

Citizen Charter Review Committee
February 19, 2026
11:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.
Leon County Main Library
Programming Room

The Leon County 2025-2026 Citizen Charter Review Committee (CCRC) met on February 19, 2026, at 11:30 a.m. in the Leon County Main Library with Committee Members Mary Ann Lindley, Chauncy Haynes, Joey Davis, Linda Bond Edwards, Anita Favors, Max Herrle, Darryl Jones, Howard Kessler, Henry Lewis, III, Heidi Otway, Sean Pittman, Ryan Ray, Shamarial Roberson, Temple Robinson, 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 Abigail Thomas, Management Analyst Cameron Williams, and Clerks to the Board, Beryl Wood and Daniel J. Antonaccio.

Absent Members: Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray.

Call to Order and Opening Mary Ann Lindley, Chair

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

Consent:

Ryan Ray moved, seconded by William Smith, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

The motion carried 13 – 0 with Committee Members Joey Davis, Liz Ellis, Max Herrle, Slaton Murray, Sean Pittman, Shamarial Roberson, Jarrett Terry and Katrina Tuggerson not present,

Approval of February 5, 2026 Meeting Minutes

Receipt & File of Written Public Comments

Public Comment:

- Susan Robinson, 4656 Inisheer Drive, spoke in support of establishing an Office of Food Systems, stating the office would improve coordination, public awareness of services, and accountability. She noted many residents are unaware of available resources and emphasized the need for centralized coordination of existing efforts.
- Melanie Andrade Williams, 3349 Argonaut Drive, spoke in support of establishing an Office of Food Systems, emphasizing the importance of centralized coordination and accountability to ensure equitable access to food. She also expressed support for the proposed charter amendment related to restoring communities impacted by historic harms.
- Judy Shipman, 2145 Sand Dune Court, spoke in support of establishing an Office of Food Systems.
- Serenity Williams, 4011 Elder Lane, spoke in support of the proposed charter amendment addressing historic disparities, stating it would provide long-term stability and allow the County to assess historic impacts without mandating funding or creating quotas. She

emphasized the amendment would allow further evaluation of the issue and urged the Committee's support.

- Ebony Yarbrough, 1575 Paul Russell Road, spoke regarding barriers to food access, noting that while many assistance resources exist, residents often struggle to locate and utilize them due to limited awareness of services, hours, eligibility, and transportation options. She emphasized the need for centralized coordination and stated that establishing an information hub would improve nonprofit collaboration, resource management, accountability, and overall service delivery. She expressed support for establishing an Office of Food Systems.
- Mary Miaisha Mitchell, 1009 Ellington Court, praised committee for their work and expressed that incorporating food security into the County Charter would provide the necessary structural dedication to strengthen and optimize services.
- Camille Lewis, 1639 Corey Wood Circle, spoke about food insecurity from the perspectives of public health, agriculture, and nonprofit work, acknowledging current County efforts while noting the lack of centralized coordination. She stated a unified structure could improve overall effectiveness of food system efforts.
- Stanley Sims, 1320 Avondale Way, thanked the committee for their time and efforts and shared his perspective on additional issues he believed the Committee should have addressed.
- Amanda Shebake Haynes, 808 Goodbread Lane, spoke on food insecurity in the community and the impact on mental health. She urged support for establishing an Office of Food Systems.
- Jada Brown, 512 Norma Street, NACCP Tallahassee Chapter, urged support for all three agenda items. She highlighted the Weed to Seed Program where they learned how to be sustainable while growing up and thanked the library for a similar program.
- *Joey Davis, Max Herrle, Sean Pittman, Shamarial Roberson, Jarrett Terry and Katrina Tuggerson arrived at this juncture of the meeting.*

General Business:

Agenda Item #1: Consideration of Language Affirming Leon County's Commitment to Healthcare in the Leon County Charter

Mr. Shington Lamy, Assistant County Administrator, introduced the item which provided a proposed charter amendment revising the Preamble of the Leon County Charter with language that affirms Leon County's commitment to healthcare access. He shared that no other charter counties in the State of Florida include healthcare in their charters, and a similar commitment is already expressed in the Leon County Strategic Plan, which envisions a community that is safe, healthy and vibrant. Therefore, staff recommended Option #1: Approve the draft policy recommendation encouraging the continuation of Leon County's long-standing commitment to ensuring healthcare access for low-income residents and thereby supporting an equitable, safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

Temple Robinson expressed concerns that the options presented did not fully reflect her intended direction. While she described the proposed language as well written, she stated that it does not convey the strength of the message the Committee sought to communicate.

Shamarial Roberson sought clarification from staff regarding potential state and federal policy changes, asking whether the proposed language could have implications for the County's ability to access state or federal funding related to healthcare.

County Attorney O'Steen explained that some concerns relate to a federal executive order tied to grant funding that requires entities to certify they do not operate Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) programs that violate federal anti-discrimination laws or provide preferential treatment based on protected classes. She also informed the Committee that a bill currently moving through the Florida Senate broadly defines diversity, equity, and inclusion and could restrict counties from funding or promoting such programs if enacted. She noted the bill has advanced through committees and could still be amended. She concluded that the proposed language is permissible under current law, though future interpretations could depend on whether the pending legislation becomes law.

Anita Favors asked for clarification regarding what additional language Temple Robinson believed should be included to better reflect the Committee's intent.

Temple Robinson stated that the intent was to include clear language affirming the County's commitment to access to primary care, including for uninsured and underserved residents, as an enduring statement of the County's values.

County Administrator Long explained that the proposed language was intentionally drafted to be broad and inclusive rather than focused on a specific program or policy area. He added that the County addresses health in many ways, including infrastructure, parks, emergency services, and primary care initiatives, making it difficult to highlight a single area within a value statement. He stated that staff would revise the language based on the direction of the Committee.

Darryl Jones suggested that the originator of the idea, Temple Robinson, provide guidance on how the Committee might proceed considering the discussion. He expressed interest in hearing further recommendations from members with public health expertise before determining a final recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners.

Chair Lindley stated that, at that point in the discussion, no specific alternative language had been proposed by the Committee. She noted that the Committee still had additional agenda items to address and emphasized the need to move the discussion forward. Chair Lindley indicated she would be willing to entertain a motion if members wished to approve or reject the proposal or offer specific language revisions.

Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes moved for Option #1 as amended: Approve the draft policy recommendation encouraging the continuation of Leon County's long-standing commitment to ensuring ~~healthcare access for low-income residents~~ access to public healthcare and thereby supporting an equitable, safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

The motion failed for lack of a second.

Temple Robinson requested that the item be temporarily postponed, asking that the Committee return to the matter later in the meeting to allow members time to consider the discussion and develop a motion.

Chair Lindley entertained discussion on temporarily postponing the discussion.

Howard Kessler moved, seconded by Henry Lewis, III, to table Agenda Item #1 for the time being.

The motion carried 19 – 0 with Committee Members Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray not present.

The Committee later returned to Agenda Item #1 after the conclusion of Agenda Item #2.

Temple Robinson moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, to bring Agenda Item #1 back for discussion.

The motion carried 19 – 0 with Committee Members Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray not present.

Temple Robinson read her proposed ballot language.

Vice Chairman Haynes requested a five-minute break to allow staff to place the proposed ballot language on the screen. He explained that displaying the language would ensure clarity and prevent any confusion or debate about the exact wording of the motion that had been read aloud.

The proposed revision to the Preamble included the CCRC's previous recommendation from its February 5, 2026 meeting, regarding the esteemed humanity of all residents of Leon County in the Preamble (**bold**), with additional language (**bold and underlined**) to reflect the Committee's request to affirm the County's long-standing commitment to ensuring healthcare access for low-income residents and thereby supporting an equitable, safe, healthy, and vibrant community.

*Temple Robinson moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, to accept the proposed Preamble language **as amended**: We, the citizens of Leon County, Florida, united in the belief that governmental decisions affecting local interests should be made locally, rather than by the State, and that County government should be reflective of the people of the County and should serve them in achieving a more responsive and efficient form of government, **hereby affirm the esteemed humanity of all residents of Leon County. We recognize in every person a shared dignity, not granted by government, but inherent and deserving of consideration in our public affairs effort to create a community that is safe, vibrant, and provides access to healthcare for all citizens.***

The motion carried 19 – 0 with Committee Members Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray not present.

Agenda Item #2: Proposed Charter Amendment on Food Insecurity

Mr. Lamy introduced the item which discussed a proposed charter amendment establishing an Office of Food Systems to address food insecurity. He noted that no Florida county charters address food insecurity and that the Board of County Commissioners already has the authority to address these issues without a charter amendment. He highlighted new and existing initiatives of the Leon County Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships (HSCP) addressing food insecurity, as well as ongoing coordination through a food council led by Florida A&M University (FAMU). He also noted that the Charter cannot require participation from independent organizations, and that current collaboration efforts are voluntary. Therefore, staff recommended Option #1: Approve the draft policy recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to reducing food insecurity in the community.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., stated that community feedback indicates residents often lack awareness of available resources and that services can be improved. He noted that the County is in a unique position to organize and centralize these efforts. He also suggested including annual reporting and a countywide food systems plan.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, for Option #2: Approve the proposed charter amendment for recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners to address food insecurity in the Leon County Charter.

The motion was not voted on.

William Smith asked for clarification regarding the difference between the proposed Office of Food Systems and the office that is currently addressing food insecurity and related services.

Mr. Lamy explained that the proposed office would perform the same functions currently carried out by HSCP.

Shamarial Roberson asked whether there is currently an annual plan or report related to food access or food systems that is publicly released. She also requested clarification on the current organizational structure within HSCP related to food insecurity efforts.

Ms. Abigail Thomas, Director of the Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships, explained that staff previously provided a report to the Board in the fall regarding food insecurity in the community, which highlighted current initiatives and provided general information about food insecurity. She noted that agencies funded by Leon County, such as Second Harvest, Elder Care Services, and Good News Outreach, are required to submit quarterly and annual reports because they receive County funding. She added that staff is currently preparing a Human Services report that will include FY 2025 data for programs funded by the County.

Mr. Lamy explained that the County created a Neighborhood Engagement position following community meetings held in 2021 across ten neighborhoods identified as having high food insecurity rates based on Feeding America and Second Harvest data.

Anita Favors stated that she supported the intent of the proposed Charter amendment but raised concerns about the potential cost of establishing a new Office of Food Systems. She asked whether the Committee's intent would allow the County Administrator or Board of County Commissioners flexibility to reorganize or combine existing functions rather than create a completely new office, to avoid significant administrative costs and ensure that resources are directed toward addressing food insecurity in the community. She asked Dr. Strouble to expound.

Barry Wilcox stated that while he supports the idea of coordinating food insecurity efforts and producing annual reports, he believes establishing an Office of Food Systems should be done through a recommendation to the Board rather than through a charter amendment. He suggested the office could be created within the existing Office of HSCP, like other divisions such as housing or veterans services.

Barry Wilcox made a substitute motion, seconded by Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes, to approve a policy recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners encouraging the establishment of a Division of Food Systems under the Leon County Office of Human Services and Community Partnerships.

The motion carried 12 – 7 with Committee Members Max Herrle, Howard Kessler, Ryan Ray, Shamarial Roberson, Temple Robinson, William Smith and Bruce Strouble, Jr., in opposition. Committee Members Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray were not present.

Agenda Item #3: Proposed Charter Amendment on Persistent Disparities Resulting from Historic Public Policies

Mr. Lamy introduced this item which provided a proposed charter amendment and corresponding ballot language to address disparities resulting from historic public policy decisions. He stated that there are no county charters in the State of Florida that include language related to disparities from historic public policies. He also explained that adoption of the proposed amendment into the Charter could put the County's federal and state funding in jeopardy, as well as result in legal challenges against the County. Therefore, staff recommended Option #1: Approve the draft recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to addressing poverty and inequities in the community.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., acknowledged the concerns raised by County staff about legal risks related to addressing historical harm in a charter amendment. He explained that, after discussions with the County Attorney, he prepared alternative language that removes references to race while still addressing the lingering impacts of historic unconstitutional policies. He distributed a handout with his revised alternative language and stated that this approach would avoid potential conflicts with federal and state laws while still addressing disparities caused by past policies. He then made a motion to recommend his revised language to the Board of County Commissioners.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners a proposed charter amendment and ballot language (as distributed by Mr. Strouble during the meeting) to require the County to assess persistent disparities resulting from historic public policy decisions and establish a framework for addressing those impacts, including periodic audits and potential restoration strategies.

County Attorney O'Steen explained that the revised language removes explicit references to race or DEI, but potential legal risks remain. She noted that if any programs or policies developed under the amendment were ultimately based on a protected class, such as race, gender, or national origin, they could be subject to strict scrutiny under the U.S. Constitution. She added that case law on programs addressing historic wrongs is inconsistent, with many recent federal programs being struck down in court. She cautioned that such programs could also jeopardize federal funding depending on their structure and target population.

- *Joey Davis left at this juncture of the meeting.*

William Smith asked for clarification about the funding referenced in the proposed charter amendment, specifically regarding the creation of a restoration fund.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., explained that the proposed charter amendment would create a restoration fund, but it would not specify the funding sources within the charter itself. Instead, the County Commission would have discretion to determine how the fund is financed. He also questioned the legal concern raised by the County Attorney, asking how the County could conduct any data-driven programs if identifying disparities among protected classes automatically creates legal risk.

County Attorney O'Steen explained that the County's current programs are legally defensible because they rely primarily on socioeconomic data rather than targeting protected classes directly. While such programs may indirectly benefit individuals who belong to protected classes, the benefits are not explicitly tied to race, gender, or other protected characteristics. In contrast, the proposed amendment references historical policies like segregation, which specifically impacted certain protected classes. If programs are created based on that rationale, they could raise legal concerns because the benefits would be directly connected to a protected class, potentially violating anti-discrimination laws.

Vice Chairman Haynes asked the County Attorney what her professional recommendation would be to the Board of County Commissioners regarding the proposed ballot language.

County Attorney O'Steen stated that the proposed charter language itself is legally acceptable but federal and state constitutional and statutory restrictions could limit what the County is able to do in practice, even if the amendment was adopted.

Chair Lindley asked whether placing the language in the charter now, despite the current legal risks, could still be valuable because future circumstances might change. She suggested that even if the amendment cannot be fully implemented today due to legal constraints, a future County Commission might be able to act on it more freely if laws or policies change, since the language would already be embedded in the charter.

County Attorney O'Steen noted that the proposed charter language might have little practical effect right now due to current legal limitations, but future legal changes could either expand or further restrict what the County could do.

Henry Lewis, III, warned that the language might be used to challenge or dismantle single-member districts and other programs created to address past disparities.

Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes made a substitution motion for Option #1: Approve the draft recommendation encouraging the Board to continue the County's long-standing commitment to addressing poverty and inequities in the community.

The motion failed for lack of a second.

Linda Bond Edwards asked the County Attorney for further clarity on the viability of using economic data for related programs.

County Attorney O'Steen cited the County's MWSBE (Minority/Women-owned Small Business Enterprise) program as an example, which is based on a third-party disparity study showing a need for corrective action. She noted that similar programs across the country are currently being challenged in court, so the legal landscape is still evolving. She emphasized that legal risk increases when a program explicitly targets a protected class, because that triggers strict scrutiny under constitutional law. In contrast, policies based on geographic need or general socioeconomic data—such as addressing food access in an underserved area, are more legally defensible, even if they indirectly benefit members of a protected class.

Sean Pittman stated he would support the proposal, but suggested that the structure might be better implemented through an ordinance rather than a charter amendment.

Bruce Strouble, Jr., moved, seconded by Howard Kessler, to recommend to the Board of County Commissioners a proposed charter amendment and ballot language (as distributed by Mr. Strouble during the meeting) to require the County to assess persistent disparities resulting from historic public policy decisions and establish a framework for addressing those impacts, including periodic audits and potential restoration strategies.

The motion failed 9 – 9 with Vice Chairman Chauncy Haynes, Linda Bond Edwards, Anita Favors, Darryl Jones, Henry Lewis, III, Heidi Otway, Shamarial Roberson, William Smith and Barry Wilcox in opposition. Committee Members Joey Davis, Liz Ellis and Slaton Murray were not present.

Chair Lindley thanked Committee Members for their time, thoughtful participation, and respectful discussion of complex issues. She noted that their work helped the community better

understand how local decisions are made and expressed appreciation for everyone's effort. She shared that she had been invited to speak to the League of Women Voters in March to provide an overview of the Committee's work. She also thanked County staff for their support and dedication throughout the process.

Darryl Jones asked whether the two recommended changes to the Preamble of the Leon County Charter, related to esteemed humanity and affirming access to health care, would be presented separately to the Board of County Commissioners.

Mrs. Nicki Hatch, Assistant to the County Administrator for Legislative and Strategic Initiatives, clarified that proposed amendments would be presented separately.

Linda Bond Edwards made a special announcement congratulating the County Attorney for recently receiving the Martha Barnett Outstanding Attorney Award from the Tallahassee Women Lawyers. She thanked County Attorney O'Steen for her professionalism and for patiently addressing the Committee's many questions during the meeting.

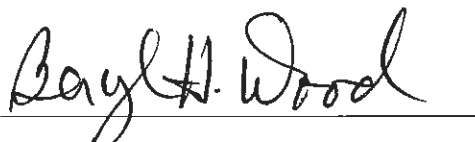
Sean Pittman congratulated the County Attorney on receiving the Martha Barnett Outstanding Attorney Award, noting that it is a significant honor given Martha Barnett's reputation. He also thanked Chair Lindley for her leadership in guiding the Committee through the process and expressed appreciation to the staff, particularly Mrs. Hatch, for their dedication and hard work.

County Administrator Long thanked the Committee Members and Chair Lindley on behalf of County staff for their work and participation. He also noted that the Board of County Commissioners will formally recognize the Committee in the future and that staff will notify members when that occurs.

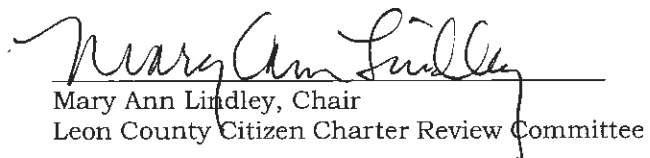
Adjournment:

Chair Lindley adjourned the meeting at 2:22 p.m.

ATTEST:



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



Mary Ann Lindley, Chair
Leon County Citizen Charter Review Committee