

Citizen Charter Review Committee

January 8, 2026

11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.

Leon County Main Library
Programming Room

AGENDA

1. Call to Order and Opening

Mary Ann Lindley,
Chair

Consent

2. Approval of December 18, 2025 Meeting Minutes
3. Receipt & File of Written Public Comments

Public Comment

General Business

- Committee Discussion on Proposed Charter Amendments
(*Final Opportunity for Introduction of New Proposals*)
- Item #1: Funding Mechanisms for Affordable Housing (pg. 10)
- Item #2: Funding Mechanisms for Healthcare Access for Low-Income Residents (pg. 28)

*The next meeting of the Citizen Charter Review Committee
will take place on Thursday, January 22, 2026.*

**LEON COUNTY CITIZEN CHARTER REVIEW
COMMITTEE**

**APPROVAL OF DECEMBER 18, 2025 MEETING
MINUTES**

Citizen Charter Review Committee
December 18, 2025
11:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Leon County Main Library
Programming Room

The Leon County 2025-2026 Citizen Charter Review Committee (CCRC) met on December 18, 2025, at 11:30 a.m. in the Leon County Main Library with Committee members Mary Ann Lindley, Chauncy Haynes, Darryl Jones, Linda Bond Edwards, Henry Lewis, III, Bruce Strouble, Jr., Howard Kessler, Ryan Ray, Liz Ellis, Joey Davis, Barry Wilcox, Katrina Tuggerson, Temple Robinson, Max Herrle, Shamarial Roberson, Heidi Otway, Sean Pittman and Jarrett Terry in attendance. Also present were Assistant County Administrator Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy, County Attorney Chasity O'Steen, Assistant to the County Administrator for Legislative and Strategic Initiatives Nicki Hatch, Director of the Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships Abby Thomas, Management Analyst Cameron Williams, and Clerks to the Board, Beryl Wood and Daniel J. Antonaccio.

Absent Members: William Smith, Slaton Murray and Anita Favors.

Call to Order and Opening Mary Ann Lindley, Chair

Chair Lindley called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m.

Nicki Hatch advised the Committee that the audio team was experiencing technical issues and requested that those planning to provide public comments submit their speaker cards to her.

Consent:

Ryan Ray moved, seconded by Linda Bond Edwards, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

- Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes arrived at 11:31 a.m.
- Shamarial Roberson and Temple Robinson arrived at 11:32 a.m.
- Darryl Jones and Heidi Otway arrived at 11:39 a.m.
- Sean Pittman arrived at 11:42 a.m.

The motion carried 18 – 0 with Committee Members Anita Favors, Slaton Murray and William Smith not present.

Approval of December 4, 2025 Meeting Minutes

Receipt & File of Written Public Comments

Public Comment:

- Mary Miaisha Mitchell, 1009 Ellington Court, addressed the Committee regarding food insecurity in Leon County, with particular emphasis on its impact on youth. She urged the Committee to move forward with consideration of this item, highlighting the importance of farm-to-table programs to support children and families in the future.

- Camille Lewis, 1689 Corey Wood Circle, addressed the Committee stating that Leon County's food challenges stem from a lack of coordinated structure rather than a lack of programs. She advocated for a charter amendment to establish food access and food system resilience as a county responsibility, including creation of an Office of Food Systems, a countywide food system plan with measurable goals, and annual public reporting to ensure accountability and long-term durability.
- Lynn Jones, 3211 Notre Dame Street, spoke in support of addressing food insecurity. She highlighted the role of community gardens in supporting youth development and discussed ways to better support children.
- Melanie Andrade Williams, 3349 Argonaut Drive, spoke in support of addressing food insecurity. She referenced Leon County's strategic initiative related to food insecurity, requesting the inclusion of additional goals. She asked that staff return with proposed Charter language for the Committee's consideration.
- Tiffany Hill, 1401 Lola Drive, addressed the Committee regarding affordable housing options and noted that HUD grant funding could be pursued.

General Business:

Item #1: Status Report on City-County Consolidation in Florida

Assistant County Administrator Ken Morris introduced the item, noting that the remaining three items would be presented by Shington Lamy and Abby Thomas, who can speak on human services trends, community needs, the CHSP process, and County and City investments. Ken Morris stated that the human services items were grouped together to provide the Committee with a comprehensive understanding of service delivery, gaps, and coordination between public and nonprofit agencies. He also noted that after discussion of the agenda items, there will be another opportunity for Committee members to offer additional Charter amendment concepts for future consideration.

Ken Morris explained that in November the Board of County Commissioners requested a status report on City and County consolidation, including how the process would work and general pros and cons. That item was prepared for the Board's December 9 meeting. At the Committee's prior meeting, members requested that the same materials be presented for review and discussion. Therefore, the Board agenda materials were included in the Committee's packet. He provided an overview of the consolidation process, noting that consolidation would require development of a comprehensive consolidation plan, adoption by the Legislature through a special act, and approval by voters via referendum. He explained that a consolidation plan would need to address numerous issues including governance structure, staffing, salaries, contracts, unions, retirement benefits, and debt. On December 9, the Board directed staff to bring back draft language for a non-binding straw ballot question for the November 2026 General Election to gauge community interest in consolidation. Based on the Board's action, he stated that no action by the Committee was recommended at this time, but staff welcomed feedback and questions.

Sean Pittman asked whether the County considered potential savings for the community which would be important in drafting ballot language.

Ken Morris clarified that the item focused on the consolidation process, and that any cost or savings analysis would occur during development of a consolidation plan. He further clarified that this is a non-binding straw ballot intended to assess public interest.

Barry Wilcox asked for clarification regarding next steps should the straw ballot indicate support for consolidation.

Ken Morris explained that following a favorable vote, the County Commission would need to determine whether to proceed jointly with the City or independently engage the Legislative Delegation. Mr. Morris noted that a fully executed consolidation could take several years as it requires the development of a consolidation plan, approval by the Legislature, approval by voters, and a transition period.

Ryan Ray commented that, given current community needs and broader governance challenges, consolidation was not advisable at this time. He expressed concerns about limiting local capacity and involving the Legislature in local governance decisions.

Max Herrle inquired about the items that will come back to the Board regarding consolidation. He also asked about the Board's voting threshold for placing this topic on the ballot.

Ken Morris responded that an item discussing draft language for the ballot will be presented to the Board in the spring. A simple majority vote of the Board is needed to place the straw ballot question on the ballot.

Barry Wilcox commented on the concept of functional consolidation. He asked whether functional consolidation between the City and County had been examined to identify duplicative efforts and inquired about the process for evaluating such consolidation.

Ken Morris clarified that functional consolidation can be implemented through an interlocal agreement between the City and the County.

Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes moved, seconded by Ryan Ray, for Option #1: Accept the report and take no further action.

The motion carried 18 – 0 with Committee Members Anita Favors, Slaton Murray and William Smith not present.

Item #2: Food Insecurity Provisions

Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy introduced the item, noting that Leon County established a department dedicated to food security efforts in 2022. He also noted that no other county charters in Florida include the specific issue of food insecurity. Mr. Lamy outlined options for the Committee, including encouraging the Board to continue its commitment to reducing food insecurity through a recommendation in the Committee's final report, or moving forward with a Charter amendment.

Darryl Jones stated that food security has long been a County priority and remarked that a government's values are reflected in how it allocates funding. He expressed that codifying these values in the Charter could protect them from changes resulting from elections or political shifts.

Linda Bond Edwards expressed concern regarding the apparent disconnect between information presented by staff and testimony provided by public speakers. She noted that despite existing efforts, food insecurity persists, suggesting that the overall structure may require further evaluation.

Shington Lamy stated that the County does not have authority to mandate actions by entities such as Leon County Schools and that a Charter amendment would replicate authority that the County already has.

County Attorney O'Steen directed the Committee's attention to Article IX, Section 4 of the Florida Constitution, noting that counties lack authority over school districts. She explained that prior County actions, including mandatory mask requirements, explicitly excluded schools due to this limitation. She further discussed Charter provisions related to funding, noting that while some charters require funding for specific purposes, they typically avoid prescribing exact dollar amounts and instead leave discretion to the governing board. She also explained that proposed charter amendments in other jurisdictions to limit a county's revenue generation have been preempted by Chapters 129 and 200, Florida Statutes, and that there is no case law supporting Charter-mandated funding.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., provided a separate handout to the Committee and commended the efforts of the County's Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships. He emphasized that food insecurity increased significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly among vulnerable populations. He cited examples of bodies created by other jurisdictions to address this issue, including New York City's Offices of Food Policy and Urban Agriculture as well as Philadelphia's Office of Sustainability.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., moved, seconded by Heidi Otway, to direct staff to bring back charter language establishing a County duty for food access and food system resilience, creating an office of food systems under the executive branch to monitor efforts, and requiring a countywide food systems plan, annual reporting, countywide minimum standards, and that an ordinance be made within 12 months of a charter amendment being passed.

The motion was not voted on.

Shamarial Roberson raised concerns regarding fiscal impacts, adjacent programs, and federal regulations. She questioned how a Charter amendment would address these complexities and suggested a policy-based approach focused on measurable outcomes, a countywide plan, and a coordinating committee.

Katrina Tuggerson noted the involvement of the Capital City Chamber of Commerce in recent food system initiatives and referenced ongoing coordination with County staff to secure grants and address service gaps.

Heidi Otway highlighted that beginning in October 2026, Florida will assume responsibility for SNAP administration and urged prioritization of food security in advance of these changes.

Chair Lindley asked whether a policy recommendation would allow for a more timely response.

Nicki Hatch stated that the March 2026 County Commission meeting would include all proposals and policy recommendations for the Board's consideration.

Darryl Jones distinguished between Charter language and strategic planning, emphasizing that Charter provisions should empower rather than constrain, and cautioned against overly prescriptive language that could affect voter support.

Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes made a substitute motion, seconded by Liz Ellis, for Option #2: Direct staff to include a recommendation encouraging Leon County to continue its long-standing commitment to reduce food insecurity in the community as part of the Citizen Charter Review Committee report.

The motion failed 11 – 7 with Chair Mary Ann Lindley, Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes, Linda Bond Edwards, Liz Ellis, Heidi Otway, Shamarial Roberson and Barry Wilcox in favor of the motion. Committee Members Anita Favors, Slaton Murray and William Smith were not present.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., stated that any proposed structure would be subject to annual appropriation and would establish minimum standards rather than fixed funding amounts.

Darryl Jones made a substitute motion, seconded by Jarrett Terry, for Option #3: Direct staff to draft a proposed charter amendment on food insecurity as determined by the Citizen Charter Review Committee.

The motion carried 18 – 0 with Committee Members Anita Favors, Slaton Murray and William Smith not present.

Max Herrle asked whether items not yet discussed could be modified based on stakeholder input and whether attachments could be submitted.

Nicki Hatch confirmed that stakeholders may submit materials through public comment. She explained that they would take up remaining items during the Jan 8, 2026 Committee meeting.

Item #3: Funding Mechanisms for Affordable Housing

Item #4: Funding Mechanisms for Healthcare Access for Low-Income Residents

Committee Discussion on Proposed Charter Amendments

Motion to adjourn:

Ryan Ray moved, seconded by Max Herrle, to adjourn the meeting.

The motion carried 18 – 0 with Committee Members Anita Favors, Slaton Murray and William Smith not present.

Chair Lindley adjourned the meeting at 1:29 p.m.

ATTEST:

Mary Ann Lindley, Chair
Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee

Beryl Wood, Clerk to the Board for
Gwen Marshall Knight, Clerk of Court

LEON COUNTY CITIZEN CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

RECEIPT AND FILE OF WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENTS

(To be electronically distributed Wednesday before the meeting)

From: T Young <trishayyoung@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 17, 2025 10:14 PM
To: Charter Review Process <CCRC@leoncountyfl.gov>
Subject: Support for the Restoration of Communities Amendment (RCA)

Good afternoon. My name is Trishay Young and I live in the 32310 zip code. I'm here because I believe government has a responsibility not just to grow the county, but to repair the harm its own decisions have caused.

The RCA does not mandate spending or raise taxes. It creates a framework that requires the county to acknowledge and consider past public-policy harm when making major decisions.

Counties across the country use their home-rule authority to place equity and restoration principles into their governing documents. Leon County has the same authority.

This amendment ensures that future generations inherit a county that remembers its history, learns from it, and governs more responsibly. Please support the RCA.

Thank you,
Mrs. Young

"Look at Life through an Eagle's Eyes"

LEON COUNTY CITIZEN CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

NOTES FOR AGENDA ITEM #1

Citizen Charter Review Committee

Agenda Item #1

January 8, 2026

To: 2025-2026 Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee

From: Vincent S. Long, County Administrator

Title: Funding Mechanisms for Affordable Housing

Review and Approval:	Vincent S. Long, County Administrator
Department / Division Review:	Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy, Assistant County Administrator
Lead Staff / Project Team:	Nicki Hatch, Assistant to the County Administrator for Legislative and Strategic Initiatives Abigail Thomas, Director, Human Services & Community Partnerships Jelani Marks, Housing Services Manager

Statement of Issue:

As requested by the Committee at its December 4, 2025 meeting, this item provides information on funding available to the County to support affordable housing needs and highlights the County's commitment and continued strategic investment to increase and preserve the stock of affordable housing in the community. As presented in the item, the County utilizes all available funding sources to invest in affordable housing including general revenue (property taxes), infrastructure surtax (sales tax), grants, and bond financing.

Staff Recommendation:

Option #1: Accept the report and take no further action.

Report and Discussion

Background:

As requested by the Committee, this item provides information on funding available to the County for affordable housing and highlights the County's commitment and continued strategic investment to increase and preserve the stock of affordable housing in the community. During its December 4, 2025 meeting, the Committee requested further information on funding mechanisms available to the County to support affordable housing to determine whether to consider a proposed charter amendment.

Leon County is dedicated to increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing. To address the highest affordable housing need of rental units in the community, over just the past five years the County has invested \$5.8 million in direct funding and authorized \$195 million in bond financing that has or will construct 1,200 new affordable units within the next 12-18 months. As presented in the item, the County utilizes all available funding sources to invest in affordable housing including state funding dedicated to affordable housing; federal grants; general revenue (property taxes); infrastructure surtax (sales tax); and bond financing. These revenues support a variety of affordable housing programs and services such as down payment assistance, emergency home repair, home rehabilitation, homeownership development, and rental development that are increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing. The Analysis section details the County's long history of commitment to increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing in the community through County-led policies, programs, partnerships, and investments.

As subsequently presented, most county charters do not include language regarding affordable housing. County charters generally address large organizational issues focused on the authority, structure, and power of county government. Only four of the 20 charter counties include affordable housing provisions that generally memorialize the broad discretion and authority already available to county commissions. As demonstrated in the Analysis, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners (Board) currently has the authority and actively addresses affordable housing needs through its policy, programming and budgetary decisions without the need for a charter change. Alternatively, the Committee may wish to make a recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing in the community as described in the item. The recommendation would be included as part of the Committee's report for consideration by the Board.

Analysis:

The state and federal governments define affordable housing as housing that costs no more than 30% of the household's total income. Households that must spend more than 30% of their total income for housing expenses are considered "cost burdened". According to the Shimberg Center for Housing Studies at the University of Florida (Shimberg Center), approximately 59% of low-income households (earning 80% or less of area median income; \$74,000 or less for a family of four) in Leon County are considered cost burdened. In response, the County has prioritized increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing through policies, partnerships, and investments for low-income households. The following sections provide an overview of County-led programs, policies, partnerships, and investment of various funding sources to address affordable housing needs in the community.

Leon County Housing Programs

Leon County's Housing Services Division administers a wide variety of programs designed to create and maintain affordable homeownership and rental opportunities for low-income individuals and families. The County's programs include the following:

- *Down Payment Assistance:* The County's First-Time Homebuyer Assistance program which provides low- to moderate-income first-time homebuyers with financial assistance for down payment and closing costs associated with the purchase of a home in unincorporated Leon County.
- *Emergency Home Repair:* The County's Emergency Home Repair Program aids low-income homeowners in need of immediate and dire repairs to their homes such as roof leaks and septic tank pump outs in unincorporated Leon County.
- *Home Rehabilitation:* The County's Rehabilitation/Replacement program funds major repairs including full home replacements to preserve affordable homeownership for existing low-income households.
- *Homeownership Development:* The County's Homeownership Development Program provides funding to developers to pay down the development costs associated with the construction of new homes to reduce the purchase cost for low-income first-time homebuyers in unincorporated Leon County and within the City of Tallahassee (City) limits. This program includes partnership with the City to build new homes in neighborhoods that have historically experienced poverty and inequities (Bond, Frenchtown, Griffin Heights, Providence, and South City).
- *Rental Development:* The County's Rental Development Program provides funding to rental developers primarily in the form of gap financing for projects that construct or rehabilitate units dedicated to low-income housing households in unincorporated Leon County and within the City limits. This program includes partnership with the City to construct and rehabilitate rental projects countywide.
- *Clear Title Services:* In partnership with Legal Services of North Florida, the County provides title clearing services to low-income County residents experiencing issues with heirs' property. Heirs' property refers to property inherited without clear legal ownership.

Leon County's State and Federal Funding Partnerships

The primary and dedicated funding source of the County's housing program is the State Housing Initiative Partnership (SHIP) which is allocated by the State of Florida annually. SHIP funds are generated from the Documentary Stamp Tax (Doc Stamp Tax), appropriated by the Florida Legislature, and administered and distributed by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation (FHFC) to local governments (counties and cities) based on population size. The City is also allocated annual SHIP funds. As a result, the County programs are generally dedicated to affordable housing projects outside the City limits except for the Homeownership and Rental Development programs as previously described. Over the past five years, the County has received an average of \$840,000 annually in SHIP funds; the City has received an average of \$1.7 million during the same period.

In addition to SHIP, the County regularly seeks other funding opportunities to expand and maintain access to affordable housing for the residents of Leon County. In January 2025, the County applied for and was awarded \$750,000 in federal Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the State to enhance the County's home rehabilitation program. This will allow the County to perform major repairs to the homes of an additional 13 low-income households over the next three years. It is important to note that due to its population size, the City is designated as an "entitlement community", and as a result receives annual federal CDBG funding in the amount of \$1.9 million for housing directly from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The great majority of local governments in Florida exclusively utilize SHIP and CDBG to fund affordable housing programs.

Other Funding Sources Leveraged for the County's Investment in Affordable Housing

Recognizing the significant need in the community and limited funding provided at the federal and state levels, the County continuously identifies opportunities and resources to enhance its investment and commitment to preserve and increase the stock of affordable housing for low-income residents. As summarized below, these include proceeds from the sales of County owned properties, bond financing through the Housing Finance Authority of Leon County, and local revenue sources (i.e., general revenue and infrastructure surtax).

- *Sales of County-Owned Properties:* A common and best practice adopted by local governments, including the County, is to dedicate the proceeds from the sale of properties to affordable housing programs and services. Florida Statutes require that at least every three years each county prepare an inventory of county-owned property deemed suitable for affordable housing by the Board. Pursuant to the County's Real Estate Policy, when the County sells a property deemed suitable for affordable housing, the proceeds from the sale are provided to the Housing Finance Authority of Leon County (HFA) to invest in affordable housing programs and services. As detailed in the next section, the HFA is a special dependent district of the County, established by the Board to alleviate the shortage of affordable housing (primarily rental) through capital investment and bond financing.

The proceeds provided to the HFA are a major source of funding of the County's Emergency Home Repair Program which as described earlier offers aid to low-income homeowners in need of immediate and dire repairs to their homes. Over the past five years, the proceeds from the sale of County properties have generated \$672,000 to the HFA for the Emergency Home Repair Program which has assisted 63 homeowners.

- *Bond Financing:* According to the Shimberg Center, the highest affordable housing need in Leon County is affordable rental units for very low-income households earning 50% or less of the Area Median Income (AMI) (\$46,000 for a household of four). As mentioned earlier, the Board established the HFA specifically to address the need for affordable rental developments. Pursuant to state law, counties are authorized to establish housing finance authorities which can issue bonds upon approval of the Board. Bonds are a significant component (50% - 60%) of funding for the construction of affordable housing rental projects that also typically include federal tax credits and private loans.

As a result, the County actively partners with the HFA to secure and issue tax-exempt, multifamily housing revenue bonds made available through the State to finance projects that construct affordable rental developments for low-income households. Over the past five years, in addition to \$5.8 million in direct funding, the County has authorized the HFA to issue approximately \$195 million in bond financing that has or will develop more than 1,200 affordable rental units over the next 12-18 months. Additionally, within the past several months the Board has authorized the HFA to secure a total of \$100 million in additional bond allocation from the State. The bonds will be utilized to fund additional affordable rental projects in Leon County that dedicate units for very low-income households over the next two years (2026 and 2027).

- *Local Revenues for Affordable Rental Housing Gap Financing:* Building on its effort and commitment to addressing the highest affordable housing need in the community, the County very recently enhanced its investment in gap financing for rental development projects with the utilization of existing local revenue (general revenue and infrastructure surtax). As mentioned earlier, the County's Rental Development program provides gap financing for projects that construct or rehabilitate units dedicated to low-income housing households in unincorporated Leon County and within the City limits. A gap in financing occurs when construction costs exceed the traditional revenue (bonds, tax credits, private loans) of rental development projects. In recent years, local governments have provided gap financing to ensure the successful completion of such projects.

Over the past several years, the County in partnership with the City has utilized one-time COVID-19 related federal funding to provide gap financing for affordable rental projects that have since been exhausted. As mentioned earlier, the County provided \$5.8 million in direct funding which was primarily one-time federal dollars. SHIP funds have also been utilized for rental development; however, Florida Statutes limits the amount of annual SHIP funds that can be invested into rental projects (no more than 25%).

In order to address the exhaustion of federal funds, limitation of the SHIP program, and the need for more rental development in the community, the County recently increased its annual investment in rental development projects. In June 2025, the Board approved \$250,000 in general revenue annually for gap financing of affordable housing projects for very low- and extremely low-income households. This additional investment in general revenue to support affordable housing is recurring, subject to Board approval during the annual budget process.

Additionally, the Blueprint Intergovernmental Agency (IA) Board, which is comprised of the County and City Commissions, established and funded an affordable housing gap financing program in the amount of \$250,000 annually through the Office of Economic Vitality (OEV) portion of the one-cent infrastructure surtax (sales tax). As approved by the voters of Leon County, the surtax is utilized to invest in countywide infrastructure projects and economic development activities. The utilization of the one-cent infrastructure tax for affordable housing is consistent with several other local governments in Florida including the counties of Alachua, Collier, Palm Beach, Pinellas, and Sarasota.

As a result of the recent actions taken by the Board, the County's annual investment in rental development projects for gap financing increased to \$500,000 with the combination of SHIP, general revenue, and the County's share of OEV funds.

- *Property Tax Exemption for Affordable Housing Projects:* In addition to the various funding sources the County utilizes to invest in affordable housing, in early 2026 the Board is scheduled to consider establishing a property tax exemption for affordable housing projects that could result in additional rental units in the community. Pursuant to Florida Statutes, local governments (counties and cities) are authorized to create a property tax exemption for rental developments with at least 50 units that set aside apartments for low-income households and meet other statutory criteria. Staff will bring an agenda item to the Board in January to consider a draft ordinance establishing the property tax exemption for affordable housing projects.

Review of Affordable Housing Provisions in County Charters

Statewide, most county charters do not include language regarding affordable housing. Only four of the 20 charter counties provide for the establishment of an affordable housing trust fund for funding homeownership and/or rental housing programs: Alachua, Brevard, Broward, and Orange Counties (Attachment #1). The provisions within these county charters are very similar to each other and generally memorialize the broad discretion that county commissions already have to establish and implement a trust fund dedicated to affordable housing. The charters do not require an annual minimal financial commitment or prioritize a type of affordable housing program (home ownership, rental, rehabilitation) due to continuously evolving housing needs and trends specific to each community. Only the Broward County Charter establishes an income eligibility ceiling for funds to serve households below 140% of the median annual income.

The four charters include the explicit authority for county commissions to determine the appropriate revenue source(s) for an affordable housing trust fund (i.e., general revenue, sales tax, etc.) as part of the annual budget process and provide conditions for maintaining unexpended revenue within the trust fund or reallocating funds for other governmental purposes. However, Florida Statutes already provides counties (including the Board) with these authorities which the Board has exercised through adopted ordinances, policies, strategic initiatives, enhanced partnerships, and increased investments in affordable housing. In fact, the affordable housing trust fund ordinance adopted by Leon County is consistent with the trust funds established in the four county charters.

Chapter 8, Article V of the Leon County Code of Laws (Code of Laws) adopted by the Board established the local housing assistance trust fund as authorized in Florida Statutes (Attachment #2). The revenue source for the County's trust fund is SHIP funding. As mentioned earlier, SHIP funding is the primary and dedicated revenue source for affordable housing for the County and many local governments. In addition to the housing trust fund, the County ordinance also establishes the local housing assistance plan (LHAP), which serves as the governing document of the County's housing programs (down payment assistance, emergency home repair, etc.), and creates the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC). The AHAC is comprised of County residents appointed by the Board that represents various organizations and industries (private developers, residents, not-for-profit organizations, etc.). The AHAC provides

recommendations to the Board on affordable housing policies, LHAP, programs, and services. The AHAC recommendations are brought to the Board annually for consideration.

With the comprehensive affordable housing ordinance established in the County's Code of Laws, amending the County's structural governing document is unnecessary to effectuate strategic programmatic and budgetary support for affordable housing (or most program areas). Additionally, placing funding and programmatic requirements in the Charter would not be consistent with the County's approach to addressing and investing in the most pressing issues in the community. In order to respond to the ever-changing human service needs in the community, the County regularly conducts data-driven analysis, collaborates with local stakeholders, and engages impacted residents. This approach has successfully led to improved policies, enhanced partnerships, and increased investments in affordable housing.

As mentioned earlier, county charters generally address large organizational issues focused on the authority, structure, and power of county government rather than specific policy issues. Alternatively, the Committee may wish to make a recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing in the community as described in the item. The recommendation would be included as part of the Committee's report for consideration by the Board.

Conclusion

Leon County is dedicated to increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing through policies, partnerships, and investments. To address the highest affordable housing need of rental units in the community, over just the past five years the County has invested \$5.8 million in direct funding and authorized \$195 million in bond financing that has or will construct 1,200 new affordable units within the next 12-18 months. The County utilizes all available funding sources to invest in affordable housing including state funding dedicated to affordable housing; federal grants; general revenue (property taxes); infrastructure surtax (sales tax); and bond financing.

Adopting a charter amendment would only serve to highlight the Board existing authority. If this were to occur with every high priority issue, then the County Charter would ultimately include volumes of initiatives, policies, programs, and services that are being addressed by the County. Affordable housing was adopted in the charters of other communities that had not placed a high priority on the issue. However, as presented through its policies, programs, partnerships, and investments that include an established trust fund, Leon County is committed to addressing affordable housing.

County charters generally address large organizational issues focused on the authority, structure, and power of county government rather than specific policy issues. Alternatively, the Committee may wish to make a recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing in the community as described in the item. The recommendation would be included as part of the Committee's report for consideration by the Board.

Options:

1. Accept the report and take no further action.
2. Direct staff to include a recommendation encouraging Leon County to continue its long-standing commitment to increasing and preserving the stock of affordable housing in the community as part of the Citizen Charter Review Committee report.
3. Direct staff to draft a proposed charter amendment on affordable housing as determined by the Citizen Charter Review Committee.
4. Committee direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1

Attachments:

1. County Charters with Affordable Housing Provisions
2. Chapter 8, Article V of the Leon County Code of Laws – Affordable Housing Assistance

County Charters with Affordable Housing Provisions

Alachua

Sec. 1.9. - Alachua County Affordable Housing Trust Fund

(A) *Alachua County Affordable Housing Trust Fund established.* The Alachua County Affordable Housing Trust Fund ("Trust Fund") is hereby established.

(B) *Purposes of Trust Fund.* The purpose of the Trust Fund is to provide a continuing, non-lapsing fund for the Alachua County Commission to use to address the need for affordable housing within Alachua County. The Trust Fund will be used to create and sustain affordable housing throughout Alachua County for renters and homeowners, and increase workforce housing opportunities.

(C) *Revenue sources.* The Trust Fund established under this section shall be funded as directed by the County Commission, and may be comprised of the following sources:

- (1) Alachua County General Revenue appropriated to the Trust Fund by the County Commission as part of the annual budget;
- (2) Funds voluntarily contributed by municipalities that may elect to participate in the Trust Fund and programs funded by the Trust Fund;
- (3) Grants or donations of money, property, or any other thing of value made to the Trust Fund;
- (4) Mandatory or voluntary payments, including but not limited to fees from new commercial and residential development, made pursuant to the development policies established by ordinance; and
- (5) Other sources as established by ordinance.

(D) *Continuing Nature of Trust Fund.* Unless otherwise provided by ordinance or required by applicable law, unspent portions of the Trust Fund established under this Section, repayments of principal and interest on loans provided from the Trust Fund, and interest earned from the deposit or investment of monies from the Trust Fund:

- (1) Shall remain in the Trust Fund, to be used exclusively for the purposes of the Trust Fund;
- (2) Do not revert to the general revenues of the County; and
- (3) Any appropriations do not lapse.

(E) *Administration and Oversight of Trust Fund.* The Trust Fund shall be administered, appropriated, and expended by the County Commission in a manner consistent with the purposes of the Trust Fund as set forth in this section. The Trust Fund shall be administered in a manner that allows the Trust Fund to leverage other sources of public funds and private investment. The Trust Fund shall be included in the annual audit.

(F) *Implementation by Ordinance.* No later than July 1, 2021, the County Commission shall adopt one or more ordinances implementing the provisions of this section, which ordinances may be amended from time to time by the County Commission consistent with the provisions of this section.

Ballot Language (Passed in 2020 with 64% Voter Approval):

“COUNTY CHARTER AMENDMENT ESTABLISHING ALACHUA COUNTY AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND”

Shall the Alachua County Charter be amended to establish an Alachua County Affordable Housing Trust Fund used to create and sustain affordable housing, which may be funded by fees from new commercial and residential development and other sources, all as directed by the County Commission, and to provide for the purposes, revenue sources, appropriation and expenditure of funds, annual audit, continuing nature, implementation by ordinance, and administration and oversight of the Trust Fund?

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Brevard

Sec. 1.9. - Brevard County Workforce and Supportive Housing Trust Fund

(A) The Brevard County Workforce and Supportive Housing Trust Fund is hereby established.

(B) Purpose of Trust Fund. The purpose of the trust fund is to provide a continuing, non-lapsing fund for Brevard County to use to address the need for affordable housing within Brevard County. The trust fund shall be used to create and sustain affordable housing throughout Brevard County for renters and homeowners and to increase workforce housing opportunities.

(C) Revenue sources. The trust fund shall be funded as directed from time to time by the county commission and may be comprised of the following sources:

(1) Funds from the sale of county surplus real property, the funds of which are not otherwise legally committed to other sources; and

(2) Other sources as established from time to time by ordinance.

(D) Continuing nature of trust fund. Unless otherwise provided by ordinance or resolution or required by applicable law, unspent portions of the trust fund, repayments of principal and interest on loans provided from the trust fund and interest earned from the deposit or investment of monies from the trust fund:

(1) Shall remain in the trust fund to be used exclusively for the purposes of the trust fund;

(2) Shall not revert to the general revenues or other funds of the county; and

(3) Any appropriations shall not lapse.

(E) Implementation. Not later than July 1, 2023, the county commission shall adopt one or more ordinances implementing the provisions of this section, which ordinances may be amended from time to time.

Ballot Language (Passed in 2022 with 53% Voter Approval):

“PROPOSAL NO. 6 - WORKFORCE AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING”

Creates Section 1.9 of the Charter. The amendment establishes an affordable housing trust fund to assist in establishing affordable housing for renters and homeowners to create and increase workforce housing opportunities throughout the county. The trust fund shall be funded as directed by the county commission.

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Broward

Sec. 11.09. - Broward County Affordable Housing Trust Fund

(A) Broward County Affordable Housing Trust Fund established. The Broward County Affordable Housing Trust Fund ("Trust Fund") is hereby established. The purpose of the Trust Fund is to provide a continuing, non-lapsing fund for the Broward County Commission to use to address the need for affordable housing in Broward County, Florida.

(B) Affordable housing; definition; scope. For purposes of this section, "Affordable Housing" shall mean housing intended for very low to moderate income households as defined as follows: Income Eligible Person/Family: means one or more natural persons or a family that has a total annual anticipated income for the household below 140 percent of the median annual income adjusted for family size for households within Broward County.

(C) Purpose of Trust Fund. The Trust Fund will be used to create and sustain affordable housing throughout Broward County for renters and homeowners, and increase workforce housing opportunities.

(D) Revenue sources. The Trust Fund established under this section shall be funded by the County Commission, and may be comprised of the following sources:

- (1) Broward County General Revenue appropriated to the Trust Fund by the County Commission as part of the annual budget;
- (2) Savings from Expired Tax Increment Financing Payments to Community Redevelopment Agencies within the County;
- (3) Funds voluntarily contributed by municipalities that may elect to participate in the Trust Fund and programs funded by the Trust Fund;
- (4) Grants or donations made to the Trust Fund;
- (5) Mandatory or voluntary payments made pursuant to the development policies established by ordinance; and
- (6) Other sources as established by ordinance.

(E) Continuing Nature of Trust Fund. Notwithstanding any other provision of this section, unspent portions of the Trust Fund established under this Section, repayments of principal and interest on loans provided from the Trust Fund, and interest earned from the deposit or investment of monies from the Trust Fund:

- (1) Shall remain in the Trust Fund, to be used exclusively for the purposes of the Trust Fund;
- (2) Do not revert to the general revenues of the County; and
- (3) Any appropriations do not lapse.

(F) Administration and Oversight of Trust Fund. The Trust Fund shall be administered by Broward County in a manner that allows the Trust Fund to leverage other sources of public funds and private investment, a recognized national best practice. The Trust Fund shall be included in the annual audit.

Ballot Language (Passed in 2018 with 73% Voter Approval):

“BROWARD COUNTY AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND”

Shall the Broward County Charter be amended to enact a new Section 11.11 to establish the Broward County Affordable Housing Trust Fund, to provide a definition of "Affordable Housing," and to provide for the purpose of the Trust Fund, the revenue sources for the Trust Fund, the continuing nature of the Trust Fund, and for administration and oversight of the Trust Fund?

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Orange

Sec. 713. – Affordable Housing Trust Fund

(A) *Affordable Housing Trust Fund to remain in continued existence.* The Affordable Housing Trust Fund ("Trust Fund") initially established in [Chapter 2](#), Article VIII, Division 2 of the Orange County Code shall remain in continued existence, as modified from time to time by ordinance in a manner not inconsistent with the requirements of this section.

(B) *Purposes of Trust Fund.* The purpose of the Trust Fund is to provide the financial resources and the leverage necessary to create and preserve affordable housing units in Orange County. The purposes of the Trust Fund may be further specified by ordinance.

(C) *Revenue sources.* The Trust Fund shall be funded as directed by the board of county commissioners. The Trust Fund may be comprised of the following sources:

- (1) General revenue fund monies appropriated to the Trust Fund by the board of county commissioners as part of the annual budget;
- (2) Funds voluntarily contributed by municipalities that may elect to participate in the Trust Fund and programs funded by the Trust Fund;
- (3) Grants or donations of money, property, or any other thing of value made to the Trust Fund;
- (4) Mandatory or voluntary payments, including but not limited to fees from new commercial and residential development, made pursuant to development policies established by ordinance; and
- (5) Other sources as established by ordinance.

(D) *Continuing Nature of Trust Fund.* Unless otherwise directed by the board of county commissioners or required by applicable law, unspent portions of the Trust Fund, repayments of principal and interest on loans provided from the Trust Fund, and interest earned from the deposit or investment of monies from the Trust Fund:

- (1) Shall remain in the Trust Fund, to be used exclusively for the purposes of the Trust Fund;
- (2) Do not revert to the general revenues of the County; and
- (3) Any appropriations do not lapse.

(E) *Administration and Oversight of Trust Fund.* The Trust Fund shall be administered, appropriated, and expended in a manner consistent with the purposes of the Trust Fund. The Trust Fund shall be administered in a manner that allows the Trust Fund to leverage other sources of public funds and private investment. The Trust Fund shall be included in the annual audit.

(F) *Implementation by Ordinance.* No later than July 1, 2025, the board of county commissioners shall amend [Chapter 2](#), Article VIII, Division 2 of the Orange County Code to implement the minimum requirements of this section. The board of county commissioners may adopt additional implementing ordinances not inconsistent with the requirements of this section.

Ballot Language (Passed in 2024 with 74% Voter Approval):

“ORANGE COUNTY CHARTER AMENDMENT REQUIRING CONTINUED EXISTENCE OF AFFORDABLE HOUSING TRUST FUND”

Amending the County Charter to require the continued existence of an Affordable Housing Trust Fund used to create and preserve affordable housing, which may be funded by fees from new commercial and residential development and other sources, all as directed by the County Commission, and to provide for purposes, revenue sources, appropriation and expenditure of funds, annual audit, continuing nature, implementation by ordinance, administration, and oversight of the Trust Fund. No financial impact.

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PART II – LEON COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES
Chapter 8 - HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ARTICLE V. AFFORDABLE HOUSING ASSISTANCE

ARTICLE V. AFFORDABLE HOUSING ASSISTANCE

Sec. 8-151. Declaration of policy.

It is hereby declared to be the policy of the county, in the exercise of its police power for the public safety, public health, and general welfare, to support and encourage the initiatives which enhance the availability of and accessibility to affordable housing for all citizens of the county.

(Code 1992, § 8-151; Ord. No. 93-2, § 1(1), 3-30-1993)

Sec. 8-152. Purpose.

This article specifies the provisions statutorily required for the county, as a participant in the state housing initiatives partnership (SHIP) program pursuant to F.S. §§ 420.907 through 420.9079, as amended (the "State Housing Initiatives Partnership Act"), to receive its share of local housing distributions from the local government Housing Trust Fund as defined by F.S. § 420.9071(17), as amended.

(Code 1992, § 8-152; Ord. No. 93-2, § 1(2), 3-30-1993; Ord. No. 94-15, § 1, 7-26-1994; Ord. No. 16-15, § 1, 10-18-2016)

Sec. 8-153. Definitions.

The definitions enumerated in F.S. § 420.9071, as amended, shall apply to the terms used in this article.

(Code 1992, § 8-153; Ord. No. 93-2, § 1(3), 3-30-1993; Ord. No. 16-15, § 1, 10-18-2016)

Sec. 8-154. Local Housing Assistance Trust Fund; local housing assistance plan; responsibility for administration.

- (a) There shall be created within the official fiscal and accounting records of the Board of County Commissioners a specifically designated and dedicated Local Housing Assistance Trust Fund (hereinafter referred to as the "trust fund"), which shall be implemented and operated in accordance with F.S. § 420.9075(6), (7), as amended. The trust fund shall be solely reserved for the deposit and expenditure of funds in support of the local housing assistance plan.
- (b) The county local housing assistance plan, hereinafter referred to as the "LHAP," shall be adopted by resolution of the Board of County Commissioners and implemented through a local housing partnership as defined in F.S. § 420.9071(18), as amended. The LHAP shall be developed and implemented in accordance with F.S. § 420.9075, as amended.
- (c) Responsibility for the administration of the LHAP shall be vested in the County Administrator or designee.

(Code 1992, § 8-154; Ord. No. 93-2, § 1(4), 3-30-1993; Ord. No. 94-15, § 2, 7-26-1994; Ord. No. 16-15, § 1, 10-18-2016)

Sec. 8-155. Reserved.

Sec. 8-156. Affordable housing advisory committee.

(a) *Creation; membership.* There is hereby created the affordable housing advisory committee, hereinafter referred to as the "AHAC." The AHAC membership shall be composed of at least eight members but not more than 11 members. The AHAC shall consist of one duly appointed County Commissioner and one representative from at least six of the first 11 categories listed below:

- (1) A citizen who is actively engaged in the residential home building industry in connection with affordable housing.
- (2) A citizen who is actively engaged in the banking or mortgage banking industry in connection with affordable housing.
- (3) A citizen who is a representative of those areas of labor actively engaged in home building in connection with affordable housing.
- (4) A citizen who is actively engaged as an advocate for low-income persons in connection with affordable housing.
- (5) A citizen who is actively engaged as a for-profit provider of affordable housing.
- (6) A citizen who is actively engaged as a not-for-profit provider of affordable housing.
- (7) A citizen who is actively engaged as a real estate professional in connection with affordable housing.
- (8) A citizen who actively serves on the local planning agency pursuant to F.S. § 163.3174. If the local planning agency is comprised of the governing board of the county or municipality, the governing board may appoint a designee who is knowledgeable in the local planning process.
- (9) A citizen who resides within the jurisdiction of the local governing body making the appointments.
- (10) A citizen who represents employers within the jurisdiction.
- (11) A citizen who represents essential services personnel, as defined in the local housing assistance plan.
- (12) A citizen who currently benefits from a rental housing assistance program, has benefited from an affordable homeownership program, or has experienced an eviction within the ten years preceding their appointment.

(b) *Terms of membership.* The duly appointed County Commissioner shall serve a term on the AHAC beginning on September 29, 2020 and expiring on December 31, 2022. Thereafter, the duly appointed County Commissioner shall be appointed to a two-year term on the AHAC. The terms of the AHAC membership presently appointed shall continue upon the effective date of the ordinance amending this section until the designated expiration dates of membership. Thereafter, the AHAC membership shall be appointed to three-year staggered terms, as set forth in resolution adopted by the Board. Vacancies may be filled at any time by the Board for the unexpired term of a member.

(Code 1992, § 8-156; Ord. No. 08-10, § 1, 5-13-2008; Ord. No. 16-15, § 1, 10-18-2016; Ord. No. 20-17, § 1, 9-29-2020; Ord. No. 24-12, § 1, 9-17-2024)

State law reference(s)—Similar provisions, F.S. § 420.9076(2).

Secs. 8-157—8-159. Reserved.

LEON COUNTY CITIZEN CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

NOTES FOR AGENDA ITEM #2

Citizen Charter Review Committee

Agenda Item #2

January 8, 2026

To: 2025-2026 Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee

From: Vincent S. Long, County Administrator

Title: Funding Mechanisms for Healthcare Access for Low-Income Residents

Review and Approval:	Vincent S. Long, County Administrator
Department / Division Review:	Ken Morris, Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy, Assistant County Administrator
Lead Staff / Project Team:	Nicki Hatch, Assistant to the County Administrator for Legislative and Strategic Initiatives Abigail Thomas, Director, Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships

Statement of Issue:

As requested by the Committee at the December 4, 2025 meeting, this item provides information on the County's Health Care Program (known as CareNet) and continued strategic investments to expand healthcare access to low-income residents.

Staff Recommendation:

Option #1: Accept the report and take no further action.

Report and Discussion

Background:

As requested by the Committee, this item provides information on the County's Health Care Program (known as CareNet) and continued strategic investments to expand healthcare access to low-income residents. During its December 4, 2025 meeting, the Committee requested further information on funding mechanisms for healthcare access to determine whether to consider a proposed charter amendment.

For more than two decades Leon County has been dedicated to ensuring low-income residents have access to high quality healthcare services. In partnership with local providers, the County has expanded healthcare services to uninsured and underinsured low-income Leon County residents for primary care, mental health, dental care, specialty services, and pharmaceutical services. As described in the item, the County invests a total of \$7.7 million in healthcare annually in mandatory and discretionary programs and services.

There are no County charters in Florida that include language regarding the provision of healthcare. County charters generally address large organizational issues focused on the authority, structure, and power of county government. As presented in this item, the Leon County Board of County Commissioners (Board) currently has the statutory authority and has been active in expanding healthcare services for uninsured and underinsured low-income residents in the community. The Board has successfully taken action to expand healthcare access through its policy, programming, and budgetary decisions without amending the Leon County Charter. Alternatively, the Committee may wish to make a recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing dedication to ensure low-income residents have access to high quality healthcare services in the community as described in the item. The recommendation would be included as part of the Committee's report for consideration by the Board.

Analysis:

Healthcare services for uninsured, underinsured, and elderly residents are primarily the statutory responsibility of the federal and/or state governments through programs such as Medicaid, Medicare, and the Affordable Care Act (ACA). However, pursuant to Florida Statutes, counties (both charter and non-charter) are mandated to contribute annually to the Florida Medicaid Program, County Health Departments (the 67 County Health Departments are operated by state employees under the Florida Department of Health) as well as the Baker and Marchman Act mental health and substance use disorder programs. The Florida Legislature annually establishes the level of funding that counties must contribute. For FY 2026, the County is providing \$5.9 million in statutorily required contributions. Over the past three years, the County's mandated contribution has increased approximately 15% annually.

In addition to the mandated programs, the County elected to establish the CareNet program to serve as a safety net for residents that are not eligible for healthcare through the state and/or federal programs. Although not required by the State, through CareNet, the County has partnered with local providers to expand access to healthcare for uninsured and underinsured low-income Leon County residents for more than two decades. The County is among very few counties that dedicate

additional local tax revenue to healthcare beyond the state mandated programs. The County invests \$1.8 million annually in the CareNet program. As a result, the County invests a total of \$7.7 million in healthcare annually.

Leon County Health Care Program (CareNet)

Leon County has historically partnered with local healthcare stakeholders to provide low-income residents with access to critical medical services through CareNet. Annually, the County contracts with Bond Community Health Center (Bond), Neighborhood Medical Center (NMC), Apalachee Center (Apalachee), Capital Medical Society/We Care (We Care), and FAMU Pharmacy to provide low-income uninsured and underinsured residents access to primary care, dental, mental health, specialty care, and/or pharmaceutical services.

Bond and NMC are federally qualified healthcare centers (FQHCs) which receive annual federal funding to provide medical services to residents in Leon County. Apalachee is designated by the State of Florida as the public receiving facility for individuals experiencing mental health and/or substance abuse crisis; Apalachee receives annual funding through the State. Through CareNet, Bond, NMC, and Apalachee are reimbursed for costs incurred to provide primary, dental, and mental health visits to eligible County residents. These visits include services such as general annual physical exams; dental cleanings and extractions; case management services for mental healthcare; and more. To be eligible, a patient of Bond, NMC, or Apalachee must be a Leon County resident, 18 years old or older, and uninsured or underinsured. Additionally, the household income of a patient must be 100% or below the federal poverty level (FPL). The income requirement reflects households that are not eligible for public insurance including Medicaid, Medicare, and the ACA in the State of Florida. For example, the ACA Marketplace offers financial assistance known as subsidies for monthly premiums to enrollees with household incomes above 100% of the FPL. Subsidies are not available for individuals or families in households that earn below 100% of the FPL.

In addition to primary, dental, and mental health services, the County provides funding for specialty care and pharmaceutical services (We Care and FAMU Pharmacy, respectively). The County contracts with WeCare, which recruits medical specialists to provide specialty care to low-income residents at no charge. Specialty care services include but are not limited to cardiology, neurology, internal medicine, orthopedics, and orthodontic care. FAMU Pharmacy provides coordinated pharmacy services to County residents and addresses morbid and mortality of African Americans with Type 2 diabetes through educational programming coordination with local healthcare providers including Bond and NMC.

As mentioned earlier, the County invests \$1.8 million annually in the CareNet Program. General revenue is the funding source for the CareNet Program as well as the State mandated County contributions (i.e., Medicaid, etc.). The leveraging of County funding has been critical to expanding healthcare in the community. Over the past three years, the providers have leveraged County funding to secure \$7.5 million in state and federal funding to provide primary and mental services to additional uninsured and underinsured local-income County residents.

Regular Community Engagement on the CareNet Program

The County regularly engages with the healthcare partners to ensure that the CareNet Program continues to provide low-income residents with access to critical medical services. Staff meets quarterly with the providers to discuss challenges and opportunities to enhance the program. During these meetings quantitative and qualitative data are evaluated and proposed changes are considered for recommendation to the Board to better position the County's program in addressing the changing healthcare needs of residents in the community. Subsequently, County staff brings proposed program enhancements to the Board for consideration as part of the budget process. Over the past several years this has led to:

- 80% increase in the reimbursement rates since FY 2023 for primary care visits to Bond, NMC, and Apalachee to more accurately reflect the cost of diagnostic and ancillary services, such as laboratory and X-Ray services.
- 40% increase in the reimbursement rates since FY 2024 for dental and mental healthcare visits to Bond, NMC, and Apalachee to include diagnostic and ancillary costs as well as the increased costs of mental healthcare.
- 30% increase in the annual investment since FY 2023 to voluntary and involuntary in-patient mental health services to Apalachee better reflect ongoing rise in costs for personnel and operations.
- 9% increase funding to WeCare since FY 2022 to enhance financial assistance to patients for specialty services including laboratory and transportation costs.

The next meeting with the healthcare partners is anticipated for January 2026. At that time any changes to the CareNet Program such as the eligibility criteria and reimbursement rates would be evaluated and discussed for potential recommendations to the Board as part of the budget process for the next fiscal year (FY 2027). This is consistent with the County's approach to addressing the most pressing human service needs in the community which includes conducting data-driven analysis, collaborating with local stakeholders, and engaging residents.

2006 Indigent Healthcare Sales Tax

Florida Statutes provide counties with a population of less than 800,000 the authority to levy a local option sales tax for indigent healthcare subject to voter approval (section 212.055(7), F.S.). Sales tax referenda are a standalone process prescribed in Florida Statutes which cannot be effectuated through a charter amendment. In 2006, the Board of County Commissioners placed a referendum on the ballot for voters to consider a local option $\frac{1}{2}$ cent sales tax to support primary healthcare for low-income residents in our community. Despite the stigma associated with a new $\frac{1}{2}$ cent sales tax and the potential of Leon County having the highest sales tax in the state, the referendum was placed on the 2006 General Election ballot in response to the escalating costs for health insurance, feedback from local healthcare providers, and input from the ministerial community on the long-term financial costs associated with health emergencies. In November 2006, more than three years prior to the passage of the national Affordable Care Act, 60% of Leon County voters rejected the $\frac{1}{2}$ cent sales tax for indigent healthcare. Following voter rejection of the sales tax, the County continued to support primary healthcare needs with ad valorem revenues (property taxes) as previously described in this agenda item.

County Charter Provisions Related to Healthcare Access

In summary, although healthcare services for uninsured, underinsured, and elderly residents are primarily the statutory responsibility of the federal and/or state governments, Leon County has been dedicated to ensuring low-income residents have access to high quality healthcare services in the community. Beyond the mandated financial support counties provide for several state healthcare programs, the County has dedicated additional local tax revenue to expand healthcare access for uninsured and underinsured low-income residents through the CareNet Program. In partnership with local providers, CareNet provides access to primary, dental, mental health, and specialty care, and pharmaceutical services. In total, the FY 2026 County budget invests \$7.7 million for the provision of healthcare services.

As presented in the item, the Board currently has the authority and has been active in expanding healthcare services for uninsured and underinsured local income residents in the community. The Board has successfully taken action to expand healthcare access through its policy, programming, and budgetary decisions without the need for a charter change. Additionally, county charters generally address large organizational issues focused on the authority, structure, and power of county government. For these reasons, there are no county charters in Florida that include language regarding the provision of healthcare. Alternatively, the Committee may wish to make a recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to ensure low-income residents have access to high quality healthcare services in the community as described in the item. The recommendation would be included as part of the Committee's report for consideration by the Board.

Options:

1. Accept the report and take no further action.
2. Direct staff to include a recommendation encouraging Leon County to continue its long-standing commitment to ensure low-income residents have access to high quality healthcare services in the community as part of the Citizen Charter Review Committee report.
3. Direct staff to draft a proposed charter amendment on access to healthcare as determined by the Citizen Charter Review Committee.
4. Board direction.

Recommendation:

Option #1