



NORTHEAST FLORIDA REGIONAL COUNCIL
Board of Directors Meeting
September 3, 2026

MINUTES

The Northeast Florida Regional Council Board of Directors held a meeting on Thursday, September 3, 2026 at 40 East Adams Street, Jacksonville, FL 32202. President Anderson called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Roll call was conducted with the following members present, representing a quorum:

BAKER: Commissioner Anderson
Mr. Griffis

CLAY: Commissioner Condon
Councilman Ludwig
Mr. Bourre

DUVAL: Councilmember Amaro
Councilmember Pittman
Mayor Lynch
Ms. Brown (*virtual*)

FLAGLER: Commissioner Dance (*virtual*)
Councilmember Gambaro (*virtual*)

NASSAU: Commissioner Huppmann
Commissioner Martin (*virtual*)
Commissioner Minshew

PUTNAM: Mayor Michele Meyers

ST. JOHNS: Commissioner Taylor
Commissioner Whitehurst
Commissioner Morgan

EX-OFFICIO: Mr. Hart
Mr. Conkey, St. Johns River Water Management District
Ms. Gore, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (*virtual*)
Ms. Santana, Florida Department of Transportation

Excused: Commissioner Harvey, Commissioner Wilkinson, and Commissioner Renninger

Absent: Commissioner Iverson

Presenter: Meaghan Smalley, Emergency Preparedness Manager, JAA

Guests: Jeannie Rickman of Congressional Member Kat Cammack Ofc (virtual), and John Nooney

Staff: Elizabeth Payne, Eric Anderson, Jennifer Bryla, Tyler Nolen, Donna Starling, Jack Shad, Sheron Forde, et al.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

President Anderson welcomed everyone to the meeting and recognized Ms. Jeannie Rickman of Congresswoman Kat Cammack's office.

*ACTION ITEMS

*Consent Agenda

President Anderson asked if anyone wanted to pull any item on the consent agenda. Hearing none, he called for a motion on the consent agenda. Commissioner Huppmann motioned to approve the Consent Agenda; seconded by Councilmember Amaro. Motion carried.

* Election of FY 26/27 Board Officers

Commissioner Whitehurst stated that the Personnel, Budget & Finance Committee reviewed and discussed and nominated the FY 26-27 slate of officers as follows: Commissioner Dance for President, Commissioner Martin for 1st Vice President, Councilmember Amaro for 2nd Vice President, and Commissioner Condon for Secretary/Treasurer. These are presented for the Board's consideration and vote.

President Anderson called for a motion on the Election of FY 26-27 Board Officers. Commissioner Whitehurst motioned to approve the FY 26/27 Slate of Officers as presented; seconded by Mayor Lynch. Motion carried.

Ms. Payne stated that the new officers will be seated at the October meeting in Flagler County.

Councilmember Pittman arrived.

Presentation: JAA Triennial Cash Exercise

Ms. Meaghan Smalley, Emergency Preparedness Manager, Jacksonville Aviation Authority (JAA), presented on the FAA required full scale aviation disaster exercise; required of all commercial service airports nationwide every three years. She stated that the exercise has evolved over the past 15 years to become more about the Region than just the airport. While the JAA exercise includes first responders, they are now also focusing on family assistance. The presentation covered the reasons for the exercise, which is to validate the airport's emergency plan, test response coordination and communications, capacity, resilience, exercise personnel, equipment and procedures, and identify any gaps before a real emergency exposes them.

This year's exercise will take place on October 23rd and will be a regional, community-centered exercise. It will be a coordinated effort with JAA, Air National Guard and Customs and Border Protection. It will include 25+ agencies, over 100 volunteers, and a family assistance center operations that will represent the airlines, American Red Cross, the Salvation Army and the Tri-State K9 Crisis Response Teams.

Board Members are invited to participate in this event as VIP observers.

Councilman Ludwig arrived.

Brownfield Program Roll Out

Mr. Shad stated that Brownfield Program is a new initiative of the Council. He provided a brief overview highlighting what a Brownfield is, the issues surrounding these sites, locations in Northeast Florida and redevelopment goals. He stated that the Council has successfully secured a four-year, \$1.5 million grant through the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to assess properties and do planning for cleanup. However, it does not directly fund cleanup. The Council partnered with Nassau County and the City of Palatka and identified four target sites. These sites are Johns Metals (Palatka), Florida Furniture Company (Palatka), Gas Station at US17 and SR200 (Yulee), and Old Bacher Street Hospital (Bunnell) will be assessed first.

Mr. Shad also shared the process that the Council will utilize, which includes establishing a Brownfields Advisory Committee to assist with identifying potential sites. To begin the process, staff has issued an RFP for an environmental consultant that will come to the Board for approval in October and execute a Memorandum Of Understanding with the two coalition members. Once the EPA contract is executed in October, then the four target sites can be assessed; assessment of additional sites can begin in January 2027. He then shared the next steps, including asking Members to fill out the card at their places identifying any potential brownfield sites in their communities they may be aware of.

Program Spotlight: City of Fernandina Beach 2050 Visioning

Ms. Bryla provided an overview of the Visioning Exercise conducted for the City of Fernandina Beach. She stated that the project included several public engagement opportunities and resulted in six themes. These themes included preservation of community character, managed growth and redevelopment compatibility, environmental stewardship and conservation, walkability-connectivity-and multimodal transportation, resiliency and infrastructure investment, and housing affordability and community livability. These themes were carried over into the City's comprehensive plan. Council staff's recommendations included what amendments could be made and Evaluation and Appraisal Review policies that needed to be updated. A brief discussion followed.

Transportation Disadvantaged Overview

Mr. Anderson provided brief review of the Transportation Disadvantaged program and highlighted the implementation process that is managed by the State of Florida who contracts with each county's service provider and the Regional Council as the Designated Official Planning Agency for planning and administration of the program, the FY 26-27 planning calendar that includes the structure and required tasks of each quarter. He stated that to create more stability, both he and Ms. Bryla will be the Council TD staff representatives moving forward. A brief discussion followed.

Community Resiliency Update

Ms. Payne provided an overview of Council's resiliency activities. She stated that the FY 25-26 Regional Resilient Entity (RRE) agreement has been completed and is now closed. While the Council did apply for the RRE for FY 26-27, due to the Governors' line-item veto this was not awarded. The current resiliency projects that will close at the end of September includes the Baker

County Vulnerability Assessment, the Town of Baldwin Vulnerability Assessment and, the Northeast Florida Military Installation Readiness Review (MIRR). The South Atlantic Salt Marsh Initiative will conclude at the end of this year, the Pinecastle and Bugg Spring MIRR will conclude in June of 2027, and the Aquatic Connectivity will conclude in December 2028. Upcoming meetings and events include the Resilient First Coast full collaborative meeting on October 7th and the Florida Resilience Conference September 23 – 25.

Future Land Use Change Dashboard

Ms. Bryla introduced an interactive ArcGIS Dashboard, developed by the Council, to track Future Land Use Map amendments adopted throughout the Region over the past six years. The dashboard is a way to visually explore where these changes have occurred, identify trends and better understand the growth taking place across the Region. The dashboard will be updated quarterly and include large-scale comprehensive plans reviewed by the Council. Further information will be provided when available for use. A brief discussion followed.

FY 25-26 Return on Investment

Ms. Payne share the return on investment that was completed. Staff creates this each year during the budgeting process to provide county administration and elected officials an understanding of what their investment covers for their counties. It highlights the regional projects as well as the individual projects completed in each county and their municipalities. This information provides Board Members, as liaisons, talking points to share with their fellow Commissioners. It is also provided to each county administrator and commission chairs when Ms Payne meets with them. A brief discussion followed.

Welcome New Board Member – President Anderson recognized City of Jacksonville Council Member Ju’Coby Pittman to the NEFRC Board of Directors.

Councilmember Pittman stated that she is looking forward to participating on the Board and possibly share her experiences as well as learning from the other Members.

FY 2026 Regional Leadership Academy Review

Mr. Nolen provided a recap of the 2026 Regional Leadership Academy by highlighting the last two classes, including activities in Clay County where they started with an economic development presentation, a walking tour of the new County Development Services building and historic triangle and teen court overview. In the final class of the year, Duval County highlighted workforce development and toured Jones Technical Institute, received a presentation on economic impact of U.S. Navy Installations and COJ Veterans Services, followed by the ‘I Ran for Office’ panel that included the participation of Board Member Amaro. . The program concludes with a graduation on September 24, 2026; all Board members are welcome to attend.

Nominations are now open for the 2027 Regional Leadership Academy class. Registration is now available on the Council website where applicants/nominees can fill out a short form to get started.

Public Comment – Mr. John J. Nooney, 8356 Bascom Rd., Jacksonville, FL 32216, addressed the Board regarding City of Jacksonville (COJ) Resolution 2023-0819 and a number of other topics.

LOCAL AND REGIONAL ISSUES DISCUSSION

Clay County – **Commissioner Condon** shared her belief that land development is under attack and will stay that way; with no trust in local government. She encourages the challenging everything when looking at the budget. She added that 100% of property taxes collected in the County goes to public safety and still do not meet the need. **Councilman Ludwig** shared the City of Keystone Heights' concerns should Amendment 3 pass, which will drastically affect their health insurance and would be interested in any groupings that may be available.

Duval County – **Councilmember Pittman** shared information on work to address the drownings in retention ponds and asked for any information that could assist in finding solutions. **Mayor Lynch** invited Members to the City of Baldwin's Founder's Day and 250th Anniversary.

Flagler County – **Commissioner Dance** shared a recent occurrence in City of Bunnell that includes an addition of another 600-acre solid waste management facility and landfill that was approved by special exception through Planning & Zoning without the elected officials being able to vote on it.

Nassau County – **Commissioner Huppman** stated that he is grateful to have another four years to serve. **Commissioner Minshe** stated that the City of Fernandina's residents voted to stop paid parking, which may cause an increase in the City's millage rate. She stated that the elections resulted in one new Commissioner on their Board in November. She also shared information about an affordable housing development with a USDA loan that controlled rent. The residents were notified that the property had been sold and they needed to leave. It was determined that the property was initially bought under a USDA loan that, after expiration at 30 years, the property can be bought by anyone with no requirement to keep it 'affordable'. She encourages Members who have low-income property in their communities to investigate this to see if they are USDA properties and when that loan ends. **Commissioner Martin** thanked everyone for electing him as 1st Vice President and looks forward to working with everyone. He stated that Amendment 3 will be a disaster for Nassau County and the County is making significant cuts including non-profit funding in preparation for it passing.

Putnam County – **Mayor Myers** stated that the municipalities in Putnam County had a Town Hall meeting in Crescent City and heard a presentation from the Florida League of Cities on Amendment 3 with many residents in attendance. One of the big takeaways is that local governments must provide the same level of service through this.

St. Johns County – **Commissioner Taylor** stated that the effects of SB 86 is proving to be devastating to the County. **Commissioner Whitehurst** commented on the Budget hearings and some of the scrutiny on the tax dollars under their authority. He stated that 80% of revenue over last year's budget is going to public safety with the remaining 20% to be utilized for meeting the needs of the residents.

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS' REPORT

Florida Department of Transportation – **Ms. Santana** informed Members about the Northeast Florida's Community Traffic Safety Program, a volunteer organization that is sponsored by FDOT. For more information, visit www.trafficsafetyteam.org. This is a way for local traffic safety partners to discuss roadway concerns, share ideas and help improve safety in a community through

a collaborative effort. Anyone interested in participating in the virtual meetings can send an email to trafficsafetyteam@dot.state.fl.us and ask to get on the email list.

Department of Environmental Protection – **Ms. Gore** stated they currently have no updates.

St. Johns River Water Management District (WMD) – **Mr. Conkey** stated that the aquafer is still low and appreciates everyone's efforts in sharing their messaging. He acknowledged the City of Fernandina Beach for embedding the Level 3 Severe Water Shortage into their Code.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT

Ms. Payne recognized the Councils interns: Kaitlyn Willams and Arani Cooray and thanked them for their assistance with Council programs.

The Regional Awards for Excellence Nominations are now open with nominations online.

The Regional Council will be kicking off its 50th year in 2027.

Next Meeting Date: October 1, 2026

Meeting Adjourned: 11:54 a.m.


Andy Dance
President


Elizabeth Payne
Chief Executive Officer