



DeSoto County

Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Minutes - Final

Tuesday, June 9, 2026

9:00 AM

QUASI-JUDICIAL PUBLIC HEARING

ROLL CALL

Present: Commissioner JC Deriso
Commissioner Judy Schaefer
Commissioner Steven Hickox
Commissioner Elton Langford
Commissioner Jerod Gross

TURN OFF OR SILENCE ALL CELL PHONES

PRAYER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Ed Horne of Pine Level Church gave the invocation.

INTRODUCTION OF ELECTED OFFICIALS

SET/AMEND

A motion was made by Commissioner Deriso, seconded by Commissioner Schaefer, to amend the agenda pulling item 14. The motion carried unanimously. Commissioner Gross made a motion to move the Employee presentation before the public forum for non-agenda items, seconded by Commissioner Langford. The motion carried unanimously.

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

PUBLIC FORUM FOR NON-AGENDA ITEMS

Joseph Minore once again addressed the Board regarding his proposal to rezone his property to allow primitive camping for a fee. He questioned when the matter would be brought before the Board for a vote, noting that he has been working through the approval process for more than a year. Kenny Gault, a resident of the Nocatee area, spoke about hurricane preparedness and county development. Referencing a recent emergency preparedness program, he noted discussions about the dangers of high winds and the point at which first responders can no longer safely operate during a storm. Gault expressed concern about properties containing excessive outdoor debris, equipment, and clutter that could become airborne hazards during hurricanes. He encouraged the Board to direct code enforcement staff to proactively identify and address such properties as a public safety measure to help protect residents and emergency personnel. During public comment, dozens of residents addressed the Board regarding the proposed AI Data Center. The most frequently cited concerns involved water usage, groundwater impacts, freshwater availability, saltwater intrusion, noise pollution, air quality, and potential health effects. Several residents shared personal experiences with ongoing industrial

noise and expressed concerns about impacts on children, seniors, and individuals with respiratory conditions. Many speakers questioned the project's potential effects on regional water resources, including the Peace River watershed, and requested additional information regarding environmental studies, consultations with neighboring counties, wastewater management plans, and safeguards to protect water supplies during droughts or emergency situations. Residents also raised concerns about the long-term environmental and infrastructure impacts of the project and urged county officials to proceed cautiously. Questions were also raised regarding the project's projected economic benefits. Several speakers requested greater transparency regarding claims of significant annual revenue generation, asking how those figures were calculated, whether anticipated revenues would offset infrastructure and public service costs, and whether additional county expenditures, including specialized emergency response equipment, might be required to support the facility. Multiple residents specifically requested that the Board place a moratorium on the project, or otherwise delay consideration, until additional studies, analysis, and public review could be completed. Speakers emphasized the need for more information regarding the project's environmental, economic, and infrastructure impacts before any final decisions are made. Others spoke in support of the proposed development, citing potential economic growth, job creation, and increased tax revenue for the county. Speaking on behalf of the developer, Erica Robertson stated that the facility would utilize closed-loop cooling systems designed to reduce water consumption by more than 90 percent compared to previous operations, with groundwater serving only as a last-resort water source. She further stated that the project would not increase local electricity rates. Robertson acknowledged that the project remains in the pre-development phase and that environmental studies are still underway, with no findings currently available for public release. Overall, commenters stressed the importance of protecting DeSoto County's long-term water security, environmental resources, public safety, and quality of life while ensuring that any future development is carefully evaluated and aligns with the interests of county residents.

PRESENTATION

1. Employee & Recognition Awards

Latrinda Jones, presented Employee Recognition Awards. The recipients of these awards have made a significant contribution towards the goals of the County and their departments through exceptional job performance, longevity and service above and beyond their normal job duties.

Outstanding Team Performance - The Planning Department

Outstanding Employee - Ricky Mercer

Thrifty Nickel - Harvey Sweeting and Ricky Mercer

5 Years of Service

Brian Golden

Jacob Haynes

Travis Kona

Brian Ross

15 Years of Service

Peter Danao

Andrew Fabila

20 Years of Service

Sharon Gray

Alex Shannon

Kirk Simcic - 20 years of service DeSoto County /4 years of prior service with the City

Harvey Sweeting - 20 years of service DeSoto County/22 years of prior service with the City

Lewis Wells II - 20 years of service DeSoto County/16 years of prior service with the City

25 Years of Service

Latrinda Jones

CONSENT AGENDA-MOTION TO APPROVE

Approval of the Consent Agenda

A motion was made by Commissioner Gross, seconded by Commissioner Langford, to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

2. H-GACBuy Interlocal Contract for Cooperative Purchasing

Attachments: [HGACBUY](#)

3. Purchase of Public Safety Boating Equipment

Attachments: [Rescue Boat HGAC quote](#)

4. Resolution/Adoption of the Cash Handling and Rounding Policy

Attachments: [Cash Handling and Rounding Policy.pdf](#)
[Resolution.docx](#)

Enactment No: 2026-047

REGULAR BUSINESS

5. Proclamation/Juneteenth Day 2026

Attachments: [Juneteenth Day 2026](#)

Mandy Hines, read the Proclamation into record proclaiming June 19th, 2026, as Juneteenth Day in Desoto County.

A motion was made by Commissioner Langford, seconded by Commissioner Deriso, to approve this Proclamation. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

6. Resolution/Budget Amendment Fiscal Year 2025/2026

Attachments: [Resolution](#)
[Summary and Narrative](#)
[2026-106 Utilities Capital Wastewater](#)
[2026-110 Public Safety](#)

Brian Wagner presented a requested to adopt a Resolution relating to the budget amendments affecting the 2025/2026 adopted budget as provided in Budget

Amendment 2026-106, and 2026-110.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gross, seconded by Commissioner Langford, to adopt this Resolution. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

Enactment No: 2026-048

7. Accounts and Warrants Drawn Per Schedule of Bills Payable.

Attachments: [AP Check Report - Warrants 04-28-26 to 05-26-26](#)

Peter Danao, presented a request to approve accounts and warrants drawn according to Schedule(s) of Bills Payable April 28, 2026-May 26, 2026.

A motion was made by Commissioner Langford, seconded by Commissioner Gross, to approve the accounts and warrants drawn. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Langford, and Gross

Recused: Hickox

8. Fort Ogden Railroad Crossing Request for Direction

Attachments: [Fort Ogden RR Crossings Exhibits](#)
[Seminole Gulf Railway- CRISI Grant Letter 04-30-2026 \(1\)](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Langford, seconded by Commissioner Schaefer, to table this item and return it to the Board of County Commissioners, on 6/23/2026. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

9. Liverpool & Boll Weevil Seminole Gulf Proposals

Attachments: [Seminole Gulf Liverpool Quote](#)
[Seminole Gulf Boll Weevil Quote](#)

A motion was made by Commissioner Langford, seconded by Commissioner Schaefer, to table this item and return it to the Board of County Commissioners, on 6/23/2026. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

10. Resolution/Appointment of alternate member to the Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment

Attachments: [2026-5-20 Jennifer Bowser PC Alt. Appointment](#)

Misty Servia presented a request to approve the appointment of Jennifer Bowser as an alternate member of the DeSoto County Planning Commission and Board of Adjustment.

A motion was made by Commissioner Schaefer, seconded by Commissioner Deriso, to adopt this Resolution. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

Enactment No: 2026-048

11. Cooperative Purchase Agreement Generator Repair and Maintenance

Attachments: [CAT SOURCEWELL](#)

Cindy Talamantez made a request to approve the Cooperative Purchase

Agreement through Sourcewell for generator repair and maintenance services.

A motion was made by Commissioner Langford, seconded by Commissioner Gross, to approve this Contract. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

12. Contract / Construction - Mills Generator Project

Attachments: [26-13-01ITB Contract - Final](#)

Cindy Talamantez made a request to approve the construction contract with Accurate Power and Technology for the installation of an emergency backup generator at the Mills Building located at 815 N Mills, Arcadia, FL.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gross, seconded by Commissioner Langford, to approve this agreement. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

13. Approval of Surplus Property Sale- 11212 SW Cedar Ave.

Attachments: [BillOfSale12112 Cedar](#)

Cindy Talamantez made a request to accept and approve the purchase offer of \$56,500 for the property located at 11212 SW Cedar Avenue and authorize Legal to prepare a Deed of Conveyance.

A motion was made by Commissioner Gross, seconded by Commissioner Deriso, to approve the surplus property sale. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

14. Resolution/Burn Ban/Drought Emergency expires

Attachments: [Resolution ending Burn Ban 6-9-2026](#)

This Resolution was pulled.

15. Funding Agreement / Florida Department of Environmental Protection

Attachments: [FDEP\(L0181_ DeSoto County](#)

Mandy Hines, presented a request to approve the funding agreement between the County and FDEP as presented.

A motion was made by Commissioner Langford, seconded by Commissioner Deriso, to approve this agreement. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Deriso, Schaefer, Hickox, Langford, and Gross

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Mandy Hines, County Administrator, sought Board direction regarding a request from Eugene Turner Jr. for a 30-day extension to complete berm planting at his dirt pit. The request would extend the deadline from June 15 to July 15 due to a lack of rainfall. After brief discussion, the Board expressed general agreement with granting the extension, noting that the work should be completed by mid-July. Staff indicated an administrative letter would be issued consistent with the prior extension process. Ms. Hines then provided an update on the DCIP application review process. She advised that while staff is working diligently, the County will not be able to meet a July timeline-and likely not August-due to the need for specialized technical input, including

acoustics, engineering, and power generation expertise. She emphasized that it would be imprudent to advance an incomplete application to the Board and recommended allowing additional time to ensure a thorough and accurate review. The Board acknowledged the importance of obtaining complete and reliable data and supported prioritizing a comprehensive evaluation over expedited review. Discussion continued regarding broader planning considerations, including lessons learned from a recent Virginia site visit and ongoing concerns related to emergency preparedness, development impacts, and potential risks associated with large-scale projects. Board members emphasized the importance of obtaining complete information, carefully evaluating both likely and unlikely risks, and ensuring that decisions are made with appropriate expert input and due diligence. Ms. Hines also briefed the Board on anticipated fiscal impacts resulting from proposed state tax reform measures affecting homestead property tax relief. She reported an estimated \$4.1 million reduction in county revenue beginning in 2027, along with potential structural changes to millage rate calculations and budget constraints. She further explained that the County is already obligated to fund approximately \$26 million in constitutional requirements and over \$30 million in mandated obligations before discretionary services are considered, including economic development, tourism, parks, libraries, and other community programs. She noted that staff will prepare detailed budget scenarios, including a “second-year impact” model, to help the Board evaluate future funding decisions. These will be presented in upcoming workshops over the next several months. The Board concurred with developing forward-looking budget scenarios to better understand potential impacts and guide future decision-making.

COUNTY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Board members thanked residents for their participation and public comments regarding the proposed data center and other county issues, emphasizing that community input is being carefully considered as part of the decision-making process. Commissioners also addressed the proposed homestead exemption amendment, expressing concerns about its potential impact on county revenues, services, infrastructure, and future budgeting. Additional comments included recognition of the successful 4-H Awards Ceremony and Hurricane Expo, appreciation for county staff and volunteers, condolences to the family of Deputy Timothy Kratzer, and reminders for residents to remain safe during the summer season. Overall, board members reiterated their commitment to making informed decisions that balance community concerns with the county's long-term needs.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business before the Board, Chairman Hickox adjourned the meeting at 12:40PM

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DESOTO COUNTY, FLORIDA

MANDY HINES
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

STEVE HICKOX
CHAIRMAN

Supplemental Board Documents Public Meeting 06-09-2026

Attachments: BOCC Speaker Cards 06-09-2026
 Supplemental Document 06-09-2026

NOTE: For quasi-judicial matters, any party desiring a verbatim record of the proceeding of this hearing for the purpose of an appeal is advised to make private arrangements for the production of a record and anyone wishing to present documents or other written evidence to the Board must provide eight (8) copies of the written material . If special accommodations are required in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, individuals should contact the County Administrator's Office by calling 863-993-4800 at least 48 hours prior to the hearing.