



Polk County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Minutes - Final

July 15, 2025 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. (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

INVOCATION

Murphy Hanley, Polk County Fire Rescue Chaplain

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

A. PRESENTATIONS and RECOGNITIONS

A.1. Employee Recognition

Minutes: The Board recognized Abran Caudillo with Roads and Drainage, Yevgeniy Gorokhov with Fire Rescue, Jerri Tesseneer with Emergency Medical, Charlotte Filmore with Building, and Benjamin Fort with Fire Rescue for their years of service.

B. PUBLIC COMMENTS CONCERNING AGENDA ITEMS

B.1. Comments.

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

C. APPROVE CONSENT AGENDA

C.1. Approve Consent Agenda.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Bill Braswell

SECONDER:	Becky Troutman
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, and Santiago
Absent:	Scott

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

D.1. Disbursements.

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

D.2. Minutes of Regular Board meeting held on July 1, 2025.

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

G. COUNTY MANAGER (BILL BEASLEY)

- G.1. Approve construction contract with 1st Class Roofing, Inc. for the roof replacement of the existing Polk County Specialty Care and Children Home Society building in Bartow, FL. (\$850,500.00 one-time expense).

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley reviewed the construction contract with 1st Class Roofing, Inc., for the roof replacement of the existing Polk County Specialty Care and Children Home Society building in Bartow. He recommended approval.

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

- G.2. Approve Right-of-Way Agreement between the City of Lake Alfred and Polk County in conjunction with the County Road 557 Project, Parcels 100, 145 and 146. (\$550,000 one-time expense)

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the right-of-way agreement with the City of Lake Alfred for the County Road 557 Project, Parcels 100, 145 and 146. He recommended approval.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Becky Troutman

SECONDER:	Bill Braswell
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, and Santiago
Absent:	Scott

G.3. Approve cooperative agreement with Optus, Inc. for software based phones and implementation services. (One-time cost \$438,864.26)

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed cooperative agreement with Optus, Inc., for software based phones and implementation services. He recommended approval.

Upon question, Information Technology Director David Palmer said the technology we are on is outdated, is not supported and is going away. He said this is part of our normal phone replacement and we are moving from wired to phones that are compatible with the internet.

Commissioner Braswell said it sounds like a bad idea and to have a backup hard-wired system. He said he can remember when the internet phone line was cut. He asked if it makes sense to keep a basic wired backup. He said if the internet goes down no one can call us and he asked if it affects 911.

Mr. Palmer said they have seen that. He said we are using the same cables whether it is the internet or the hardwired phones. He said the cables are still running on the poles and underground. He said it is hardwires using different equipment.

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

G.4. Approve cooperative agreement with Carahsoft Technology Corp. for Zoom phone software and implementation services. (\$67,331.18 one-time cost and \$253,023.85 recurring annual cost)

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the cooperative agreement with Carahsoft Technology Corp., for Zoom phone software and implementation services. He recommended approval.

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

H. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 1 (BECKY TROUTMAN)

H.1. Commissioner Troutman Comments.

Minutes: Commissioner Troutman said today the Polk History Center is reopening and

it was undergoing a large renovation project. She said it is something to be seen. She encouraged the audience to visit and she said Ms. Myrtice Young does a wonderful job and it is something to celebrate.

I. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 3 (BILL BRASWELL)

I.1. Commissioner Braswell Comments.

Minutes: Commissioner Braswell had no comments.

J. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 4 (MARTHA SANTIAGO)

J.1. Commissioner Santiago Comments.

Minutes: Commissioner Santiago had no comments.

K. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 5 (MICHAEL SCOTT)

K.1. Commissioner Scott Comments.

Minutes: Commissioner Scott was not present.

L. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 2 (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

L.1. Chair Wilson Comments.

Minutes: Chair Wilson had no comments.

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

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

N.1. Public Hearing (LDCPAS-2025-7 Brooks Street CPA Amendment) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Small-Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change the Future Land Use designation on 3.8 acres from Residential-Low X (RLX) to Business-Park Center (BPCX).

Minutes: Erik Peterson, Land Development, reviewed the proposed land use map change. He said that the Planning Commission and staff recommends approval.

Commissioner Braswell said he would vote against this if anyone is in the audience that was against this. He said we are heading in a too aggressive direction changing a land use without a request and he understands why they are doing it. He said it makes sense when the phosphate issue was coming up. He said it moves the issues to the north on a road that has issues with a cut-through and bypass. He said he will support it today.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

Mr. Peterson clarified that this is applicant initiated. He said that staff will review the

area and will bring forth some county initiated amendments. He confirmed that this is only for this one parcel.

County Attorney Randy Mink said there was discussion on Friday about getting direction from the Board on reviewing the whole area for BPC.

Commissioner Braswell said he does not like this land use moving into places it probably should not be.

Mr. Peterson said they will be reviewing the area, making assessments, and establishing a community outreach for property owners.

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

N.2. Public Hearing (LDCPAL-2025-4 EAR Based Comprehensive Plan Text Amendment) (Transmittal Hearing) to consider a Large-Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change several policies in all Comprehensive Plan elements per the requirements of Florida Statutes 163.3191, Evaluation and Appraisal Report (EAR).

Minutes: Erik Peterson, Land Development, reviewed the proposed text amendment. He said that the Planning Commission and staff recommends approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

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

N.3. Public Hearing (LDCT-2025-5 Chicken Coop Setbacks LDC Text Amendment) (Adoption Hearing) to reduce the setbacks for structures intended for the feeding and sheltering of livestock and fowl from 50 to 10 feet. (No Fiscal Impact)

Minutes: Erik Peterson, Land Development, reviewed the proposed text amendment. He said this is the modified version for chicken coops. He recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

Stephanie Widner asked the Board if they could make the writing on the screen larger.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Martha Santiago

SECONDER:	Becky Troutman
AYE:	Troutman, Wilson, Braswell, and Santiago
Absent:	Scott

- N.4. Public Hearing (LDCT-2025-3 Stressed Basins and Stormwater Management Standards) (Adoption Hearing) to consider a County-initiated request to adopt a LDC Text amendment to multiple sections, to address stressed drainage basins, and improve stormwater management standards. (Withdrawn by staff)

Minutes: This item was withdrawn by staff.

Commissioner Troutman said we are withdrawing this because we are preempted by state rule that is not allowing us to move forward.

County Attorney Randy Mink stated that Senate Bill 180 preempts us from being more restrictive during state of emergencies.

- N.5. Public Hearing (LDCT-2025-4 Public Hearing Mailing Radius) (Adoption Hearing) to consider a County-initiated request to adopt a LDC Text amendment to Chapter 9 Development Review Procedures, Section 960(A), Types of Public Notice, by removing the current text of a 500-foot distance in which mail notices are to be sent to area property owners and replacing it with 1,000 feet. (Withdrawn by staff)

Minutes: This item was withdrawn by staff.

O. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- O.1. Public Hearing (LDCPAS-2025-2 Morame Watkins Rd 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 \pm 0.55 acres in the Utility Enclave Area (UEA).

Minutes: Chanda Bennett, Land Development, showed slides and reviewed the proposed land use amendment. She said that the Planning Commission recommended approval 5:2. She showed aerial photos of the area. She discussed the permitting of group homes. She reviewed the Land Development Code institutional policies. She said that staff recommends approval. She said that the applicant will have to research state permitting requirements for this land use if it is adopted today. She said this is consistent with the Land Development Code.

Upon question, Ms. Bennett said they are not required to change the exterior. She stated the applicant has a range of options. She said the parcel and the size is appropriate for the uses.

Julia Morame, applicant, had no additional comments.

Upon question, County Attorney Randy Mink said we do not get into who will be occupying the site because of the Fair Housing issue.

Upon question, Ms. Bennett said the county is not the licensure for the number of people that are taken care of in the home. She said that question is only answered by the licensing agency. She said the size of the property is appropriate for institutional.

Mr. Mink said if they do get this approved they would be allowed a group home for up to 7 - 14 residents with a Level 1 or Level 2 Review.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

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

O.2. Public Hearing (LDCPAL-2024-17 Stuart Thornhill CPA Amendment) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Large-Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change the Future Land Use designation on 158 acres from Agricultural/Residential-Rural (A/RR) to Residential-Low (RL), and from Rural Development Area (RDA) to Urban Growth Area (UGA).

Minutes: Mark Bennett, Land Development, reviewed the proposed land use change. He said that the Planning Commission and staff recommends approval. He said this is compatible with the area. He said this is consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and the Land Development Code.

Bart Allen, applicant, said that he went into detail at the transmittal hearing and that staff has summed this up. He reviewed the proposed land use change request. He said it is urbanized in this area and he discussed the density of the surrounding areas. He requested approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

Daniel Bence showed where his property is located. He asked what they intend to put there and how many houses per acre. He asked what are they going to do with all the water. He said traffic on Thornhill Road is terrible. He said he is opposed to this.

John Daly asked how dense will this be and how many people will be there. He asked if Thornhill Road will be widened.

Jennifer Castro said she is a school teacher and said our schools are at high capacity. She said something like this could impact the schools. She said they have the right to not have an increase to school class sizes.

Cary Purcell said Thornhill Road is a dangerous road. He said with the elevated road this will make the water damage worse.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

Mr. Allen spoke in response to public comment. He said water retention is required. He said drainage, culverts, and underpasses are already in construction. He said that the applicant is not the developer of the site and when that comes forward all the issues will be addressed at the Level 2 Review. He said there is capacity in the schools. He said he is available for questions. He said that staff recommended approval.

Commissioner Braswell said he had brought this up to close Thornhill Road to truck traffic and he fully intends the day that the Central Polk Parkway opens to bring it back up. He said it will not be appropriate for semis to utilize that road.

Commissioner Troutman said she would agree that most of the semis are from an increase of the construction of the parkway.

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

O.3. Public Hearing to consider adoption of a resolution to vacate a portion of deeded and unmaintained right-of-way located east of Overlook Drive. (No fiscal impact)

Minutes: Wade Allen, Real Estate Services Director, reviewed the proposed request to vacate right-of-way on Overlook Drive. He said there was one objection by an adjacent property owner and he said it has no negative impact on their property nor does it affect the access. He said there are no other objections to the request. He said that staff recommends approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

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

O.4. Public Hearing to Consider Adoption of a Resolution Allowing for the Installation of Two Traffic Calming Devices (Speed Humps) on Harney Street, Near Bartow. (estimated \$10,000.00 one-time expense)

Minutes: Amy Gregory, Traffic Manager, showed slides and reviewed the proposed request for two traffic calming devices on Harney Street, near Bartow. She said that this meets the traffic calming policy. She recommended approval.

The Chair opened a public hearing.

Charles Hicks said they have three school busses that come by everyday and that tells you how many children are out there. He said people fly down Reynolds Road at 70-80 m.p.h. He said that they need speed bumps all down Reynolds Road.

Robin Barnes said she agrees with the gentleman about Reynolds Road. She said she disagrees with putting two speed humps on the small road. She said she has a low-lying car and this will destroy her vehicle. She discussed her aunt's medical issues and the distress speed bumps would cause.

The Chair closed the public hearing.

Upon question, Ms. Gregory said this road is 668 feet long and they can go at least 30 m.p.h. She said 85% of the traffic is going 30 m.p.h. or less. She said they sent out a lot of ballots and got a lot of no responses.

Commissioner Braswell said this is a dead-end street and speed humps on 600 feet does not make sense.

Upon question, Ms. Gregory said that this was initiated by a resident. She said they probably could put in one speed hump and they thought two would work best with the driveways on the road.

Commissioner Santiago said putting speed humps is appropriate. She said the distance is not the fact it is how people are driving. She said because of the concerns we owe that to this area.

Commissioner Santiago made a motion to approve; motion died for lack of a second.

Commissioner Troutman made a motion to place one speed hump on this road; motion died for lack of a second.

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

P.1. Wallace Lowery to discuss building permitting and code enforcement violations.

Minutes: Wallace Lowery said he had a code violation. He said he is held up with hiring a contractor when he can do the work himself. He said he would never had this problem had they left him alone. He said he has the electric on but cannot have the lights on.

P.2. G. Robert Weedon, DVM, MPH to continue discussion regarding amending the Polk County Animal Ordinance.

Minutes: Dr. Robert Weedon said there is lack of support in Polk County for fair treatment of animals. He said the Board is the governing body and he discussed the Charter. He said they have the power to adopt and amend county ordinances. He asked why they will not embrace TNVR. He said to embrace evidence based, humane and effective management of community cats.

P.3. Becky Bywater to discuss experience with Animal Control and need for spay/neuter.

Minutes: Becky Bywater said she has volunteered for over 40 years in animal shelters.

She said that her volunteer work has been regulated to office work. She discussed what happens on a regular basis and the high amount of calls received. She said there is one shelter and said there is a problem with dumping. She said the root cause is over breeding. She said we cannot adopt our way out of this problem. She stated we need a spay and neuter program and a breeding and animal abuse ordinance.

P.4. Comments.

Minutes: Cassandra Richards said she is waiting on her speed humps. She asked if there will be sirens for weather emergencies. She said she will be glad when she gets her speed humps. She said to get your supplies in order and that we are in hurricane season. She said we need to come together as a county and take care of one another.

Deborah Joseph showed pictures of her dog when she got him and how he looks now. She discussed animals being tethered. She asked for an ordinance and she said this is terrible in Polk County.

Patricia Jacques said she is here to share the story of Celia Jennings. She discussed Ms. Jennings being cited for feeding cats she has looked after for years. She said we need a spay/neuter program and a trap/release program.

Kay Bourque said animal welfare is at a breaking point. She said that the pet overpopulation is the root cause. She said people in Polk are making a difference in the lives they can help and she said that we need the Board's leadership. She said we have people here willing to help. She said if we continue to do what we are doing this will worsen.

Diane Shaffer discussed a kitten that was picked up and could not be kept. She said it would end up in the shelter and would be euthanized. She said we need a policy for animals to be spayed and neutered. She said there is no large shelter to take animals because they have no space. She said we have to help our animals.

Saralyn Smith discussed cats and the process that Animal Control uses for cats. She discussed the high number of cats that are entered into the shelter. She said to spay or neuter the feral cats and to have a TNR program. She discussed how many cats are in the shelter.

Patricia Kirby discussed a kitten she had seen at the shelter that ended up dead. She discussed the animal programs in Pinellas County. She said the Sheriff hates animals and that she is an ordained minister. She said we need a TNR program.

Jennifer Castro said pet overpopulation is the issue. She discussed the family poverty levels and discussed affordability. She said that all of these programs are important. She said it would help if the public knows which animal is on critical need so the euthanasia rate goes down. She said we have to show the community what pet ownership looks like.

Ashly Woosypiti said she is here to recognize and honor the Veteran Services department. She said their quiet impact is deeply felt by the community. She discussed a medial issue in her military career and being a veteran. She said the Veteran

Services office is here to help and she discussed how they have helped her.

County Manager Bill Beasley said we have an outstanding Veteran Services office. He said there is a handful of employees there and they go above and beyond the call of duty.

Commissioner Troutman said they are in critical need of volunteers for the Veterans Court services.

Stephanie Widner said there are over hundreds of residents requesting a TNVR program. She asked them to slow the growth of excess pets instead of euthanizing them.

Charlotte Bernhardt said she is a public civil servant. She discussed a petition asking for lowering the euthanasia rates. She said she submitted a petition for TNR. She said she organized peaceful protests and had over 50 cats pulled from a shelter and started a rescue. She discussed retaliation for peaceful protests.

John Daly said everybody is saying important things. He said he has rescued over 100 cats and he cannot do it anymore. He said the Board and Grady Judd need to do something. He said we love our animals and that this is not going to go away.

Meeting adjourned at 11:09 a.m.