

**Forest Preserves of Winnebago County
BOARD MEETING**

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 – 5:30 PM
Forest Preserve Headquarters



AGENDA

- A. ROLL CALL**
- B. PLEDGE of ALLEGIANCE**
- C. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**
- D. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**
Minutes for December 17, 2025 Regular Board Meeting
- E. OLD BUSINESS**
- F. NEW BUSINESS**
1. Bills for December
3. Approval of Purchase of Golf Utility Vehicle
4. Budget Amendment for Golf Personnel
6. Budget Amendment for Natural Resources Building
8. Length of Service Bonus Policy
- G. DISCUSSION**
1. Holt House Next Steps
- H. UPDATES and REPORTS**
9. Preserve Operations
11. Natural Resource Management
13. Golf
15. Marketing
16. Human Resources
6. Partner Groups
- I. CLOSED SESSION**
Personnel
- J. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED – Consent Agenda**
6. Approval of Closed Session Minutes from Dec. 20, 2023.
7. Approval of Closed Session Minutes from Jan. 17, 2024.
8. Approval of Closed Session Minutes from Feb. 21, 2024.
9. Approval of Closed Session Minutes from Nov. 20, 2024.
10. Approval of Closed Session Minutes from Dec. 18, 2024.
11. Approval of Closed Session Minutes from Feb. 19, 2025.
12. Approval of Closed Session Minutes from Sept. 17, 2025.
13. Approval of Closed Session Minutes from Oct. 22, 2025.
14. Approval of Closed Session Minutes from Nov. 19, 2025.
17. Approval of Resolution for Review, Release and Destruction of Closed Session Minutes
- K. ANNOUNCEMENTS and COMMUNICATIONS**
1. Winter Tree & Shrub ID Hike at Hononegah Forest Preserve starting at 10:00 a.m. on January 29th.
2. Snowshoeing Excursion with Rocktown Adventures at Kieselburg Forest Preserve starting at 1:00 p.m. on February 7th.
3. Calling Frog Monitor Training, starting at 6:00pm virtually on February 12th.

L. ADJOURNMENT

Next regular Board Meeting– 5:30 PM Wednesday, February 18, Forest Preserve Headquarters

If you require assistance while attending our meetings, please call 815-877-6100 or email ewendlandt@winnebagoforest.org no less than 48 hours prior to the Board meeting.

Anyone wishing to address the Board must call 815-877-6100 or email ewendlandt@winnebagoforest.org in advance of the meeting.

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County
Authorization to Process Payment of Bills



January 21, 2026

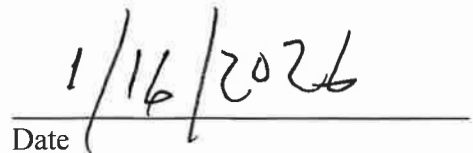
**TO: THE AUDITOR AND TREASURER OF THE
FOREST PRESERVES OF WINNEBAGO COUNTY.**

Your Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners, to whom were referred the following bills in the amount of **\$ 622,372.23** against the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County, have reviewed and approved and therefore respectfully request that orders be drawn on the account of the Forest Preserve District for their payment:

CORPORATE FUND	3001	260,848.99
BOTANICAL GARDEN FUND	3120	3,038.40
HEALTH BENEFITS FUND	3185	41,690.64
SOCIAL SECURITY FUND	3192	16,775.33
RETIREMENT FUND	3193	20,323.04
LIABILITY RESERVE FUND	3194	155,388.00
IMPROVEMENT & DEV. FUND	3302	64,611.84
CORPORATE FUND	3402	<u>59,695.99</u>
		\$ 622,372.23

Respectfully submitted,


Steve Chapman, Finance Director


Date 1/16/2026

RESOLUTION

No. 26-0101

PAYMENT OF BILLS FOR DECEMBER

WHEREAS, the Forest Preserve incurs annual and monthly operating and capital expenditures during its budget cycle; and

WHEREAS, the Winnebago County Finance Department compiled the attached invoices relating to Forest Preserve expenditures to be paid for the month of December; and

WHEREAS, our Finance Director, Steve Chapman, has reviewed the invoices and avows them to be accurate and appropriate for payment; and

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board authorizes the payment of the attached compilation of bills totaling \$622,372.23 to be paid by the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County for the month of December 2025.

Voting YES _____ Voting NO _____ Voting ABSTAINED _____

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 21st day of January, 2026.

That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon its adoption.

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

RESOLUTION
No. 26-0102
PURCHASE OF GOLF UTILITY TRUCKSTER

WHEREAS, the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners approved the purchase of a new Utility Truckster for Ledges Golf Maintenance Department as part of the 2025-26 capital budget; and,

WHEREAS, the desired equipment is available through the Sourcewell Cooperative Purchasing program (Contract # 112624-TTC); and,

WHEREAS, Reinders Inc., Sussex, WI is the Toro golf dealer and is able to supply one Toro Workman HDX-2WD Truckster, for a total cost of \$35,141.31; and,

WHEREAS, staff budgeted \$37,500 for this capital purchase; and,

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County authorize the purchase of one Toro Workman HDX -2WD Truckster from Reinders Inc. of Sussex, WI., under Sourcewell Cooperative Purchasing Agreement #112624-TTC, for the cost of \$35,141.31.

Voting YES_____ Voting NO_____ Voting ABSTAINED_____

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 21st day of January, 2026.

That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon its adoption.

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County

ORDINANCE

No. 26-0103

**Amending the Annual Budget and Appropriations Ordinance
for the period of November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2026**

WHEREAS, Chapter 70, paragraph 805/13,4 Illinois Compiled Statues – 1992 states “After the adoption of the Annual Appropriation Ordinance, no further appropriations may be made at any other time during that fiscal year except as provided in this Act, provided that the Board of each district may amend such appropriation ordinance from time to time by the same procedure required by this Act for the original adoption of the appropriation ordinance in order to meet an immediate emergency,” and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners for the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County have agreed to include an additional full-time Golf Food and Beverage Manager position not previously provided; and,

WHEREAS, the cost of wages and benefits for the remainder of the FY 2025-26 budget year are projected to be \$64,000.00 or less; and,

WHEREAS, in order to facilitate the additional full-time position the Corporate Fund Balance will be utilized to fund the position.

NOW THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED as follows;

Section 1. That \$64,000 in appropriations shall be added to the 2025-2026 fiscal year Forest Preserve Golf Course Fund under expenses in Personnel and funded from the Corporate Fund Balance.

Corporate Expense Fund 3402 Personnel (Regular Wages) – Golf Course General 995 411.10 \$40,000.00
Corporate Expense Fund 3402 Personnel (Health Insurance) -Golf Course General 995 412.11 \$24,000.00

Section 2. That this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect immediately upon this adoption

Section 3. That the Secretary of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County is hereby authorized and directed to send two certified copies of this Ordinance to the District Executive Director and one to the Director of Finance.

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County

ORDINANCE

No. 26-0103

**Amending the Annual Budget and Appropriations Ordinance
for the period of November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2026**

Voting Yes

Judith Barnard

Mike Eickman

Gloria Lind

Cheryl Maggio

Jerry Paulson

Emily Porter

Jeff Tilly

Voting No

Judith Barnard

Mike Eickman

Gloria Lind

Cheryl Maggio

Jerry Paulson

Emily Porter

Jeff Tilly

The above and foregoing Ordinance was adopted this 21st day of January, 2026.

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County

ORDINANCE

No. 26-0104

**Amending the Annual Budget and Appropriations Ordinance
for the period from November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2026**

WHEREAS, Chapter 70, paragraph 805/13,4 Illinois Compiled Statutes – 1992 states “After the adoption of the Annual Appropriations Ordinance, no further appropriations may be made at any other time during that fiscal year except as provided in this Act, provided that the Board of each district may amend such appropriation ordinance from time to time by the same procedure required by this Act for the original adoption of the appropriation ordinance in order to meet an immediate emergency,”; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners approved a bid from Schmeling Construction for the construction of a new Natural Resource Building in the amount of \$2,511,000; and

WHEREAS, the budget for the entire project is estimated at \$2,900,000 of which \$200,000 was budgeted in the 2025 Budget and \$2,700,000 in the 2026 Budget; and

WHEREAS, only \$156,000 was spent in 2025 which requires reappropriating the \$44,000, which was not spent into the 2026 Budget; and

WHEREAS, an additional \$56,000 is requested as a contingency for the project to be amended into the 2026 Budget.

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT ORDAINED as follows:

Section 1. That \$100,000 in budgeted appropriations shall be added to the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year Improvement Development Fund Capital expenses and funded from the Improvement Development Fund Balance.

Improvement Development Fund 3302 Capital 965-46210, \$100,000.

Section 2. That this Ordinance shall be in full force and effect immediately upon this adoption

Section 3. That the Secretary of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County is hereby authorized and directed to send two certified copies of this Ordinance to the District Executive Director and one to the Director of Finance.

Forest Preserves of Winnebago County

ORDINANCE

No. 26-0104

**Amending the Annual Budget and Appropriations Ordinance
for the period from November 1, 2025 through October 31, 2026**

Voting Yes

Voting No

Judith Barnard

Judith Barnard

Mike Eickman

Mike Eickman

Gloria Lind

Gloria Lind

Cheryl Maggio

Cheryl Maggio

Jerry Paulson

Jerry Paulson

Emily Porter

Emily Porter

Jeff Tilly

Jeff Tilly

The above and foregoing Ordinance was adopted this 21st day of January, 2026.

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

RESOLUTION

No. 26-0105

LENGTH OF SERVICE BONUS RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County (FPWC) is committed to maintaining fair, competitive and equitable compensation and benefits for its employees in order to recruit and retain highly-qualified individuals, and,

WHEREAS, the Board, would like to recognize and reward employees that reach certain benchmarks in their careers with the District, and,

WHEREAS, the Board has determined that it is in the best interest of the District to implement a program of bonuses based on the length of service with the District.

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Board of Commissioners of the Forest Preserves of Winnebago County hereby approves the following Length of Service Bonus Policy:

All employees are eligible for a one-time bonus payment at the end of the employee's service year.

At the completion of five (5) years of full-time service with the FPWC a \$ 250.00 bonus will be awarded.
At the completion of ten (10) years of full-time service with the FPWC a \$ 500.00 bonus will be awarded.
At the completion of fifteen (15) years of full-time service with the FPWC a \$750.00 bonus will be awarded.
At the completion of twenty (20) years of full-time service with the FPWC and then every five-year increment thereafter, a \$1,000.00 bonus will be awarded.

Voting YES_____ Voting NO_____ Voting ABSTAINED_____

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 21st day of January 2026.

That this Resolution shall be in full force and effect immediately upon its adoption.

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners

Preserve Operations

Vaughn Stamm, Director of Operations
Matt Weik & Scott Wallace, Preserve Managers
Bryan Helmold, Facility & Equipment Manager
December 2025 Activities Report

- Plowed snow and salted parking areas and roadways after snow events (12/1,12/2,12/7, 12/8).
- Rebuilt Hononegah Self Registration Kiosk.
- Started updating Safety Data Sheet (SDS) binders for shops.
- Repainted work benches in Sugar River Maintenance Shop.
- Purchased and cut lumber for picnic table board replacements.
- Matt and Kayla attended Community Needs Assessment Survey meeting for FPWC.
- Reorganized storage above tool room at Sugar River Maintenance Shop.
- Refurbished campground posts.
- Purchased road salt for preserve parking areas.
- Rebuilt wooden bench for Sugar River Alder.
- Presented full-time staff with 2025 performance evaluations.
- Cropps Garage replaced broken spring above bay 1 door at Sugar River Maintenance Shop.
- Nick Eskilson assisted Central Maintenance with Ledges Golf Course Bridge project.
- Bucked up and split firewood.
- Periodically checked inside gates of preserves.
- Removed six dead or dying ash trees from along roadway at Blackhawk Springs.
- Burned brush pile at Seward Bluffs.
- Grounded tree stumps throughout various preserves.
- Replaced wood planking on twelve South Area picnic tables.
- Removed large uprooted oak tree from Kilbuck Bluffs.
- Serviced chainsaws and string trimmers.
- Repaired broken window at Severson Dells.
- Completed monthly safety inspections.
- Repaired gates at Pecatonica River and Blackhawk Springs Perryville entrances.
- Removed hazardous trees from along roadway at Kishwaukee River.

Preserve Operations

December 2025 Activities Report – Cont.

- Sourced black locust logs for use in the Grove play area at Severson Dells.
- Ongoing trail maintenance including tree removals at Pecatonica River, Funderburg, Oak Ridge and Deer Run preserves.
- Replaced log base for the slate table in the Grove play area at Severson Dells.
- Removed large uprooted oak tree near picnic shelter at Espenscheid.
- Central Shop worked towards completing annual service on vehicle & equipment fleets prior to current Mechanic II leaving due to retirement at the end of February 2026.
- Central Shop worked on rebuilding two cart path bridges at Ledges Golf Course. Work is on-going.
- Managers and Director worked on equipment and vehicle specifications and obtaining contract pricing quotes.

Natural Resource Management

Mike Brien, Director of Natural Resources

Mike Groves, Natural Resources Manager

Keith Krey, Stewardship Coordinator

Liz Hucker, Wildlife Biologist

December 2025 Activities Report

Natural Resource Staff

- Cleaned up and winterized burn equipment.
- Hand cut and chemically treated invasive brush at Sugar River Alder, Cedar Cliff, and Rotary Forest Preserves.
- Prepared stands for the upcoming deer management program.
- Attended the holiday appreciation brunch.
- Forestry mowed invasive species at Sugar River Alder, Cedar Cliff, and Seward Forest Preserves.
- Removed snow and salted Headquarters as needed.
- Attended Northern Illinois Native Seed Network's annual seed exchange.
- Assisted with moving purple martin house locations at Four Lakes Forest Preserve.
- Attended Region 1 Planning Council's greenways plan working group meeting.
- Completed employee performance review process.
- Continued with employee handbook review.
- Continued new shop development process.
- Staff took lots of time off around the holidays to spend time with family.

Wildlife

- Determined locations for three additional kestrel nest boxes and pre drilled holes for post installation before the ground froze.
- Moved purple martin nest boxes at Four Lakes Forest Preserve from in the water to on land to allow for more monitoring and management.
- Cleaned and repaired foothold traps.
- Repaired salamander traps.
- Continued baiting camera traps to monitor badger activity in northwestern preserves.
- Led a guided bird walk at Sugar River Alder Forest Preserve.
- Continued tracking locations of tagged Blanding's turtles.
- Coordinated estimates for installation of bird strike film on windows at Headquarters.
- Continued work on wildlife species index, developing badger health survey protocol, Endangered and Threatened Species Permit renewal, and year end reporting.
- Continued sorting and cataloging camera trap photos from 2024 and 2025 field seasons.

Natural Resource Management

December 2025 Activities Report – Cont.

Stewardship

- Met with University of Illinois Extension staff to discuss volunteer partnerships.
- Uploaded bat survey data collected by volunteers to NABat's national database.
- Attended holiday party.
- Hosted three volunteer workdays at Hononegah, Pecatonica River, and Kishwaukee Gorge North Forest Preserves.
- Cut snagged and down trees in volunteer restoration area at Pecatonica River Forest Preserve.
- Attended webinars on volunteer management and engagement.
- Attended Xerces Firefly Atlas Training to evaluate whether the community science program would be a good fit for the District.

2025 Statistics

A total of 279 volunteers earned 4,786.25 service hours from January 2025 through December 2025.

The monetary value of these service hours equals **\$166,513.64**. As of April 2025, the estimated national value of each volunteer hour is currently \$34.79 (based on the Independent Sector).

Golf Operations

Vaughn Stamm, Director of Operations
Rich Rosenstiel, Clubhouse Manager
Tyler Knapp & Mark Freiman, Golf Maintenance Managers
December 2025 Activities Report

Clubhouse Operations:

- Continued to work on year-end-inventories.
- Ordered & Received 2026 staff uniforms.
- Liquor & Food Permitting reports updated.
- Developed Golf Operations Overview Including:
 - Vendor List & Account Info
 - UN / PW Credentials
 - Licensing & Permitting Info
 - Staff Certifications Info & Dating
 - Activity Overview
- Secured Carpet Quotes for Atwood Flooring Projects.
- Met with 2026 Leagues & Completed Schedules.
- Fielded Several Inquiries from Potential Golf Manager Candidates.
- Vacation Time.

Golf Maintenance:

Ledges

- Washed and cleaned all ball washers.
- Successfully conducted annual performance evaluations for all full-time staff.
- Prepared and submitted heavy-duty utility vehicle bid specifications to the Director of Operations.
- Completed pesticide and fertilizer bid specifications and submitted to headquarters.
- Finalized pesticide and fertilizer inventory records.
- Provided assistance in drafting bid specifications for the irrigation well pipe and pump replacement project at the Atwood irrigation pump station.
- Finalized the janitorial supply order and submitted it to headquarters.
- Took inventory and completed the order for all golf course accessories.
- Began removal of volunteer trees in the prairie restoration area behind the 4th tee complex.
- Represented the Golf Department at the Community Needs Assessment Committee meeting for FPWC.
- Attended the Employee Appreciation and Recognition brunch.
- Burned brush pile.
- Mechanic performed repairs and maintenance on equipment.

Golf Operations

December 2025 Activities Report – Cont.

Macktown

- Washed and cleaned all ball washers.
- Successfully conducted annual performance evaluations for all full-time staff.
- Completed pesticide and fertilizer bid specifications and submitted to headquarters.
- Finalized pesticide and fertilizer inventory records.
- Took inventory and completed the order for all golf course accessories.
- Attended the Employee Appreciation and Recognition brunch.
- Prepared and submitted slope mower bid specifications to the Director of Operations.
- Continued trimming low-hanging branches around greens, tees, and along fairways.
- Burned brush pile.
- Mechanic performed repairs, grinding reels, performing maintenance on equipment.
- Evaluated prior year fertility and pesticide programs and make necessary adjustments.
- Inventory janitorial supplies and placed annual order for clubhouse and maintenance building.

Atwood

- Completed full time staff performance evaluations.
- Evaluated prior year fertility and pesticide programs and made necessary adjustments.
- Submitted fertilizer and pesticide bid quantities.
- Took Inventory and ordered necessary golf course accessories for upcoming season.
- Removed of large dead trees on golf course.
- Burned brush pile.
- Took inventory of janitorial supplies and placed annual order for clubhouse and maintenance building.
- Prepared information and specification for irrigation pump and column pipe replacement.
- Completed fertilizer and pesticide inventory.
- Mechanic grinded reels and serviced equipment.

Marketing & Communication Relations

Sarah Lorenz, Communications Coordinator

December 2025 Activities Report

Marketing/Advertising:

- General visitorship (Mid-West Family targeted display ad running seasonally).
- GoRockford advertising (Outdoor Activities, Family Fun).
- Developing signage for Community Needs Assessment.
- Preliminary brochure redesign in progress.

Events/Programs

- January Guided Bird Hike 1/14.
- Upcoming: Winter Tree & Shrub ID Hike 1/29, Snowshoeing Excursion with Rocktown Adventures 2/7.
- Save the Date: Fabulous Frogs with Illinois Extension Master Naturalist Connie McIntosh 3/26.

Engagement

- January digital newsletter to be sent to subscribers on 1/22.
 - February digital newsletter scheduled for 2/19.

Community Needs Assessment

- Committee continues collaborative efforts to develop survey scope and questions.
- Preliminary sign and mailer designs completed.
- Working with printer to establish mailing addresses.
- On track for February 1 go-live date.

Social Media

- Social Media Stats (December 9, 2025 – January 6, 2026)
 - FPWC Facebook: 5,888 followers (+16)
 - Reach: 10,044 (-42.9%)
 - Engagement: 1,446 (-16.5%)
 - FPWC Instagram: 2,036 followers (+12)
 - Reach: 1,049 (-50.3%)
 - Engagement: 500 (-53%)
 - Views: 9,545 (-50.3%)

Human Resources

Jody Kennay, Human Resources Manager
December 2025 Activities Report

Full-Time and Seasonal Open Requisitions	3 (Carpenter, Golf Manager, Food and Beverage Manager) Interviewing in process for open positions
Resignations	1

Projects:

Revising Employee Handbook (updating with new employment laws, rewriting sections as needed, adding addendums; Staff/ED review in process; Legal review is next step followed by Employees, and Board. Estimate bringing to Board in Feb. for approval)

Performance Review Process and Merit Increases- completed with no issues- increases reflected in 1/23 paychecks.

Updating New Employee Orientation (discovering quality videos, what do other FPs do, use of/purchasing videos, working with Legal on topic requirements, etc.).

Compensation Study (current state, pain points, research, other Preserve information, compensation analysis, etc.).

RESOLUTION
No. 26-0106
REVIEW, RELEASE, AND DESTRUCTION OF
CLOSED SESSION MINUTES

WHEREAS, pursuant to 5 ILCS 120/2.06(d), the Forest Preserve District of Winnebago County Board of Commissioners (the “Board”) has met and reviewed the minutes of all meetings of the Board dated below that are presently closed to the public; and

WHEREAS, the Board hereby finds and declares that the minutes for closed sessions held on certain dates no longer require confidential treatment; and

WHEREAS, section 2.06(c) of the Open Meetings Act allows for destruction of closed session minutes more than eighteen (18) months old.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS OF THE WINNEBAGO COUNTY FOREST PRESERVE DISTRICT IN ILLINOIS, AS FOLLOWS:

SECTION ONE: The recitals set forth herein above shall be and they are hereby incorporated as if said recitals were fully set forth within this Section One.

SECTION TWO: The Board finds and hereby declares that closed session minutes or parts thereof of the following dates no longer require confidential treatment and can be released at this time:

December 20, 2023 – Entire set of minutes.
November 20, 2024 – Partial release of minutes. Release includes sections on titled Trademark, Severson Dells Lease, and Personnel.

SECTION THREE: The Board finds and hereby declares that the closed session minutes or parts thereof for the following dates cannot be released at this time because it remains necessary to protect the public interest or the privacy of an individual to keep said minutes confidential:

January 17, 2024 – Entire set of minutes.
March 20, 2024 – Entire set of minutes.
November 20, 2024 – Land Acquisition section to remain closed and confidential.
December 18, 2024 – Entire set of minutes.
February 19, 2025 – Entire set of minutes.
September 17, 2025 – Entire set of minutes.
October 22, 2025 – Entire set of minutes.
November 19, 2025 – Entire set of minutes.

SECTION FOUR: The Board finds and hereby declares that the verbatim recordings of closed session minutes for the following dates may be destroyed by the recording secretary, as approved written minutes exist for those sessions.

December 20, 2023
January 17, 2024
March 20, 2024

SECTION FIVE: Any and all motions, policies or resolutions of the Forest Preserve District of Winnebago County in conflict with the provisions of this resolution shall be and are hereby repealed.

SECTION SIX: This resolution shall be in full force and effect from and after its passage and approval in the manner provided by law.

PASSED THIS 21st day of January, 2026.

Voting YES _____ Voting NO _____ Voting ABSTAINED _____

The above and foregoing Resolution was adopted this 21st day of January, 2026.

Jeff Tilly, President
Board of Commissioners

Gloria Lind, Secretary
Board of Commissioners