



**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES
TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING
TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 155 F. Road, Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470
Tuesday, April 7, 2026**

TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kane called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE AND MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor Kane led the pledge of allegiance and moment of silence.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Anita Kane, Vice Mayor Margaret Herzog, Councilmember Paul Coleman, Councilmember Lisa El-Ramey, Councilmember Todd McLendon, Councilmember – Elect William “Joe” Stephens, Councilmember – Elect Manish Sood, Town Manager Francine Ramaglia, Town Attorney Jeff Kurtz, Community Standards Director Caryn Gardner – Young, Public Works Director Craig Lower, and Assistant Town Manager/Town Clerk Valerie Oakes.

Note: Councilmember Kane departed early during the meeting due to a family matter.

ADDITIONS, DELETIONS, AND MODIFICATIONS

Staff added a presentation by Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council after Item No. 8. Removal of Item No. 12 from the consent agenda and move it to the regular agenda and to pull items No. 16 and No. 19.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ MCLENDON MOVED TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS MODIFIED. MOTION PASSED (5-0).

PRESENTATIONS

1. Acceptance and Certification of the March 10, 2026, Election Results for the Town of Loxahatchee Groves

Town Clerk Oakes read the certified election results from the Palm Beach County Supervisor of Elections.

Seat 1 (1-year unexpired term): Steve Hoffman – 64 votes; William “Joe” Stephens – 212 votes; Robert Sullivan – 191 votes. Winner: William “Joe” Stephens

Seat 5 (3- year term): Todd McLendon – 151 votes; Manish Sood – 322 Votes. Winner Manish Sood.

Referendum Question 1: Yes – 282; No – 109.

Referendum Question 2: Yes – 199; No – 263.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER EL-RAMEY/ COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN MOVED TO ACCEPT THE ELECTION RESULTS. MOTION PASSED (5-0).

2. Acknowledgement of Service and Recognition of the Outgoing Town Councilmembers Marge Herzog and Todd McLendon

Mayor Kane presented plaques to outgoing Vice Mayor Marge Herzog and Councilmember Todd McLendon and thanked them for their service.

3. Administration of Oath of Office – Seat No. 1 and Seating of Councilmember-Elect Joe Stephens

Oath of office was administered to Councilmember-Elect William “Joe” Stephens. Councilmember Stephens gave brief remarks and took his seat on the dais.

4. Administration of Oath of Office – Seat No. 5 and Seating of Councilmember-Elect Manish Sood

Oath of Office was administered to Councilmember-Elect Manish Sood. Councilmember Sood gave brief remarks and took his seat.

5. Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-16: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA, ELECTING A MAYOR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR 2026-2027 AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Town Clerk Oakes read the resolution into the record.

Councilmember El-Ramey suggested a different approach to mayor nominations. After discussion with the Town Attorney and Council the Council decided to continue with previous traditions to nominate a mayor.

Mayor Kane nominated Councilmember Coleman and Councilmember Sood nominated Councilmember El-Ramey. Both nominees accepted the nominations.

Public comment received from Todd McLendon showing his opposition for implementing a new nomination process. That if the Council wishes to implement a new process it should be discussed after the fact and not during nominations. He also showed his support for Paul Coleman as Mayor.

MOTION: MAYOR KANE/ COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN MOVED TO NOMINATE PAUL COLEMAN AS MAYOR. MOTION FAILED (2-3). WITH COUNCILMEMBERS EL-RAMEY, STEPHENS, AND SOOD DISSENTING.

MOTION: **COUNCILMEMBER SOOD/ COUNCILMEMBER EL-RAMEY MOVED TO NOMINATE LISA EL-RAMEY AS THE MAYOR. MOTION PASSED (4-1). WITH MAYOR KANE DISSENTING.**

Councilmember El-Ramey was seated as Mayor.

6. **Consideration of Approval on Resolution No.2026-17: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, PALM BEACH COUNTY, FLORIDA, ELECTING A VICE MAYOR FOR THE ENSUING YEAR 2026-2027 AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Town Clerk Oakes read the resolution into the record. Mayor El-Ramey opened the floor for nominations for Vice Mayor.

Councilmember Stephens nominated Manish Sood. Councilmember Coleman self-nominated with a second from Councilmember Kane. Both nominations were accepted.

MOTION: **COUNCILMEMBER STEPHENS/ COUNCILMEMBER SOOD MOVED TO NOMINATE MANISH SOOD AS VICE MAYOR. MOTION PASSED (3-2). WITH COUNCILMEMBER KANE AND COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN DISSENTING.**

7. **Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-19: A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA NOMINATING A TOWN COUNCILMEMBER FOR AND SUPPORTING HIS/HER APPOINTMENT AS THE PALM BEACH COUNTY LEAGUE OF CITIES VOTING DELEGATE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Town Clerk Oakes read the resolution into the record.

Vice Mayor Sood nominated Mayor El-Ramey as the Palm Beach Voting Delegate. Councilmember Coleman nominated Councilmember Kane who declined the nomination. It was noted that the conference takes place August 13–15 and that the delegate is traditionally the Mayor or Vice Mayor.

MOTION: VICE MAYOR SOOD/ MAYOR EL-RAMEY MOVED TO DESIGNATE MAYOR EL-RAMEY AS THE PALM BEACH COUNTY LEAGUE OF CITIES VOTING DELEGATE. MOTION PASSED (5-0).

[MEETING RECESSED BRIEFLY FOR REFRESHMENTS TO CELEBRATE THE NEWLY SEATED COUNCILMEMBERS.]

TOWN COUNCIL MEETING RECONVENED

As the newly seated Council Mayor El-Ramey opened the agenda back up for additions, deletions, and modifications.

Following the seating of new council members, the newly formed council reconvened with Mayor El-Ramey addressing the agenda. Vice Mayor Sood proposed several additions, including discussions on the PBSO contract, repealing Resolution 2025-08, the Florida Commerce grant scope, cancelling lobbyist contracts, the town manager performance report, and restoring public comments to the beginning of meetings. Councilmember Stephens suggested discussing the town's website policy, the MythBusters page, and the agenda process. Mayor El-Ramey suggested adding Item 7a on town manager matters, filing the legislative update (Item 8), retaining Item 8a and 9, and shifting Item 10 to staff comments. Councilmember Coleman and former Mayor Kane voiced concerns about the volume and timing of these additions, citing resident fairness and potential management contract implications. Public opinion was divided, though Town Attorney Kurtz confirmed the council's legal authority to make additions, acknowledging potential criticism due to the lack of prior notice.

Public comment received from Todd McLendon showing his opposition to adding agenda items to the agenda.

As well as a public comment received from Christine Betts asking who the Town Manager was.

A public comment was received from Laura Danowski showing her support to adding the agenda items to the meeting. As well as explaining her experience as a past councilmember and how discontent comes with the position.

A public comment was received from Lissette Vasquez showing her support for adding the agenda items as she believed some of these items are overdue and should be discussed.

MOTION: MAYOR EL-RAMEY/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO ADD ITEM NO. 7A REGARDING TOWN MANAGER OPERATIONAL AND

PERFORMANCE MATTERS. MOTION PASSED (3-2). WITH COUNCILMEMBER KANE AND COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN DISSENTING.

Public comment received from Todd McLendon showing his opposition to removing presentations as he believes presentations are placed on the agenda to educate the public and prevent misinformation.

Public comment received from Cassie Suchy where she states that adding and removing items from the agenda is not something new. That while presentations may be used for education they often take up most of the meeting time and the length prevents people from staying for public comments.

Public comment received from Cindi Screnci where she states her support to adding items as the items are of importance and she sees them as more important than the presentations.

MOTION: MAYOR EL-RAMEY/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO RECEIVE AND FILE ITEM NO. 8 AND MOVE FORWARD WITH ITEM NO. 8A, WHICH WILL INCLUDE VICE MAYOR SOODS ADDITION OF THE FLORIDA COMMERCE GRANT, MOVE ITEM NO. 10 TO STAFF COMMENTS. MOTION PASSED (4-1) WITH COUNCILMEMBER STEPHENS DISSENTING.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ COUNCILMEMBER KANE MOVED TO ADD DISCUSSION ITEM NO. 28 – PBSO CONTRACT, ITEM NO. 29 – WEBSITE POLICY, AND ITEM NO. 30 – SLUGGET LOBBYIST CONTRACT. MOTION PASSED (4-1) WITH COUNCILMEMBER KANE DISSENTING.

7A. Town Manager Operational and Performance Matters

Item No.7A was discussed after item No. 9.

Mayor El-Ramey presented a written motion to place Town Manager Francine L. Ramaglia on paid administrative leave effective immediately (see *Exhibit A*), pending a formal investigation into ongoing operational and performance matters. The motion included extensive conditions governing the town manager's conduct during the leave period, designation of Valerie Oakes as Acting Town Manager, refusal of Town Attorney Kurtz from any further involvement in the matter, and direction to return to the next council meeting with three qualified options for independent special counsel to conduct a fact-finding investigation.

Town Attorney Kurtz advised the council that termination of the town manager with cause requires a 4-1 vote under her contract, that termination without cause triggers a 20-week severance, and that the contract requires a 30-day notice period. He cautioned that initiating an investigation process given the pending retirement announcement may not be the most fiscally prudent course of action.

Town Manager Ramaglia addressed the council directly, noting she had formally provided her retirement letter that evening upon the contract's natural expiration on September 30, 2026. She expressed willingness to cooperate fully with an accelerated and orderly transition, and requested the opportunity to negotiate a graceful departure consistent with her contract terms without the need for an investigation or additional expense to the town.

Councilmember Coleman urged caution, citing the contract's penalty provisions and the fiscal risks of acting precipitously. Councilmember Kane raised concerns about transparency to residents who had not been notified this item would be added to the agenda.

Following discussion, Mayor El-Ramey amended her motion to remove the special counsel investigation component and instead direct that the parties negotiate an accelerated leave arrangement, with a negotiator to be appointed. Vice Mayor Sood seconded the amended motion, conditioning his support on the town manager relinquishing her duties immediately.

Public comment received from Todd McLendon showing his opposition to the motion. Stating that council members should learn the inner workings of the Town and get to know Francine before making personnel changes.

Public comment received from Cindy Screnci showing her support for the motion. That people have wanted change and actions like this one lead to the positive change she is seeking.

Public comment received from Christine Betts where she details her frustration with the Town's money management practices and use of taxpayer dollars.

MOTION: MAYOR EL-RAMEY / VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO APPROVE THE MODIFIED MOTION. MOTION PASSED (3-2). WITH COUNCILMEMBER KANE AND COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN DISSENTING.

Subsequently, a motion was made to direct the Acting Town Manager to bring back three independent special counsel options for the negotiation of the town manager's accelerated departure at the next council meeting.

Public comment received from Nina Corning showing her support for proper counsel and that going forward she hopes Council will reel back some of the current management responsibilities to the Council level.

MOTION: MAYOR EL-RAMEY / VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO INSTRUCT THE ACTING TOWN MANAGER TO BRING BACK THREE INDEPENDENT SPECIAL COUNSEL OPTIONS FOR PROPOSED NEGOTIATION FOR ACCELERATED LEAVE FOR THE CURRENT TOWN MANAGER. MOTION PASSED (4-1). WITH COUNCILMEMBER KANE DISSENTING.

[MEETING RECESSED BRIEFLY TO CHANGE STAFF DAIS.]

8. Presentation on Legislative Update: State Session Status and Town Priorities

Item No. 8 was received and filed. *Please see Exhibit B.*

8A. Presentation by the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council

Jessica Seymour of the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council (TCRPC) presented a status update on the Southern Boulevard Corridor study being conducted pursuant to a \$75,000 Florida Commerce technical assistance planning grant. Ms. Seymour outlined the five primary deliverables: traffic and infrastructure analysis, public safety and drainage assessment, pedestrian and equestrian safety analysis, fiscal and zoning strategy evaluation, and a final report. She emphasized that any final recommendations would require council adoption before taking effect. A community survey was noted to close on May 1st, and a QR code was displayed. TCRPC requested scheduling of an additional council workshop to present findings prior to a final submission in June.

Vice Mayor Sood questioned the scope of the study area, the origin of the study's geographic boundaries, and raised concerns about whether the grant's activities were consistent with the town's adopted Comprehensive Plan. Town Manager Ramaglia clarified that the study scope was consistent with the original grant application approved by the prior council, and that the geographic boundaries were drawn from historical planning documents, including prior comprehensive plans.

Councilmember Coleman argued that the study was intended to consolidate existing data, solidify buffers, and better protect the town from encroachment, rather than to enable new commercial development. He expressed support for the study's continuation.

Public comment received from Matt Reinhold showed his support for agricultural businesses and landscapers. He emphasized the need for supporting local businesses and having community support for these businesses.

Public comment received from Nina Corning where she discussed her criticism of the Council for not including a map amendment rather than a text amendment to the comprehensive plan. She expressed her concern for ensuring that the study begins and ends with factual information.

Public comment from Lawrence where he discusses the differences in maps for the Southern Boulevard corridor. As well as his concerns for the study.

9. Presentation and Update on Okeechobee Blvd. Properties Evaluation by Ramsey Bulkeley, Town Consultant

Public comment received from Matt Reinhold showing his support for landscapers and nurseries. Stating that the two have a marriage-like relationship and nurseries need landscapers and vice versa. He urged Council to find a balance between landscapers and people opposed to commercial within the Town.

Public comment received from Mike Sands regarding ordinances passed in 2017 pertaining to landscape services.

Town consultant Ramsey Bulkeley provided an update on code enforcement for the Okeechobee Boulevard corridor. Violations mainly involve large commercial operations developing from former nurseries or agricultural uses, as well as illegal commercial storage and semi-trailer parking. The code of ordinances prohibits landscape maintenance service companies, though nurseries with ancillary services have been previously interpreted as allowable. Discussion touched on whether a code amendment process should be pursued. Industry representatives suggested a workshop to create a regulatory framework for business compliance while preserving the town's rural character. A workshop was not scheduled at the meeting but there will be further conversations on the matter.

10. Presentation on Public Works and Capital Projects Update by Acting Public Works Director Craig Lower

CONSENT AGENDA

Note: Councilmember Kane departed early during the meeting due to a family matter.

Items 16 and 19 were removed from the agenda at the beginning of the meeting. Councilmember El-Ramey moved Items 17 and 20 to the Regular Agenda. The remaining Consent Agenda included Items 11, 13, 14, 15, and 18.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO APPROVE THE CONSENT AGENDA AND MOVE ITEMS NO. 17 AND NO. 20 TO THE REGULAR AGENDA. MOTION PASSED (4-0).

11. Approval of the Minutes

APPROVED ON CONSENT.

12. Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-18 : A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA, APPROVING A SCHEDULE FOR THE REGULAR AND WORKSHOP TOWN COUNCIL MEETING DATES FOR APRIL 2026 TO MAY 2027; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Kenthia White read the resolution into the record.

This item, previously moved from the Consent Agenda, pertained to the schedule of Regular and Workshop Town Council meeting dates from April 2026 through May 2027.

Vice Mayor Sood proposed combining workshop sessions with regular meeting nights to improve efficiency and attendance. Councilmember Coleman and Councilmember Stephens expressed preference for maintaining the existing separate workshop format, noting that it provided more time for substantive discussion and had been well-received by the public. Mayor El-Ramey noted a desire to use upcoming April and May workshop dates as second regular meetings given the volume of pending business, reserving that right without eliminating the workshop format.

The council agreed that the April 21 and May 19 workshop dates would be available to be convened as special or regular meetings as needed.

Public comment received from Todd McLendon showing his support for the workshop meetings. That previous meeting format of having a 30-minute workshop before regular meetings wasn't ideal as the comment time was rushed. That the two-hour workshops have allowed residents to speak to Council and create a neighborly atmosphere.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO EXTEND THE MEETING. MOTION PASSED (4-0).

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ COUNCILMEMBER STEPHENS MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO.2026-18 WITH THE UNDERSTANDING APRIL AND MAY WORKSHOP DATES MAY BE USED AS REGULAR MEETINGS AS NECESSARY. MOTION PASSED (4-0).

13. **Consideration of Approval of Resolution No. 2026-20:** A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA, APPOINTING KATIE LAKEMAN TO THE ROADWAY, EQUESTRIAN TRAILS AND GREENWAY ADVISORY COMMITTEE; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICT, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

APPROVED ON CONSENT.

14. **Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-21:** A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA, TO AMEND FIRST AND SECOND PENALTIES FOR CITATIONS IN THE SCHEDULE OF VIOLATIONS AND ASSOCIATED PENALTIES FOR CIVIL CITATIONS for RESOLUTION 2025-42 DUE TO A SCRIVENER'S ERROR; AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER AND THE TOWN ATTORNEY TO TAKE SUCH ACTIONS AS ARE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THIS RESOLUTION; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

APPROVED ON CONSENT.

15. **Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-22:** A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA AUTHORIZING AN AGREEMENT WITH B. DOUGLAS MACGIBBON, P.A. FOR SPECIAL MAGISTRATE SERVICES AND PROVIDING CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

APPROVED ON CONSENT.

16. **Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-23:** A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA APPROVING REMOVAL OF SPECIMEN TREES; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Item No. 16 was pulled from the agenda.

17. **Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-24:** A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA, APPROVING A PIGGYBACK AGREEMENT UNDER THE TOWN OF MELBOURNE BEACH CONTRACT WITH C.A.P. GOVERNMENT, INC. FOR BUILDING INSPECTION SERVICES; AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF THE AGREEMENT, AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER AND THE TOWN ATTORNEY TO TAKE SUCH ACTIONS AS ARE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THIS RESOLUTION; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Community Standards Director Caryn Gardner-Young explained that the purpose of this agreement was to augment inspection capacity. She noted that limited inspection capacity had resulted in residents waiting up to a week for inspections.

Mayor El-Ramey voiced her concern over C.A.P Government, INC. as they were previously hired by the Town and didn't deliver expected performance. Gardner-Young noted she had the same concerns, but the unfortunate issue is that there are limited firms that can do inspections. She will monitor the firm's work and if performance isn't up to par will assess then how to further proceed.

Public comment received from Jo Siciliano read into the record by Kenthia White where she states her opposition for C.A.P Government as they were previously let go from the Town for billing inaccuracies and whereabouts.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO APPROVE RESOLUTION NO. 2026-24. MOTION PASSED (4-0).

18. **Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-25:** A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES TO MAKE ITS OPPOSITION KNOWN TO THE PALM BEACH COUNTY COMMISSION FOR "PROJECT TANGO" OR ANY HYPERSCALE AI DATA CENTER TO LOCATE IN PALM BEACH COUNTY WITHIN 5 MILES OF ANY SCHOOL OR RESIDENTIAL AREA. THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES BELIEVES THAT PROPER STUDIES

MUST BE CONDUCTED AS TO THE DETRIMENT, COST AND AMOUNT OF POWER, WATER, NOISE AND OTHER NUISANCES LIKELY TO BE EXPERIENCED; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

APPROVED ON CONSENT.

19. **Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-26:** A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA, TO AMEND THE FEE SCHEDULE FOR RESOLUTION 2025-75 TO WAIVE THE SPECIAL EVENT FEES FOR NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS; AUTHORIZING THE TOWN MANAGER AND THE TOWN ATTORNEY TO TAKE SUCH ACTIONS AS ARE NECESSARY TO IMPLEMENT THIS RESOLUTION; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

20. **Budget Amendment Request – 20th Anniversary Celebration and Veterans Day Event (November 2026)**

This item was tabled and moved to the April 21, 2026, special meeting to allow Councilmember Kane, who had departed the meeting, to be present and discuss the matter in detail.

**[RECESS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING & CALL TO ORDER DEPEDENT
WATER CONTROL DISTRICT]**

DISTRICT’S REGULAR AGENDA

21. **Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-DD01:** A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE LOXAHATCHEE GROVES WATER CONTROL DISTRICT, A DEPENDENT DISTRICT OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA, ELECTING THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT AND PROVIDING THAT THE PRESIDENT SHALL SERVE AS CHAIR AT MEETINGS OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS: ELECTING THE DISTRICT SECRETARY AND PROVIDING BOND AMOUNT; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT, PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Kenthia White read the resolution into the record.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO NAME MAYOR EL-RAMEY AS THE DISTRICT PRESIDENT AND THE TOWN CLERK AS THE DISTRICT SECRETARY WITH NO BOND REQUIRED. MOTIONPASSED (4-0).

22. Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-DD02: A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE LOXAHATCHEE GROVES WATER CONTROL

DISTRICT, A DEPENDENT DISTRICT OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA, APPOINTING THE DISTRICT TREASURER AND PROVIDING BOND AMOUNT AND COMPENSATION; DESIGNATION THE TOWN MANAGER AS FISCAL AGENT FOR THE DISTRICT AND PROVIDING FOR COMPENSATION; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Kenthia White read the resolution into the record.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO APPOINT VICE MAYOR SOOD AS THE DISTRICT TREASURER AND THE FISCAL AGENT THE ACTING TOWN MANAGER WITH NO BOND REQUIRED. MOTION PASSED (4-0).

23. Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-DD03: A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE LOXAHATCHEE GROVES WATER CONTROL DISTRICT, A DEPENDENT DISTRICT OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA, DESIGNATING CRAIG LOWER, AS THE ENGINEER FOR THE DISTRICT; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Kenthia White read the resolution into the record.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO DESIGNATE CRAIG LOWER AS THE DISTRICT ENGINEER WITH NO BOND REQUIRED. MOTION PASSED (4-0).

24. Consideration of Approval on Resolution No. 2026-DD04: A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF THE LOXAHATCHEE GROVES WATER CONTROL DISTRICT, A DEPENDENT DISTRICT OF THE TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA ESTABLISHING A SCHEDULE OF ITS REGULAR MEETINGS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ VICE MAYOR SOOD TO ESTABLISH THE MEETING SCHEDULE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027. MOTION PASSED (4-0).

[TOWN COUNCIL MEETING RECONVENED AT ITEM NO. 12]

25. Discussion on Recreational Vehicle Program

Community Standards Director Caryn Gardner-Young presented a revised draft of the town's Recreational Vehicle (RV) program regulations, incorporating direction from a prior council workshop. She noted the revised language addressed disability accommodations, and that the proposed ordinance would require Planning and Zoning Board review, followed by two council

readings, with a target timeline of a PZB hearing in May, first reading in June, and second reading in July.

Vice Mayor Sood requested background data including estimates of how many RVs currently operate in the town, how many have been permitted, the nature of common complaints, and the public's primary concerns prior to taking action. Director Gardner-Young agreed to provide a briefing memo with available data.

Public comments were received from Todd McLendon, who suggested the council consider the potential scale of RV activity under any new program (estimating 2,500–3,500 units could be authorized), and recommended a simpler code-based approach

Public comment received from Mrs. Coleman urged that smaller parcel owners be permitted to maintain at least one occupied RV, arguing that the current code inequitably restricts smaller properties while larger parcels with ag exemptions can maintain RVs more easily.

26. Discussion on Code Enforcement Lien Foreclosures

Town Attorney Kurtz presented an update on the status of pending code enforcement lien foreclosure cases. He advised that statutory requirements necessitate special magistrate authorization before foreclosures can proceed, and that such authorization had been obtained for a number of cases. He recommended retaining outside counsel, specifically the firm of Weiss Serota. As his office does not have the bandwidth to litigate foreclosure cases. He proposed that the Acting Town Manager and Town Attorney be authorized to enter into a retainer agreement, with individual foreclosure decisions brought back to the council on a case-by-case basis. He noted a budget amendment would likely be required if foreclosures proceed beyond the current \$22,000 allocation for outside counsel.

Councilmember Stephens raised the possibility of retaining the prior town attorney's firm, citing institutional knowledge of the cases. Town Attorney Kurtz responded that the previous firm did not have litigation capacity for foreclosure cases. Vice Mayor Sood expressed a preference for retaining counsel with direct knowledge of the town and its cases.

The council reached consensus to authorize the Acting Town Manager and Town Attorney to proceed with the retainer agreement with the Weiss Serota firm.

27. Discussion on Consideration of Offer from Sheltering Palms Foundation Request for Release of a Conservation Easement on their Property

Town Attorney Kurtz summarized the history of this matter. The property in question is a vacant 20-acre parcel owned by Sheltering Palms Foundation, Inc. The town holds a conservation easement over approximately two acres of the property, which had been cleared in violation of the easement. The town's arborist estimated replanting costs at approximately \$158,000. The property

owner had previously offered \$150,000 and then \$200,000 for release of the easement; the latest offer on the table was \$250,000. Town Attorney Kurtz noted that any proceeds could be directed to the town's mitigation fund for acquisition of properties that could be publicly accessed and managed as conservation land.

Councilmember Coleman explained the mitigation fund concept, noting that proceeds could be used to acquire undevelopable cypress or wetland properties that could become public green space, rather than simply replanting in a location the public cannot access.

Vice Mayor Sood questioned the purpose of the original easement and expressed a preference for retaining it. Given Councilmember Kane's absence and the desire to have all five members present for this decision, the council agreed to table the matter to the April 21, 2026, special meeting.

Public comment received from Nina Corning where she questioned the owners of the conservation easements intentions to keep the Town rural. Another concern was raised over the preservation of conservation easements by the State of Florida, and she acknowledged the work of the State of Virginia as she agrees with their practices on conservation.

Public comment from Cassie Suchy showing her support to protect conservation easements and refraining from giving it to the highest bidder.

28. Discussion on PBSO Contract

Vice Mayor Sood called for the town to reengage with PBSO, emphasizing the importance of reconciliation to improve service levels, visibility, and cost fairness. Town Attorney Kurtz shared that past contract renewals had been halted by the former council, with PBSO stopping services on December 17.

PBSO accused the Town of charter violations in communications to the Governor. Attempts to reengage had stalled without resolution. Councilmember Coleman expressed concern over double billing, prioritizing fiscal responsibility. Mayor El-Ramey favored renewing ties with PBSO, citing previous informal talks with a PBSO captain and her opposition to the original contract termination. The council agreed to reopen discussions with PBSO, appointing Mayor El-Ramey to lead efforts, ensuring council backing and any agreement required council approval.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER STEPHENS/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO EXTEND THE MEETING BY 30 MINUTES. MOTION PASSED (4-0).

29. Website Policy

Mayor El-Ramey and Councilmember Stephens led a brief discussion on the town's website, focusing primarily on the "mythbuster" page. The council agreed this page should be taken down immediately and directed the Acting Town Manager to remove it. Council also directed that a website policy be developed and returned for council review to ensure the website is limited to official town business and avoids use for political purposes.

30. Sluggett and Associates Lobbyist Contract

Vice Mayor Sood expressed his position that the town's \$90,000-per-year contract with lobbyist Mary McNicholas was unnecessary at the town's size and that the funds would be better directed toward roads, drainage, and public safety. However, it was noted that Sluggett and Associates had entered submitted their termination.

Public comment received from Todd McLendon showing his support for the local lobbyist referring to pending legislation on Okeechobee Boulevards expansion.

Public comment received from Nina Corning raises her concern over conflict of interests from any lobbyists hired by the Town.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

There were no comments received from the public on non-agenda items during this meeting.

TOWN STAFF COMMENTS

Acting Town Manager Valerie Oakes thanked the council for their confidence and stated she was committed to serving the council and residents during the transition period.

Town Attorney Jeffrey S. Kurtz, Esq. advised that he would be contacting council members to schedule a shade session regarding active litigation on a matter related to B Road, and requested the new council members meet with him individually to be briefed on the case. He suggested scheduling the shade session approximately one hour before a regular meeting.

Acting Town Clerk Kenthia White had no report.

Community Standards Director Caryn Gardner Young congratulated the new council members and announced an open house for the Community Standards Department on April 21, 2026, from 8:30 AM to 10:30 AM, open to the public.

Public Works Superintendent Craig Lower handed out his presentation which was received and filed into the record.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN/ VICE MAYOR SOOD MOVED TO RECEIVE AND FILE THE PRESENTATION FROM PUBLICWORKS SUPERINTENDENT LOWER. MOTION PASSED (4-0).

He also updated the Council on the ongoing Hurr homes construction work, noting two crews would soon be operating simultaneously on swale and catch basin work.

TOWN COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilmember Joe Stephens thanked Acting Public Works Director Lower for a tour of town

infrastructure projects, recommending all council members take advantage of a similar tour.

Councilmember Paul Coleman II welcomed the new council members, encouraged collegiality, and raised a question about whether the timeline under SB 180 had been adjusted due to the recent severe weather freeze event. Town Attorney Kurtz agreed to research and respond.

Councilmember Anita Kane was not present at this time.

Vice Mayor Manish Sood thanked residents for staying late and summarized the key actions taken at the meeting, including accountability measures, improving public safety, fiscal responsibility, and restoring public participation. He directed the Acting Town Manager to present key performance metrics for all departments at the next meeting, establish a public reporting framework, and prepare a repeal of Resolution 2025-08 for the next council meeting.

Mayor Lisa EL-Ramey thanked the public for their patience and announced her intention to add public comments on non-agenda items back to the beginning of meetings. She expressed a desire to empower council members to submit agenda items and to streamline meeting length. She thanked all for their confidence in her new role as Mayor.

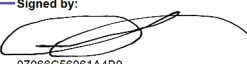
ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 11:35 P.M.

**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES,
FLORIDA**

ATTEST:

Signed by:
Kentia White
48C99CDA084B463...
Town Clerk

Signed by:

07086C56061A4B9...
Mayor Lisa El-Ramey, Seat 2

Signed by:
Manish Sood
FCB5F7E3A7FF4E4...
Vice Mayor Manish Sood, Seat 5

Signed by:
Joe Stephens
8927031D8ECE4F0...
Councilmember William “Joe” Stephens, Seat 1

Signed by:
Anita Kane
F5AB3D69FF41435...
Councilmember Anita Kane, Seat 3

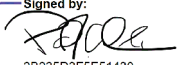
Signed by:

2B235D3F5E51430...
Councilmember Paul Coleman II, Seat 4

EXHIBIT A

1. Effective immediately, the Town Manager, Francine L. Ramaglia, is placed on paid administrative leave pending the report and review of a formal investigation into ongoing operational and performance matters.

While on administrative leave, the Town Manager:

- Shall be relieved of all duties and responsibilities of the Town Manager position and shall have no authority to act on behalf of the Town in any official capacity;
- Shall not enter Town facilities or Town-owned property;
- Shall not contact, communicate in any form (including email, text, verbal, written, or through any third party), or attempt to direct or influence any Town employees, contractors, vendors, charter officers, or elected officials regarding Town business, except through the designated contact person identified below;
- Shall not access or use any Town-owned equipment, email accounts, systems, documents, or property without the prior written approval of the Acting Town Manager;
- Shall return all Town property (keys, electronic devices, passwords, documents, etc.) in her possession or control to the Acting Town Manager within twenty-four (24) hours of adoption of this motion;
- Shall preserve any Town-related information or communications (including those on personal devices) and, upon formal request by the independent investigator or special counsel, produce such materials as relevant to the investigation; and
- Shall direct all communications regarding her employment or any Town business exclusively to the designated contact person identified below.

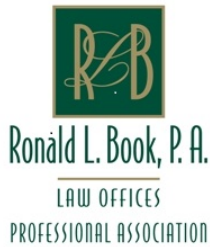
Any violation of these terms shall constitute additional grounds for termination with cause under Section XIII.B of the Employment Agreement and applicable provisions of the Town Charter.

Valerie Oakes is designated as the sole contact person for the Town Manager during the period of administrative leave. All inquiries or communications from the Town Manager must be directed exclusively to Valerie Oakes.

2. The current Town Attorney is formally recused from any and all participation in, or advice concerning, this personnel matter (including but not limited to any discussion, drafting, executive session, or vote related to the Town Manager's employment status). He shall have no further involvement in this matter.
3. Valerie Oakes is appointed as Acting Town Manager effective immediately upon adoption of this motion, pursuant to Sections 4(2)(d) and 4(3)(c) of the Town Charter. She shall exercise all powers and duties of the Town Manager position during this interim period and shall receive such additional compensation as the Council may later determine by separate motion.
4. Gabriella Croasdaile is appointed as Acting Town Clerk effective immediately upon adoption of this motion.

5. All Town employees, including charter officers, department heads, and supervisory staff, are directed to comply with the following during the period of the Town Manager's administrative leave:
 - a. Continue to perform their regular duties and responsibilities under the direction and supervision of the Acting Town Manager, Valerie Oakes.
 - b. Direct all questions, concerns, requests for direction, or operational matters exclusively to the Acting Town Manager or through the normal chain of command as re-established by the Acting Town Manager. No employee shall seek or accept direction from the Town Manager, Francine L. Ramaglia, on any Town-related matter.
 - c. Refrain from discussing the Town Manager's administrative leave status, the pending investigation, or any related personnel matters with the Town Manager except as specifically authorized by the Acting Town Manager.
 - d. Refrain from any communication with the Town Manager regarding operations, personnel, contracts, or other official matters. Any such communication initiated by the Town Manager must be immediately reported to the Acting Town Manager.
 - e. Maintain the confidentiality of all Town records, discussions, and information related to this matter in accordance with Florida public records law, the Town's policies, and any instructions from the Acting Town Manager.
6. The Acting Town Manager is directed to return to the next Town Council meeting (or a special meeting called within two weeks) with a minimum of three (3) qualified options for independent special counsel/investigator(s). Each option shall include: the name and qualifications of the firm or individual; confirmation of no prior relationship with the Town Manager, current Town Attorney, or any current Council member; the proposed scope of work (to include a fact-finding investigation into ongoing operational and performance matters); a cost estimate and timeline for a written report.

EXHIBIT B



On behalf of Ronald L. Book, P.A. and the Pittman Law Group, it has been our pleasure to represent the Town of Loxahatchee Groves in Tallahassee and to inform you of various issues important to local governments. Enclosed is the final 2026 Session report summarizing the property tax issue, the state budget status, and legislative measures that passed and did not pass.

Please let us know if you have any questions regarding issues included in this report or on other issues of concern.

Included in this report:

- **Budget Status Update**
- **Property Tax Reform – Constitutional Amendments**
- **Bills That Passed:**
 - HB 145 Claims Against the Government (Sovereign Immunity)
 - HB 1329 Local Government Finances (Financial Reporting requirements)
 - SB 1614 Local Government Funding (Florida Building Code)
 - SB 1134 Official Actions of Local Governments (Prohibition of DEI Initiatives)
 - HB 1085 Local Government Cyber Security
 - SB 484 Data Centers
 - HB 1217 Prohibited Governmental Policies Regulating Greenhouse Gas Emissions
 - SB 290 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services – Approved by the Governor
 - HB 1245 Biosolids Management
 - SB 386 Farm Equipment - Approved by the Governor
- **Live Local And Land Use Legislation That Passed:**
 - HB 1389 Affordable Housing
 - HB 399 Land Use and Development Regulations – Approved by the Governor
 - HB 803 Building Permits and Inspections
 - SB 1434 Infill Redevelopment
- **Bills That Did Not Pass:**
 - SB 840 (SB 180 “Fix”) Land Use Regulations for Local Governments Affected by Natural Disasters
 - HB 103 Local Business Taxes
 - HB 299/SB 354 Blue Ribbon Projects

Budget Status Update: Lawmakers were unable to complete the budget by the end of Session, March 13.

The 2026 Regular Session of the Florida Legislature adjourned sine die on March 13 without adoption of the Fiscal Year 2026–27 General Appropriations Act or passage of the proposed constitutional amendments relating to property taxes. At adjournment, all legislation considered during the session became final, whether enacted or failed, concluding the regular legislative business for the year.

Several key issues are anticipated to carry forward into one or more special sessions, most notably completion of the state budget, the associated implementing and conforming bills, and the comprehensive taxation bill which typically includes sales tax holidays and other broad tax policy provisions. Additionally, it is expected the legislature will come together for an additional special session for potential constitutional amendments addressing property tax reforms.

At this time, the presiding officers have not issued a call for a special session focused on the budget. The House and Senate remain divided over allocation levels across major spending categories, preventing progress in negotiations. Until a consensus on allocations is reached, formal budget conferencing cannot begin. The impasse could extend into early summer, as the state constitution only requires enactment of the budget by July 1, the start of the new fiscal year.

Both chambers adopted their respective budget proposals during the regular session but have not agreed on the overall spending allocations needed to initiate the conference process. These allocations determine funding levels for core areas such as education, health care, transportation, and environmental programs. The Senate's proposed budget currently exceeds the House plan by about \$1.4 billion, reflecting both numerical and policy-based differences that remain unresolved.

A special session will be convened once agreement is reached on allocations between the two chambers. As of this report, no date has been announced.

The Town of Loxahatchee Groves funding requests are below. The Stormwater system rehabilitation phase III project is funded in the House budget and therefore is eligible to be considered for funding once a budget conference begins. **The Control Structure Resiliency Improvements project is not addressed in either House or Senate budget which means it cannot be addressed for funding during the budget conference.

Town of Loxahatchee Groves Project	House proposed funding	Senate proposed funding	Status
Loxahatchee Groves Control Structure Resiliency Improvements (LFIR #2065, HSE #1771) Requested: \$750,000 Match: 50% Sponsors: Senator Harrell, Representative Weinberger	\$0	\$0	Cannot be addressed for funding in the budget conference**
Loxahatchee Groves Stormwater System Rehabilitation Phase III (LFIR #2066, HSE #1772) Requested: \$750,000 Match: 50% Sponsors: Senator Harrell, Representative Weinberger	\$375,000 Line 1774	\$0	Will be addressed for funding in the budget conference

Additional budget issues of interest:

The Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP), is a grant program within the Department of Environmental Protection, that provides financial assistance for acquisition or development of land for public outdoor recreation (parks).

The FRDAP grant program is not funded in either the Senate or House budget, which is a general indicator that this grant program will not be funded again this fiscal cycle, but will be determined once the budget conference process is completed.

Resilient Florida Grants & Planning Grants: The Resilient Florida Grant Program, through DEP, provides funding to counties, municipalities, and special districts for projects tackling flooding and sea-level rise. It includes Planning Grants for vulnerability assessments and Implementation Grants for construction.

Resilient Florida grants’ current funding levels in both the House and Senate budgets, pre-conference.

Senate Budget: Resilient Florida: \$100 million Resilient Florida Planning Grants: \$20 million	House Budget: Resilient Florida: \$100 million Resilient Florida Planning Grants: \$10 million
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Property Tax Reform – Constitutional Amendments: No final action has been taken. As reported earlier in the Session, the House put forth multiple constitutional amendment ideas for debate and discussion, and one did pass the full House only. Both the Senate and the Governor have long indicated that they’re developing proposals but have not released specific constitutional amendments. Members of the Senate filed bills to address property taxes; however, none were constitutional amendments, and none were heard. Both the House and Senate have acknowledged that a constitutional amendment will appear on the ballot this fall, however, even with the passage of HJR 203 in the House, no single version has emerged as the preferred option. This issue will carry over into a yet-to-be-called special session in late spring or early summer.

BILLS THAT PASSED:

➤ **HB 145 Claims Against the Government (Sovereign Immunity) Passed**

HB 145 represents a compromise reached late in the legislative session between the Florida Association of Counties, the Florida League of Cities, the House and Senate sponsors.

Final Version:

- Raises the maximum liability from \$200,000 to \$350,000 per person and from \$300,000 to \$500,000 per incident.
- Shortens the time to present claims from 3 years to 18 months, with adjustments.
- Revises the statute of limitations for tort actions against the government, including special provisions for sexual battery claims involving minors.
- Effective Date: October 1, 2026

➤ **HB 1329 Local Government Finances (Financial Reporting requirements) Passed**

HB 1329, a compromise between CFO Ingoglia, the Florida Association of Counties, and the League of Cities, revises financial reporting to ease compliance burdens while maintaining transparency. It simplifies website posting requirements to five days before hearings, and PDF format allowed, and removes employee travel posting mandates. The bill also reforms impact fee calculations, limits extraordinary fee increases, and applies these standards to all cities and counties statewide.

This bill was amended to make changes to the financial reporting requirements in earlier versions of this bill that would have been costly to local governments. This compromise is intended to address local government concerns while maintaining a level of transparency in the local government budget process.

➤ **SB 1614 Local Government Funding (Florida Building Code) Passed**

The bill limits how local governments can use building code enforcement funds by removing their authority to use excess funds to construct buildings for code enforcement agencies. Local governments may still collect reasonable fees to cover direct costs of enforcing the Florida Building Code, such as plan reviews, inspections, and permitting. The change means any revenue from these fees may only support enforcement activities themselves, not broader capital projects or facilities construction.

➤ **SB 1134 Official Actions of Local Governments (Prohibition of DEI Initiatives)** **Passed**

The bill prohibits counties and municipalities from funding, promoting, or taking official action related to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and bars spending on DEI offices or staff. It imposes penalties for officials who violate the ban, allows residents to bring actions against non-compliant local governments, and requires contractors and grantees to certify they will not use local funds for DEI activities. These provisions take effect for DEI contracts on January 1, 2027, with specified exceptions for compliance with federal law and federally recognized observances and monuments.

➤ **HB 1085 Local Government Cyber Security** **Passed**

Creates the Local Government Cybersecurity Protection Program to help local governments fund tools and services to prevent and respond to cyber incidents. It prioritizes fiscally constrained counties, requires data-sharing agreements for better coordination, and allows all local governments to purchase cybersecurity services through state contracts. The Florida Digital Service must report annually to the Governor and Legislature and may seek federal or other funding to support the program.

➤ **SB 484 Data Centers** **Passed**

The bill addresses issues related to the development of large-scale data centers in this state - sets minimum tariff and service standards for large-load electric customers to ensure they cover full service costs and bars utilities from serving certain foreign entities. It requires public utilities to file tariffs with the Public Service Commission by a set date and restricts economic development agencies from extending confidentiality for data center projects beyond 12 months. The bill also creates a new permitting framework for large-scale data centers and mandates an independent study on their construction and operation.

➤ **HB 1217 Prohibited Governmental Policies Regulating Greenhouse Gas Emissions** **Passed**

The bill bans state and local governments from adopting or enforcing net-zero greenhouse gas policies or using public funds to support them. It requires annual affidavits confirming compliance, prohibits participation in programs mandating statewide emission limits or carbon pricing, and excludes such policies from local planning and taxing authority. Exceptions apply to regulated public utilities, the Public Service Commission, and existing general-law pollution control measures.

➤ **SB 290 Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services** **Passed**

Approved by the Governor; **Chapter No. [2026-3](#)**

This is a comprehensive Ag bill that the Governor has signed, full language of the bill via link above. These are the sections that are particularly relevant:

- Only permits land application of Class AA biosolids by July 1, 2028, (phases out Class B) requires local governments that do not to transport biosolids for land application outside of their boundaries to comply with this requirement by July 1, 2031. It consolidates Florida's permitted biosolids framework around Class AA, treating it as the single allowable class for land-application facilities going forward. **Also see SB 1245 regarding biosolids management
- Equipment Use Prohibition: Prohibits a municipality from enacting or enforcing any local ordinance, policy, or rule restricting gasoline-powered farm or landscape equipment, preserving use of such tools for local agriculture and maintenance.
- Development Restrictions: In low-density areas like a municipality, bans administrative approval of development applications on ecologically significant parcels without developer attestation; aligns with the area's rural, agricultural character to limit high-density growth.

- Land Surplus Protections: Requires review of any municipality-surplused lands for bona fide agricultural suitability via Acquisition and Restoration Council, blocking transfer of development rights if suitable—protects the area's farmland from redevelopment.
- Rural Event Venues: Preempts local requirements for agricultural property owners in a municipality to obtain rural event venue permits, easing agritourism operations.

➤ **HB 1245 Biosolids Management** **Passed**

- The bill closes a regulatory gap in the management of bulk Class AA biosolids by extending oversight similar to that applied to Class B materials. While Class B biosolids are already regulated to prevent nutrient loading in sensitive areas such as the St. Johns River Basin, Class AA biosolids have been exempt from these site-specific controls. The legislation ensures consistent standards for both classes to protect water quality and prevent nutrient runoff from agricultural and equine agricultural lands.
- The measure requires that bulk Class AA biosolids be applied at or below agronomic rates and under conditions that limit nutrient leaching and runoff. It also strengthens monitoring and enforcement within the Basin Management Action Plan area, aligning biosolid use with sustainable agricultural practices. According to Representative Shoaf, the goal is to reduce nutrient pollution in the St. Johns River and its watershed while maintaining the agricultural benefits of biosolid use.
- Also see SB 290 section on Class B biosolids.

➤ **SB 386 Farm Equipment** **Passed**

Approved by Governor; **Chapter No. [2026-5](#)**

The bill establishes a procedure for consumers and manufacturers to resolve defects in farm equipment not covered by express written warranties. It defines “farm equipment” as any power-driven or self-propelled machinery used on farms or to transport farm products. Consumers may report defects to the manufacturer or its authorized service agent during the warranty period or within one year of the equipment’s original delivery. If the defect cannot be repaired after reasonable attempts, the manufacturer must replace the equipment with a comparable model or refund the full purchase price, including taxes and fees.

LIVE LOCAL AND LAND USE LEGISLATION THAT PASSED:

➤ **HB 1389 Affordable Housing** **Passed**

The bill requires counties and municipalities to permit affordable multifamily and mixed-use housing in commercial, industrial, and certain publicly or religiously owned properties, provided at least 40% of units stay affordable for 30 years. It preempts local regulations by forbidding new zoning, height, or setback restrictions on qualifying projects, while revising tax exemptions and expanding antidiscrimination rules to include government entities. Certain sensitive areas, such as the Everglades Protection Area and conservation easements, are explicitly exempted from these mandates.

➤ **HB 399 Land Use and Development Regulations** **Passed**

Approved by Governor; **Chapter No. [2026-7](#)**

This legislation (statewide) limits local government discretion over permitting and land use by requiring that development fees reflect actual costs, establishing uniform criteria for compatibility reviews, and prohibiting denials based on subjective terms like “community character.” It creates a streamlined approval process for large destination resorts, specifically enabling the Fontainebleau water slide park in Miami Beach, by mandating automatic administrative approvals for qualifying projects through July 1, 2031. It also restricts local regulation of composting

facilities and removes prior study requirements on urban development boundaries, signaling tighter state control over local land-use regulation.

Removed: Language in this bill was removed that would have required an OPPAGA study to “review the necessity” of the urban development boundary and other similar boundaries across the state. Amendment Did Not Pass: A floor amendment was proposed by Rep Eskamani to include the “SB 180 fix”, but it was ruled out of order.

➤ **HB 803 Building Permits and Inspections** **Passed**

This legislation standardizes Florida’s building permitting and inspection systems by creating statewide uniform applications, expanding private inspection options, and capping fees to actual review costs. It limits local governments’ authority by prohibiting discrimination against offsite-constructed homes, restricting added permit requirements, and requiring equal treatment across zoning districts. The goal is to streamline approvals and reduce barriers to housing and recovery projects while curbing local discretion in permit issuance and inspection oversight.

➤ **SB 1434 Infill Redevelopment** **Passed**

This legislation creates the Infill Redevelopment Act, requiring large counties to allow residential development and streamlined approvals on environmentally impacted urban parcels. It limits local governments by mandating administrative approval, prohibiting density reductions or new restrictions, and preempting additional local procedures. The intent is to promote housing redevelopment on underused or contaminated lands while constraining local discretion over zoning and approval conditions.

The impact of SB 1434 on Loxahatchee Groves would depend on the town’s land exemption criteria. This bill does not apply to land zoned or classified for agricultural use or property owned by the town for public park purposes. Qualifying parcels must be at least 5 acres, environmentally impacted (brownfields or contaminated sites), and inside an urban growth boundary, however, it appears that sections of the town fall under the exemptions for agricultural zoning/classification or locations outside such boundaries.

BILLS THAT DID NOT PASS:

Several bills affecting local governments advanced through committee hearings but ultimately did not pass. These measures are worth noting, as the issues they address may be reintroduced during the 2027 Legislative Session.

➤ **SB 840 (SB 180 “Fix”) Land Use Regulations for Local Governments Affected by Natural Disasters**

DID NOT PASS.

Known as the SB 180 “fix”, SB 840 would have revised language onerous to local governments that passed as SB 180 (Session 2025). While the Senate passed SB 840, the House never took up the companion bill, HB 1465.

In the last days of the legislative session, Representative Eskamani from the Orlando area, filed an amendment to HB 399 to include language to address the solutions to SB 180, but it was ruled out of order.

2025: SB 180 restricted local governments within 100 miles of a hurricane impact area from imposing new development moratoriums or stricter rebuilding rules after a storm. It also banned cumulative flood-protection ordinances, required uniform post-storm permitting standards, and froze permit fees for 180 days after an emergency.

➤ **HB 103 Local Business Taxes**

DID NOT PASS.

This bill would have repealed the ability of cities and counties to collect local business tax. There were few exemptions included: Panama City and Panama City Beach, as they are collected on the gross sales of all retail and wholesale, and Miami-Dade County who levies an additional local business tax dedicated to funding the Beacon Council, the official public-private economic development partnership for Miami-Dade County.

➤ **HB 299/SB 354 Blue Ribbon Projects**

DID NOT PASS.

This bill would have established a state-overseen framework for "blue ribbon projects" that would override local comprehensive planning and zoning authority, allowing projects to be sited in any future land use or zoning category without requiring plan amendments or rezoning.

State legislation would have preempted local authority over key land-use decisions, transferring control of development scale, density, and location to the state. Local governments would be limited to brief compliance reviews under strict deadlines, with the risk of state appeals and attorney fee penalties for noncompliance. This shift could impose unpredictable local infrastructure and service costs without guaranteed revenues, while primarily benefiting select landowners pursuing large-scale projects across the state.

It is likely a version of this legislation will be refiled next Session.
