

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
UNION COUNTY, FLORIDA
BUDGET MEETING
AUGUST 18, 2025

NOTE: If any person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at this meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record is made.

PRESIDING: Channing Dobbs, Chair; Donna Jackson, Vice-Chair

RECORDING: Reagan E. Robinson, Deputy Clerk

ATTENDING:

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| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Willie Croft | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Kellie Hendricks Rhoades, Clerk of Courts & Comptroller |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Channing Dobbs | <input type="checkbox"/> Russell A. Wade III, County Attorney |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Donna Jackson | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Jimmy Williams, County Coordinator |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Mac Johns | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Pamela Woodington, Finance Director |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commissioner Melissa McNeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Dianne Hannon, Board Secretary |

MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Vice-Chair Jackson called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M. She noted that Chair Dobbs would be present later in the meeting.

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE

Commissioner McNeal offered the prayer and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Commissioner McNeal moved to adopt the agenda, with the addition of Health Insurance added after Public Comments. Commissioner Croft seconded the motion, and it passed unanimously.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Hearing no requests to speak, Vice-Chair Jackson closed the floor to public comments.

DISCUSSION OF BUDGETS

Mrs. Denise Clemons, Building Department Secretary, stood before the Board to review the Building Department's budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Vice-Chair Jackson asked Clerk Rhoades if the County will run into any issues carrying over the remaining fund balance from the previous year. Clerk Rhoades responded stating that the Florida Statute allows for funds to be carried over for two years and the Building Department's balance is less than that. Vice-Chair Jackson then inquired as to why a code enforcement official position cannot be funded in the Building Department's budget. Clerk Rhoades informed her that code enforcement doesn't fall under the description of what the department can allocate funds toward. Vice-Chair Jackson followed this question up by noting that some counties allow certified building inspectors to be contracted privately. Mrs. Clemons stated that this is allowed by Florida Statutes and is something that the County should consider. Vice-Chair Jackson suggested the Board begin to budget for code enforcement. Mr. Williams recommended moving around \$75,000 for this reason, which is the amount code enforcement was estimated to cost the county in an earlier calculation. Discussion ensued regarding what the parameter should be surrounding contracting with a code enforcement official. Vice-Chair then asked about salary increases within the department. Mr. Williams shared that a 3% increase for Mr. Whidden and a 3% plus \$1 per hour increase for Mrs. Clemons is reflected in the budget. Discussion regarding impact fees and special

assessments ensued, with Vice-Chair Jackson expressing her feeling that it needs to be looked into as soon as possible.

Mr. Brent Allen, EMS Director, stood before the Board to review the Volunteer Fire Department's budget for the upcoming fiscal year. Clerk Rhoades immediately noted that the negative fund balance is a result of a transfer late in the previous fiscal year from EMS, and when combined with EMS the total is positive. She further explained that the transfer was for the Fire Coordinator salary which was moved out of Fire and into EMS. Mr. Allen then shared with the Board that the Volunteer Fire Department has been out of compliance, which has caused grants to not come to fruition. Discussion ensued regarding the impact of these grants not coming to fruition has had on the balance and what the necessary steps are to bring them back into compliance. Mr. Allen stated that he is working to do so.

Vice-Chair Jackson passed the gavel to Chair Dobbs upon his arrival.

Mr. Williams suggested the utilities line item should be reduced as a result of loss of the Lake Butler station.

Mr. Williams then brought Cemetery Maintenance's budget for the upcoming fiscal year before the Board for review on behalf of Mr. Chris Griffis, Road Department Superintendent. Clerk Rhoades pointed out the total employee costs to the County for this maintenance, and that it costs the County \$80,000 annually to keep Cemetery Maintenance running, which is a burden to the General Fund. Chair Dobbs asked which cemeteries are giving toward this cost. Mrs. Woodington stated that she would provide Board members with a detail report. Clerk Rhoades posed a question to the Board, asking if they wish to continue to maintain cemeteries. Vice-Chair Jackson shared that she discussed this with Attorney Wade and that his opinion is that they fall under public land. Chair Dobbs suggested creating a fee schedule to obtain the contributions. Clerk Rhoades suggested moving payments up a month per year until it is in March. Vice-Chair Jackson then proposed that the fuel budget be lowered to \$10,000 instead of \$14,000. Clerk Rhoades noted that realistically, it could be moved to \$8,000. The Board agreed to do so by general consent. Clerk Rhoades then shared that as a result, the overall transfer could be lowered to \$11,000. The Board agreed to this as well.

Moving into the General Fund, Vice-Chair Jackson brought up the transfer of \$412,600 from Reserves to balance the budget. Clerk Rhoades confirmed that this is the amount needed to keep fund balance at the recommended level. Regarding the Legislative Expense line item, which includes the County Commissioners' salaries and their insurance, Vice-Chair Jackson suggested that the health insurance budget be removed for any Commissioner that does not intend to use it. Clerk Rhoades stated that she can see how this would be beneficial in relation to Commissioners who know they're not going to use it. Vice-Chair Jackson suggested budgeting one more than those who are currently taking the County's insurance in case of extenuating circumstances.

In regards to the travel for Commissioners line item, Vice-Chair Jackson shared her concern that \$5,000 may not be enough to cover the upcoming conferences. Clerk Rhoades clarified that the expenses for this line item is specifically for travel, while conference registration is placed under Training. Vice-Chair Jackson suggested bumping Travel to \$6,000 and Training to \$2,500. Mrs. Woodington then asked if the Board would allocate a small budget of about \$750-\$1,000 for the Courthouse Christmas decorations. Vice-Chair Jackson stated that this sounded good and requested that the budget line be isolated, and include other holidays. Clerk Rhoades noted that if it is the pleasure of the Board she can create a line item within Courthouse Facilities Operating called Christmas/Holiday

and allocate \$1,000 toward it. The Board agreed to this by general consent. Mrs. Woodington thanked the Board. The Board then discussed the Auto Insurance line item and the change in its amount.

Clerk Rhoades then discussed the need to bring Mrs. Rita Gracki from part time to full time. She shared that she is an asset and noted that Mrs. Woodington is planning her retirement within the next two years, and this is needed for succession. Vice-Chair Jackson then asked Clerk Rhoades about the \$13,000 budget for Clerk's IT. Clerk Rhoades clarified that the funds are for mostly tech support and Clericus maintenance fees. Vice-Chair Jackson asked if Clerk Rhoades would provide a breakdown of IT expenses the Board is paying and Clerk Rhoades stated that she would send it to her. Vice-Chair Jackson went on to inquire about the increase in Sheriff's Office's employees taking on health insurance. Discussion ensued regarding this increase as well as the two new positions for Courthouse Security. Discussion also ensued regarding closing off the front entrance due to screening requirements and what this means for day-to-day functions. Clerk Rhoades informed the Board that no one on the committee really likes the idea, but they see no other option to ensure proper security measures.

Clerk Rhoades shared that there have been no complaints on the new phone systems, which will greatly reduce a lot of lines from Windstream phone services as they are phased out. She then informed the Board that the elevator in the Courthouse had been having some issues, which she had been made aware of. While working to have the elevator serviced, employees realized that someone needed to be designated to make the day-to-day decisions regarding the elevator. Clerk Rhoades asked the Board who they would like to place in charge of its operations. She noted she wouldn't mind doing so because her office is so close to it. The Board agreed by general consent that the Clerk would be responsible for supervising the elevator's day-to-day function due to her proximity. Clerk Rhoades then shared that nothing is budgeted for other Courthouse Security because it is unknown what will be expended from the line item aside from personnel included in the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Williams provided a few examples such as upgraded doors and maintenance.

Vice-Chair Jackson highlighted the increase in Emergency Management's budget request before sharing her concern that in order to keep a healthy fund balance the Board has to transfer almost \$1,000,000 from Reserves, which is depleting the fund almost entirely. She noted her awareness of the necessity of the expenditures, but feels that the County may be broke if funds continue to come from the Reserves like it has been. Vice-Chair Jackson asked where interest revenues are budgeted. Clerk Rhoades noted that they are in each department, but they had not been fully allocated yet. She shared that they are being allocated based on the amount of cash each department has invested. Vice-Chair Jackson noted that the General Fund shows \$6,484 in interest and asked if the amount that has yet to be allocated is substantial. Clerk Rhoades stated that she could not give a definitive answer at this time. She closed by sharing that Medicaid should reduce by around \$140,000, that she believes this is an error and will double check the amounts.

Clerk Rhoades then pointed out that SHIP is the only grant that has charges for admin fees built in. She noted that this would be a way to bring revenues into the County. Mr. Williams noted that some grants have these fees built in. Rather than continuing this discussion, Chair Dobbs suggested trimming the fat off of the budget after seeing the final numbers.

Mr. Williams stated that his inputs into the General Fund budget spreadsheet weren't right. Clerk Rhoades noted that she will send him an updated version after this meeting for him to make any changes and email back to her before the next meeting.

Budget Meeting
August 18, 2025

CONSIDERATION OF NEXT BUDGET MEETING DATE AND TIME

Chair Dobbs suggested that the next Budget Meeting be held Thursday, August 28 at 4:00 P.M. and the Board agreed to this by general consent.

Seeing no further business, Chair Dobbs adjourned the meeting by general consent at 5:54 P.M.

Adopted by vote of the Board of County Commissioners on September 15, 2025.

DRAFT