

**SPECIAL MEETING
LEVY COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
September 9, 2025**

The Special Meeting of the Board of County Commissioners was held on September 9, 2025 at 5:01 P.M. in the BoCC Meeting Room at the Levy County Government Center.

CALL TO ORDER: Madam Chair Mills called to order the budget meeting at 5:01 P.M.

INVOCATION: Given by Comm. Meeks

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Led by Comm. Hodge

ROLL CALL:

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT:

Madam Chair, Comm. Desiree Mills
Vice Chair, Comm. Tim Hodge
Comm. Charlie Kennedy
Comm. Rock Meeks
Comm. Johnny Hiers

ALSO PRESENT:

County Attorney – Nicolle Shalley
County Manager – Mary-Ellen Harper

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

- **Action Taken:**
 - Amendments: No changes
 - Motion Comm. Kennedy
 - Second Comm. Hodge
 - Vote Outcome 5-0

Business or Informational Items

1. Requesting the Levy County Board of County Commissioners to adopt RESOLUTION NO. 2025- 47. FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES. (Audio 3:12)

- **Presenter:** Mary-Ellen Harper, County Manager,
- **Discussion:**
 - Resolution to adopt fire protection service assessments for fiscal year 2025-2026, effective October 1, 2025.
 - Preliminary maximum rate set in June 2025 at \$374 per residential dwelling unit; staff recommended \$250 per dwelling unit.
 - Other rates:
 - Commercial: \$0.48 per square foot
 - Industrial/Warehouse: \$0.06 per square foot
 - Institutional: \$0.20 per square foot
 - Vacant Land: \$28 for the first 160 acres, \$0.01 per acre thereafter
 - Exemptions: Government buildings, tax-exempt institutional buildings, non-residential agricultural buildings, and vacancy credits for RV/mobile home parks.
 - Expected net revenue: Approximately \$4.7 million, collected via the tax bill.
 - Public Comments:
 - **Renate Cannon (Chiefland):** addressed the assessment rate being considered and was appreciative of the board going half the amount of what they could have gone, but some families still won't be able to afford any increase. Wanted to know how the county provided these services before assessments.
 - **Teresa McKenzie (Inglis):** This increase is just below 100% increase on this assessment. Why not increase incrementally?
 - **Stacey Peters (Williston):** Raised affordability concerns, noting the impact on fixed-income residents. Suggested tabling the resolution to explore alternatives like a sales surtax to distribute costs more equitably.
 - **Rose Marie Aslanian (Archer-Levy):** Wanted to know if EMS employees are county employees.
 - **Linda Jane Cramer (Williston):** As a realtor, highlighted the impact of rising assessments on homeowners, particularly those on fixed incomes or inheriting property. Urged reconsideration of the increase.
 - **Edward Thren (Williston):** Criticized the large increase as disproportionate to inflation, suggesting smaller annual increases to avoid burdening retirees.
 - **Linwood Shouse (Williston):** Confirmed rates (\$250 for fire, \$116 for landfill) and echoed concerns about the cumulative tax burden, especially for fixed-income residents.
 - **Kathy Johnson (Bronson):** Wanting to know how services were paid for if the fees didn't cover the service itself. How much in reserves are there and can that be used?
 - **Jason Rivera, Aclarian Subcontractor - County Budget Employee:** Clarified how the general fund has been subsidizing these services.

- **Denise Blackburn (Bronson):** Wanted to know if the EMS service bills someone's insurance for being dispatched to the resident's home?
- **Steven Drefke (Chiefland):** There was a big change out in Commissioners because of this type of taxing action. We are experiencing inflation and there's a spending problem. Criticized the large increase, suggesting a spending problem and advocating for a sales surtax to fund services.
- **Board Comments:**
 - Clarified that EMS assessments fund countywide services, with approximately 7,000 EMS calls annually compared to 1,100 fire calls.
 - Noted a \$3.8 million general fund transfer is still required to balance the EMS budget, even with reimbursements.
 - Discussed the limitations of a sales surtax, which cannot fund operational costs like salaries but can support capital improvements (e.g., ambulances).
 - Commissioner Johnny Hiers proposed reducing the EMS rate to \$200 to ease the burden, acknowledging the risk to reserves but responding to public concerns.
- **Action Taken:**

■ Motion	Comm. Hiers
■ Second	Comm. Meeks
■ Vote Outcome	5-0

**Comm. Rock Meeks exited the meeting.*

3. Requesting the Levy County Board of County Commissioners to adopt RESOLUTION NO. 2025-49. DISPOSAL OF SOLID WASTE AND RECOVERED MATERIALS. (Audio 1:26)

- **Presenter:** Mary-Ellen Harper, County Manager,
- **Discussion:**
 - Resolution to adopt solid waste assessments for fiscal year 2025-2026, effective October 1, 2025, for residential properties only.
 - Rates unchanged since 2018: \$116 per dwelling unit.
 - Expected net revenue: Approximately \$2.471 million.
 - Other rates:
 - Commercial: \$0.16 per square foot
 - Industrial/Warehouse: \$0.01 per square foot
 - Institutional: \$0.27 per square foot
 - Exemptions mirror fire assessment exemptions.
 - Expected net revenue: Approximately \$5.733 million.

- **Public Comments:**
 - **Denise Blackburn (Bronson):** Suggested the county use decals on vehicles to prove residency for Levy County dumping. How do the employees know?
 - **Linda Cooper (Williston):** Criticized the assessment, arguing the landfill should be self-sustaining through user fees rather than a flat \$116 assessment. Noted residents in municipalities pay both municipal garbage fees and the county assessment.
 - **Jeff Hardison (Chiefland):** Thank you for the satellite stations that lowered my cost to dump my garbage instead of driving to Bronson.
 - **Grayson Albert (Williston):** Wants the county to look at the landfill as a profit center and not a liability. Please consider looking at the potential you have to make profit.
 - **Kathy Johnson (Bronson):** Requested reconsideration of the \$116 rate for seniors and disabled residents who also pay for private garbage pickup. It is getting harder to take my garbage to the dump myself.
 - **Board Comments:**
 - Acknowledged concerns about non-resident landfill use and committed to exploring verification methods.
 - Noted the landfill assessment's history and the board's efforts to maintain rates since 2018.
 - **Action Taken:**

■ Motion	Comm. Kennedy
■ Second	Comm. Hodge
■ Vote Outcome	4-0
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4. Requesting the Levy County Board of County Commissioners to adopt RESOLUTION NO. 2025-50. ROADWAY MAINTENANCE SERVICES ON SUBDIVISION ROADS. (Audio 1:38)

- **Presenter:** Mary-Ellen Harper, County Manager,
 - **Discussion:**
 - Resolution to adopt roadway maintenance assessments for fiscal year 2025-2026, effective October 1, 2025, for subdivision roads.
 - Rates unchanged from the previous year; no updates to the study.
 - **Public Comments:** NONE
 - **Action Taken:**

○ Motion	Comm. Kennedy
○ Second	Comm. Hiers
○ Vote Outcome	4-0
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**Madam Chair Mills recessed the meeting for 25 mins to make adjustments to resolutions.*

5. Requesting the Levy County Board of County Commissioners to adopt RESOLUTION NUMBER 2025-51. ADOPTING THE PROPOSED MILLAGE RATE. *(Audio 1:40:43)*

- **Presenter:** Mary-Ellen Harper, County Manager,
- **Discussion:**
 - The Fiscal Year 2025-2026 proposed countywide operating millage rate is 8.7500 mills, which is more than the rolled-back millage rate of 7.8037 mills by 12.1263%. 2. The County has no voted debt service millage. 3. This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.
- **Public Comments:** NONE
- **Action Taken:**

○ Motion	Comm. Hiers
○ Second	Comm. Kennedy
○ Vote Outcome	4-0

6. Requesting the Levy County Board of County Commissioners to adopt RESOLUTION NUMBER 2025-52. ADOPTING THE TENTATIVE BUDGET *(Audio 1:50:40)*

- **Presenter:** Mary-Ellen Harper, County Manager,
- **Discussion:**
 - The Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Tentative Budget in the amount of \$197,786,252 as shown by fund and set forth in the attached [Exhibit A](#).
- **Public Comments:**
 - **Chief Lamar Stegall (Williston Fire):** Wanted to clarify if the municipality's fire requests were being cut by half. Confirmed by board. Explained how costs have increased and gave examples of vehicles and equipment expenses. Communication has lacking and this cut was just realized by our department last night with no discussions with county management.
 - **Jonathan Bishop (Williston):** Kicking the can down the road is not the way to make decisions. Things will be even more expensive in the future moving forward.
- **Board Comments:**
 - Comm. Hiers let Chief Stegall know if they needed more in the future the door is open within reason.
 - Comm. Hodge reiterated to Chief Stegall that the door is still open and they may not even need it.
 - Comm. Kennedy made a motion to set the budget and adopt resolution 2025-52 but the fire departments can come back and make requests during the year if need be.
- **Action Taken:**

○ Motion	Comm. Kennedy
○ Second	Comm. Hodge
○ Vote Outcome	4-0

PUBLIC COMMENT: NONE

Adjournment

- **Time:** 7:41 P.M.

Minutes Submitted by: Matt Brooks, Clerk of Court & Comptroller

Date Submitted: 09/09/2025