



DeSoto County

Board of County Commissioners

Meeting Minutes - Final

Tuesday, July 14, 2026

1:00 PM

Budget Workshop I

CALL TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

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

PRESENTATIONS

Discussion of the 2026-2027 Budget

Power Point Presentation on the 2026-2027 Budget

Attachments: [Budget Workshop 1 Presentation \(07-14-2026\) Draft Rev 7](#)
[07-13-2026 Final to MH](#)

Brian Wagner alongside Mandy Hines presented the proposed FY 2026/2027 budget, outlining projected revenues, expenditures, capital projects, departmental requests, and the County's long-term financial outlook. The proposed countywide budget totals approximately \$191 million, including nearly \$40 million in grant funding, with the General Fund projected to receive more than \$72,893,707 million in revenue from ad valorem taxes, licenses, permits, intergovernmental revenues, and other sources. The County maintains a strong financial position with approximately \$9 million in General Fund Balance reserves, and approximately \$10 million in Contingency reserves representing about 4.7 months of operating expenses. Commissioners reviewed departmental budget requests, which include vehicle replacements, equipment purchases, technology upgrades, infrastructure improvements, and public safety needs. The Sheriff's proposed budget of approximately \$22.7 million reflects increased funding for law enforcement, corrections, communications, court security, and E911 services. Staff noted that departments were instructed to submit flat or reduced budgets whenever possible, resulting in significantly lower capital requests than in previous years. The Board discussed major capital priorities, including continued funding for the ****Kings Highway project****, an additional \$2.5 million for annual road paving using one-time revenues, replacement of the courthouse chiller system, and the proposed replacement of the County's 23-year-old financial software. Staff explained that modernizing the financial system would improve

budgeting, purchasing, payroll, reporting, transparency, and operational efficiency while reducing reliance on multiple software platforms. Ms. Hines emphasized that much of the County's budget is dedicated to legally mandated services, including constitutional offices, the Sheriff's Office, jail operations, emergency communications, courthouse operations, Medicaid cost sharing, cybersecurity, public records management, emergency services, and other required governmental functions. Commissioners also reviewed discretionary programs such as parks, libraries, tourism, Extension services, mosquito control, community events, and economic development, recognizing their value to residents despite not being state mandates. Budget discussions also focused on increasing operating costs, including higher Florida Retirement System (FRS) contributions, employee health insurance, Medicaid obligations, utility costs, and significant inflation in emergency vehicles and equipment. Staff cautioned that these rising costs continue to place pressure on future budgets despite the County's conservative financial management. A significant portion of the workshop centered on the proposed statewide property tax amendment. Staff and Property Appraiser Dave Williams discussed its potential effects on county revenues, property owners, businesses, renters, and agricultural operations. Mr. Williams emphasized that the proposal would not eliminate property taxes but would substantially change how they are administered, likely increasing administrative responsibilities and homestead fraud investigations. Commissioners expressed concern that any shift in the tax burden could ultimately increase costs for renters and businesses while reducing revenue available for essential county services. Recognizing the uncertainty surrounding the amendment, commissioners discussed delaying nonessential capital expenditures, strengthening reserves, evaluating additional cost recovery through existing assessments, and preserving financial flexibility until the amendment's outcome and implementing legislation become clear. Ms. Hines also proposed hosting a series of community meetings throughout the county this fall to gather public input on service priorities should future revenue reductions become necessary. Commissioners supported the outreach effort, emphasizing the importance of involving residents in future budget decisions. The workshop concluded with staff reaffirming the County's long-standing commitment to conservative budgeting, careful revenue forecasting, and responsible financial planning while preparing for future economic uncertainty and upcoming budget workshops with constitutional officers.

ADJOURNMENT

Being no further business before the Board, Chairman Hickox adjourned the meeting at 2:24pm

ATTEST:

BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
DESOTO COUNTY, FLORIDA

MANDY HINES
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

STEVE HICKOX
CHAIRMAN

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.