



David O'Keefe
LEON COUNTY COMMISSIONER, DISTRICT 5

Dear Neighbor,

One of our astute readers replied to last month's newsletter with a great question. *Why did I vote against reaffirming the county's commitment to affordable housing, healthcare, and food security?*

I appreciate that someone reads the votes in our email!

Because the Citizens Charter Review Committee recommended stronger actions, the phrase "continuing commitment..." means staff is recommending we stick with what we've already been doing, rather than do more.

Our Citizens Committee met and voted to put two of these amendments to the voters to establish new charter language and to have the county create a division of food systems. I agree with those 21 citizens, and I did not support the staff recommendation against taking those actions.

Let's look at each of them:

Food Systems

CCRC Policy Recommendation:

The Leon County Citizen Charter Review *Committee encourages the establishment of a Division of Food Systems* under the Leon County Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships.

Staff Recommendation:

As presented to the CCRC, continue the County's long-standing commitment to reducing food insecurity in the community through the County's existing structure, active engagement, ongoing investment, and critical programming in partnership with local stakeholders to increase food access.

Vote/Motion:

Reaffirmed the County's commitment to reducing food insecurity, awareness

of resources, and directing staff to schedule a workshop on this topic once the FAMU Food Council report is complete. **PASSED 4-3 (Maddox, O’Keefe, and Proctor voted NO)**

Healthcare Access

CCRC Recommendation (Charter Amendment):

Advance the Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee’s proposed Charter Amendment *revising the Charter Preamble to affirm the County’s commitment to healthcare access* to be considered at the CCRC’s public hearings in June and July 2026.

Staff Recommendation:

As presented to the CCRC, continue Leon County’s longstanding commitment to ensuring healthcare access for low-income residents and thereby supporting an equitable, safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

Vote/Motion:

Reaffirmed the County’s long-standing commitment to ensuring healthcare access for low-income residents in support of an equitable, safe, healthy, and vibrant community. **PASSED 4-3 (Maddox, O’Keefe, and Proctor voted NO)**

Affordable Housing Trust Fund

CCRC Recommendation (Charter Amendment):

Advance the Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee’s proposed Charter Amendment *codifying the County’s Affordable Housing Trust Fund in the County Charter* to be considered at the CCRC’s public hearings in June and July 2026.

Staff Recommendation:

As presented to the CCRC, continue the County’s long-standing commitment to increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing in the community.

Vote/Motion:

Reaffirmed the County’s long-standing commitment to increasing and preserving affordable housing in the community. **PASSED 4-3 (Maddox, O’Keefe, and Proctor voted NO)**

Of course, we must continue our commitment to food security, access to healthcare, and affordable housing – but we must do more, as the CCRC suggested.

If you had the same questions when you looked at our votes in March, you know now.

I'm always here to answer your questions about my votes.

David O'Keefe

Leon County Commissioner, District 5

Countywide Burn Ban extended thru May 1

The County [extended the temporary county-wide burn ban through Friday, May 1, 2026](#). This is due to extreme drought conditions. Many surrounding counties have implemented burn bans similar to ours including Wakulla, Jefferson, Gadsden, Calhoun, Franklin, Liberty and Franklin.

What is prohibited

During the burn ban, all open burning that is not specifically authorized by the Florida Forest Service is prohibited, including:

- Burning of yard debris such as leaves, branches and other vegetative waste;
- Land-clearing fires, brush piles and similar site-preparation burns;
- Campfires, bonfires, fire pits and similar recreational or ceremonial fires on public or private property;
- Burning of household trash, construction debris or other solid waste;
- Use of burn barrels or similar devices for outdoor burning.

What is allowed

The burn ban does not prohibit:

- ✔ Use of gas, propane, charcoal or electric grills and smokers for cooking, as long as they are attended and fully extinguished after use;
- ✔ Indoor fireplaces, wood stoves or similar appliances used inside a structure in accordance with applicable codes;
- ✔ Burns conducted/ authorized by the Florida Forest Service, including permitted agricultural or land-clearing burns that follow all state laws and permit conditions;
- ✔ Firefighting, emergency or training activities conducted by or under the direction of Leon County, the City of Tallahassee Fire Department or the Florida Forest Service.

Residents who observe an unattended fire or signs of wildfire should call 9-1-1 immediately.

Invite us to your HOA or Community Group

We welcome the opportunity to connect with your homeowners association or community group and share information about County programs and services or to hear directly from you and your neighbors on issues that are important to you.

If you'd like to invite us to speak at an upcoming meeting, please reach out to us at **850-606-5375** to coordinate a time—we look forward to the conversation and to working together to strengthen our community.

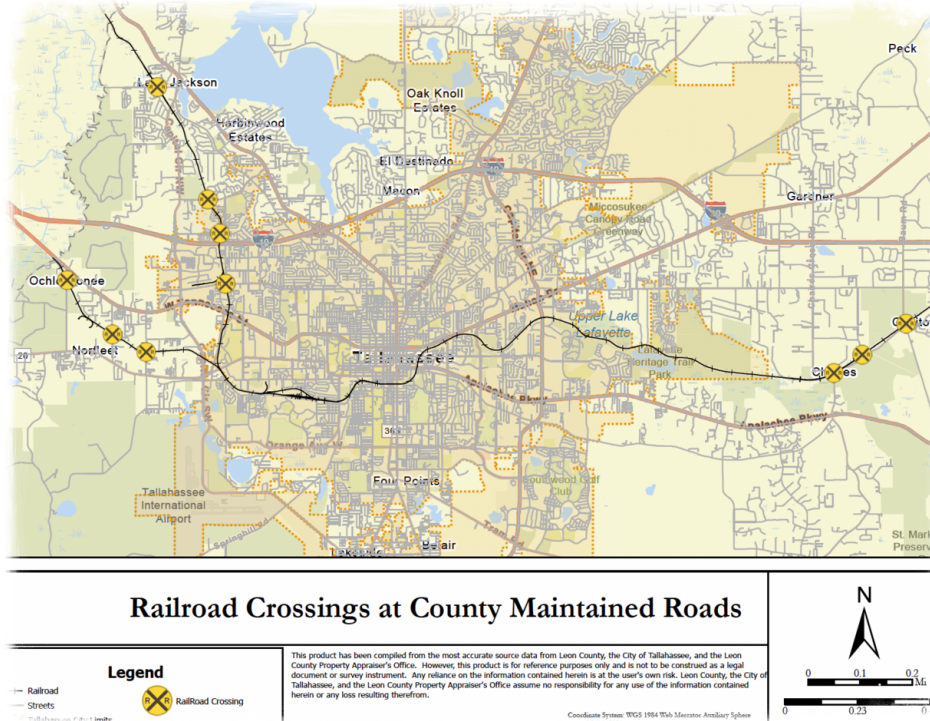


Railroad across Lake Lafayette

In the coming weeks, I'll meet with members of the Sierra Club and a representative from the Pinsky Railroad Company to tour the railroad track across Lake Lafayette. Pinsky operates the Florida Gulf & Atlantic Railroad across the Panhandle between Pensacola and Baldwin. We will see first-

hand the pipes beneath the tracks that serve as a critical passage for water movement in the Lake Lafayette basin.

Back in 2024 I led the charge to upgrade and improve the rail crossings in Leon County with new crossing surfaces and updated pavement markings. The goal was to improve safety and ensure that these crucial intersections can handle traffic with greater reliability.



Volunteer at any Volunteer Fire Department

Six [volunteer fire departments](#) (VFD's) provide fire and medical first response services within the unincorporated areas of Leon County. The VFDs supplement the response of Leon County EMS and the Tallahassee Fire Department. The VFDs are independent organizations that provide fire apparatus/vehicles (not owned by the County), equipment, and personnel to respond to incidents.

If you would like to volunteer at any of the VFDs contact the chief of the department listed below or call Leon County EMS at 850-606-2100.

Location	Department Head	Phone Number	Email
Chaires – Capitola Volunteer Fire Department P.O. Box 13356 4701 Chaires Cross Rd. Tallahassee, FL 32327	Chief Joe Parks	850-508-5362	chief@chairescapitolavfd.com
Bradfordville Fire & Rescue P.O. Box 15405 Tallahassee, FL 32317	Chief James Pollock	850-284-5161	chief@bradfordvillefire.org
Lake Jackson Fire Rescue 5329 Tower Rd. Tallahassee, FL 32303	Chief Marcus Gocker	850-363-3473	gocker08@gmail.com
Lake Talquin Volunteer Fire Department 16614 Blountstown Hwy. Tallahassee, FL 32310	Chief Steve Mays	850-559-9585	semg1963@gmail.com
Miccosukee Volunteer Fire Rescue P.O. Box 13752 Miccosukee, FL 32317	Chief Brian Carroll	850-766-4289	MiccosukeeVFR@gmail.com
Woodville Volunteer Fire Department 1555 E. Oakridge Rd. Tallahassee, FL 32305	Chief Richard Meuth	850-933-4018	WVFD1300@yahoo.com

Washington Square Update

Progress continues at the site of the failed Washington Square project, directly behind the County Courthouse. New sidewalks have been installed, grass is growing along the right-of-way and new parking spots are available for downtown visitors along S. Calhoun Street and E. Jefferson Street.

The Tallahassee City Commission is also moving to foreclose on the property which has accumulated hefty fines, environmental issues and building code violations.

Independence Landing Visit

Earlier this month, we visited Independence Landing, an affordable housing community for adults with disabilities right here in District 5. The community reflects a strong commitment to independence and dignity, offering residents quality housing and access to resources and amenities that enhance daily life and foster connection.

While we were there we also had lunch at their *Press Cafe*, an on-site workforce development program for residents who learn culinary skills, food preparation, and customer service while serving customers. The cafe is open

to the public for lunch, Monday through Friday from 11:30a until 2:30p. The menu offers soups, salads, hot paninis and baked goods along with other favorites.

Independence Landing is a powerful example of how intentional development can meet critical housing needs while also building a vibrant, inclusive community right here in Leon County.



Private to Public Dirt Road Improvement & Maintenance Program

Do you live on a private dirt road and want to convert it to a publicly maintained dirt road? Learn about a new program that the County Commission created in 2024 - the [Private Road to Public Dirt Road Improvement and Maintenance Program](#).

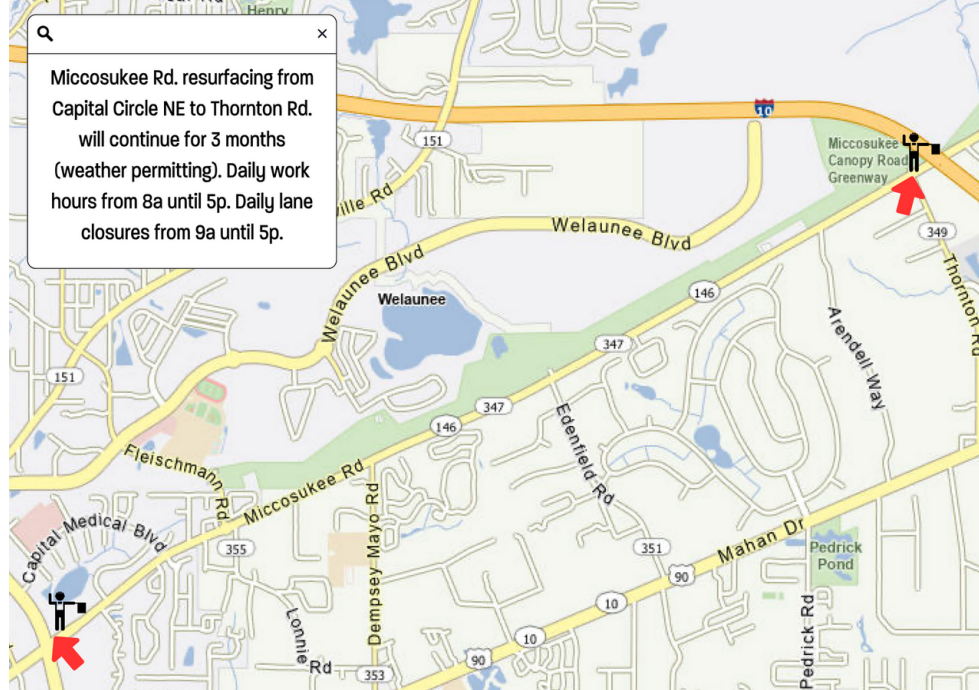
The program gives property owners on private dirt roads the option to donate 100% of the needed right-of-way so the road can be brought into the County system, improved to County standards, and maintained - it requires unanimous participation from every property owner on the road. If you would like to learn more about this new program offered by Leon County, click this [link](#) to find more information.



Miccosukee Road Resurfacing

Leon County is currently resurfacing Miccosukee Road, from Capital Circle NE to Thornton Road. The entire project is expected to last 3 months (weather permitting) with daily work hours from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The project requires lane closures that will take place between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. daily and will be managed by a flagging operation.



Recent Votes at the County Commission

To keep you informed on decisions we make at the County Commission, I am providing a summary of the key votes we took at our April 14 meeting.

● ● ● County Commission - April 14 Key Votes

- **LCSSO School Zone Speed Enforcement Agreement**
Approve the Interlocal Agreement with the Sheriff's Office for the School Zone Speed Enforcement Program.
Vote: Passed 6-1 (Commissioner Proctor voted NO)
- **Request for Proposals on School Zone Speed Detection Program**
Approve the draft Request for Proposals for the School Zone Speed Detection and Enforcement Program.
Vote: Passed 6-1 (Commissioner Proctor voted NO)
- **County Lease with North Florida Fair Association**
Direct the Chairman and County Administrator to continue lease negotiations for 6 months with the North FL Fair Association.
Vote: Passed 7-0 (Unanimous)
- **Annual List Update County Property for Affordable Housing**
Adopt the Resolution that includes the Inventory List of Properties Appropriate for Affordable Housing.
Vote: Passed 7-0 (Unanimous)
- **Munree Cemetery Museum Site Plan**
Approve the Munree Cemetery Museum site and development plan application and approve the application with conditions.
Vote: Passed 7-0 (Unanimous)
- **Tram Rd & Capital Circle SE Zoning Classification**
Adopt an Ordinance amending the zoning classification for property located approx. 640 Feet SW of the Intersection of Tram Rd. and Capital Cir. SE from the Medium Density Residential zoning district to the General Commercial zoning district.
Vote: Passed 7-0 (Unanimous)

- **Charter Referendum - County Ordinances vs. City Ordinances**

Schedule a public hearing to consider a Board-initiated charter amendment that, if passed by voters, would establish that, in the event of a conflict, County ordinances take precedence over City ordinances.

Vote: Passed 7-0 (Unanimous)

- **Charter Consideration - Historical Harms from Past Policies**

Request an agenda item to consider a county charter amendment addressing historical harms from past policies that impact different parts of our community. Not including items related to protected classes such as ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and other non-allowed classes. If approved later, this would be considered by the CCRC for a possible ballot item.

Vote: Passed 6-1 (Commissioner Welch voted NO)

- **LCSO In-custody deaths information**

Request a report from the Leon County Sheriff's Office on completed investigations of deaths occurring in custody.

Vote: Passed 5-2 (Commissioner Welch and Caban voted NO)

- **Southwood Developer Road Obligations Update**

Request information on actions taken related to the two roads in Southwood that St. Joe is obligated to build.

Vote: Passed 7-0 (Unanimous)

- **Info on Government camera uses in public spaces**

Request a status report on all government cameras in public spaces and in public/private partnerships, and how they are used.

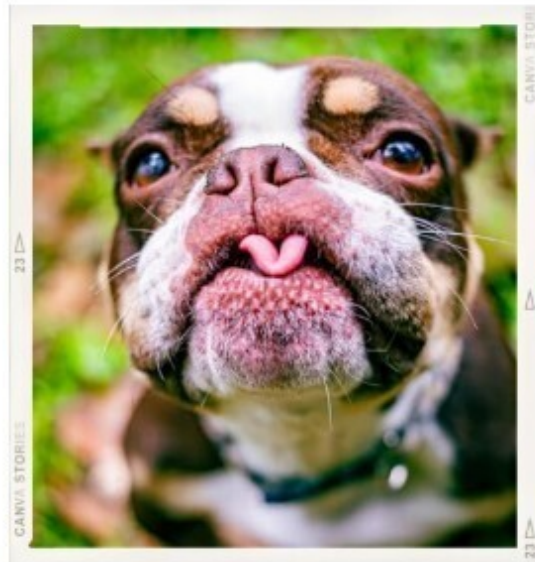
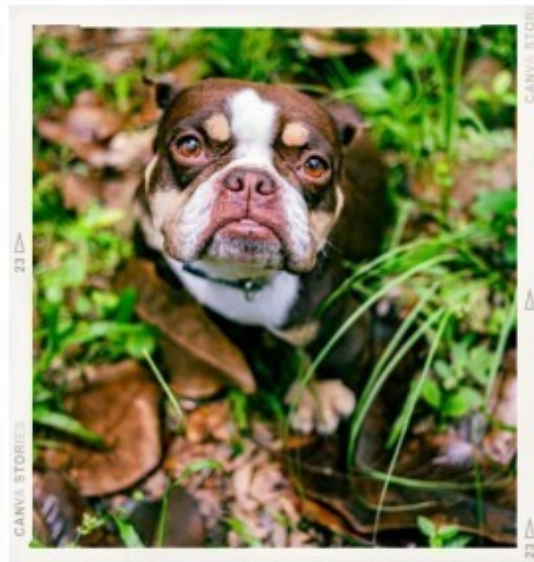
Vote: Passed 6-0 (Unanimous)

- **Lake Munson Update**

Request an update on water quality at Lake Munson.

Vote: Passed 6-0 (Unanimous)

Pet of the Month - Pearl



[Meet Pearl!](#)

I'm a 2.5-year-old female, and I'm an American Bulldog - some people even joke that I look like a platypus. Either way, I'm cute!

I spent the first two years of my life living outside but now I'm enjoying indoor living. I'm crate trained and almost completely housetrained. I get along with

kids, other dogs and yes, even cats. My tiny body isn't really built for long walks or heavy physical exertion, but I am content to be a couch potato. I'll even save some room for playtime and happy trots around the house.

Humane Society Adoptions are by appointment only.

Phone: 850-224-9193

Humane Society Address: 413 Timberlane Road

Humane Society Adoption Information

Leon County's *Unearth A Story* Library Summer Programs

Leon County's Summer Program through the Leon County Public Library offers a fun, engaging, and educational experience for residents of all ages throughout June and July. Featuring a wide variety of activities—including reading challenges, hands-on crafts, live performances, scavenger hunts, and interactive learning opportunities—the program helps prevent the "summer slide" by keeping minds active and inspired during the summer months.

With opportunities to earn prizes, explore new interests, and connect with the community, the library's summer programming helps prevent learning loss while fostering creativity, curiosity, and a lifelong love of reading.

Learn about our Summer Library Programs



Leon County Humane Society honored with a Proclamation

At our April Commission Meeting I had the honor of presenting a Proclamation

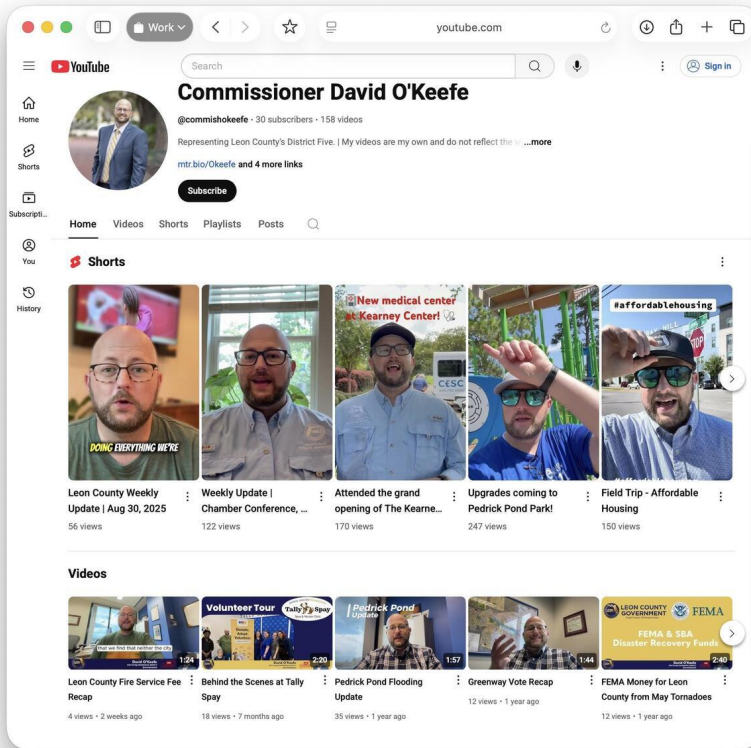
to the Leon County Humane Society for their service in our community. They are celebrating 65 years of working tirelessly to promote the humane treatment of animals through adoption services, foster programs, spay and neuter initiatives, and community education.

They rely of dedicated volunteers, staff, and community supporters who give their time, resources, and compassion to improve the lives of animals and strengthen the human-animal bond.

If you're interested in learning more about fostering or adopting a pet from the Leon County Humane Society, visit their website [here](#).



Watch our Community Updates on Youtube



Stay connected between newsletters by subscribing to our YouTube channel. Each week we share updates on County projects, local events, and issues that matter to the community.

[Subscribe on YouTube](#)

Upcoming Commission Meetings

[Leon County Commission](#)

May 12 at 3:00 p.m. - Commission Meeting

May 12 at 6:00 p.m. - Public Hearings







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