



The Latest from Your District 5 Office

Dear Neighbor,

Across Leon County, people are starting to feel the ripple effects of quiet federal cuts that many of us rely on, even if we don't realize it. These aren't dramatic announcements, but they're already showing up in schools, senior programs, local newsrooms, and crisis hotlines.

Leon County Schools are facing a [\\$12.5 million shortfall](#) due in part to frozen federal grants. WFSU is losing [\\$2.8 million in federal and state funding](#). The national 988 suicide crisis line has cut the [specialized LGBTQ+ youth option](#) that served as a trusted resource for many. *(Anyone can still call or text 988 for help!)*

Dozens of local seniors were recently dropped from a [federal food box program](#), while Meals on Wheels still has over 400 people on the waiting list. Critical senior support services like elder companionship and caregiver relief may soon be affected by [frozen federal AmeriCorps funding](#).

These are the kinds of programs that help people stay connected, cared for, and resilient, whether it's a child learning to read, a family balancing school and work, or a senior aging safely at home. Even if you don't use these services today, someone you know or care about does. These are not extras. They are the infrastructure that helps our entire community function well.

As your County Commissioner, I'll keep doing everything within our local reach to support those who serve our neighbors and care for our community. But some of what's happening now is beyond the County's control. These outcomes are the result of national policy decisions, and they carry consequences here, in real ways.

If you've lost access to a program, if you work in one that's been stretched thin, or even if you care about someone who's affected, I hope you'll take a moment to share that with our federal representatives. You can look up their contact information at usa.gov/elected-officials.

I'll keep showing up and keep you informed. Together, we can protect what we've built and make sure those making decisions far from here understand what's at stake.

With care,
David

Washington Square Update



On July 9th, the County signed a binding agreement with the Washington Square developer to restore the nearby roads and rights-of-way.

- ☐ The developer must restore Calhoun & Gadsden Streets — including sidewalks, curbs, milling, paving, striping, and removal of barriers.
- ☐ Deadline: All work must be completed by September 9, 2025 (That's 60 days from the date the agreement was signed).
- ☐ If the developer misses the deadline, the County can:
 - ☐ Terminate the agreement
 - ☐ Complete the work ourselves
 - ☐ Recover full costs, plus damages
- ☐ The developer must provide a performance bond covering the entire cost — to protect taxpayers and guarantee the job gets done.
- ☐ All the work must follow County-approved plans.

Citizen Charter Review Committee (CRCC)

Every eight (8) years, Leon County updates its Charter through a citizen-led review. The [Leon County Charter](#) is our local "home rule constitution," which outlines the structure, organization, and authority of your county government.

It's important that the Charter remain current, accountable, and reflective of your needs.

At our September Commission Meeting, we will be appointing 21 members to the CRCC (3 appointments per Commissioner). Through a series of public meetings and public hearings, the CRCC will make recommendations for changes to the Charter. The recommendations will be submitted to the County Commission, which can either place them on the November 2026 General Election Ballot or add its own proposals to the ballot.

Comprehensive Plan Extension

At our July Commission Meeting, we voted (6-1) to delay transmittal of our Comprehensive Plan updates by one year. The "Comp" Plan helps guide growth and development in Leon County, and allowing more time to gather community input around what our neighborhoods actually support will be beneficial to the process.

As our staff finalizes and schedules the citizen engagement and input sessions over the next year, I will share those details. I encourage anyone interested in how we grow as a community to get involved over the next year, so our Comp. Plan reflects our priorities and values.

□ Learn more about the Comprehensive Plan update: <https://www.compplantlc.com/>

Animal Shelter Renovations Update



The renovation project is moving into the final stages and the entire project is expected to be completed by the end of September.

What has been completed and what remains?

Large Dog Kennels (Dog Adoption Area):

This area is nearly complete. Improvements include new plumbing and stormwater systems, updated finishes, acoustic panels, custom stainless-steel kennels, an outdoor vinyl canopy, and new lighting. With the kennel installation done, the remaining work includes plumbing connections and minor paint touch-ups.

Sunshine Yard (Outdoor Play Area):

This portion is fully completed. Dogs now have access to new synthetic turf, sunshades, concrete sidewalks, and secure metal fencing. All underground utility and site work is also finished.

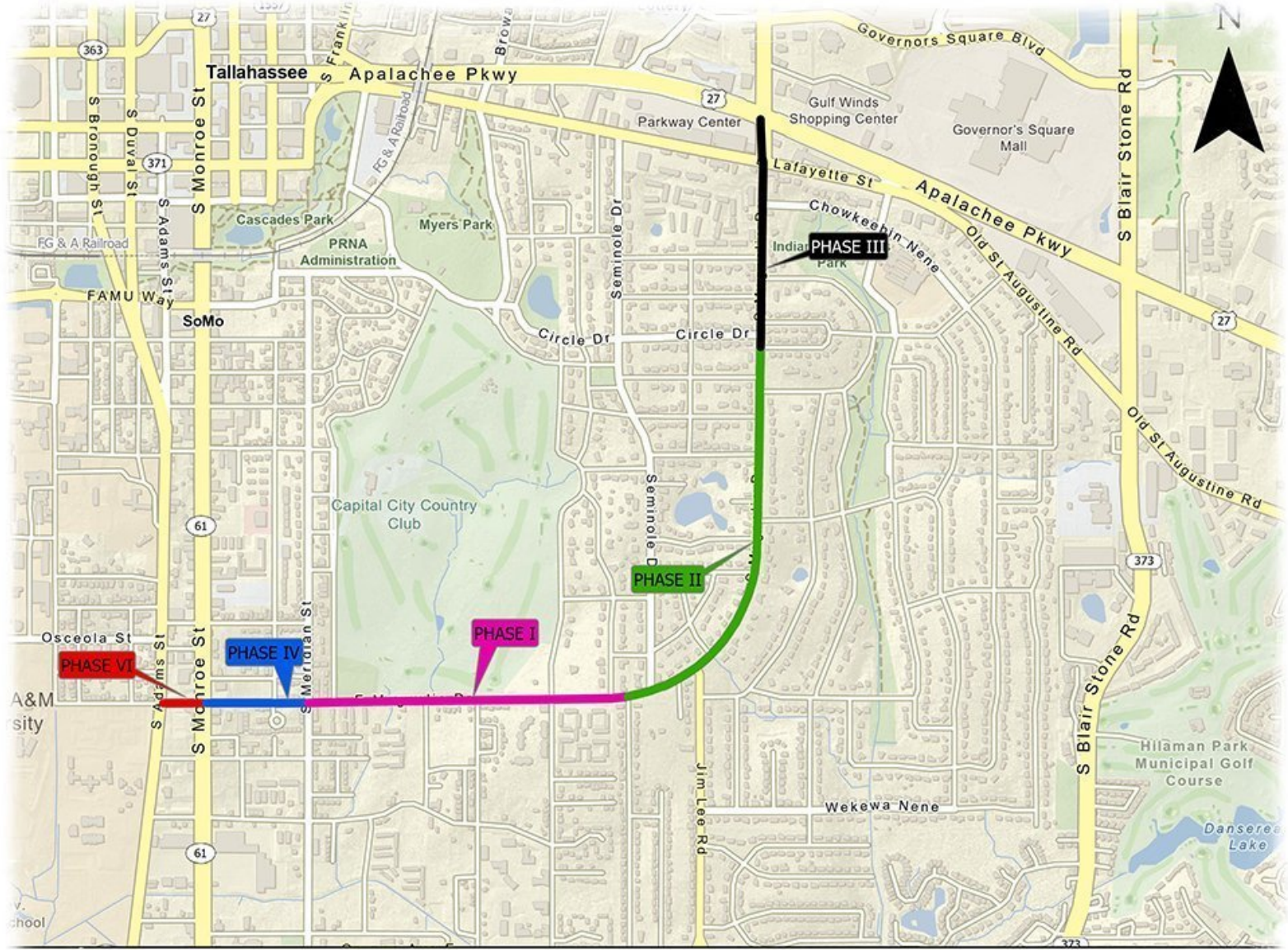
Shelter Medicine Suite (Veterinary Area):

Progress is steady. The veterinary technician space is fully renovated. Upcoming tasks include installing casework, medical equipment, cages, and finalizing plumbing and electrical systems.

Laundry Facility:

A new laundry room is now in place at the back of the building, awaiting the installation of the washer and dryer.

Magnolia Drive Multi-Use Trail Update



MAGNOLIA DRIVE TRAIL PROJECT - LOCATION MAP

The goal of the [Magnolia Drive Multi-Use Trail](#) project is to enhance connectivity and improve safety along the S. Magnolia Dr. from S. Adams St. to Apalachee Parkway. The improvements have been divided into phases.

- ☐ S. Meridian to Pontiac Dr. (**Complete**)
- ☐ Pontiac Dr. to Diamond St. (**Anticipated Completion: End of 2025**)
- ☐ Diamond St. to Apalachee Parkway (**Under Design**)
- ☐ S. Monroe St. to S. Meridian (**Complete**)
- ☐ S. Adams St. to S. Monroe St. (**Complete**)

The Pontiac Dr. to Diamond St. phase just wrapped up the following work:


- ☐ **Utility upgrades:** the new water main and all service connections are now complete along the Phase II corridor.
- ☐ **Roadbed:** stabilization and limerock base have been placed between Cherokee Dr. and Sarasota Dr.
- ☐ **Pedestrian features:** crews poured new curb, sidewalk, and driveway aprons from Jim Lee Rd. to Cherokee Dr., and began installing irrigation and landscaping between Hemlock St. and Hokolin Nene.

What's coming up (next 2-3 months):

- ❑ **Paving continues:** once base work is finished east of Cherokee Dr., the contractor will place the first layer of asphalt from Cherokee toward Diamond St..
- ❑ **Trail build-out:** concrete trail segments will be poured, including ADA-compliant ramps and driveway tie-ins.
- ❑ **Lighting & landscaping:** underground conduit for new street lighting, as well as landscaping, continues.

Recent votes at the County Commission

In our effort to keep you informed about the decisions we make on various issues, I am posting the key votes from our July 8th County Commission Meeting.



7/8/2025

Votes

Ratified FY26 Budget Workshop decisions, including \$500,000 for GAP financing to expand affordable rental housing for low- and very low-income families.

PASS


YES

Cummings, Welch, Caban, Proctor, Minor, O'Keefe

NO

Not Present:

Abstained: Maddox



7/8/2025

Votes

Approved a 5% across-the-board salary increase for all County employees, replacing the standard merit-based system.

PASS

YES

Cummings, Caban, Proctor, Maddox

NO

Welch, Minor, O'Keefe

Not Present:

Abstained:



7/8/2025

Votes

Created a 21-member Citizens Charter Review Committee, with 3 appointees per Commissioner.

PASS

YES

Cummings, Caban,
Proctor, Minor,
O'Keefe, Maddox,
Welch

NO

Not Present:

Abstained:



7/8/2025

Votes

Proposed to give no recommendations to the Citizens Charter Review Committee.

FAIL

YES

Minor, O'Keefe,
Maddox

NO

Cummings,
Welch, Caban,
Proctor

Not Present:

Abstained:



7/8/2025

Votes

Recommended CRCC consider six (6) changes: a Citizen Utility Review Board, anyone in the County who pays for city utilities and the fire services fee can vote in city elections, annexing all properties inside Capital Circle into the city limits, County ordinance precedence, a Utility Authority, and Charter language cleanup.

PASS

YES

Cummings,
Welch, Caban,
Proctor

NO

Minor, O'Keefe,
Maddox

Not Present:

Abstained:



7/8/2025

Votes

Approved \$1.3 million in Community Human Services Partnership funding for nonprofits and service providers.

PASS

YES

Cummings, Welch,
Caban, Proctor,
Minor, O'Keefe

NO

Not Present:

Abstained: Maddox



7/8/2025

Votes

Postponed Comprehensive Plan adoption for one year to allow more public engagement and input.

PASS

YES

Cummings, Welch,
Proctor, Minor,
O'Keefe, Maddox

NO

Caban

Not Present:

Abstained:



7/8/2025

Votes

Approved a 3-year, \$200,000/year contract with The Southern Group for state and federal lobbying services, with two automatic 1-year extensions and no RFP process.

PASS

YES

Cummings, Welch,
Caban, O'Keefe,
Proctor, Maddox

NO

Minor

Not Present:

Abstained:



7/8/2025

Votes

Directed staff to prepare a public hearing to consider changes to how fire service fees are billed for residents outside City limits who have City utilities.

PASS

YES

Cummings, Caban,
Proctor, Minor,
O'Keefe, Maddox,
Welch

NO

Not Present:

Abstained:

Shelter Pet of the Month - Buns



I am a neutered male and I look like a Dutch Shepherd mix. The shelter staff think I am about 7 months old.

I'm a **super friendly guy** and I love **outdoor adventures** and playtime with my **toys**. I am very social and I love playing with other dogs. I already know some helpful commands and I pickup on new commands quickly. I recently had my TV debut on the WCTV News, so check out my [video](#).

By Appointment: Daily, 10:00 am – 6:00 pm

Walk-in Kennel Viewings: Wednesday, Saturday, and Sunday, 1:00 pm – 5:00 pm

Phone: 850-891-2950

Shelter Address: 1125 Easterwood Drive

Shelter Adoption Information

2024 Leon County Audit

□ Audit Findings: Why I Spoke Up

At our July 8 Commission meeting, we reviewed this year’s independent audit of Leon County’s finances. As a CPA, I was alarmed to see **five material weaknesses**, the most serious type of audit finding, along with a pattern of repeated issues across multiple years.

I made a motion calling for a formal **corrective action plan**, but it was not seconded. The Board instead voted to accept the audit and request a **future update from the Clerk’s office**.

Here’s what I said during the meeting:

□ *“This is an unusually high number of findings. There’s a lack of control. I fully believe the Clerk’s office is working to fix it, but the volume of issues means it’s our responsibility to pay closer attention now, not wait until next year.”*
— Commissioner David O’Keefe, CPA

□ [Watch at 1:03:57](#)

Leon County is careful with how we budget and spend your tax dollars. This conversation isn’t about misuse. It’s about how we **track and report our finances accurately and transparently**. I’ll continue pushing for better internal controls to protect public trust.

□ [Read the full FY 2024 audit report \(PDF\)](#)

□ *Audit findings begin on page 101*

□ [News coverage from WCTV](#)

□ *Before joining the County Commission, I worked as a CPA and Chief Financial Officer. I know what clean audits look like, and I know how important it is to act when the findings point to deeper issues.*

NACO Annual Conference

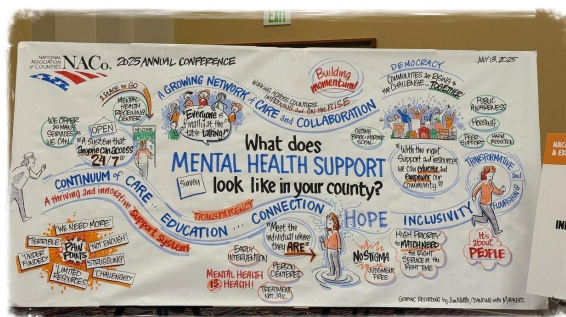


This month I attended the National Association of Counties Annual Conference, where I gathered with more than 1,000 County Commissioners from across the country. The sessions I attended offered valuable information about what is working in other counties and how we can replicate some of these ideas right here in Leon County.

We heard from other counties about how they are tracking immigration policy changes that directly affect their communities. With so many changes happening so quickly, counties could face new costs and new duties, without additional funding or guidance from our state or federal partners.

I was also able to tour the [Riverview Wellness Village](#) — a powerful example of what’s possible when local leaders prioritize care over punishment. The City of Philadelphia and Mayor Cherelle Parker became a national leader in helping people exit homelessness when they launched this program — and they did it in under 18 months. **Big solutions don’t have to take decades.**





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