

Citizen Charter Review Committee
January 22, 2026
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 January 22, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. in the Leon County Main Library with Committee members Chauncy Haynes, Joey Davis, Linda Bond Edwards, Liz Ellis, Anita Favors, Max Herrle, Darryl Jones, Slaton Murray, Sean Pittman, Ryan Ray, Shamarial Roberson, William Smith, Bruce Strouble, Jr., Jarrett Terry, Katrina Tuggerson and Barry Wilcox in attendance. Also present were County Administrator Vincent Long, 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: Mary Ann Lindley, Howard Kessler, Henry Lewis, III, Heidi Otway and Temple Robinson.

Call to Order and Opening Chauncy Haynes, Vice Chairman

Vice Chairman Haynes called the meeting to order at 11:30 a.m. He noted that Chair Mary Ann Lindley was out sick and provided a brief overview of the agenda.

Consent:

Ryan Ray moved, seconded by Max Herrle, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

The motion carried 13 – 0 with Chair Mary Ann Lindley, Joey Davis, Howard Kessler, Henry Lewis, III, Slaton Murray, Heidi Otway, Sean Pittman and Temple Robinson not present.

Approval of January 8, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Receipt & File of Written Public Comments

- *Slaton Murray and Sean Pittman arrived at this juncture of the meeting.*

Public Comment:

- Melanie Andrade Williams, 3349 Argonaut Drive, addressed the Committee in support of a proposed charter amendment related to the restoration of communities from historic harm. She stated that historic public policies, including segregation-era decisions related to zoning, housing, education, healthcare, and infrastructure, contributed to long-standing disparities in neighborhoods such as Frenchtown, Bond, Griffin Heights, Providence, and South City. She noted that the amendment would not mandate spending or raise taxes, but would establish a framework requiring consideration of historic public policy impacts and urged the Committee to advance the amendment for charter drafting.
- Stephanie McMillon spoke in support of an amendment for restoring communities, stating that historic public policies shaped neighborhood outcomes and current disparities.

- Serenity Williams, 4011 Elder Lane, spoke in support of an amendment to restore communities, stating that disparities were the result of intentional policy choices and that the charter is an appropriate vehicle to address structural issues. She urged the Committee to advance the amendment to allow the community the opportunity to vote.
- Bill Lowaman, 3742 Dorset Way, commented on the discussion around President Lincoln and civility. He also spoke on denying race and the federal government requiring identification by race. He suggested getting rid of those discussions and focusing on the restoration of human beings.
- Mary Miaisha Mitchell, 1009 Ellington Court, addressed the Committee regarding historic displacement and the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion. She referenced the impacts of displacement in the Smokey Hollow community and discussed the elimination of DEI-related policies, noting the effect on public health equity efforts. She urged the Committee to consider Charter language that supports long-term resilience and accountability.
- *Joey Davis arrived at this juncture of the meeting.*

General Business:

Agenda Item #1: Comparative Analysis of Bill of Rights Provisions in County Charters

Assistant County Administrator Ken Morris introduced the item, noting that the Committee requested a comparative analysis of county charters with a Bill of Rights. He explained that a Bill of Rights is intended to express fundamental community values and may be adopted through a charter, ordinance, or resolution. He noted most are adopted by Ordinance or Resolution. Leon County's Charter includes a Preamble reflecting community values. Among Florida's 20 charter counties, staff identified 4 charters with Bill of Rights provisions (Miami-Dade, Broward, Orange, and Pinellas) done in two different ways. Miami-Dade and Broward have sections with an extensive list of "rights" defined in detail. Orange and Pinellas have succinct sections and direct the BOCC to further address issues by ordinance. He reminded the Committee that anything included cannot conflict with state or federal laws and noted that many listed rights in the four examples discussed overlap with existing protections addressed in county policies and requirements under state and federal laws. He noted that staff recommended Option #1: Accept the report and take no further action.

Max Herrle asked whether the proposal would be legally binding.

Assistant County Administrator Morris responded that Miami-Dade County includes provisions with specific remedies; however, he clarified that Bill of Rights provisions are value statements.

Max Herrle stated that he would like to review Miami-Dade's language and consider implementing similar language in Leon County.

County Attorney Chasity O'Steen cautioned that the County does not have the authority to waive its sovereign immunity through a charter amendment or ordinance, and that any effort to create an enforcement mechanism exposing the County to liability would require action by the Florida Legislature or a constitutional amendment. She noted that limited waivers of sovereign immunity exist only where expressly authorized by state law, and that courts have rejected local attempts to expand liability beyond those statutory limits.

Darryl Jones stated that he has been clear regarding the Charter. He expressed interest in language that esteems shared humanity, whether placed in the Preamble or a Bill of Rights, stating that such language would communicate that neighbors have value.

Joey Davis offered a friendly amendment requesting staff bring back draft language reflecting the rights listed in the Miami-Dade and Broward charter examples as a working framework for Committee consideration.

Max Herrle accepted the friendly amendment.

Linda Bond Edwards asked whether there would be the same legal effect from changes to the Preamble or the creation of a Bill of Rights section.

County Attorney O'Steen stated it would depend on the language used and that intent must be clear that the statements do not create a cause of action.

County Administrator Long explained that the Charter Preamble is where most counties articulate broad community values, including home rule, equity, responsiveness, efficiency, and the ability of residents to effect change in their government, and noted that the Committee may choose to further articulate aspirational values either within the Preamble or through a separate bill of rights. He encouraged the Committee to consider the distinction between aspirational value statements and the County's adopted core practices, emphasizing that both what government says it values and what it does in practice are important considerations.

Max Herrle moved, seconded by Bruce Strouble, Jr., for Option #2: Direct staff to prepare a charter amendment providing a Bill of Rights for Leon County citizens with a friendly amendment, as introduced by Joey Davis, to request staff bring back draft language reflecting the rights listed in the Miami-Dade and Broward charter examples as a working framework.

The motion failed 5 – 9 with Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes, Linda Bond Edwards, Liz Ellis, Darryl Jones, Slaton Murray, Shamarial Roberson, William Smith, Jarrett Terry and Barry Wilcox in opposition. Chair Mary Ann Lindley, Howard Kessler, Henry Lewis, III, Heidi Otway, Sean Pittman, Ryan Ray and Temple Robinson were not present.

Darryl Jones moved, seconded by Linda Bond Edwards, to direct staff to prepare a charter amendment revising the Preamble to reflect the esteemed humanity among residents of Leon County.

The motion carried 15 – 0 with Chair Mary Ann Lindley, Howard Kessler, Henry Lewis, III, Heidi Otway, Sean Pittman and Temple Robinson not present.

Agenda Item #2: Considerations for Addressing Poverty and Racial Inequity in the County Charter

Assistant County Administrator Shington Lamy introduced the item, stating that at its December 4, 2025 meeting, the Committee requested an agenda item to consider amending the Leon County Charter to address communities and neighborhoods impacted by poverty and racial inequities. He summarized existing County and partner investments, and cautioned that adopting charter language tied to race or Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) concepts could jeopardize state and federal funding. He noted that staff recommended against further consideration, offering an alternative option for a policy recommendation affirming the County's existing data-driven approach.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., commented on the options staff listed in the item:

- *Liz Ellis left at this juncture of the meeting.*

Vice Chairman Haynes reminded the Committee of the County's civility expectations, emphasizing respectful engagement even when there is disagreement.

County Attorney O'Steen discussed legal considerations related to DEI. She cautioned that charter language explicitly tied to race and gender could be legally problematic.

Linda Bond Edwards asked whether proposed charter language would address issues already identified by the County. She questioned whether the primary challenge was a lack of resources or a lack of awareness of resources.

Katrina Tuggerson asked how the County can continue current efforts in a changing legal and policy environment. She asked, as a community, how the County can "work with what we have" given ongoing changes.

County Attorney O'Steen referenced a document issued by the Florida Attorney General on January 19, 2026, noting that concerns about constitutionality are being raised more frequently. She reiterated the County's current approach is data-driven and intended to remain compliant with state and federal law.

Anita Favors asked Bruce Strouble, Jr., to clarify whether the Committee was considering a policy recommendation or a charter amendment.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., clarified the proposal was a charter amendment.

Slaton Murray asked Bruce Strouble, Jr., how he envisioned funding would work.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., stated the framework would allow restoration actions if grants or other external funding sources become available. He stated it would not require establishing a new department.

County Administrator Long explained that staff highlighted the charter preamble because, in many charters, it is the primary location for aspirational and values-based language, rather than highly specific or enforceable provisions. He noted that the Leon County preamble already emphasizes: home rule and local decision-making; service to the people of the County; government reflecting the community it serves; responsiveness and efficiency; and the ability of residents to effect change in their government.

He stated that if the Committee wished to add additional aspirational language, such as language discussed by Committee Member Jones, that could appropriately occur in the preamble. He cautioned the Committee to distinguish between values statements and operational practices, noting that "core practices often outweigh core values in daily governance." He referenced the County's adopted core practices and beliefs, including language affirming that County government exists to serve residents and demonstrate accountability for tax dollars. He reminded the Committee that while values are important, implementation through policy and practice is equally critical.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., stated the County has not formally acknowledged certain historic public policy harms at the charter level and reiterated why the Charter is the appropriate vehicle for this framework.

Anita Favors asked whether the Committee was directing staff to develop draft language, as reflected in the motion.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., moved, seconded by Max Herrle, to direct staff to prepare draft language for amending the Charter to require the County to assess and address persistent disparities resulting from historic public policy decisions.

The motion carried 13 – 0 with Chair Mary Ann Lindley, Liz Ellis, Howard Kessler, Henry Lewis, III, Heidi Otway, Sean Pittman, Temple Robinson and Barry Wilcox not present.

Agenda Item #3: Community Value of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

Assistant County Administrator Lamy introduced the item. He stated at its January 8, 2026 meeting, the Citizen Charter Review Committee requested an agenda item to consider amending the Leon County Charter to adopt a community value statement in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Darryl Jones motioned, seconded by Slaton Murray, for Option #1: Accept the report on a community value statement in support of diversity, equity, and inclusion and take no further action.

The motion carried 13 – 0 with Chair Mary Ann Lindley, Liz Ellis, Howard Kessler, Henry Lewis, III, Heidi Otway, Sean Pittman, Temple Robinson and Katrina Tuggerson not present.

Vice Chairman Haynes reminded the committee of the need for civility in discussions, and the significance of ensuring policies address both current and historical community needs without conflicting with federal and state guidelines.

He acknowledged all staff and departments involved in supporting the Charter Review Committee's work.

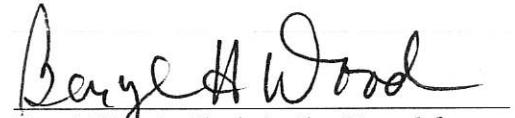
Motion to adjourn:

Vice Chairman Haynes adjourned the meeting at 1:13p.m.

ATTEST:



Mary Ann Lindley
Mary Ann Lindley, Chair
Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee



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