



Polk County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Minutes - Final

May 05, 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.

Rollcall

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

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

C.2. Minutes of Regular Board meeting held on April 21, 2026.

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

D. APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

D.1. Approve Consent Agenda.

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

F. COUNTY ATTORNEY (RANDY MINK)

F.1. Authorize County Manager from May 1 to June 1 to adjust landfill rates annually, as necessary, to address yard waste to prepare for hurricane season.

Minutes: County Attorney Randy Mink discussed authorizing the County Manager from May 1 to June 1 to adjust landfill rates annually, as necessary, to address yard waste to prepare for hurricane season. He stated this is to encourage individuals to bring yard waste to the landfill in preparation for hurricane season. He recommended approval.

Commissioner Scott encouraged residents to be proactive and pickup anything that is loose yard debris, dead trees or limbs.

Chair Santiago said this is a great idea to prepare for the hurricanes and minimize any danger.

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

G. COUNTY MANAGER (BILL BEASLEY)

G.1. Approve commerce agreement No. MS024 between State of Florida Department of Commerce and Polk County, for Federally Funded Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Rebuild Florida Infrastructure Repair

Program Subrecipient Agreement (one-time revenue of \$70,000,000.00).

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the commerce agreement No. MS024 between State of Florida Department of Commerce and Polk County for the Federally Funded Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery Rebuild Florida Infrastructure Repair Program subrecipient agreement. He said if it was not for Parks and Natural Resources Director Tabitha Biehl they would not have gotten the \$70 million; he said with her reputation across the state, her tenacity, deliberate style and knowledge of what goes on in Central Florida. He complimented her and staff for landing \$70 million into Polk County. He recommended approval.

Ms. Biehl said this is a true partnership. She said it is a regional watershed project and we will see more of these projects that help address multiple issues. She said this is a four year project and they will be moving this quickly.

Chair Santiago thanked Ms. Biehl for what she does for Polk County.

Commissioner Wilson recused from voting.

Upon question, Ms. Biehl said Lake Hancock is a completely different water body with how it is managed now. She said the original feasibility studies would be more difficult this time because of the objectives and the original study was to draw the lake down to less than a foot. She said this would be impossible with the regulatory restrictions on Lake Hancock. She said treating the water coming into Lake Hancock and then treating the water leaving Lake Hancock is their best cost benefit.

Commissioner Braswell said Lakeland's sewage went into Lake Hancock for 50 years. He asked if that goes away after decades.

Ms. Biehl said there are historical loadings from multiple wastewater treatment facilities. She said Lake Hancock ended up as that resting place and that is why we have the extreme muck layers at the bottom. She said the only way the muck layers decompose is when the water layers come down low enough and oxidation starts to happen. She said due to water concerns within the regional basin we are stacking water higher using it as water supply and that is why the water reservation was placed on Lake Hancock by the Water Management District.

Commissioner Troutman said what this does for the region for water holding capabilities is exciting to see. She said this builds in a system of water storage capabilities across this area. She said we will see the results at our next very wet summer. She said we will see the benefit of this and it is great for our community. She thanked Ms. Biehl.

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

G.2. Approve a State-Funded Grant Agreement between the Florida Department of

Transportation (“FDOT”) and Polk County in conjunction with the Power Line Road Phase 2 Project. (\$7,500,000 one-time money)

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the State-Funded Grant Agreement between the Florida Department of Transportation and Polk County in conjunction with the Power Line Road Phase 2 project. He recommended approval.

Commissioner Braswell asked to show a dash line on the maps showing the Central Polk Parkway line.

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

G.3. Approve a CIP amendment and a budget transfer of \$3,000,000 from the Polk County Sheriff’s Office Central County Jail (CCJ) expansion CIP project to the Kathleen Government Center CIP project (one-time transfer \$3,000,000).

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the CIP amendment and a budget transfer of \$3,000,000 from the Polk County Sheriff’s Office Central County Jail expansion CIP project to the Kathleen Government Center CIP project. He recommended approval.

Commissioner Scott said with the Kathleen Government Center we had a town hall meeting and got a lot of feedback from the community. He said we are continuing to seek that and anyone watching this to reach out to their offices and give specific feedback. He said anything they want them to see or consider they are all open ears.

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

G.4. Execute a Local Agency Program (LAP) Agreement No. 452132-1-58-01 with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT), and Resolution to establish that Polk County will serve as the LAP manager on behalf of the City of Lake Wales for the Ridge Scenic Highway (RSH) Connector Trail project.

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the Local Agency Program (LAP) Agreement No. 452132-1-58-01 with the Florida Department of Transportation, and Resolution to establish that Polk County will serve as the LAP manager on behalf of the City of Lake Wales for the Ridge Scenic Highway Connector Trail project. He recommended approval.

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

Minutes

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley said he requested that Fire Chief Shawn Smith be here. He said several weeks ago the drought conditions improved and the Burn Ban was rescinded. He said the drought conditions have continued to increase and the index numbers are up again. He said staff is recommending a Burn Ban again.

Fire Chief Shawn Smith said the state is in a drought and some of the state is in a severe drought. He said when we rescinded the Burn Ban we were at the 386 KDBI index level and right now we are at 525 KDBI. He said 70% of the county is at or above 500; he said at 50% is where we stress and weigh the balance of enacting the Burn Ban. He said we are at that point and the rain this weekend was not enough.

County Attorney Randy Mink said the Board will see this on the next agenda.

Chair Santiago thanked them for continuing to monitor this and advising us.

Commissioner Wilson said last weekend with tornado warnings we don't want the tornadoes we want the rain. He said at his place he got half an inch of rain.

Fire Chief Smith said 50 counties have Burn Bans and it is time to reinstate that.

Mr. Beasley said it would be effective tomorrow morning and the Board will codify within two weeks from today.

H. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 1 (BECKY TROUTMAN)

H.1. Commissioner Troutman Comments.

Minutes: Commissioner Troutman said she was absent during the last meeting and said she had the opportunity to go on a trek with the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation. She stated there will be a documentary that is produced out of this in probably December of this year. She stated she thinks the public knowledge and public education around the wildlife corridor continues to grow.

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 since the last meeting he met with TLC Petsnips. He said that it was a good meeting and it confirmed everything that he said. He said it is the same name different people and they are in the process of reviving the process for vouchers for sterilizations. He said they have begun raising money. He said they are looking at raising \$50,000 annually and with \$50,000 they will do 1,000

sterilizations a year and if they get more they will do more. He said they talked about the opportunity for corporate sponsorships. He stated it will not involve any county money or the county in any way. He said he and some others intend to move it along because they know a lot of potential corporate sponsors that can help out. He said this is for Polk County residents and is for pets owned by individuals and they will have to prove their residency and financial need. He said he is not here to announce that this program is rolling out right now but they are open for business.

Commissioner Troutman said if they raise \$50,000 the sterilizations will be significantly more than 1,000. She said she has been talking with other agencies about that.

K. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 5 (MICHAEL SCOTT)

K.1. Commissioner Scott Comments.

Minutes: Commissioner Scott said this weekend is Mayfaire by-the-lake at Lake Morton. He said it is a Mother's Day tradition and he invited all to come out. He wished a Happy Mother's Day to all the mothers out there.

L. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 4 (MARTHA SANTIAGO, CHAIR)

L.1. 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 public hearings. He swore in those who plan to speak.

N.1. Public Hearing (LDPCAS-2025-19 PRWC Receiving Facility CPA) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Small-Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change the Future Land Use from Residential Low (RL) to Institutional (INST) on ±9.91 acres for a future County potable water storage and interconnect facility. (No Fiscal Impact)

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

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie said he has not had an opportunity to read this until this morning. He said he would like to know the full idea, where it is coming from and what it is for.

Mr. Ziskal confirmed that this was the full presentation.

County Attorney Randy Mink reminded the audience that the agenda was published by Friday, was available by Friday, and was covered during the agenda review.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

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

N.2. Public Hearing (LDCCD-2025-4 PRWC Receiving Facility District Change) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Land Development Code Subdistrict Map change from Institutional-1X (INST-1X) to Institutional-2X (INST-2X) on ±9.91 acres for a future County potable water storage and interconnect facility.

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

Upon question, Mr. Ziskal clarified that this is the county making a land use change. He said Polk County has land use authority within unincorporated Polk County. He said this decision is on unincorporated land.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie said he needs the public records and wants to see everything that they base their decision on. He said he is sure that he has not read it. He said he wants public records on this, the last one and probably all of them.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

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

N.3. Public Hearing (LDCT-2026-1 Wahneta Main Street Corridor (MSC) Overlay LDC Text Amendment) (First Reading) 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 discussed the proposed text amendment. He said that staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval. He said this is the first reading and no action is required by the Board.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie said he wants to see the public records on how the decision was made and who was involved in it. He said public records are important and it needs to be viewed. He said he needs to see it on the computer and it was not where he looked.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

N.4. Public Hearing (LDCT-2026-4 Poinciana Commercial Activity Center Plan LDC Text Amendment) (First Reading) 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: Land Development Director Ben Ziskal discussed the proposed text amendment. He said that staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval. He said this is the first reading and no action is required by the Board.

Upon question, Mr. Ziskal said the extension of Laurel Avenue will be at the expense of the developer. He said it clearly states that it must be accomplished at the time of the development and access to Laurel Avenue and Pine Street are maintained so the development disperses onto all three roads so they have adequate ingress/egress. He confirmed that the type of intersection for Laurel and Pine would be based off of the traffic study. He said some trees will be eliminated for buildings, parking lots and storm water. He said they will work with them to preserve as much landscaping as possible.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie said he wants the public records for this. He said he is interested in the committees who make the recommendations and he wants all the information for the committees.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Braswell said pages 162 through 240 of today's agenda packet will answer some of his questions.

County Attorney Randy Mink said if you go to www.polkfl.gov and click on Government at the top right hand corner that brings you to where you can go to the Board of County Commission page and right underneath the members of this Board it is there.

Chair Santiago said these are published in the Sun and it has been publicly announced.

Mr. Mink said these items go to the Planning Commission and their agenda. He said these items have been out there for some time.

Commissioner Scott said he was absent at the Agenda Briefing. He said he was able to watch the full meeting on Sunday and all the items covered today were discussed.

O. PUBLIC HEARINGS

O.1. Public Hearing to Consider Adoption of a Resolution Allowing for the Installation of Four Traffic Calming Devices (Speed Humps) on Woodview Drive, Near Polk City. (estimated \$20,000.00 one-time expense)

Minutes: Amy Gregory, Traffic Manager, discussed the resolution allowing for the installation of four traffic calming devices on Woodview Drive, near Polk City. She said

they received the required favorable votes for these devices. She recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie asked if anybody has taken the time to consider these speed bumps. He discussed ambulances and said he has not heard how it has improved anything. He said he wants to see everyone involved.

Darryl Morris said he has lived here for four years. He said we need the traffic control devices. He said a child, mailboxes and dogs have been run over. He said people are still going to speed and he asked for a bump they cannot hit going faster than five miles per hour.

Ms. Gregory said what Mr. Morris is looking for is intended for parking lots. She said she can do research and she does not think they are permitted on public roads.

Commissioner Troutman said that some of the speed humps installed over by Lake Eloise you will not hit those going much more than five miles and they are not the ones you see in a parking lot.

Praxis Rogers said there are gaps in the bump where you can drive through the speed hump. She said these are useless and she asked if there are going to be gaps.

Ms. Gregory said the speed humps they install go across the whole road with the exception of the edge for drainage.

Commissioner Troutman stated the City of Lakeland has installed those recently in areas where there is significant water flow and you can drive through them and take up both lanes.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

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

O.2. Public Hearing to consider adoption of an ordinance amending Ordinance 21-006, the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Agro-Iron, LLC.

Minutes: Deputy County Attorney Sandra Howard discussed the ordinance amending Ordinance 21-006, the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Agro-Iron, LLC. She said the company has requested that the exemption period be pushed back two years and begin in 2028. She said the company is citing changes in the citrus industry. She said since quite a bit of time has passed for the exemption the company has agreed to increase that salary to today's standard. She recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie said they never give him or anybody an exemption on ad valorem taxes only businesses. He said this is our tax dollars and we have to make it up.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

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

O.3. Public Hearing to consider adoption of an ordinance amending Ordinance 22-018, the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Publix Super Markets, Inc. (Project HORIZON - IT Headquarters).

Minutes: Deputy County Attorney Sandra Howard reviewed the ordinance amending Ordinance 22-018, the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for Publix Super Markets, Inc. She said the company has requested that the exemption period be pushed back one year. She said the company has agreed to increase the average annual wage required to be paid to today's rate. She recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie said Publix is a good company and they make a lot of people millionaires. He asked why we are making this up and said they have the money to do so.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

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

O.4. Public Hearing to consider adoption of an ordinance amending Ordinance 2024-015, the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for D.R. Horton, Inc.

Minutes: Deputy County Attorney Sandra Howard discussed the ordinance amending Ordinance 2024-015, the Economic Development Ad Valorem Tax Exemption for D.R. Horton, Inc. She said the company has requested that the exemption period be pushed back one year. She recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

James Abercrombie asked why is he paying their taxes. He said we should not be supporting them and to let them go somewhere else.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Troutman said it is important to look at economic development. She said these are some companies that are known within our households but these jobs are vital to our economy and she supports economic development fully.

Commissioner Scott said when you look at the improvements being done and the jobs provided to the community; he said the county is not funding this to happen it is giving a small percentage of a break on taxes. He said the net gain is not only job and economic growth but also the additional funds and revenue received on the tax roll. He said it is a great program and he is glad that we provide these programs.

Chair Santiago stated that there are metrics that have to be met by these organizations and if not we can revoke the approval.

Ms. Howard said they are audited every year to make sure they have created the job and invested the capital they agreed to do.

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

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

P.1. Comments.

Minutes: Reverend Lois Ann Sorensen said we are continuing to advocate for low-income seniors. She said basic in-home care is not only about aging in place with dignity it can be a matter of life or death. She said county staff expressed interest in funding a pilot project and will be considered for funding by the COC. She said that about 900 seniors receive care through the Senior Connection Center while 2,773 who are pre-qualified are still waiting. She asked the county manager to secure funding for basic in-home care to serve 100 seniors on the 3,000 person wait list. She submitted postcards into the record.

David Butler discussed the Kodiak, the Cessna, fuel and the costs. He said they bought the sheriff the Kodiak as a favor. He said he worked for the Sheriff for 25 years and never needed a plane. He said the last time he was here he saw a temper tantrum from an elected official and called them a piece of crap. He said he made it their mission to make sure that company did not get a dime. He said a portion of the \$3 million could have gone to Animal Control. He said to look closer at the Sheriff's budget and he said to do the right thing.

Commissioner Braswell thanked Mr. Butler. He said they have a mutual acquaintances and friends at the Sheriff's office. He said when Mr. Butler walked in and sat down with the animal people that shocked him as the most negligent animal owner in Polk County's history to be sitting down with these people. He said the fact that his

negligence killed a county canine with the Sheriff's office. He stated now he sees him separating himself from them every time they come up here. He asked how much did he cost the county and he said that number is over \$100,000. He said Mr. Butler has a beef with the Sheriff. He said we bought that plane for surveillance and it was a part of the largest fentanyl bust. He said it has saved lives already and we will continue using the airplane.

Terry Bucher said she is a member of PEACE. She said she is here to speak for assistance for seniors. She said the cost of keeping seniors in their own homes is less than in facilities. She asked for funding of in-home care for at least 100 seniors on that list.

Upon question, County Manager Bill Beasley said it will be part of the Polk Health Care Plan and the Indigent Healthcare funding. He said he would have to get back with staff and there could be other phases.

Kay Bourque thanked Commissioner Braswell for shining light on TLC Petsnips. She said we are never going to rescue, adopt or kill our way out of the animal welfare crisis. She said she has provided a draft proposal for an animal welfare committee.

Debbie Hicks said she takes issue with Commissioner Braswell's comment on how we should be doing something productive. She said she has tried to help animals that came across her path. She discussed the animals she has helped and said she volunteered for Animal Control. She said coming here has been productive otherwise they would not want them to go away.

Novella Johnson said she is here as a caregiver. She said she cares for her 80 year old mother who is a double amputee. She said the cost for care is \$25 per hour and most families cannot afford that. She said seniors need services now and are often offered services after they pass away. She said these are vulnerable seniors that deserve care.

James Abercrombie said the records that Commissioner Scott gave him is not what he asked for. He discussed traffic and said we need infrastructure and an overpass to go over the rail road track.

Doretha Tillman said she is the PEACE team leader. She discussed having to care for her mother in her home. She discussed her mom using the Adult Day Care Center. She asked for funding for in-home care for at least 100 seniors.

Becky Bywater said she appreciates Commissioner Scott looking at other facilities. She referred to Commissioner Braswell and said she takes personal offense that they want TV time. She said she does not believe any rescue has asked for a check. She said she hopes the fellow commissioners do not follow his lack of responsibility

Praxis Rogers said she is here to speak against the AI data center. She discussed water and electricity bills increasing. She said this will bring 500 jobs and will not be for an average everyday Floridian.

Meeting adjourned at 10:44 a.m.

