JACKSON COUNTY
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
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PRESS RELEASE **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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Jackson County BOCC Regular Meeting Highlights

Jackson County, FL. – On October 27, 2026, at 6:00 PM, the Jackson County Board of County Commissioners held a Regular Meeting. This is a recap of some of the reports and requests included in that meeting.

Recognition of Citizens Academy 2026 Participants

The Jackson County Board of County Commissioners proudly recognized the **2026 Citizens Academy** graduates during its October 27 meeting, celebrating another successful year of a program dedicated to strengthening the connection between citizens and their local government.

Now completing its fifth year, Citizens Academy continues to provide residents with a behind-the-scenes look at County operations, offering opportunities to meet County leaders and employees, explore the services provided by various departments, and gain a better understanding of how local government serves the community.

This year's class included 23 graduates who demonstrated a commitment to learning more about Jackson County and becoming informed, engaged members of their community. Graduates in attendance were individually recognized by the Board and presented with certificates of completion.

Graduates recognized in attendance included: *Lonnie Barber, Amber Barnes, Dexter Brand, Nichole Brannon, Lily Bratcher, Barbara Brewer, Angela Calloway, Jennifer Collins, Jennie Ann Dean, Annie Dowd, Bowden Howell, Linda Long, Barbara Mason, Jack Mason, Judy Stanton, Kevin Sura, and Kevin Yoder.*

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Additional graduates who completed the program but were unable to attend included: *Billy Bailey, Mary Howard, Martin Howard, Malachi McAllister, Shana Robison, and Theresa White*.

Jackson County extends its congratulations and appreciation to each graduate for investing their time in learning about County government. We hope they leave the program with a greater understanding of the people, responsibilities, and resources behind County services, and we look forward to welcoming future classes as we continue building a more informed and connected community.

Resolution Enacting Updated Fee Schedule for Jackson County Building Services, Community Development, and Corrections

The Commissioners approved a resolution updating the County's fee schedules for the Building Division, Community Development/Planning Department, and Corrections Department, effective November 1, 2026. The updates represent the first comprehensive revisions to these departmental fees since April 2016.

The revised schedules address costs associated with building permits, inspections, development applications, planning services, and certain corrections-related services. Notable changes include adjustments to residential and commercial development fees, building permit rates, and corrections booking, housing, and daily subsistence fees. For example, residential development order fees increase from $50 to $75, while the minimum general development order fee increases from $250 to $750. Corrections booking fees increase from $25 to $35, and daily subsistence fees increase from $2.70 to $3. Several existing fees remain unchanged. The resolution establishes that regulatory fees must not exceed the County's actual costs and that other service fees must be reasonable in relation to the services or benefits provided.

SUSTAINABLE SERVICES & BUDGETING

Approval of Updates and Amendments to Tourist Development Tax Ordinance

The Commissioners approved amendments to the County's Tourist Development Tax Ordinance following a public hearing on October 27. Presented by Interim Tourist Development Council (TDC) Director Chastity Sheffield, the updates modernize the County's tourism development policies, clarify the responsibilities of the TDC, and establish a more comprehensive framework for managing tourism-related funding and initiatives.

The revised ordinance maintains the County's existing 5% Tourist Development Tax, collected on qualifying short-term accommodations, while updating the Tourist Development Plan to reflect current priorities. These include destination marketing, visitor services, tourism-generating events, and eligible improvements to tourism facilities and attractions, including the Endeavor

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Convention Center, Jackson County Museum, and certain outdoor recreational and natural resources.

The amendments also formally incorporate the TDC's bylaws into the ordinance, establishing guidelines for council membership, meetings, and procedures. Additionally, the updates clarify that the TDC serves in an advisory capacity, with the Board retaining final approval authority over tourism-related expenditures, contracts, and budgets.

VIBRANT & GROWING ECONOMY

Adoption of Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan Update

The Commissioners approved an ordinance updating the Capital Improvements Element of the County's Comprehensive Plan for fiscal years 2026–2031. The update outlines planned infrastructure investments and capital projects over the next five years, helping the County prioritize improvements and plan for future growth.

The plan identifies approximately $166.7 million in proposed projects, including road and bridge improvements, water and sewer infrastructure expansions, Fire Rescue equipment and facilities, recreational enhancements, and continued redevelopment of the Endeavor property. The five-year schedule serves as a long-term planning tool, with project timelines and implementation dependent on available funding, including state and federal grants.

SUSTAINABLE SERVICES & BUDGETING

INNOVATIVE FACILITIES & INFRASTRUCTURE

VIBRANT & GROWING ECONOMY

Adoption of Resolution Regarding Potential Fire and EMS Assessments

Following a public hearing, the Board adopted a resolution preserving the option to use the uniform method of collecting non-ad valorem assessments to help fund fire protection and emergency medical services (EMS) throughout Jackson County. Commissioner Edward Crutchfield voted against the resolution.

The resolution allows the County to consider collecting potential future assessments through annual property tax bills, beginning as early as November 2027. If pursued, the assessments could apply to properties in both incorporated and unincorporated areas of the County.

Importantly, the Board's action does not establish or impose any new assessments. The resolution is non-binding and simply preserves the County's ability to use this collection method should an assessment program be approved in the future. Any decision to implement assessments would require additional Board action, and Commissioners retain the option to modify the areas covered or choose not to proceed with the proposed assessments.

HEALTHY & SAFE COMMUNITY

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Approval of Development Plans for New Restaurant and Residential Housing

Following public hearings, the Commissioners approved General Development Orders for two projects supporting commercial growth and residential development in the community.

- The first approval allows **Jack's Family Restaurant** to move forward with plans for a new 3,055-square-foot restaurant with a drive-thru on Highway 90, just west of Panhandle Road near Marianna. The proposed development includes parking, sidewalks, landscaping, and roadway improvements to accommodate traffic.

- The Board also approved a development order for **Christian's Way LLC**, a residential project proposed near the intersection of Old US Road and Christiana Way. The development will consist of four duplex buildings, providing a total of eight residential units, along with associated parking and access improvements. The approval also includes a variance waiving the County's perimeter landscaping buffer requirement. Commissioner Donofro abstained from the vote due to completing architectural work on the project.

Both projects previously received favorable recommendations from the Jackson County Planning Commission and remain subject to applicable permitting, inspections, and development requirements.

VIBRANT & GROWING ECONOMY

Adoption of Updated Procurement Ordinance

Following a public hearing, the Commissioners adopted a new Procurement Ordinance, replacing the County's purchasing ordinance originally established in 1989. Presented by Procurement Officer Tyler Schaeffer, the update modernizes the County's purchasing framework to better reflect current laws, operational needs, and best practices for managing public funds.

The new ordinance establishes clearer guidelines for competitive bidding, contract awards, emergency purchases, cooperative purchasing, and vendor protest procedures. It also strengthens ethical standards, incorporates federal requirements for grant-funded purchases, and updates local business preference provisions to comply with state and federal law.

A key change separates the County's overarching procurement rules from its day-to-day Purchasing Policy, allowing the Board to adjust purchasing thresholds and procedures through a public vote without repeatedly amending the ordinance.

SUSTAINABLE SERVICES & BUDGETING

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Appointment of New Member to Jackson County Tourist Development Council

The Board approved the appointment of Heather Tye to the Jackson County Tourist Development Council (TDC). The appointment fills a vacant seat designated for a representative who collects the County's Tourist Development Tax, commonly known as the bed tax.

Tye owns a short-term rental property in Grand Ridge and was recommended for appointment by the TDC Board during its October 12 meeting. Her experience as a local lodging provider will bring valuable insight into the tourism industry and support the Council's ongoing efforts to promote Jackson County as a destination for visitors, strengthen tourism partnerships, and encourage economic growth throughout the community.

VIBRANT & GROWING ECONOMY

Approval of Support for Statewide EMS Reforms

The Board approved a letter of support for the Florida EMS Reimbursement and Sustainability Reform proposal. The initiative, developed by Union County, seeks to improve how emergency medical services are reimbursed by Medicaid and private insurance companies, helping reduce the financial burden on local governments and taxpayers.

The proposed reforms would require more equitable insurance reimbursements for ambulance services, establish payment for medically necessary emergency treatment provided without transporting patients to a hospital, and strengthen protections against excessive ambulance bills. These changes could help reduce unnecessary hospital visits, return ambulances to service more quickly, and ensure more of the cost of emergency medical care is covered by insurers rather than local taxpayers.

The letter will be submitted to the Florida Association of Counties for consideration as part of statewide legislative advocacy efforts.

HEALTHY & SAFE COMMUNITY

Approval of Agreement to Designate Jackson County as a Rural Area of Opportunity

The Board approved a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with FloridaCommerce to maintain Jackson County's designation as part of the Northwest Florida Rural Area of Opportunity (RAO). The agreement supports continued collaboration with state and regional partners to strengthen economic development in rural communities.

The designation recognizes the unique economic challenges facing rural areas and helps position Jackson County to benefit from state economic development initiatives, technical assistance, and opportunities to attract new businesses, support existing employers, and encourage job creation. The Northwest Florida RAO designation extends through July 8, 2030, subject to continued participation and compliance with program requirements.

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As part of the agreement, County Administrator Jim Dean will serve as the County's designated point of contact, while Kevin Yoder will represent the local nonprofit economic development community. Together with regional partners, these representatives will help coordinate efforts to promote investment, expand economic opportunities, and support long-term growth throughout Jackson County.

VIBRANT & GROWING ECONOMY

Approval of Sale of Surplus County Property

The Board approved a resolution and purchase agreement for the sale of approximately 3.7 acres of surplus County-owned land along Kynesville Road, adjacent to 3972 Kynesville Road near Marianna. The sale is to Shyam Sunder, LLC, an adjoining property owner, for a total purchase price of $18,500, or $5,000 per acre.

The property was determined to be surplus, meaning it is no longer needed for County operations or public purposes. The transaction allows the County to return unused property to private ownership, generate revenue from the sale, and potentially add the property back to the local tax rolls.

The Board had previously approved moving forward with the sale, and the October 27 action approved the formal resolution and purchase agreement following completion of the property survey. The action concerns the sale of surplus land to an adjoining property owner and does not include approval of any development project or proposed land use.

SUSTAINABLE SERVICES & BUDGETING

Board Approves Transfer of Animal Control Services to Sheriff's Office

The Board approved a recommendation to transfer oversight of Animal Control Services from Jackson County Public Works to the Jackson County Sheriff's Office, along with the department's previously approved budget. Commissioner Dr. Willie Spires voted against the recommendation.

The recommendation followed an evaluation of the County's existing animal control operations and discussions with the Sheriff. At the time of the decision, both of the department's two authorized positions were vacant.

SUSTAINABLE SERVICES & BUDGETING

Board Moves Forward with Engineering Services Selection Process

The Board approved moving forward with a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for Continuing Engineering and Construction Engineering Inspection (CEI) Services as the County's existing contracts approach expiration.

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The action establishes the Board of County Commissioners as the review committee responsible for evaluating qualifications submitted by interested engineering firms. Commissioner Paul Donofro recused himself from serving on the review committee, citing his professional relationships with engineering firms through his business, Donofro Architects, and the potential perception of a conflict of interest. The County will also utilize standard Engineers Joint Contract Documents Committee (EJCDC) agreements as part of the contracting process.

These continuing services help the County plan, design, oversee, and inspect infrastructure and construction projects, supporting quality workmanship, regulatory compliance, and responsible management of public investments.

SUSTAINABLE SERVICES & BUDGETING

Board Reviews Purchase Offer for Former Sheriff's Office Property

The Board approved a purchase proposal for the former Sheriff's Office property on Highway 90 in Marianna, which has been listed for sale through the County's contracted real estate agent for nearly a year.

The proposal includes a $500,000 purchase offer from Chrome Ministries, compared to the property's original listing price of $675,000. Chrome Ministries intends to use the facility for administrative and vocational offices.

An important consideration in the proposed sale is the public safety infrastructure that remains on the property, including radio communications equipment inside the building, a communications tower and antennas, a backup generator, and fuel tanks still used by Sheriff's Office vehicles. Any sale would require an easement allowing the County and Sheriff's Office continued access to these facilities until the equipment can be relocated. Because some of these systems may take an extended period to move, maintaining uninterrupted access would be a necessary condition of the agreement.

SUSTAINABLE SERVICES & BUDGETING

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LEGEND:

Scan Here FOR COMPLETE MEETING AGENDA