

Highlands County Board of County Commissioners
Tuesday, February 17, 2026
9:00 AM
600 S. Commerce Ave. Sebring, FL 33870

- 1. Meeting Called to Order: Invitation to fill out "Comments by the Public" forms**
Please silence all cell phones and devices.

- 2. Invocation**

- 3. Pledge of Allegiance**

- 4. Announcements**

The Heartland Library Cooperative Governing Board will meet on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 10:30 a.m., at the Lake Placid Memorial Library at 205 W. Interlake Blvd., Lake Placid, FL

The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee will hold a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, February 18, 2026, at 3:30 p.m., in the Engineering Conference Room, 505 S. Commerce Ave., Sebring

The Natural Resources Advisory Commission , will hold a regular meeting on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 4:00 p.m., in the Road & Bridge Conference Room 1, 4344 George Blvd. Sebring

The Highlands County Insurance Committee will hold a Regular Meeting on Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 10:00 a.m., in the Board Room, 600 S. Commerce Ave., Sebring

The Highlands County Hospital District Board will hold a regular meeting on Thursday, February 26, 2026, at 1:30 p.m., in the Boardroom, 600 S. Commerce Ave., Sebring

- 5. Constitutional Officers - Announcements**

- 6. Recognitions, Presentations and Proclamations**

- A. Request approval of a Proclamation recognizing the month of February 2026, as "American Heart Month", in Highlands County.

Laurie Hurner, County Administrator

No fiscal impact

- B. Presentation on the role of Arts in Community Development and Revitalization
Shellie Phelps

No fiscal impact

- 7. Public Comment**

- 8. Consent Agenda**

- A. Request adoption of Resolution 25-26-084 for Budget Amendment 25-26-051 for the EMS County 25/26 project 25033.

Dustin Fitch, Deputy Chief

The fiscal impact is an increase in the amount of \$11,084.40.

- B. Request budget amendment 25-26-056 for professional services related to the Central Square software implementation

Tanya Cannady, Business Services Director

The fiscal impact is a transfer of \$49,900 in the General Fund from cost center 9990 (Budgetary Expenditures), account 59900 (Reserve for Contingency) to cost center 2111 (Central Services), account 56810Z (Proj PC Software Purchase +\$25K), Project 20081 (Central Square Software Upgrade).

- C. Request approval of the Interlocal Agreement between Sun 'N Lake of Sebring Improvement District and Highlands County.

Tanya Cannady, Business Services Director

The fiscal impact of Fund 005 (General) is \$50,000, which is budgeted in cost center 6101 account 54955 that was approved in the Adopted Budget for FY 25/26.

- D. Request adoption of resolution 25-26-089 for Budget Amendment 25-26-052 for the EMS Fleet Replacement project 25034.

Dustin Fitch, Deputy Chief

The net fiscal impact is an increase to Fund 151 (Infrastructure Surtax) in the amount of \$475,760.00 as well as a transfer of current year CFS allocation in the amount of \$471,440.00 for a total impact of \$947,200.00 which is being appropriated in Project 25034 (EMS Fleet Replacement 25-26), cost center 5105A (Ambulance Service 151), account 56400Z (Project Equipment).

- E. Request adoption of Resolution 25-26-090 for Budget Amendment 25-26-053 to fund the Command Vehicle project 25028.

James Duppenhalter, Fire Chief

The fiscal impact is an increase to Fund 005 (General) and Fund 181 (Fire Assessment) by transferring available funding from Project 25017 (EVT Portable Lift Stand) in the amount of \$8,787.00 and transferring \$15,516.55 from Reserve for Contingency. In addition, remaining balances in Project 22040 EMS Trust Grant 22-23, Project 23024 (EMS County Grant 23-24), Project 24035 (EMS County FY24-25), and Project 25033 (EMS County FY25-26) in the amounts of \$2,320.58, \$4,209.76, \$8,475.21, and \$11,084.40, respectively. Finally, \$41,606.50 is being realigned in cost center 3217 (Fire Assessment) from account 56400 (Machinery & Equipment) to account 56400Z (Project Equipment) with a total of all funds of \$92,000.00 being appropriated in Project 25028 (Command Vehicle).

- F. Request Approval of Easement Agreement between Highlands County and Duke Energy Florida, LLC.

Laura Borgesi, County Engineer, PE, PSM, MPA

No Fiscal Impact.

- G. Requesting approval for BA 25-26-058 to realign funds for Project 22030 (R&B New Building) for completion.

Jonathan Harrison, Road & Bridge Director

Fiscal impact is \$19,379.11 from 9990B (Reserve for Contingency) Fund 151

- H. Request approval of Budget Amendment 25-26-059 Shell Pit Funding for scale repairs, pump repairs, and extensive dragline repairs.

Jonathan Harrison, Road & Bridge Director

The fiscal impact of \$130,000.00 in Fund 110 (Transportation Trust) is a transfer from cost center 9990A (Budgetary Expenditures AC/110), account 59900 (Reserve for Contingency) to cost center 4108 (County Shell Pit), account 54600 (Repair & Maintenance).

- I. Request to waive the Landfill Tipping fees for The Greater Leisure Lakes Civic Association

Mark Lawrence, Solid Waste Director

Landfill staff estimates that The Greater Leisure Lakes Civic Association will haul an estimated fifteen (15) tons of Class 1 waste at a cost of \$55.00 per ton for a total of \$825.00 to be waived. The figures are based upon the previous Greater Leisure Lakes Civic Association event in 2025.

- J. Request approval of Budget Amendment 25-26-055 to set up Project 25036 for City of Avon Park Donaldson Park Pickleball Courts.

Brandon Gunn, Parks & Facilities Director

The fiscal impact is a decrease of \$145,000 from account 56300 (Improvements Other Than) to account 58100Z (Aid to Gov't Agency Project) within Fund 151 (Infrastructure Surtax), Cost Center 6101A (Recreational Dept).

- K. Request approval of Agreement with Nu Hope Elder Care Services, Inc., a Florida Not for Profit Corporation

Tanya Cannady, Business Services Director

The fiscal impact of Fund 005 (General) is \$50,000 which is budgeted in cost center 5224, account 53439 that was approved in Adopted Budget for FY 25/26.

- L. Request approval to waive fees and deposit for the 2026 Kiwanis Aktion Club Softball Classic at the Highlands County Multi-Sports Complex.

Brandon Gunn, Parks & Facilities Director

The fiscal impact would be a loss in revenues to Fund 005 (General Fund) account 3475100 (Sports Complex) of \$600.00.

- M. Approval of Modified Job Description – Administrative Assistant to Executive Assistant (Fire Rescue)

James Duppenthaler, Fire Chief

The fiscal impact associated with the modified job description is \$8,254.55, which can be absorbed within the department's existing budget.

- N. Request adoption of Resolution 25-26-091 for Budget Amendment 25-26-057 to appropriate Fund Balance Brought Forward to upgrade Voting System Equipment for the Supervisor of Elections.

Karen Healy, Supervisor of Elections

The fiscal impact is an increase to Fund 005 (General) in the amount of \$144,000.00 by rolling forward Project Fund Balance. In addition, this budget amendment is transferring \$30,000.00 from cost center 9990 (Budgetary Expenditures AC/005), account 59900 (Reserve for Contingency) to cost center 2442 (Supervisor of Elections), account 56001Z (Project Capital Outlay), project 24026 (SOE Equipment Upgrades) for a total fiscal impact of \$174,000.00.

- O. Request approval of Budget Amendment 25-26-054 to budget for Project 25035 Mechanic EVT Vehicle.

James Duppenthaler, Fire Chief

The Fiscal Impact of Fund 005 is \$56,808.00, and Fund 181 is \$56,808.00 totaling \$113,616. Merely moving funds in the amount of \$56,808.00 from cost center 3217 account 56400, and moving funds from 9990 account 5990 in the amount of \$56,808.00 to Project 25035 Mechanic EVT Tech Vehicle.

9. Public Hearing

- A. Public hearing for CPA-26-650LS, to approve text amendments to Policy 15.2.48 of the Future Land Use Element of the Highlands County 2030 Comprehensive Plan and recommend transmittal to FloridaCommerce.

Cynthia Carman Kramer, Planning & Zoning Manager

There is no fiscal impact.

- B. Request adoption of Ordinance No. 25-26-07, extension of a burn ban pursuant to Florida Statutes, Section 125.66.

James Duppenthaler, Fire Chief

There is no fiscal impact.

10. Action Agenda

- A. Consideration of Statement of Legislative Intent seeking direction from the Board to draft revisions to the Highlands County Land Development Regulations to establish procedures for Certified Recovery Residences.

Cynthia Carman Kramer, Planning & Zoning Manager

The fiscal impact would be staff and legal time to research and develop the ordinance.

- B. Request to approve thirteen (13) Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Grant Applications for various projects being submitted to FDOT for the FY 2031-2032 Tentative Five-Year Work Program.

Laura Borgesi, County Engineer, PE, PSM, MPA, Uladzislau Bilukha, Assistant County Engineer

The fiscal impact to the County will be determined by the acceptance of the projects into the FY 2031-2032 Tentative Five-Year Work Program. Please be aware that although it has not been required in the past, FDOT began suggesting a 25% fund match for some applications.

- C. Request adoption of Resolution 25-26-095 for Budget Amendment 25-26-060 to rollover current project balances from FY 24/25 into the current FY 25/26 to properly budget the available funds in the projects in FY 25/26.

Valerie Fleeger, Senior Budget Analyst

The fiscal impact for FY 25/26 is an increase to Fund 005 General (\$3,273,034.93), Fund 151 Infrastructure Surtax (\$21,410,826.40), Fund 355 HCFPIRN LTD Capital Exp (\$2,001,883.36), Fund 181 Fire Assessment (\$3,155,154.37), Fund 163 Home Initiatives Partnership (-\$20.40), Fund 420 Energy Recovery (-\$206,141.82), Fund 180 Building (\$2,088,360.65), Fund 155 Hospital District (\$-\$6,111.12), Fund 110 Transportation Trust (\$15,260.00), Fund 122 E911 Operations (\$523,864.72), Fund 144 Lake Placid Special Benefit Fire (\$0.13), and Fund 401 Solid Waste (\$38,497.20) for a total increase overall of \$32,294,608.42.

11. County Attorney and County Administrator

- A. County Attorney Status Report

Sherry Sutphen

No fiscal impact.

- B. County Adniminstrator Status Report

Laurie Hurner, County Administrator

No fiscal impact.

12. Commissioners

13. Informational

- A. Board payables from February 17– March 2, 2026

- B. Letter of Support for the Statewide Advancement of Feature Enhancements at Intercity Passenger Rail Crossings (SAFE-IPR) Program

Laurie Hurner, County Administrator

No fiscal impact

14. Adjourn

Any person who decides to appeal any decision made by this Board of County Commissioners of Highlands County, Florida, in public hearing or meeting is hereby advised that he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record will include the testimony and evidence upon which such appeal is to be based.

The Board of County Commissioners of Highlands County, Florida, does not discriminate upon the basis of any individual's disability status. This non-discrimination policy involves every aspect of the Board's functions, including one's access to, participation, employment or treatment in its programs or activities. "Anyone requiring reasonable accommodation as provided for in the Americans With Disabilities Act or Section 286.26 Florida Statutes should contact Human Resources, ADA Coordinator at: 863-402-6509 (voice), or via Florida Relay Service 711, or by e-mail: hrmanager@highlandsfl.gov." Requests for CART or interpreter services should be made as soon as possible but no less than 48 hours in advance to permit coordination of the service.

Any invocation that may be offered before the official start of the Commission meeting is a voluntary offering by a private citizen. The views or beliefs expressed by the invocation speaker have not been reviewed or approved by the Commission, and the Commission is not allowed by law to endorse the religious beliefs or views of this, or any other speaker.

A person desiring to provide public comment related to an item on the Consent Agenda of this meeting, must fill out a Speaker Card and submit the same to the County Administrator or Chairperson by 8:50 a.m. All Speaker Cards received after 8:50am, will be called during the regular Public Comment.