



# Indian River County, Florida

## Draft Meeting Minutes

Indian River County  
Administration Complex  
1801 27th Street  
Vero Beach, Florida 32960  
indianriver.gov

### Board of County Commissioners

*Joseph Flescher, District 2, Chairman*

*Deryl Loar, District 4, Vice Chairman*

*Susan Adams, District 1*

*Joseph H. Earman, District 3*

*Laura Moss, District 5*

**John A. Titkanich, Jr., County Administrator**

**Jennifer W. Shuler, County Attorney**

**Ryan L. Butler, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller**

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Wednesday, September 10, 2025

5:01 PM

Commission Chambers

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### Public Hearing on Tentative Budget and Proposed Millage

#### 1. CALL TO ORDER

#### 2 ROLL CALL

Present: 5 - Chairman Joseph Flescher  
Vice Chairman Deryl Loar  
Commissioner Susan Adams  
Commissioner Joe Earman  
Commissioner Laura Moss

#### 2.A. A MOMENT OF SILENT REFLECTION FOR FIRST RESPONDERS AND MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES

#### 2.B. INVOCATION

Deacon Wilfred Hart, Friendship Missionary Baptist Church

#### 3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

County Administrator John Titkanich, Jr.

#### 4. BUDGET OVERVIEW BY COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR, JOHN A. TITKANICH, JR.

##### A. Proposed Budget

25-0838

County Administrator John Titankich announced the Preliminary Budget Hearing for Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026. He provided an overview of the FY 2024-2025 budget, starting with last year's budget at the beginning of this process and then presenting the proposed budget for the upcoming year. Last year, the budget started at \$524,719,875. There were amendments related to

the Capital Improvements Plan, among other items. The proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year was \$598,270,347, reflecting an increase of \$73,550,472 from the previous year.

He highlighted some significant impacts on the budget. Key points included an 8.8% rise in the Countywide Tax Roll and an 8.7% increase in the unincorporated areas. He also recommended a \$6 million increase in the Sheriff's funding, which was a reduction from his initial request of \$14.6 million and a revised request of \$12.2 million.

Commissioner Laura Moss noted that at the last budget meeting on August 10, 2025, the Board identified an additional amount that could be added to the Sheriff's budget, bringing the total increase to \$6.8 million. She emphasized that this was not the full request and reminded everyone that the Sheriff was not asking for this increase for personal gain, as his salary was determined by the State. She expressed her belief that the discussion around this issue had become overly contentious and hoped the Board would agree to the \$6.8 million increase.

Administrator Titkanich continued, stating that each year the Florida Legislature set the County's retirement rates. This year, the increase in retirement rates was \$3.9 million, which included Constitutional Officers. Additionally, Workers' Compensation expenses rose by \$1,072,121, also including Constitutional Officers. The budget included an increase of 20 full-time positions and an addition of 1.25 full-time Constitutional Officers, resulting in a total increase of 21.25 full-time positions.

## 5. AD VALOREM FUNDS

A. Ad Valorem Millage and Ad Valorem Budget (Read each fund separately and make motion for each fund after public input).

### General Fund

[25-0839](#)

Proposed millage is 3.5475 and is 6.69% above rolled back rate of 3.3250. The proposed budget is \$156,982,168.

Administrator Titkanich announced that the General Fund proposed millage is 3.5475, 6.69% above the rolled-back rate of 3.3250. The proposed budget is \$156,982,168.

Chairman Flescher stated that, unfortunately, the Sheriff could not attend because he was addressing an emergent matter, but some of his staff were present. He added that, looking at the Sheriff's budget, it was widely agreed that it was a rather significant

increase. The Board had spent many hours and engaged in countless discussions on the Sheriff's budget, but it was the Board's obligation to examine and ensure that it was a good steward of taxpayers' dollars. He pointed out that the Board set the millage rate and noted it was one of the lowest in the state. He said that, as a Chairman, he could not make a motion but felt that the Board should return the additional \$6 million to the General Fund and fully fund the Sheriff's budget request through the reserve account. Chairman Flescher stated that there was over \$685,408,713 in restricted funds, but the unrestricted amount in the account was \$78,918,193.35.

Commissioner Adams sought and received clarification from Chairman Flescher that he was proposing to return the \$6 million to the General Fund and move forward with funding the Sheriff for \$12 million from the reserve account. She explained that the Chairman proposed withdrawing \$12 million in recurring dollars from the reserve account.

Commissioner Earman was not prepared to make a motion until after hearing public comments and staff input.

Chairman Flescher opened the public hearing.

Donna Flaherty sought and received information about the dollar amount the Sheriff requested, and was opposed to the increase.

Michael Marsh expressed that he has witnessed the Sheriff's department actively working in the community day in and day out. He highlighted the positive contributions the deputies made every day and commended the Sheriff's Office Explorer Program, which gave young adults the opportunity to gain firsthand experience in public safety careers.

Tony Consalo supported fully funding the Sheriff, believing that \$6.8 million or \$6.2 million should come from the General Fund, with the remaining funds sourced from the Reserves.

Jo Anne Barnhart applauded the Board for maintaining the millage rate and being prudent with taxpayer dollars. She emphasized that the primary role of government was public safety and expressed that the County was very fortunate to have Eric Flowers as Sheriff. He has demonstrated strong leadership in law and order, notably

advancing the Sheriff's Office into the 21st century through initiatives such as the real-time crime center and license plate readers. She also recognized the valuable work he has done with the inmate population, including the farm training program for women inmates and established connections with local businesses to help those exiting the system find jobs. She supported fully funding for the Sheriff's Office.

A County resident stated that she has spent her entire adult career working in Municipal, County, and State Government. As a government employee with several years of law enforcement experience, she, along with her husband, who has 42 years in the field, believed the Sheriff deserved full funding.

Wilfred Hart urged the Board to fully fund the Sheriff's Budget and the organizations seeking financial support to ensure their survival.

Charles Hoffman noted that a business could not remain viable without annual increases and increased efficiencies; however, he believed that continual increases could become excessive. He emphasized the importance of not only increasing funding for specific programs but also creating efficiencies within the budget.

Barbara Miles raised concerns about the County's growth and the need to hire more deputies. She received confirmation that there were no new position requests in the Sheriff's Budget.

Leticia Wood stressed the importance of addressing the budget to include raises for Sheriff's Deputies. She pointed out that neighboring counties were offering higher salaries, which risked the County losing its deputies to better-paying opportunities. She emphasized that these men and women put their lives on the line every day, and their value could not be measured in monetary terms.

Renee Reya, who had worked in the Sheriff's Office for 21 years stated that many deputies had gone without a raise for seven years, which had hindered pay growth within the Sheriff's office. She acknowledged that Sheriff Eric Flowers had made diligent efforts to resolve this issue, but it has been a gradual process. Additionally, she raised a critical concern about employee retention, stating that since the Board's last meeting, she had lost one employee and was about to lose another that Friday due to pay concerns.

Dale Dawkins shared a personal story from his past about a Sheriff's Deputy who

went a mile for him, just one example of how deputies in the community went above and beyond their duties. He believed that pay increases would significantly affect the morale and well-being of the deputies. He expressed frustration at the negative portrayals on TV, stating that this did not represent Vero Beach. The law enforcement community was part of the family, and they wanted the leaders to take care of them.

Phil Daugherty, a Detective with the Sheriff's Office and President of the Deputies' Union, opened his address by expressing gratitude for the opportunity to discuss potential funding for the Sheriff's Budget. He acknowledged the concerns raised during the meeting. He sought to clarify a few essential points about the Sheriff's funding for retaining current personnel, attracting recruits, and creating the safest possible environment for the community.

Connie Kelly spoke about a situation that occurred in January 2024 and was not in support of increasing the Sheriff's Budget.

A County resident who was watching the meeting online decided to attend in person to show support for the Sheriff's Budget.

Marc Jaffe introduced himself as a resident of District 4. He inquired about the starting salary for a deputy in Indian River County compared to the surrounding counties.

There being no further speakers, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

Chairman Flescher addressed the issue of deputies leaving their positions, which had been mentioned during the public discussion. While some records existed, they were limited. With 67 counties in the state, the Sheriff's Association indicated that this was a statewide challenge. He emphasized that the County had one of the lowest millage rates in the state. However, counties with higher millage rates might attract deputies with better salaries.

Chairman Flescher stated there was a suggestion for the Board to leave the \$6 million intact and take another \$6 million from reserves. This was an alternative option. His main concern was not to increase the burden on taxpayers, especially since the Board could not change the millage rate. Additionally, he did not want to jeopardize their ability to complete many of the projects they had committed to. He stated the options

to either maintain the \$6 million they had earmarked for the Sheriff's Budget request and take an additional \$6 million from reserves to fully fund the request, or return the funds to the General Fund and withdraw a total of \$12 million from Reserves.

County Administrator John Titkanich reviewed the General Fund balance and stated after accounting for non-spendable, restricted, and committed items, the usable fund balance was \$64.6 million. Additionally, there was a reserve of \$4.4 million related to projects and proceeds. The policy required a 20% unassigned fund balance of \$28.9 million. There was also a budget stabilization policy set at 5%, which equated to \$7.25 million, along with an emergency disaster relief reserve of 5%. Furthermore, there were cash-forward budget amendments totaling \$1.475 million for projects rolled over from the last fiscal year or entirely unbudgeted. At the end of the day, the current available fund balance for the General Fund was \$15,226,936.

Administrator Titkanich made a few comments on the use of fund balances or reserves, noting that it was customary to allocate them to one-time costs or capital projects. He pointed out that it was not considered best practice to use these reserves for recurring expenses. Using reserves for ongoing costs could lead to compounded expenses. For instance, if the County utilized \$6 billion in one year, that amount would carry over into the following year's budget, necessitating a significant tax increase to cover those costs.

Administrator Titkanich also mentioned that, without decreasing reserves, the new revenue for that year was \$8.68 million, a decline from the previous three years. He observed a steady decrease in new revenue, raising concerns about the economy, as homes stayed on the market longer and price reductions became more common. He noted declines in building permits and impact fee revenues. Last year, new construction added \$665,000 to the tax rolls, but this year, it dropped to just over \$600,000. He spoke about the recent articles on the significant drop in property values in the County and the pressure from the legislature for property tax reform. If they enforced a rollback, it raised the question of how they could reduce taxes while making up for the money being taken out of reserves this year to cover not just one year's expenses, but two years' expenses. He cautioned against balancing the budget by funding recurring expenses with reserves when only \$15.2 million was truly available.

In response to Chairman Flescher, Administrator Titkanich noted that the total General Fund for the Municipal Services Taxing Unit (MSTU) was \$78,918,193.35

and that the unrestricted portion must comply with specific policies. For instance, 20% needed to be set aside for the unassigned fund balance, 5% for budget stabilization, and another 5% for the emergency and disaster relief reserve. It was important to note that the County was currently five storms behind in receiving reimbursements from the state and federal governments, resulting in a negative balance in one of those funds. Additionally, cash-forward budget amendments and Capital Improvement Element (CIE) projects were being added to the MSTU. He stated the available fund balance out of the total of \$39.3 million was \$21,589.71. He noted the challenge for the Board was that they could not fund everything from the MSTU.

Commissioner Moss appreciated Mr. Tony Consalo's suggestion to spend the six million dollars already allocated and then take an additional six million from the Reserve Fund, as previously discussed. She referred to Administrator Titkanich, who explained that the Reserve Fund included all funds designated for specific purposes, such as the Business Enterprise funds, Restricted funds, Utilities, and the Sand Ridge Golf Course. At that time, the General Fund balance available was \$15,226,936. If they withdrew \$6 million from this amount, they would have \$9 million remaining. He gave an example of a challenge in which the County used Reserves to balance the Utility budget and had to recorrect the utility rates to avoid running out of Reserves by 2027.

Vice Chairman Loar stated that the theme of this overall budget was to raise deputies' salaries to a competitive level, and he asked Administrator Titkanich for the spreadsheet of numbers presented at the July Budget Workshop to determine the cost of increasing deputies' salaries. He recalled the amount was \$61,000 per deputy, with an annual adjustment of \$9,000 for each additional deputy, and a \$3,500 adjustment for civilian employees.

Administrator Titkanich asked whether there was anything else the Board would want to consider regarding the General Fund, and Commissioner Moss asked how long it took the County to accumulate the \$15 million currently in reserves. Chairman Flescher requested a rough estimate of the time required to replenish reserves to \$3 million, \$6 million, and \$12 million.

Administrator Titkanich, in response to Commissioner Moss, explained that the scenario was highly hypothetical, as the County could not predict future changes in property values or the overall outcome. He added that policies were enacted to establish a rainy-day fund and stated that if an economic catastrophe occurred, the

County would be better prepared to weather the storm. He added that the reserves should be only for one-time expenses or capital project costs.

Commissioner Adams reiterated that it was Business 101 that you do not use savings accounts or reserves for recurring funding. She said that if the Board proceeded, it would be prepared to increase the millage next year. The increase would need to cover six million plus any additional amounts.

Commissioner Moss suggested allocating six million dollars from the reserve fund as a one-time expense and being prepared to increase the millage rate next year, understanding that this increase would need to cover the six million, plus any additional costs.

Administrator Titkanich concluded that it was also essential to recognize that the County was unlikely to see property tax reform until 2028. This reform would be determined by voters, who were often the same individuals cheering for lower property taxes.

The Chairman called a recess at 6:40 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 7:25 p.m. with all members present.

County Administrator Titkanich displayed a spreadsheet of the Sheriff's office's salaries and operating costs. He reminded the Board that whatever budget the Board ultimately decided upon, staff had advertisements scheduled for September 17, 2025. He pointed out that before the Board adjourns tonight's meeting, the Board would need to vote to adopt the exact amount, and staff would need to rebalance a \$90 million budget so it could be advertised correctly. He referred to the spreadsheet of deputies' starting salaries in other counties, noting it had been updated after the Budget Workshop to include Polk County, and emphasized the average starting salary for the Sheriff's offices listed was \$57,888.60. He presented a pay-raise scenario that included all their benefits; the total was \$6,079,920, as previously explained. The \$6,079,920 would be an option only if the Board decided to allocate those funds specifically for that purpose. This amount would raise deputies' starting salary to \$60,000.

Vice Chairman Loar received confirmation from Administrator Titkanich that the approximately \$6.1 million increase would bring all the starting salaries to \$60,000, and give every uniformed, jail, courthouse, and road patrol employee a \$9,381 raise.

Additionally, it would provide a \$3,500 across-the-board raise for the 190 civilian employees.

Commissioner Adams reiterated that the amount aligned with what the Board approved during the Budget Workshop and appeared to meet the goals stated in the Sheriff's budget presentation, which aimed to raise base pay and avoid compression among the deputies.

In response to a question from Commissioner Moss about the time required to reach \$15 million in reserves, Administrator Titkanich stated that it ultimately depended on the economic cycle. He pointed out that from 2013 to 2021, it took the County eight years to reach the current point of increasing by \$15 million. However, over the last couple of years, it has taken only about two years due to strong tax collections. He added that revenue was beginning to level off and had declined over the past three years.

Commissioner Moss stated no one wanted to take from the Reserves, and it would need to be replenished by increasing the millage next year. She liked the proposal to retain the current funding in the General Fund and take the \$6 million from the Reserves, with the understanding that it was a one-time event and would require an increase in the millage rate.

Administrator Titkanich pointed out that, whatever the millage rate increases to, it would have to double the following year to cover the year in arrears and the year ahead.

Administrator Titkanich brought up that he had requested budget information from the Sheriff back in July 2025 to review the Sheriff's operating costs and contracted services, which accounted for a significant portion of the Sheriff's budget. Although he received pay spreadsheets for previous years that were helpful for their discussions, it was crucial to examine the specific contracts. He noted that he had received the actual contracts at 1:53 p.m. on Monday, September 8th, and had not yet had the opportunity to review all of them. He stated that, out of a total of 63 contracts, he had managed to review five.

Administrator Titkanich provided examples of contracts he had reviewed, highlighting contracts in the Sheriff's Proposed Budget compared to the previous year that he felt were overstated.

Vice Chairman Loar made it clear that any increase in the millage rate would require a vote from the Board. He sought clarification from Administrator Titkanich on what the \$6 million of the Sheriff's \$12 million request was earmarked for.

A discussion ensued with Chairman Flescher trying to recall whether the Board had ever conducted this level of examination of any of the Constitutional Officers' Budgets. Commissioner Adams, who reiterated her opposition to using reserves for recurring funding, stated that they should only be used for capital projects and one-time capital expenditures.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Moss to approve \$6 million from the General Fund and \$3 million from reserves. She intended it to be a one-time event, not recurring funding, and acknowledged that it would involve a millage increase next year. The motion failed for lack of second.**

In response to the motion made by Commissioner Moss, Budget Director Kristen Daniels stated that if the Board funds \$3 million from cash, then it would need to be made up in a millage increase the following year. She emphasized that this alone would increase the millage rate. She explained that if the County saw another decrease in revenue, and another 15% increase was requested next year, it would exacerbate the millage rate. She wanted the Board to understand that these levels of increases, with what staff were seeing in the economy, were not sustainable.

A discussion followed with Chairman Flescher expressing understanding that there was significant risk in not knowing next year, but, that the Board needed to address the needs expressed today. Commissioner Earman opposed funding the Sheriff's Budget from the Reserves. Vice Chairman Loar turned to Administrator Titkanich to review the email sent from the Sheriff's General Counsel. Administrator Titkanich reviewed the letter in which the Sheriff asked to bring the following items to the Board's attention: 1) Florida Statute 30.49 says that if any Board takes any action to amend, modify, increase, or reduce, the Board must notify the Sheriff of such action in writing. Administrator Titkanich said in the same section that it also required the Sheriff to provide, as part of his budget, all relevant and pertinent information that the Board deemed necessary to evaluate.

The Vice Chairman also noted that, under Florida Statute 30.49, an increase in the budget would constitute an amendment. The Board would be required to respond,

regardless of the outcome, in writing, as the County did every year.

Administrator Titkanich continued in the second bullet, which referenced Florida Statute 901.35(2)(A), stating that the County was responsible for the payment of inmate medical costs when the inmate was either unable to pay or recovery could not be made from an inmate's health insurance. Over the years, the Sheriff had either covered the high cost of inmate hospitalization in his budget or, in the last approximately three years, arranged for his contracted medical provider to bear those costs. Beginning October 1, 2025, the Sheriff would no longer accept responsibility for inmate hospitalizations or medical costs outside of jail and would direct providers to the County for payment in accordance with the aforementioned Statute.

Administrator Titkanich mentioned that the letter included a Memorandum of Understanding concerning the maintenance of facilities to uphold the arrangement. He highlighted that the inmate medical contract, one of the five he reviewed, amounted to \$4.2 million and covered off-site care provided by a contractor. This contract specified a line item of \$350,000 for off-site care and an additional \$250,000 set aside as a reserve in case the expenses exceeded these amounts.

Vice Chairman Loar further discussed the Sheriff's Budget and emphasized that relying on Reserve Fund dollars was neither a sound policy nor a practice. He suggested that there were alternatives to this approach that did not require utilizing any of the County's fund balance dollars. One possible solution he mentioned was through budget amendments. He noted that the Sheriff had utilized budget amendments in the past. He added that the County's AAA bond rating was crucial, and that the Board must also consider the possibility of a catastrophic event in this County. There were times when the County had to self-fund a crisis, whether natural or man-made, because when such events occur, funding the response must be provided while waiting for federal and state assistance, which can sometimes take years. Misusing the County's fund balance posed a risk. He suggested engaging decision-makers at the Sheriff's office to discuss amending the budget on an as-needed basis.

Administrator Titkanich reviewed through the Budget cuts to get the Sheriff's budget the additional \$6.8 million, stating the County would eliminate the following: the new Park Foreman position, a full-time maintenance worker in Parks, the guest services attendant position for Jones' Pier would be reduced to a part-time role, and a full-time staff assistant on Conservation Lands (new position) was eliminated. There was also a partial cost related to the Assistant Project Manager for Building Facility

Services, which was cut. A part-time Recreation Leader position was removed, and funding for a senior maintenance worker crew leader in Road and Bridge was cut. Recognizing that the County was developing a new framework for Animal Control and animal sheltering, the County sought to reduce the Humane Society's annual contract funding by \$335,000. Funding for the Animal Services Division was reduced by \$729,828. Additionally, the Hospital District agreed to cover half of the Mental Health Court costs, totaling about \$250,000. When these cuts were taken into account and added to the budget, along with the General Fund adjustments, the reduction of the 911 surcharge, and the optional sales tax increase for capital, the total was \$6,852,364.

**A motion was made by Vice Chairman Loar, seconded by Commissioner Moss, to approve the increase in the Sheriff's budget by \$6,861,517 for a total of \$85,773,472. Through reducing \$853,000 in necessary cuts to the General Fund in lieu of going into the reserves, with the understanding that the Board would look at the Inmate Medical Costs, and address any fiscal budget amendments as the Sheriff saw fit. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

County Administrator John Titkanich announced the General Fund proposed millage rate is 3.5475, 6.69% above the rolled back rate of 3.3250. The proposed budget is \$156,981,163.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Commissioner Moss, to adopt the tentative millage rate of 3.5475, 6.69% above the rolled-back rate of 3.3250. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Commissioner Earman, to adopt the tentative budget of \$156,981,193. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

**M.S.T.U.**

[25-0840](#) Proposed millage is 1.1506 and is 6.09% above rolled back rate of 1.0846. The proposed budget is \$55,757,511.

County Administrator John Titkanich stated the Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) proposed millage rate is 1.1506 and is 6.09% above the rolled back rate of 1.0846. The MSTU proposed budget is \$56,348,983.

Chairman Flescher opened the public hearing. There being no speakers, the Chairman closed the hearing.

There were no proposed amendments to the budget.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Vice Chairman Loar, to adopt the tentative millage rate of 1.1506, 6.09% above the rollback rate of 1.0846, for the Municipal Service Taxing Unit. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Chairman Flescher, to adopt the tentative budget in the amount of \$56,348,983 for the Municipal Service Taxing Unit. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

## Transportation Fund

[25-0841](#) Proposed budget is \$27,075,755.

County Administrator John Titkanich announced the proposed Transportation Fund budget is \$27,075,755.

Chairman Flescher opened the public hearing. There being no speakers, the Chairman closed the hearing.

There were no proposed amendments to the budget.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Commissioner Moss, to approve the tentative budget of \$27,075,755 for the Transportation Fund. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

## Emergency Services District

[25-0842](#) Proposed millage is 2.3531 and is 6.25% above rolled back rate of 2.2147. The proposed budget is \$73,585,471.

County Administrator John Titkanich announced the Emergency Services District proposed millage is 2.3531 and is 6.25% above rolled back rate of 2.2147. The

proposed budget is \$73,585.471.

Chairman Flescher opened the public hearing. There being no speakers, the Chairman closed the hearing.

There were no proposed amendments to the budget.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Moss, seconded by Commissioner Adams, to adopt the tentative millage rate of 2.3531, 6.25% above the rolled back rate of 2.2147 for the Emergency Services District. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

**A motion was made by Commissioner Moss, seconded by Chairman Flescher, to adopt the tentative budget in the amount of \$73,585,471 for the Emergency Services District. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

#### Land Acquisition Bonds-2024

[25-0843](#) Proposed millage is 0.0610. The proposed budget is \$1,843,432.

County Administrator John Titkanich announced the proposed millage is 0.0610, and the Land Acquisition budget is \$1,843,432.

Chairman Flescher opened the public hearing. There being no speakers, the Chairman closed the hearing.

There were no proposed amendments to the budget.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Moss, seconded by Commissioner Adams, to adopt the tentative millage rate of 0.0610 for the Land Acquisition Bonds 2024 Referendum. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

**A motion was made by Commissioner Moss, seconded by Commissioner Adams to adopt the tentative budget in the amount of \$1,843,432 for the Land Acquisition Bonds 2024 Referendum. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

**Aggregate**25-0891

Proposed millage is 6.1158 and is 6.47% above rolled back rate of 5.7442.

County Administrator John Titkanich announced that the proposed aggregate millage is 6.1158 and is 6.47% above the rolled back rate of 5.7442. The rate is used for comparison purposes and does not require adoption by the Board.

Chairman Flescher opened the public hearing. There being no speakers, the Chairman closed the hearing.

**No Action Taken or Required****6. INDIAN RIVER COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
SITTING AS SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL DISTRICT BOARD**

The Board of County Commissioners reconvened as the Board of Commissioners of the Solid Waste Disposal District. The minutes will be approved at an upcoming meeting.

25-0844**Solid Waste Disposal District Budget (Non-Ad Valorem Special District)****A. Announce 2025/2026 Proposed Charge and Budget**

1. Universal Collection Assessment \$181.70
2. \$125.06 per Residential Waste Generation Unit (\$187.59/House)  
(15.00% increase from current year)  
\$79.12 per Commercial Waste Generation Unit  
(15.00% increase from current year)  
Readiness-to-Use Fee \$46.62  
(15.70% increase from current year)
3. \$42,047,435 Budget

County Administrator John Titkanich outlined the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026 Solid Waste Disposal District (SWDD) proposed charges. The proposed budget was \$42,047,435. He stated that the County Attorney has received objection letters regarding the Universal Collection Assessment and has provided them to the Clerk.

Chairman Flescher opened the public hearing.

Madeleine Szabo felt the Universal Collection Service was costly, wasteful, and unfair.

Daniel Hardee, representing Highridge Mobile Home Park, discussed his commitment to providing affordable housing in Gifford but said he could no longer afford to pay for tenants' waste removal and would have to pass the increased assessment cost to the tenants. SWDD Managing Director Himanshu Mehta offered to have Waste Management contact Mr. Hardee to conduct a site visit and review dumpster options.

Myra Ferguson, who owned Ferguson rental properties on the entire street except one house, felt that utilizing a dumpster versus individual trash service would be more economical and expressed concern about the high cost of the Universal Trash Service, which left her with no choice but to pass those costs on to tenants who could barely afford their rent. Mr. Mehta explained that a dumpster would not be allowed because the rental properties were on separate parcels, not a single parcel.

Daniel Linden preferred using the Convenience Center and did not want curbside pickup.

Donna Flaherty discussed the financial strain of the Universal Trash Assessment and the size of the bins. Mr. Mehta offered to review her case and told her about a Waste Management service called a back-door service, which required a physician's note.

Darrae Norling opposed Universal Trash Service.

Bob Ryall discussed the burden that Universal Trash pickup was having in the planned development where he lived. He also read a letter from a member of his community opposing the Universal Collection Service. Mr. Mehta explained to the Board that WM was working with communities with mixed uses, such as villas and single-family homes, that had applied for an exemption out of carted bins for the villas but were trying to get the bins out to those in single-family homes.

Bill Rigby received clarification from Mr. Mehta that the County required WM's subcontractor to scan the container's serial number and connect it to an address. Mr. Mehta stated that if the containers were dropped off on a vacant piece of property, it was a mistake, and that only improved residential properties would be charged the

Solid Waste assessment. In response to a protest submitted by Mr. Rigby regarding portions of the bid for trash collection, County Attorney Jennifer Shuler offered to arrange a meeting with Mr. Rigby.

Jonathan Clint stated that he has a large property and uses a dumpster for his yard waste, which was picked up weekly. He did not need the Universal Collection Service. Mr. Mehta explained that the County had no mechanism to exclude properties from the uniform assessment.

Kristin Goldberg supported the Universal Trash Service.

There being no further speakers, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Moss stated for the record that she was opposed to Universal Collection Service from the beginning and has not changed her position.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Chairman Flescher, to approve Resolution 2025-041, establishing the assessment rate to be levied upon all real taxable property in Indian River County, Florida, for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 for the Solid Waste Disposal District. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 4 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, and Commissioner Earman

**Nay:** 1 - Commissioner Moss

**A motion by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Chairman Flescher, the Board adopted Resolution 2025-042, relating to the management and collection of Solid Waste Collection Assessments in the Indian River County Municipal Service Benefit Unit for Solid Waste Collection Services; providing authority, definitions and interpretation; imposing Solid Waste Collection Assessments against residential property located within the Indian River County Municipal Service Benefit Unit for Solid Waste Collection Services for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2025; approving the assessment roll and providing for collection of the assessments; confirming the initial assessment resolution; providing for effect and application of the assessment proceeds; providing for conflict and severability; and providing an effective date. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 4 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, and Commissioner Earman

**Nay:** 1 - Commissioner Moss

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Chairman Flescher, to adopt the budget in the amount of \$42,047,435 for the Solid Waste Disposal District. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 4 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, and Commissioner Earman

**Nay:** 1 - Commissioner Moss

The Board of Commissioners adjourned the Solid Waste Disposal District hearing, and reconvened as the Board of County Commissioners of the Preliminary Budget Hearing meeting, continuing with the adoption of Non-Ad Valorem Assessment charges.

## 7. ADOPTION OF NON-AD VALOREM ASSESSMENT CHARGES

### 25-0845

A. Announce 2025/2026 proposed charge for each Non-Ad Valorem Assessment District.

County Administrator John Titkanich announced the proposed charge for the Vero Lake Estates Municipal Service Benefit Unit (MSBU) was \$50.00 per parcel acre/lot, the East Gifford Stormwater MSBU was \$10.00 per parcel acre/lot, the Water's Edge Phase II Subdivision (MSBU) was \$454.57 per parcel acre/lot, and the North County Water Assessment was \$283.22 per parcel acre/lot.

County Administrator Titkanich stated the County Attorney has received some objection letters and has provided them to the Clerk.

**A motion was made by Vice Chairman Loar, seconded by Commissioner Adams, to approve Resolution 2025-043, establishing the assessment rates to be levied upon certain Real Property in Indian River County for the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 for all the Non-Ad Valorem assessments. The motion carried by the following**

**vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

The Chairman opened the public hearing.

Allison Giordano, President of Water's Edge Homeowner's Association, addressed the Board regarding an upcoming assessment of \$454 per homeowner per year for 15 years. The development consists of 86 homes in total. She was in possession of a letter from their attorney that presented strong arguments, supported by Case Law and State Statutes, explaining why the homeowners should not bear the full assessment. She continued, the issue involved a road crossing over a culvert, which affected not only the homeowners in Water's Edge but also those living along First Street Southwest. Therefore, the assessment should not be assigned solely to the residents of Water's Edge.

Ms. Giordano reported that the total assessment of \$537,000 included an \$80,000 contingency discussed during the August 12th meeting, of which very little had been used. She informed the Board that an email indicated at least \$60,000 represented a cost savings. Consequently, the numbers they received should be adjusted downwards by these amounts.

Ms. Giordano referenced an email that was taken out of context, highlighting that Water's Edge acknowledged their awareness of the County's plans to construct the culvert and understood there would be some form of assessment on their properties. However, they never agreed to be solely assessed, nor to the amount of the assessment. Additionally, she mentioned an email from Dylan Reingold, dated December 16, 2022, at 4:15 p.m. In that email, he stated that there was funding available to replace the culverts at both entranceways to Water's Edge, as well as those that crossed First Street Southwest. However, he emphasized that an agreement needed to be established first. At that time, the County Attorney indicated that there was money allocated in the budget. She pointed out that on the same day, former Public Works Director Rich Szpyrka stated that the County was not responsible for addressing issues outside of the pipe replacement under the driveways. This suggested to the residents that the pipes under the driveways, which were public roads maintained by the County (as they were turned over in 2006), were indeed the County's responsibility. The culverts at these two entrances were also the County's responsibility, yet the residents were being assessed for them. She explained that once the project was completed, the County would assume responsibility for the maintenance of those culverts going forward. If the County planned to take over this responsibility in the future, the residents questioned why they were not doing so at that time.

Assistant County Attorney Chris Hicks addressed the Board, explaining that for the assessment, the County must propose the highest amount possible. However, this figure would be adjusted once they receive the final amount. It is projected that the final amount would exceed \$60,000, although this was not guaranteed; it remains a projection. The precise figure would only be known once they obtain the final numbers from the contractor.

A discussion occurred among Ms. Giordano, Board members, and Attorney Hicks regarding the Water's Edge assessment notices, email correspondence, and the transition of the roads in Water's Edge to the County. Commissioner Adams stated that today's hearing was the final step in the process of finalizing the assessment for the tax bill.

Kristin Goldberg reached out to Attorney Hicks for clarification regarding previous communications with the Water's Edge Board about the Assessment.

Christine Pokorney, representing her mother, Sun Pokorney, a resident of Water's Edge, read a letter expressing concerns about the proposed special assessment.

William Papko opined that the County owned the culvert and should be responsible for replacing the pipe.

There being no further speakers, the Chairman closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Moss requested Attorney Hicks to send the link for the Special Call Meeting on August 12, 2025, to the Water's Edge Homeowner Association.

**A motion was made by Vice Chairman Loar, seconded by Commissioner Adams, to approve Resolution 2025-044, relating to the construction and funding of the culvert replacement project within the Water's Edge Phase II Subdivision culvert replacement project Municipal Service Benefit Unit; providing authority, definitions and interpretation; creating the Water's Edge Phase II Subdivision culvert replacement project Municipal Service Benefit Unit; confirming the initial assessment resolution; imposing special assessments against all assessed property within the Water's Edge Phase II Subdivision culvert replacement project Municipal Service Benefit Unit; approving the assessment roll and providing for collection; providing for prepayments; providing for application of assessment proceeds; providing for effect; providing for recording of the notice of assessment; providing for conflicts and severability; and providing an effective date. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

Commissioner Earman read into the record the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 proposed charge for each Non-Ad Valorem Assessment District for Street Lighting.

Chairman Flescher opened the public hearing. There being no speakers, the Chairman closed the hearing.

There were no proposed amendments to the budget.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Earman, seconded by Commissioner Moss, to adopt the tentative charges read into the record for each of the Non-Ad Valorem Assessment Districts for Street Lighting. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

## 8. APPROVE NON-AD VALOREM DOLLAR BUDGETS

### A. Announce 2025/2026 Proposed Budget

25-0846 1. Special Revenue Funds - \$48,803,821

25-0847 2. Other Debt Service Fund - \$500,000

25-0848 3. Capital Projects - \$54,295,004

25-0849 4. Enterprise Funds - \$79,981,565

25-0850 5. Internal Service Funds - \$57,398,185

County Administrator John Titkanich outlined the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 proposed Non-Ad Valorem dollar budgets.

Chairman Flescher opened the public hearing. There being no speakers, the Chairman closed the hearing.

There were no proposed amendments to the budget.

**A motion was made by Commissioner Adams, seconded by Commissioner Moss, to adopt the tentative Non-Ad Valorem Dollar Budgets for the Special Revenue Funds, Other Debt Service Funds, Capital Project Funds, Enterprise Funds, and Internal Service Funds. The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Aye:** 5 - Chairman Flescher, Vice Chairman Loar, Commissioner Adams, Commissioner Earman, and Commissioner Moss

**9. ANNOUNCE TIME AND PLACE OF FINAL BUDGET HEARING**

County Administrator John Titkanich announced that the Final Budget Hearing would be held at 5:01 p.m. on Wednesday, September 17, 2025, at the County Administration Building A, Commission Chambers, 1801 27th Street, Vero Beach, Florida.

**10. ADJOURN**

There being no further business, the Chairman adjourned the meeting at 10:30 p.m.