



Polk County Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Minutes - Draft

October 07, 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)

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 (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

A. PRESENTATIONS and RECOGNITIONS

A.1. Recognize Polk County Fire Rescue for achieving a perfect score on the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS) Reaccreditation.

Minutes: Fire Chief Shawn Smith recognized Polk County Fire Rescue for achieving a perfect score for the Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services (CAAS) Reaccreditation. He said in the United States there are only 180 accredited agencies. He said they visited the stations, trucks and crews. He recognized the staff in attendance and said they received a perfect score. He said it is a high accomplishment and goes out to the men and women out in the field.

Commissioner Braswell said congratulations. He said with the training we are heading

in the right direction.

Dr. Banerjee, Medical Director, said there are 22,000 EMS agencies in the country. He said we are doing a pretty good job. He said we strive to provide the best care for our citizens and visitors.

Commissioner Santiago said congratulations and said we appreciate this. She said this indicates excellence in our community. She thanked them.

A.2. Recognize Polk County Fire Rescue Crews for Emergency Childbirth Assistance and Infant Lifesaving Efforts.

Minutes: Communications Director Amber Smith said when 911 calls are received they never know what to expect until they get there. She said they are well trained for whatever comes their way. She said one call involved the Highland City station crew of Madison Bennett, Daniel Banks, and George Gibson. She said when the crew arrived they found Kaylee Hartl in active labor and four minutes later baby Theodore was born.

Kaylee Hartl said the crew was incredible. She said she was planning on a home delivery but her midwife did not make it. She said they had to call 911 and they were there in record time. She said they did an incredible job making her feel comfortable and were there for support.

Ms. Smith said our next call involves the Haines City crew of Edward Snell, Gustavo Mora, and Brandon Harris. She said when the crew arrived Krystal O'Connell was in labor and when baby Dominick was born he was not breathing. She said that EMT Gustavo Mora immediately began CPR until the baby started breathing and the crew transported him to the hospital. She said both the mom and baby are doing well.

Krystal O'Connell thanked the crew and said without them they would not have their baby boy here. She said they did not plan a home birth and it was the scariest thing. She said they did not give up on him and he is expected to meet all his milestones. She thanked them for caring for them.

Alex O'Connell said they are heroes. He thanked them for taking care of his wife and child.

Chris Jacobs with Advent Health presented a life saving award to the crew.

Chair Wilson said this is where all the training comes in. He said we have a great crew that works tirelessly to be the best there is.

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

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

D.1. Disbursements.

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

D.2. Minutes of Regular Board meeting held on September 16, 2025, and Budget Public Hearings held on September 8, 2025, and September 15, 2025.

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

G. COUNTY MANAGER (BILL BEASLEY)

G.1. Confirm the appointment of Ms. Tabitha Biehl to serve as the Director of the Polk County Parks & Natural Resources Division.

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley thanked Parks and Natural Resources Director Gaye Sharpe. He said she has made an improvement in everything that she has done in her 30 plus years she has been here. He recognized former Parks and Natural Resources Director Jeff Spence. He said Mr. Spence also left this place better than he found it. He reviewed Tabitha Biehl's qualifications. He recognized Jason Hargo with Bartow and Julie Adams with Winter Haven for being here and showing support. He said it is his honor to recommend the appointment of Ms. Biehl to serve as the Director of the Polk County Parks & Natural Resources Division effective Monday, October 27, 2025.

Commissioner Scott said as a new commissioner, Ms. Sharpe was incredible as far as the welcoming feeling he got. He said she has compassion for the staff and he has learned so much in such a short period of time. He said Ms. Biehl has been incredible with the interactions they have had. He discussed her expertise and said he has worked with consultants that she has surpassed in many ways. He thanked her for all her dedication and for taking him under her wing and teaching him. He stated he never realized how much we did as a county. He said he looks forward to her leadership.

Commissioner Santiago said she looks forward to working with Ms. Biehl and said we are impressed with all the information she brings forth. She said we trust her expertise and leadership. She said Ms. Sharpe has been a solid leader for many years. She said she appreciates everything she has done.

Commissioner Troutman said as she traversed this county as an effort to serve here, there were two people who the community always spoke positively about and it was Ms. Sharpe and Ms. Biehl. She said in the times of growth conservation is so important. She thanked them for their services. She said Ms. Sharpe has left it better than she found it and has left us with a great person to carry it forward. She said we look forward to the years to come.

Commissioner Braswell congratulated Ms. Sharpe and said she deserves this and has done a great job. He said Ms. Biehl's presentations have a lot of technical stuff. He said she does such a good job of explaining it and making them understand what is important.

Chair Wilson said to Ms. Biehl he is excited for what we are going to do. He said he has known Ms. Sharpe all his life. He said all you have to do is look around this county and you can see it everywhere everyday. He said we have a lot going on with parks and conservation and they do a great job. He thanked her for what she has done for the county.

Ms. Biehl said she is deeply honored and humbled to accept the position. She said this represents not only her journey but the shared work with the entire team and division. She thanked her faith, her mom and dad, her husband, her children, and her work family. She said they have achieved incredible results and she discussed the various aspects of Parks and Natural Resources. She thanked the county leadership and the commissioners for their vision, trust and support. She thanked Ms. Sharpe and said she was her mentor for over 20 years. She thanked everyone and said it is a privilege to serve along side them.

Ms. Sharpe said it has been the support of the commissioners that has helped them grow over time. She said she is very passionate.

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

G.2. Approve agreement with The S/L/A/M Collaborative, Inc. for architectural & engineering services for the Courts & County Annex Building - Phase I. (\$494,337.00 one-time expense)

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the agreement with The S/L/A/M Collaborative, Inc. for architectural & engineering services for the Courts & County Annex Building - Phase I. He recommended approval.

Clerk and County Comptroller Stacy Butterfield thanked the Board for their continued support. She said as the county continues to grow the demand on the judicial system

grows for needed space.

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

G.3. Approve piggyback agreement with LucyRx Health Solutions, Inc. to provide pharmacy benefit services for the Polk HealthCare Plan. (\$7.9 million estimated recurring expense)

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the piggyback agreement with LucyRx Health Solutions, Inc., providing pharmacy benefit services for the Polk HealthCare Plan. He recommended approval.

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

G.4. Approve the contract with Peace River Center for Personal Development, Inc. for the proposed purchase of property and renovations of a building. (Total amount not-to-exceed \$1,600,000)

Minutes: County Manager Bill Beasley discussed the contract with Peace River Center for Personal Development, Inc., for the proposed purchase of property and renovations of a building. He recommended approval.

Larry Williams, Peace River, stated that they see 250 clients a day in the outpatient facility. He said that we are out of room and they need to expand. He said the state will make a \$5 to \$6 million investment and Peace River will invest \$1.2 million. He said the building was built in 1970 and needs updating. He stated that by owning the land it opens up different opportunities for funding. He discussed the current lease and stipulations of the lease and said that he does not know what the future holds. He discussed the surrounding land areas. He asked for the Board's support.

Upon question, Mr. Beasley said the funding is from the indigent health care funds.

Upon question, Mr. Williams confirmed that purchasing these makes it user friendly. He said they have had the civil engineering part of this done and they would have total access of the three buildings. He said they own everything to the east.

Commissioner Troutman thanked Mr. Williams. She said the commitment to behavioral health is extremely important.

RESULT:	APPROVED
MOVER:	Bill Braswell
SECONDER:	Becky Troutman
AYE:	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 3 (BILL BRASWELL)

I.1. Commissioner Braswell Comments.

Minutes: Commissioner Braswell had no comments.

J. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 4 (MARTHA SANTIAGO)

J.1. Appoint Cassandra Richards as a member of the Sidewalk Advisory Committee for the three-year term, October 1, 2025, through September 30, 2028.

Minutes: Commissioner Troutman said this is a perfect example of when you get involved it opens up opportunities. She thanked Ms. Richards for caring about her community to be here week after week.

Cassandra Richards thanked Jay Jarvis for the speed bumps. She discussed her children and their careers and said she is proud of them. She said her grandfather used to say that children have never been good at listening to their elders but they have never failed to imitate them. She said she imitates her father who was a pastor and a police officer and her mother who was an educator. She said thanked the Board for this opportunity to work with the Sidewalk Advisory Committee.

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

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 thanked Fire and EMS. He said it goes to show how much effort the men and women put into training whether they are on shift or not. He said they are continuously learning and preparing themselves mentally without a second thought. He said with Fire and EMS they do not have the time to reference a book. He said he and Chief Smith will be at a public engagement event tomorrow. He said he appreciates the investment from the commissioners for this.

L. COMMISSIONER DISTRICT 2 (RICK WILSON, CHAIR)

L.1. Chair Wilson Comments.

Minutes: Chair Wilson had no comments.

M. LAY BOARD APPOINTMENTS

M.1. Appoint Brian Yates as a member of the Tourist Development Council effective October 23, 2025.

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

M.2. Appoint Eugene “Gene” Conrad as a member of the Tourist Development Council to fulfill the remainder of Katherine “Kate” Johnson’s (LEGOLAND) four-year term which ends April 30, 2027.

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

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

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

N.1. Public Hearing (LDCCD-2025-5 Bowling Green District Change) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Land Development Code Sub-District Map change from Rural Cluster Center-Residential (RCC-R) to Rural Cluster Center-Commercial (RCC) on ±1.02 acres.

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

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

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

N.2. Public Hearing (LDCCPAS-2025-20 Willow Oak Fire Station) (Adoption Hearing) to consider the adoption of a Small-Scale Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change from Residential Suburban (RS) to Institutional (INST) on ±2.15 acres for a future Polk County Fire Rescue Station.

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

said the actual size is 2.15 acres.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

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

N.3. Public Hearing (LDCT-2025-13 Non-Phosphate Mining Exemption) (First Reading) to consider the adoption of an ordinance amending the Land Development Code to allow an exemption for fill material excavation associated with approved phosphate mines and gypsum stacks. (No Fiscal Impact)

Minutes: Land Development Director Ben Ziskal reviewed the proposed ordinance amending the Land Development Code to allow an exemption for fill material excavation associated with approved phosphate mines and gypsum stacks. He said that the Planning Commission recommended approval. He said this is the first reading and no action is required.

The Chair opened a public hearing; no one spoke.

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

P.1. Comments.

Minutes: Elisa Moreno said thanks to the action of Code Enforcement they were able to have peace for three months. She said the noise has continued and she discussed the vehicles and the speakers from the company Chikis Sound. She said the noise can be started anytime and when they call the police the people insist that they can make the noise. She said the business owners are posting videos to social media mocking them. She said more than 30 people are affected in more than nine homes. She asked for help. She said it is not fair that they are going through this in their homes.

Commissioner Braswell asked how can we shut this down. He said the windows in his truck vibrate when he drives by. He asked if there is something we can do.

Code Enforcement Director Autumn Fenton said they have worked several cases on this. She said they will have to work more closely with the Sheriff's office. She said under the noise ordinance it will render daily fines. She said when the Sheriff's office responds they are under the impression that if the business is there it is allowable per the Land Development Code. She said we will have to have a better discussion. She said she will follow up and have a meeting.

Chair Wilson said he will speak to the sheriff.

Ms. Moreno said they knew the three months were over from the violations and they are playing the music now.

County Attorney Randy Mink said the fines are at the state maximum of \$15,000.

Suzanne Liseo said she has been working with James Abercrombie. She said he has asked for the contracts for Hunt Fountain Park. She said with what he has been provided she cannot find the signed contracts. She said there is no discretion where the fence is going. She said she has about 2,000 pages and asked for someone to sit with her and go over it with her.

Chair Wilson said everything that has been requested has been given out and it is public records.

County Manager Bill Beasley said they will reach out and set a meeting and they will be happy to explain what they have. He said we have annual contracts for parks.

Ms. Liseo asked about the passing zone in Creeks Crossing Drive. She said several cars have hit the wall.

James Abercrombie said they are crazy. He said he was at the Agenda Briefing and he could not speak. He said the citizens have nothing to do with what they approve. He said the contract is hidden from the citizens. He asked what they did with the fence. He said it is our money and we paid for the fence. He said he wants to know who is involved with this.

Commissioner Braswell said when we tore down the Lawrence Crow building we did not sell the concrete that came from it. He said the contractor took care of it. He said that we do not care what the contractor that cleaned up the park did with the fence. He said it is part of the contract and part of the contract process.

Meeting adjourned at 10:25 a.m.