



Polk County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Minutes - Draft

May 19, 2026 Regular BoCC meeting

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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)

Rollcall

Present:	Commissioner Becky Troutman Commissioner Rick Wilson Commissioner Bill Braswell Commissioner Martha Santiago Commissioner Michael Scott
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INVOCATION

Murphy Hanley, Polk County Fire Rescue Chaplain

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (MARTHA SANTIAGO, CHAIR)

A. PRESENTATIONS and RECOGNITIONS

A.1. Employee Recognition

Minutes: The Board recognized Raymond Mullis and Ken Priest with Roads and Drainage for their years of dedicated service.

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS CONCERNING AGENDA ITEMS

B.1. Comments.

Minutes: There was no one from the public wishing to speak concerning Agenda Items.

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

C.2. Disbursements.

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

C.1. Approve minutes of Regular Board meeting held on May 5, 2026.

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

D. APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

D.1. Approve Consent Agenda

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

G. COUNTY MANAGER (BILL BEASLEY)

G.1. Approve Agreement for Sale and Purchase between La Cala, LLC and Polk County in conjunction with the Environmental Lands Program - CLASAC Project, EL-127-24. (\$2,996,250 not to exceed total expense)

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the Agreement for Sale and Purchase between La Cala, LLC, and Polk County in conjunction with the Environmental Lands Program - CLASAC Project, EL-127-24. He recommended approval.

Parks and Natural Resources Director Tabitha Biehl showed a map of the subject parcel and said the areas in green are existing conservation. She said one of the goals was to build the corridors. She said the blue areas have been nominated and they are pursuing acquisition with their partners. She said that Lake Rosalie has seen a decline in water quality and there is a canal system that takes water into Lake Rosalie. She said they will be working on a water treatment system that treats water before it enters Lake Rosalie. She said this brings value to the area. She thanked the Board for their support and said it takes a lot of partnerships. She thanked Wade Allen and Scott Lowery for their support.

Mr. Beasley said we are leveraging 45% of this through the federal government.

Upon question, Ms. Biehl said they will explore public use. She said it may have a short trail and the primary goal is water quality. She said they will reevaluate for recreational access.

Commissioner Braswell said all the trailers are probably on septic tanks.

Commissioner Troutman said there is a package plan.

Commissioner Wilson said some of the properties they have been able to acquire are amazing. He said it is amazing the people coming forward to put their land in conservation. He said this is a good thing for this county and for this state. He thanked Ms. Biehl for her hard work on these projects.

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

H. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 1 (BECKY TROUTMAN)

H.1. Commissioner Troutman Comments.

Minutes: Commissioner Troutman said she attended the Florida Economic Development Council meeting in Orlando. She said our Winter Haven Economic Development Council was awarded the project of the year. She said this is for the Chick-fil-A that went out at the Winter Haven logistics complex.

Bruce Lyon, Winter Haven Economic Development Council, said this was an interesting project for the county and the state. He said they met with Chick-fil-A during Covid. He said the project started to materialize, the properties were engaged and willing to sell some of their properties. He said this will be the first direct rail service that they have at the Intermodel Park. He said this was negotiated with Evansville Western Railroad, CSX, the governor's office and attorneys. He said the governor provided a million and a half dollar grant fund to extend the rail. He stated it is now available for public use. He said this is a cold storage facility that will serve the entire state and Chick-fil-A will use Winter Haven as a distribution hub. He said this enables them to continue to grow and the ad valorem tax exemption was a key role. He said there will be about 160 jobs with average wages of \$80,000.

Commissioner Troutman presented him with the award.

Chair Santiago thanked Mr. Lyon.

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 had no comments.

K. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 5 (MICHAEL SCOTT)

K.1. Commissioner Scott Comments.

Minutes: Commissioner Scott had no comments.

L. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 4 (MARTHA SANTIAGO, CHAIR)

Minutes: Chair Santiago said to have

L.1. Chair Santiago Comments.

Minutes: Chair Santiago wished everyone a safe Memorial Day.

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

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

N.1. Public Hearing (LDCPAS-2025-39 Braddock Road CPA) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Small-Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change the Future Land Use designation on 36 +/- acres from Mixed-Use (MUX) and Preservation (PRESVX) to Business Park Center (BPCX) in the Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA).

Minutes: Land Development Director Ben Ziskal reviewed the proposed land use amendment. He said that staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval.

Upon question, Mr. Ziskal said that FDOT is looking at this or has purchased the site on the southside. He said they purchased the site to the north.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie said he bought his house with one house per acre and the county wanted to change it to five per acre because of the water and sewer. He said he does not know why they would want to say anything about it. He said they are not even listening.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

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

N.2. Public Hearing (LDCPAS-2026-1 US 27 & Deer Creek INST CPA) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Small-Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change the Future Land Use designation from Leisure Recreation-X (LRX) to Institutional-X (INST-X) in the North Ridge SAP and Transit Supportive Development Area (TSDA) on ±1.01 acres. (No Fiscal Impact)

Minutes: Land Development Director Ben Ziskal reviewed the proposed land use amendment. He said that staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing

James Abercrombie said it is the same principle. He said when you buy the property you cannot depend on the zoning. He said we spend money and it can be changed on a daily basis.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

Upon question, Mr. Ziskal said this change is for one acre and it is the entire parcel.

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

N.3. Public Hearing (LDCPAS-2025-40 Poinciana Commercial NAC CPA) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Small-Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change the Future Land Use designation from Development of Regional Impact (DRI) to Neighborhood Activity Center (NAC) in the Utility Enclave Area (UEA) on ±12.6 acres. (No Fiscal Impact)

Minutes: Land Development Director Ben Ziskal presented this with case LDCT-2026-4 and he reviewed the proposed land use amendments. He said that staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval.

Chair Santiago said she is glad to see that some commercial development is taking place. She said one of the issues with Poinciana is that they do not have enough commercial. She said it is good we are bringing commercial to the Davenport area.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie said he doesn't know what to say anymore because they are not listening. He said he has been banned from their emails.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

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

N.4. Public Hearing (LDCT-2026-4 Poinciana Commercial Activity Center Plan LDC Text Amendment) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of an ordinance amending the Land Development Code to Appendix E, Section E 105, Parcel Specific Comprehensive Plan Amendments with Conditions, to establish the Poinciana Commercial Activity Center Plan. (No Fiscal Impact)

Minutes: This hearing was presented with the previous hearing.

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

N.5. Public Hearing (LDCT-2026-1 Wahneta Main Street (MSC) Overlay LDC Text Amendment) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of an ordinance amending the Land Development Code to establish the Main Street Corridor (MSC) Overlay, plus reinstate Table 3, Wahneta Neighborhood Plan Temporary Uses Modifications. (No Fiscal Impact)

Minutes: Land Development Director Ben Ziskal reviewed the proposed text amendment. He said that staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

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

O. PUBLIC HEARINGS

O.1. Public Hearing (LDCPAS-2026-11 Medulla Road RL CPA) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Small-Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change the Future Land Use designation on 5.14 +/- acres from Business Park Center (BPC) to Residential Low (RL) in the Urban Growth Area (UGA). (No Fiscal Impact)

Minutes: Chanda Bennett, Land Development, reviewed the proposed land use change. She said that the Planning Commission voted 4:3 for denial. She submitted a letter from Nancy Howard. She reviewed the surrounding land uses. She said the property was denied for Residential Low in 2020. She showed photos of the site. She said one of the concerns is the bifurcation of commercial. She said for compatibility there are to be no buildings within 50 feet of residential structure or FLU. She gave historical information on the property. She said that the City of Lakeland requested denial and if approved they requested an avigation easement between the city and the applicant; She said that staff does not feel that is something they can require. She said that staff recommends approval and she said since 2020 this area has not shifted to non-residential uses.

Upon question, Ms. Bennett showed the homes there before the Comp Plan. She said the BPC was designated in 1991. She said in 2019 that they wanted the other change to residential. She confirmed that there are no applications for BPC to warehouse. She said the concerns are for future residents and future complaints with the airport that could threaten the expansion of the airport. She said they did designate this area as low density and not warehouse.

Commissioner Scott said when he looks at this with single family he does not see why this is an issue when the other properties are not.

Ms. Bennett said staff recommends approval because this is adjacent to residential properties.

Commissioner Braswell said for the airport expansion they could always buy this property and redesignate it.

Ms. Bennett said the macro is what the staff report is focused on. She discussed the Gresham Farms development and Publix.

Commissioner Troutman said they are seeing more residential development in the area.

Aniels Salgado, applicant, said she is proposing residential. She said that this is compatible and will make the land use more practical.

Ms. Salgado said she would consider the easement but would request her neighbors all do the same.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

Jamie Collins said she is one of the first residents out there. She said all the land has been agriculture with animals. She asked to make this residential agriculture. She said they need their animals to feed their families. She said to keep this agricultural and said they do not need to put buildings on every square inch of the county.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Braswell asked if this will put any restrictions on anybody else.

Ms. Bennett said they allow farm animals and farming on any land use classification in the county. She said it does not have a future land use designation category of agriculture residential rural. She said all land uses in the county allows for animals. She confirmed that this would not impact the resident with separation and buffering requirements.

Commissioner Troutman said with the side setbacks and they are looking at BPC to residential it is her understanding that a variance is not allowed. She asked for staff to look and see if there are conditions that we do want to make open for variances on a

case by case basis. She said this may not be the only area we want to look at our code.

Commissioner Scott clarified that the motion does not require the resident to sign an easement or anything related to the airport.

Commissioner Troutman said the city requires those to be signed for a condition of their approval. She said it may be a situation where it does not apply to some of the older homes. She asked the applicant to work with the city on that as they are trying to protect from the complainers. She reminded the applicant of the busy airport with planes all hours of the day.

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

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

P.1. Comments.

Minutes: Kay Bourque said she wants to talk about the voices that shape the animal advocate movement. She said their perspectives add something valuable. She said differences are not a weakness. She said words can cause harm when they are ill and cause people to divide. She discussed backyard animal breeding and said much of the stray population can be traced back to these breeders. She said the health certificate is a state requirement for the sale of animals.

Commissioner Troutman said the honest people are pulling the licenses and Mr. Tedder provided that information to her. She said she is hitting on a point and it would be very hard to enforce it. She said we do have licensed breeders that have applied for the appropriate paperwork.

James Loyd Thomas said he is here to talk about e-bike safety in memory of Maddox Moore a young teenager who died in an e-bike accident. He discussed his use of the e-bike and thanked them for the Fort Fraser Trail. He said he advocates for veterans and behavioral health court to get these types of bikes if they do not have a drivers license. He said he is pushing for a safety program and said helmets should be worn. He said bike shops should be required to offer safety courses. He said there are three classes of e-bikes and not all have throttles and some have pedal assists. He said accidents are happening because rules are not being followed and not everyone wears helmets.

Commissioner Wilson said there are a lot of e-bikes on the trail. He said a lot wear helmets and some will fly without helmets. He said it needs to be looked at and he knows exactly what Mr. Thomas is talking about.

Mr. Mink discussed Senate Bill 382 that was passed to address some of the e-bike

issues. He said part of it would be when they ride on a sidewalk with pedestrians and they are required to slow down. He stated it would be enforced by Florida Statute violation and they did create a task force looking at the safety issues.

Commissioner Troutman said there are different classifications. She said parents are buying bikes not realizing it is something that needs to have a license, a tag and registered. She said she has seen in Lakeland where there could be a very serious injury from some of the children and the behaviors she has seen.

Commissioner Scott said it is like an electrically powered motorcycle with some of the speeds they are able to achieve. He said he is glad to hear about the pedal assist. He stated he did not know about the recovery aspect of it and he appreciates Mr. Thomas' time.

Chair Santiago said he is meeting with the right person on this and they will bring this when they meet with FDOT because they always look at bicycle safety. She said safety is paramount to this situation and hopefully we will be able to put things in gear. She said we are dealing with human behavior and education is important.

David Butler said at the last meeting there was a dollar figure put out that was extremely wrong. He said DR Horton was given a tax exemption and he said to give them the exemption after they perform. He said they are worth \$40 billion and our budget is \$3 billion. He discussed the \$70 million Ms. Biehl brought back and he asked if she got to fly on the airplane for that. He said he will bring this up until the deputies get paid their overtime. He discussed the cost of the Cessna and the Kodiak. He said he appreciates the conservation purchases and he said these need to have public access.

Commissioner Braswell said the tax breaks are after the fact. He said they have to perform, hire the people and nothing is given in advance.

Chair Santiago said we do not give tax breaks until they show the metrics. She said they monitor this whole process.

Mr. Mink said they moved the tax exemption on when it would begin because they had not had the opportunity to meet the requirements.

Commissioner Troutman said to look up the program ad valorem tax exemption. She said that will give information as far as what the companies must do to qualify for those exemptions, how it is monitored, and audited each year to show compliance.

Eve Salimbene said on April 21st Commissioner Braswell made statements on animal advocates that are inaccurate. She responded to his comments. She said they have sent emails, offered to run programs and offered suggestions that have gone unanswered. She said TNVR and injured animals are not dumped. She said we are here because Polk struggles with animal overpopulation, high euthanasia and preventative resources are lacking. She said they are asking for assistance that continues to be ignored.

Cynthia Dorman said she wants to speak about community cats. She said she has trapped and sterilized approximately 1,000 cats. She said the cats did not create this crisis people did. She asked if they are listening and said they have the power to improve animal welfare. She responded to comments from Commissioner Braswell. She asked for removing ownership and tag requirements for feral cats. She asked for \$150,000 for the Street Cat Project.

Lee Awesome said he is here because folks here have forgotten that they work for the people and they are not being as receptive to the citizens as they should be. He said the people of Polk County are the employers. He said the power of social media can be strong and he has seen some of the things said and the meetings. He said he has seen disrespect. He said when you see him at the meeting stuff has to change. He said his address is on the form but it is not legally required for him to give it to the world. Upon question, he said his address is not legally exempt.

Debbie Hicks discussed animal control and said there is nothing in the capital plan for animal control. She asked why are we not making a new facility and she said there is no washer and dryer. She said it is a county facility and we own the facility. She said if the SPCA, the Humane Society, and the people who volunteer quit you would have more animals coming in.

Commissioner Scott said he visited the Animal Control facility two weeks ago. He showed a picture of an improved outside area for the dogs. He said the need is incredible and the staff does a great job with animals being dropped off. He said there are areas for families to visit with animals for adoptions. He said all the wood pallets are gone and the food and cat litter is stored in sealed containers. He said there is a washer and dryer for the main shelter. He said there is music and toys for the cat shelter. He said they are looking for a second vet and increased the salary for that position. He said they are looking for a solution for the grates for the kennels. He said they are continuing to improve and he will do a PGTV segment at the shelter. He said a new facility does not solve all problems but it is working together that solves problems. He said he appreciates the feedback and the patience. He said they will continue to strive to do the best with the resources they have.

Commissioner Troutman said there were complementary words from the meeting with Ms. Salimbene and Captain Varnadore with the Sheriff's office. She said it is important to remember we are all human and we are working on progress. She said on December 3rd and September 30th she reached out to the Bully Project and they were to get her the information on the voucher program. She said to this day she has not gotten a return email and there is communication that does not get returned to them as well. She said there are things that are happening, delivery does matter and respect goes both ways. She said we hear them but there have been changes made. She thanked her for recognizing that.

Kristina Vasquez said she is here to offer a community plan. She asked for support to modernize the building and competitive wages. She asked for air conditioning and upgrades. She asked for a breeder licensing ordinance and opening a structured volunteer network. She asked for an inmate dog program. She asked for the ban to be lifted for cell phones and cameras in the shelter.

Commissioner Scott said some updates are that there are evaporative cooling fans, ceiling fans and additional fans. He said there is a full time staff member there for adopting and working with the rescues. He said there are temperature monitors and are remote controlled. He said there is a salary increase for a second veterinarian and office space is being renovated.

Jhoanna Allende said this is a community issue. She discussed animal welfare and said we need to modernize the approach. She discussed low cost vet care, pet food banks and an TNVR program. She asked for an advisory board for animal welfare and said she is committed to public awareness.

James Abercrombie said they did not have a signup sheet for the public hearings. He said that property is surrounding city limits. He asked why are they making decisions for the City of Lakeland. He said for public records there is a paper trail of the fence and he wants that public record. He said he is going to see where that metal went and who took the money.

Commissioner Scott said in specific to the contract it is for the removal and disposal of the fence. He said they do not require a chain of custody for the removal of an old product. He said as long as they are not illegally disposing of it there is not a requirement to show what they did with the fence. Mr. Abercrombie responded.

County Manager Bill Beasley said the public records were provided.

Commissioner Troutman said that citizens are not removed from county emails. She said we are not making decisions for the cities. She said we are going to touch boundaries if they want the land the city can annex it in. She stated it is county land and a county decision.

Chair Santiago said she has been serving for eight years and she has never had to make a decision for any city that is not their jurisdiction.

Meeting adjourned at 10:59 a.m.