our residents. He said his commitment is to serve with integrity, be a good steward of the taxpayer resources, support the employees and ensure a safe, compliant, and reliable operations. He said that leadership is about listening, building strong teams, and making decisions that serve both today and the future needs of our county. He thanked them for their time, trust and service.

Chair Santiago thanked Mr. Cogswell. She said he has one third of our problems but we are more than sure that he is going to be successful in addressing those issues and keeping Polk County clean. She thanked him, his wife and daughters for being here today.

Mr. Beasley thanked Susan Pelz who has been the chief engineer and the acting director. He said she has been with us for about ten years through the thick and thin of the good and the bad. He said she will continue to stay with us in the engineering capacity. He said that is extremely helpful and beneficial to us and he thanked her for

what she does.

Chair Santiago thanked Ms. Pelz and said she has been a solid hand in the transition time. She said we appreciate it.

Mr. Beasley recognized Katie Hayes with Keep Polk County Beautiful. He said we have just won a national award and other awards associated with some of our art programs.

Ms. Hayes congratulated Mr. Cogswell and said we are excited to have him and she cannot wait to see our programs grow together. She said we just won the 2025 National Innovation Award for local programming for the Clean It Up To Green It Up Program. She said this is a curbside cleanup program and last year we collected over 400,000 pounds of trash curbside and over 11,000 tires. She said because of that program and our partnerships we were recognized nationally. She congratulated the Board and said it goes to everyone who participates in that program. She said they were notified that Jewett Middle Academy won the top award for broadcast at the Student Network Television Convention. She congratulated the students and said together we are making a difference.

Chair Santiago thanked Ms. Hayes and said that is wonderful. She said Ms. Hayes is a one-man show and she does tremendous work with all the volunteers that come and help out. She said this is the lady behind Keep Polk County Beautiful. She congratulated her and her team.

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| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>APPROVED</b>                                 |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Rick Wilson                                     |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Bill Braswell                                   |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott |

G.2. Approve Land Purchase Agreement between Steven Morrison and Sally Morrison and Polk County in conjunction with the Environmental Lands Program, CLASAC Project EL-109-23. (\$422,917.50 total expense)

**Minutes:** County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the Land Purchase Agreement between Steven Morrison and Sally Morrison and Polk County in conjunction with the Environmental Lands Program, CLASAC Project EL-109-23. He recommended approval.

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| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>APPROVED</b>                                 |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Michael Scott                                   |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Bill Braswell                                   |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott |

G.3. Approve Consultant Services Authorization (CSA) No. 22-088-04 with HNTB Corporation (Consultant) for design services for the Longfellow Blvd at N. Crystal Lake Dr Intersection Improvement Project, CIP Amendment and budget transfer. (\$411,187.81 one-time expense - \$261,188.00 one-time transfer)

**Minutes:** County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the Consultant Services

Authorization No. 22-088-04 with HNTB Corporation for design services for the Longfellow Blvd at North Crystal Lake Drive intersection improvement project, CIP Amendment and budget transfer. He recommended approval.

Upon question, Mr. Beasley said that there will be pedestrian crosswalk signalization. He said safe pedestrian movement is part of the analysis.

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| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>APPROVED</b>                                 |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Becky Troutman                                  |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Rick Wilson                                     |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott |

**H. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 1 (BECKY TROUTMAN)**

H.1. Commissioner Troutman Comments.

**Minutes:** Commissioner Troutman had no comments.

**I. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 2 (RICK WILSON)**

I.1. Commissioner Wilson Comments.

**Minutes:** Commissioner Wilson had no comments.

**J. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 3 (BILL BRASWELL)**

J.1. Commissioner Braswell Comments.

**Minutes:** Commissioner Braswell said last month we recognized the anniversary of Polk County becoming a county. He said today in 1845 Florida became the 27th state of the union. He said at that time there was about 30,000 people living in the state which is about how many move to Polk every year. He said Happy Birthday Florida.

**K. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 5 (MICHAEL SCOTT)**

K.1. Commissioner Scott Comments.

**Minutes:** Commissioner Scott said he was not able to attend the new Ag Center meeting last week but he was able to go to the Strawberry Festival. He said he got a behind the scenes tour on how they use that facility and how they have grown over the years. He said that the Board is very in tune with the community and are open to hearing suggestions that are made. He said it was enlightening to see what was there and he will be able to look at the future Ag events and our facilities and see over time what we can do to approve and expand. He said he appreciates the community's support and they do have limitations on budget and timing but we are here to listen and to best implement their wishes.

**L. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 4 (MARTHA SANTIAGO, CHAIR)**

L.1. Appoint Joshua Borem as Member (Seat 7) of the Polk County Industrial

Development Authority, for the remainder of the three-year term, March 3, 2026, to January 21, 2027.

**Minutes:** Chair Santiago recognized Mr. Borem in the audience. She thanked him for his service and said good luck.

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| <b>RESULT:</b>   | <b>APPROVED</b>                                 |
| <b>MOVER:</b>    | Becky Troutman                                  |
| <b>SECONDER:</b> | Bill Braswell                                   |
| <b>AYE:</b>      | Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, Santiago, and Scott |

L.2. Chair Santiago Comments.

**Minutes:** Chair Santiago had no comments.

## **N. EXPEDITED HEARINGS PURSUANT TO RESOLUTION NO. 2022-089**

**Minutes:** County Attorney Randy Mink reminded the audience of the procedures for public hearings and expedited hearings. He swore in those who plan to speak.

N.1. PUBLIC HEARING (LDCT-2025-25 Communication Towers) (First Reading) to consider the adoption of an ordinance amending the Land Development Code to lower the level of review for Monopole Communication Towers in non-residential districts; to modify Communication Tower conditional use standards; and add standards and a definition for Mobile Communication Towers. (No Fiscal Impact)

**Minutes:** Erik Peterson, Land Development, reviewed the proposed text amendment regarding Communication Towers. He said that the Planning Commission and staff recommend approval. He said that this is the first reading and the adoption hearing will be on March 17th.

Upon question, Mr. Peterson said when it is a Commercial District and it is abutting a Residential District there is a one times the height of the tower fall zone setback. He said the higher the tower the further away it would be from residential.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

N.2. PUBLIC HEARING (LDCT-2025-26 Car Washes) (First Reading) to consider the adoption of an ordinance amending the Land Development Code to consolidate the number of car wash uses. (No Fiscal Impact)

**Minutes:** Erik Peterson, Land Development, reviewed the proposed text amendment regarding Car Washes. He said that the Planning Commission and staff recommend approval. He said that this is the first reading and the adoption hearing will be on March 17th.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

N.3. PUBLIC HEARING (LDCT-2025-27 Drive-Thru Facilities) (First Reading) to consider the adoption of an ordinance amending the Land Development Code to clarify standards pertaining to drive-thru facilities. No Fiscal Impact.

**Minutes:** Erik Peterson, Land Development, reviewed the proposed text amendment regarding Drive-Thru Facilities. He said that the Planning Commission and staff recommend approval. He said that this is the first reading and the adoption hearing will be on March 17th.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

## **O. PUBLIC HEARINGS**

O.1. Consider the adoption of an Ordinance of the Polk County Board of County Commissioner entitled the Polk County Right-of-Way Sign Enforcement Ordinance. (Continued to March 17, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.)

**Minutes:** County Attorney Randy Mink said this is being continued to March 17, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

## **P. REQUEST FROM THE GENERAL PUBLIC/AUDIENCE AND OPPORTUNITY TO BE HEARD**

P.1. Comments.

**Minutes:** Christie Shenefield said she is here for the Ag facility and to advocate for a vision that serves the entire agriculture community. She said that her children barrel raise animals, show cattle, and raise multiple species of livestock. She said she leads the youth leaders in production agriculture club at a local school and the Polk County Junior Cattleman's Association. She said she directs a local cattle show in Kissimmee at the Osceola Heritage Park and she invited them all to come on April 17th and 18th. She asked for a multi-use facility that accommodates all species of farm animals. She said Polk has a rich and diverse agriculture heritage. She discussed the youth programs and said they invest lots of time and public funds into the agriculture community. She asked for a focus group prior to finalizing the plans for the facility and said to include people who use this type of facility.

Eve Salimbene said she is about transparency. She said she visited Animal Control on February 6th. She said they have made some improvements. She said they added some barriers to keep the cats from running away. She said the cleaning was still going on at 10:15 a.m. and said that is a no-no and they want the building to be ready prior to opening. She said they did have beds with blankets and she said that the smell was bad. She discussed a dog that was rescued with respiratory issues and she said it was there for two weeks without medical care.

Charlene Leis discussed the link between animal abuse and domestic violence. She said research shows that in homes where domestic violence is present that the animal abuse rate it at 88%. She said animal cruelty is often the first red flag. She said when someone harms an animal they are exerting power over something defenseless and they are sending messages to children and partners that this is what they are capable of. She said when animal abuse cases are not thoroughly investigated we are failing to interrupt a documented pipeline to child abuse, partner violence and other violent crimes. She asked for stronger coordination between Animal Control and the Sheriff's

office.

Debbie Hicks said we need a new facility. She said to look at facilities in other counties and then see what we have. She said the back gate does not lock. She said don't we want a facility where the people are passionate about what they do. She said she wants an advisory committee.

Becky Bywater said her purpose is to remind them why government maintains the Animal Control facility. She said they are asking for the spay and neuter program again. She said low-income people are barely surviving. She said a spay and neuter voucher program will make a difference.

Kateland Raney said she is the Vice President of Central Florida Youth and Agriculture, is on the Farm Bureau Board, and the UFI Small Farms Advisory Committee. She said she is hopeful to utilize the facility. She said agriculture is a foundation to Polk County and this facility matters. She said the concept leads towards equestrian use and Polk County is much broader than that. She said it should be a multi-use facility. She asked for an advisory group to provide expertise and input. She welcomed the opportunity to serve on that committee.

Communications Director Amber Smith confirmed that today's comments will be taken into consideration with the other comments at the meeting.

Commissioner Wilson said they are having a meeting in the morning to review all the comment cards, suggestions, and emails.

Chair Santiago said Commissioner Scott mentioned something important which is time and funds. She said it has been a good 10-12 years that this has been in the talks. She said that it is in the planning stages and it is important that we take into consideration all the comments so we can decide how to move forward.

County Manager Bill Beasley said the next step in the process is that staff and the consultant will review each comment, look at the merits of those comments and incorporate the comments. He said they will look at the budget impacts and whether there are subsequent phases. He said they may reach out to them and talk about the extent of their comment. He said there are some good comments that have a lot of merit. He said they will go through a deliberate, conscientious, and thought provoking process to incorporate those comments.

Commissioner Troutman said going back to transparency and what the public is wanting here there seems to be still a lot of ambiguity as she sat and listened to them. She said people appreciate the fact that they are openly saying we are going to take these into consideration, we will be in touch, but that still just leaves a lot of unknowns. She said to tie that process down a little more.

Mr. Beasley said after they have reviewed all the comments there would be an agenda review or work session to bring the Board up to speed. He said that is when the Board will decide how do we reach out to the public.

Chair Santiago said that is what we discussed on Friday. She said we will generate all the information that we can and see where we stand. She said that will determine how they move forward and that will determine whether a focus group is needed. She said the Board needs to be updated because constituents call all of them.

Commissioner Scott said we do invest our time and research and are actively doing things behind the scenes in between these meetings. He said our obligation is to represent the community. He said they increased the salary for an additional veterinarian for Animal Control. He said actions are being taken and he appreciates the patience and their voices are heard.

James Abercrombie said they have changed the three minute rule and said it is ridiculous. He commended Mr. Beasley, Commissioner Troutman and Commissioner Scott for setting up the meeting for the park. He said he wants to know where the fence went and where that money went.

Jhoanna Allende said tonight is a full moon. She said animal cruelty is not isolated it is connected to domestic violence. She said protecting pets is not separate from protecting families. She said we need stronger regulations of pet sales, tethering ordinances, protection for community cats, and proactive policies.

Meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.