

**Brevard County Board of County Commissioners**

*2725 Judge Fran Jamieson Way  
Viera, FL 32940*



**Minutes**

**Thursday, February 29, 2024**

**1:00 PM**

**Special Budget Workshop**

**Florida Room**

**A. CALL TO ORDER 1:00 PM**

**Rollcall**

**Present:** Commissioner District 1 Rita Pritchett, Commissioner District 2 Tom Goodson, Commissioner District 3 John Tobia, Commissioner District 4 Rob Feltner, and Commissioner District 5 Jason Steele

**B. BUDGET PRESENTATION**

Frank Abbate, County Manager, stated he and staff are privileged to have the opportunity to come before the Board today to discuss with it the County's budget; the plan today is to provide the Board with a high-level overview of some key organizational areas that staff believes the Board would be interested in hearing about and areas that might benefit from Board input and direction; the Board has already addressed some key areas like Solid Waste and a variety of things being done at U.S. 192 Central Facility, Mockingbird Mulching Facility, and Utility Services; and staff is moving forward with the prior Board approved direction received. He mentioned the Board would not be seeing those departments on today's Agenda; and, however, staff is ready to address those or other areas that the Board may be interested in hearing from at another time, if the Board would be interested in doing so. He stated staff had already committed to presenting the Board a budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 that does not exceed the charter cap or the aggregate millage; as a result, per the Board guidance already provided at a recent Board meeting, staff will develop and submit a budget proposal that is in accordance with Florida Statute, not having a tax increase; and for no tax increase it does not need to be advertised. He noted he is proud to say the County has been able to present to the Board similar budget proposals in six of the past seven years; and for today's Workshop, staff is going to be providing the Board with data information that will show the Board where the County has been operationally and budgetarily the last several years, in several departments, where they are currently in Fiscal Year 2023-2024, where he believes the County will be, and where it plans to be, moving forward. He stated what staff is going to be seeking from the Board today is input and direction on whether it would like staff to either stay the course in each of the areas that are going to be discussed; augment what staff is doing in any particular area; then having a discussion about the budget impact of that; and then whether or not the Board wants staff to scale back in any area, and reprioritize what staff is doing and had planned moving forward. He continued to saying to the degree the Board would like staff to prepare any additional information to assist the Board, staff is happy to do so; and basically today, staff is looking to check its alignment, what it is they are doing with important Board initiatives, and things the Board thinks are important for staff to move forward with. He advised they are going to begin with Jill Hayes, Budget Office Director, giving the Board a brief overview of the overall budget, that is followed by the Charter Officers presentations; the Chief Judge is present to speak; and then the departmental presentations will follow.

**B.1. Budget Overview**

Jill Hayes, Budget Office Director, stated she would be starting the Workshop with a brief overview of the budget; she wants to start by giving a quick review of the change in the Consumer Price Index (CPI); the charter cap limits property tax revenue to the lesser of three percent, or the change in CPI whichever is less, and there is also a variety of other revenues, such as non-ad valorem assessments, charges, and services that are also tied to CPI; the chart being shown illustrates the change in CPI since 2014; and as budget development begins for Fiscal Year 2024-2025, staff is looking at a change in CPI of 4.12 percent. She added while this is lower than last year's change of eight percent, it is still higher than that three percent cap it had in the property tax revenue; in addition to the change in CPI, she wanted to highlight the

cumulative comparison of other price indices that impact County operations and its buying power; the blue line, on the chart being shown, reflects the cumulative change in CPI, which was just talked about on the prior slide, but she also wanted to show the red line, which is the change in the Construction Cost Index, as well as the green line, which is the change of Municipal Cost Index; it can be seen that the prices of those types of services had grown higher than the change in the CPI; and this is important because Brevard County has Capital Improvements Projects, and other programs and services that require procurement of those standard government commodities and contracted services. She mentioned they are going to be talking about that more, later on when the departments give their presentations; and they will hear about the growing cost of fire apparatus and construction projects from Public Works, Parks and Recreation, and Natural Resources Management. She stated as they work to develop the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 proposed budget and millage rates, in accordance with charter cap limitations, they will be looking at that three percent increase in the general Countywide property tax revenue which is approximately a \$5.6 million increase to the current ad valorem revenue; this is the third time since 2008 where the County has experienced that change in CPI, greater than the three percent; and she wanted to illustrate the difference if the County were able to go to the 4.12 percent, that would be an additional \$2 million, but are capped at that \$5.6 million increase. She noted the charter cap calculations does exclude new construction from that calculation and she wanted to show the portion of the general Countywide property tax revenue associated with new construction; significant growth has been experienced over this time period; however, she will not know what that number is going to be until June or July when those property valuations are received. She advised this next portion of the budget overview is going over the Fiscal Year 2023-2024 budget, which the Board adopted this September; what she is focusing on in the next several slides is the light blue operating revenue, which is the new revenue received by the County each year, but statutorily it is required to budget for balances carried forward; of the \$2 billion budget, there is approximately 46 percent of that, or \$936 million is balance forward; that is primarily associated with long-term capital projects, or funding that is set aside in; and they are going to focus on that operating revenue which is new money coming forward each year from property taxes, permits, fees, special assessments, and charges for services. She stated the next chart shown represents those operating revenues that are \$1.046 billion; in governmental accounting, many of the revenues that are collected are limited in how they could be spent; years ago a concept was developed that the County refers to as the color of money, to help better explain the purposes of those funds; for example, Special Revenue Funds which are the largest portion of the pie shown in pink, those are funds received for a specific purpose, such as grants, Local Option Gas Taxes, and Tourist Development Taxes which have to be legally allocated for a specific purpose; the Enterprise Funds are Solid Waste and Utility Services which act as a business and collect charges for services; she is not going to go into a great level of detail on those, but over the next several slides is a high-level summary of how those dollars are allocated, and how they must be spent, just to have for reference for the Board and for the public; but what really needs to be focused on is the dark green which is the General Fund, where the Board has the most discretion. She mentioned she is skipping over a few slides, but they are available for the Board and the public, and she is able to answer any questions the Board might have on those. She highlighted on the left side of the General Fund chart shown which represents the revenue collected in the General Fund; she mentioned the primary source of that is that property tax revenue at about \$186 million; there also is some other major revenues that are collected in the General Fund, including State Revenue Sharing, Communication Service Tax, Local One-Half Cent Sales Tax, and Balance Forward; and the total General Fund for the current Fiscal Year is just over \$321 million. She continued highlighting on the right side of the General Fund chart shown that represents how those Funds are allocated; at the top in the section where she listed the General Fund obligations of \$212 million that is broken out, and represents about 66 percent of the General Fund, which the County has to obligate those dollars for General Fund supported departments; and there will be additional details provided in

the next several slides. She stated with the General Fund, it supports the Charter Officers and their budgets, and the slide shown is a breakdown of how those General Funds are allocated to the Charter Officers; she knows that several of them are present today and they will talk more about their individual budgets; the County is also required to fund certain mandates and those are State requirements being provided as well; there are other obligation funds set aside for in accordance with policies, and to also have money set aside for emergencies; and there is also some debt that the General Fund is required to pay and there are obligations to pay for the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) payments, and the North Brevard Economic Development Zone (NBEDZ). She continued to say after making those obligations, the remaining funds allocated are to the County's departments and services; the slide shown shows the Board's commitment to public safety and infrastructure, and more about this will be heard in the departmental presentations; the Board has committed to making long-term investments in Fire Rescue, as well as infrastructure; and the next slide shown is other General Fund allocations that supports other programs and services; and Parks and Recreation will be heard talking about how this General Fund allocation also supports infrastructure improvements. She advised she is not going to go over the list in detail; and staff is available to answer any questions the Board has.

## ***Charter Offices***

### **B.2. Brevard County Sheriff**

Doug Waller, Chief Deputy of Brevard County Sheriff Office (BCSO), stated he is present with Brett Carman, Chief Financial Officer, and unfortunately, Sheriff Ivey was not able to make it today; he thanked the Board, the County Manager, and the staff for being able to put a leadership plan together that had led to generational improvements for the BCSO; he mentioned he would have lost a bet to the County Manager on the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) completion, it is an absolute beautiful facility; it was done ahead of schedule; and he congratulated the County Manager for a job well done. He added there were some other important facility upgrades for BCSO done this year that were generational because most of their facilities are anywhere between 50 and 70 years of age, and had been just pieced together for years; in addition to the new EOC and the unified Communications Center, they have a new Fleet and Evidence Center, Animal Surgery Center, Harry T. and Harriette V. Moore Justice Center security enhancements, upgrade of Criminal Investigations, upgrade of a lot of deputy security equipment, including weight bearing vests, body armor, radios, and all of the upgrades associated with those; and a new Range and Training facility. He stated the budget for this upcoming year is difficult now to be able to lay out what that budget plan or footprint is going to look like; from historical years, he knows that at least 78 percent of BCSO's budget goes to personnel costs associated with salaries and benefits, and it leaves very little left to actually deal with the operational costs; and Consumer Price Index, as looked at on the graph, gives the appearance that it is going down, but actual costs continue to rise and are very impacting on BCSO, such as fuel, equipment, shipping, and everything associated with the operations of the BCSO. He advised they are still waiting on the Florida Retirement System contribution rates, he has been paying attention daily, and watching to see what is going on there; but he does not believe they are going to know anything until shortly after the session ends on the contribution rates, especially for special risk, healthcare increases, workers compensation increases, professional liability insurance, the collective bargaining facility upgrades, impacts, and renegotiation of the County Jail Medical and Food Service contracts. He mentioned the only concern that he has not expressed so far is the usual, are they going to have one, two, or three storms related to the Emergency Disaster Response and equipment replacements; they worked it out last year with the County Manager, where they were able to help them out by getting some capital back into budget; they were able to get ahead of the game, get some new ADs, Tasers, and other operational needs; and this year will be the same

and they will probably have to do some more contractual needs with Information Technology and related software. He concluded by saying other than that, that is the State of the Union in BCSO; and he expressed thanks to the Board for the support shown.

Commissioner Pritchett commended the BCSO for always doing such a good job of getting the Board good information at budget time and they explain a few things in detail, and she appreciates that; she stated over the past few years she knows their cost per population is one of the most efficient Sheriff Offices in the State of Florida; she knows the population is growing; and she inquired if they are still working hard and having a hard time getting staffing to meet the demands of a growing population in Brevard County.

Mr. Waller replied he could not speak for all of public service, but he can tell the Board, he believes that is a nationwide crisis right now; he stated there are many factors that affect that; BCSO is probably overall in the 100 – 120 range of vacancies, that is not all sworn; but if combining law enforcement, jail correction facility, and civilians it is very impacting. He mentioned he could only speak for himself but a lot of the newer culture of employees that are coming, it is not a career anymore, it is a job, and as soon as they find something that has a better appeal, it is easier to move on; they do have the charter cap which makes it a little more difficult to be competitive with some of the surrounding counties; that opens the door for poaching of BCSO's employees; they are, not only fighting public safety but now have to fight the private sector on the other side of the river with St. Johns, Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties; and on the other side of the Banana River there is SpaceX and everybody else who is paying \$10 more an hour than most of BCSO's starting salaries. He continued to say it is difficult and they are trying to fill the vacancies; they are doing the best as they can; it comes down to trying to get them in the door, through the door, and staying in the door; he thinks BCSO is not the only one; and he assumes the County Manager and Fire Rescue, and everybody else that is in the public service sector is dealing with the same issues.

Commissioner Pritchett pointed out they need to make sure all of the young people graduating high school are hearing these opportunities.

Mr. Waller agreed, stating to get them out of high school, then recruited, and get them in a uniform as quickly as possible.

Commissioner Pritchett thanked them for being present today; she stated it is one of the only opportunities the public has to hear about BCSO and the other constitutionals; and she appreciates them taking the time out to come.

Chair Steele thanked them for their time and for their service. He mentioned he just toured the EOC yesterday, it is unbelievable; the County is going to be so well served by it; and he is just thrilled with it.

Mr. Waller advised there were many who played a role in that, but the leadership team on the EOC made that happen and made it turn out as quickly, timely, and as effectively as possible; and it is absolutely remarkable.

### **B.3. Brevard County Clerk of Court**

Rachel M. Sadoff, Clerk of Court, stated she wanted to thank everyone for having the Workshop today and being able to speak; she is in the same boat as the Sheriff, when it comes to the cost of hiring and losing people; the Clerk's office used to be a place that a person stayed and retired from; that is not being seen at this time; her starting pay is about \$13 an hour, she is trying to stay a little higher than the minimum wage; but it is what comes into the budget, she tries to live by that budget, and she has a little less than most people, including her

colleagues around the State. She stated her budget with the County is a little different; she thanked the County Manager and the Budget Office Director, because they work well together, they had some laughs together, and they are just a great team to work with Finance; the Board knows, it makes the Comptroller side and the County side work a little better and easier when they all work together; and from where her budget is today, if she asks for three percent, that three percent is only a \$70,000 increase into her budget. She added this is not any fault of the County at all when she says this is on the Clerk's office and it was how it rolled with its budget; where her budget is today is still below her budget with the County in 2008; they reduced employees because changes in her budget was also reduced with the County; that was never at the County's request, that was something that the Clerk's office did; because that was a choice that was made; and she stands with that decision that was made at that time, she was on the leadership team with Clerk Ellis. She mentioned being a little bit behind the eight ball; she recognized that and she asked her staff, who is to the left of her to put up with that, and they understand that; sometimes it makes hiring a little more difficult for her, but that is why they are a little bit more behind; some of the projects being worked on in the Clerk's office, that she thinks are very important to bring to the Board today; she asked her Chief Deputy to show the Board one of the over 3,000 books, which are the original books in Brevard County; and she noted there is actually 3,407 of these books, which are used almost daily and are housed in the Titusville, Parkway Office. She went on to say in those books, they are starting to see the paper disintegrate when the public needs copies; these books include the official records, the soldier and sailor books, the military DD214s, naturalization records, the fictitious name books, the marriage license records, and the Commission minute index books; some of these books are dated in the 1800s; a project she is starting to work on is to have this type of book being shown are made to ensure the documents are not lost in the history of Brevard; and she started using funds from passports, accreditation, and marriage licenses. She mentioned she had started working on preserving these records, that is important; she hopes to continue doing that; and at any time any of the Commissioners or constituents that need that information, it will be made available. She assured them the book is waterproof and fireproof; and she hopes that there are no disasters to see if that is really so. She mentioned security, they take in millions of dollars at the Clerk's office; she is not sure how many are aware of that; they take everything in from when the foreclosure sales happens, tax deeds, child support, daily citations, marriage licenses, and all of the other requirements; security becomes an issue with that; another project that she is working on is upgrading the security cameras to capture things; she does receive fraudulent bills and she tries to do everything she can to not have those fraudulent bill get through, but they do; people are very creative and they work it through the system; but that is the two projects that her office is working on trying to give back to the public.

Commissioner Pritchett expressed her thanks to Clerk Sadoff for all that she does; she stated she does not think the general public really understands all of the work done as the Comptroller, with a lot of details; the Commission went through a training with her and the amount of information stored and how easy it is made available online for them to find information; she thanked her for all that she does, for her staff, and for running a really tight budget; and she thanked her for being present today, it is the only time the public really gets to hear about all the things she is doing, because she does not have a lot of television time.

Commissioner Feltner expressed his thanks and appreciation to Clerk Sadoff for being present today; he stated that since Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) Court Operations changed significantly, people were not having in person hearings; and he asked what 2020 looked like versus 2024 in the day-to-day operations at the courthouses.

Clerk Sadoff responded at the jail, before COVID-19, they had to have multiple hearing rooms, which was a burden on the Sheriff and the Clerk, mainly; they had to make those rooms

available with staffing and safety; she had to have extra Clerks or overtime; when an employee works at the jail, they receive a stipend because of the facility, and they recognize not everybody is comfortable at the jail; they have had to have non-in person hearings; they had to move the chairs and everything because of the close quarters at the Clerk's Office, the handling of all the money, and they never had a lot of glass before; and had to take all of that on in the past couple of years. She advised they have been fortunate of the County working with her, she cannot thank it enough, and her staff would say the same; they have been able to make some changes because of the help and because they have all worked well together; the staffing in 2020 was almost at full-staff; the staffing today is not at full-staff; they hardly have trained Court Clerks, she loses a lot of trained Court Clerks to Court Administration because they are able to pay more than she is able to pay; although, if the Clerks could see the potential for advancement is there; and she is an example, that they would maybe understand that dollar extra is not worth it in the long run. She stated she is in the middle of transferring the computer systems; what they thought the cost was and what is going to end up is a big difference; that is what she talks about in her budget meetings; the County did help her purchase that, but with all of the changes, they have racked up the prices; she had seen a decline in some of her staff in not having enough staff, to function for the Courts; and the way that they do business is totally different. She added not believing she would of had to buy televisions in 2021 for Court hearings to do team meetings, and she would have never thought that she would of needed cameras and televisions all over the place.

#### **B.7. Chief Judge Charlie Crawford**

Chair Steele mentioned Rachel Sadoff, Clerk of Court, brought Chief Judge, Charlie Crawford, with her today; and he asked if Your Honor would like to say a few words.

Clerk Sadoff stated one of the reasons she asked Judge Crawford to attend, is because the Clerk's Office noticed from 2020 that the jurors do not have enough space in the Viera and Titusville facilities; it is becoming a little too much for the constituents when coming to jury duty, along with the outside conditions for them to get into the building in Titusville; she started looking for money to expand the Jury Room and as she did so, she was in unfamiliar territory; she realized that she should not be asking for the appropriation; but the Chief Judge is who should be asking for that appropriation. She continued by saying at the time it was Chief Judge Jessica Recksiedler, so Judge Recksiedler agreed to apply and fill out the necessary paperwork for an appropriation; they were given that appropriation, it is not her, it is the Courts, and they received about \$5 million, which they are grateful for; because of that, it then goes on to the Chief Judge for the changes that are needed to be made to the buildings and to the other buildings to move forward because of the growth here in Brevard County, and the dockets; and they are much higher than they were years ago. She asked Judge Crawford if he would explain a little bit about the decisions that were made.

Judge Crawford stated this is his eighteenth year and starting his final term but he still goes to work excited, he is happy to be there, he loves being there, and he is a fixer; as Judges, he thinks they are all fixers, but he needs the Board's help on this one because they cannot do this without them; they had the good fortune of getting the \$5.5 million from the State and he believes the Moore Justice Center Steering Committee, and thanks to the County Manager, the Committee, and Commissioner Feltner for all the efforts to get them up to where they are now; and they have a plan that includes two new courtrooms, one for a jury and one for a non-jury, they will be Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compatible, in case there is a constituent that needs that or if there is a judge that needs that, those are the new requirements, because the building has been there for a while and some of it is ADA compliant and some of it is not. He thanked the Clerk of the Court, the Public Defender, the State Attorney, and those folks who walked each Courthouse with him and decided what needed to be done; it is a little disingenuous for them to ask for money when they not use every space, in every courtroom,

every office, and every square inch; they were not doing that; with their help they came up with a plan to do that where every courtroom will be used, every office is going to be filled, and they will be utilized full-time; some of the courtrooms will obviously need to be utilized by several judges, because they do not have a courtroom for every judge; and part of the safety problem now is a Sheriff has to go with a judge and litigants behind closed doors, in a judges office to have trials. He continued by saying one could image a defendant on one side and a petitioner or respondent on the other, they are in a divorce, they are three feet across from each other for days on end; it is just not safe and he is not going to continue to do that; what they had done is agreed to bring circuit/civil and circuit/criminal that have the large juries down to Viera, because the jury space is being increased, and almost double by using the library; in this day and age, books are not used, computers are; so, with everybody's somewhat agreement, they were able to get that library space; it is going to be turned into a new Jury Room; the Jury Room is now going to be the two courtrooms; and one of the other reasons he wanted to bring circuit/criminal is because they are going to leave County criminal and County civil in Titusville. He advised one of the reasons he wanted to bring that down is, right now if he is standing in the hallway and a murderer or rapist needs to go to a courtroom, he plants himself against the wall, and so does the public while the Sheriff has chains, along with several deputies bringing them down the hallway; that is just an accident waiting to happen; it is a horrible, horrible thing; but the building was built a long time ago, and that is just the way that it is. He mentioned they are going to move people so that does not happen anymore; they are also going to move the Department of Juvenile Justice down to Melbourne; they will be the only situation where somebody is there that needs to be chained, so to speak, because right now the adults and the kids are essentially in the same spot; that is not allowed by law; they have some changes that need to be made, that they are going to make regardless of what money they get; but it is believed that with the increased population and judges not having a courtroom, they are going to need the County's help. He stated another example of what they need the County's help with is the Sheriff has included them with the new security measures with the cameras and that is going to help; right now, they have to have a giant number on the swing door, because that is the way the camera knows what courtroom it is looking at because on the bench they cannot tell it is him due to the cameras being so bad; they all wear black dresses; some people think it is a lady sitting on the bench; and either way, they are thankful that is coming and it had already been funded. He went on to say there has also been funding for the new Heating, Ventilation, and Air Condition (HVAC) system and a new elevator in Melbourne; they are thankful for that because they need to be compliant with that, but with all of that being said, they took the numbers that came from the Committee that were shared and kind of extrapolated those a little bit on Melbourne and Titusville; they think they are going to be about \$2 million short, because about \$500,000 has already been ponied up for the HVAC system and the elevator; believe it or not, that is what those cost; the prices are outrageous; those that are not in the construction field are shocked every time they look at it; and he feels the pain of the County Manager. He stated one of the things they have to do in Titusville has nothing to do with the judges, they are not asking for new furniture, it is not about making them comfortable or helping the judges in any away, but it is about the constituency; for example, they have jury boxes in a courtroom that is being used for family cases, because it has to be used; there are columns in Titusville, while Major League Baseball can sell obstructed view seats, a litigant should not have to lean over and say objection Your Honor because they are sitting behind a post; and he knows that sounds strange, but it literally happens every day. He stated they are asking for the County's help and he knows this is just an initial ask; they have a lot more detail that can be provided; the County Manager has helped them with that; and he is thankful for the Board's time.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if the \$2 million is not appropriated, in some respect, what would it do to the process of offenders that go before the courts; and he asked if they would just be released, or handed over.



Judge Crawford replied no. He stated what they are asking for is to make sure that the public is not standing next to someone in chains; the Sheriff does everything he can to prevent that, but they are walking down the same common hall together; he thinks that has been resolved, but what is different is having a County guy who stole a loaf of bread standing next to him in the hallway, on bond, versus a triple murderer, there is a difference, and they understand that; so they are going to leave that in Titusville to service the people of Titusville; but there are things that cannot get done behind the secure area, where they are having hundreds and hundreds of family law cases; it is not fair to the litigants or to the judges and the deputy because of sitting in a tiny room, just three feet across from each other, and at that point in their lives they hate each other; and they act worse than some of the criminals. He continued saying criminals are usually on good behavior in court, a lot of people are not when they are in family court; so he is trying to get everybody out from that secure area, and put them in a public space; and that is what he needs help with, moving jury boxes, getting people from behind columns, but as far as anybody getting out of jail, that has nothing do with what he is talking about, and that will not happen, unless they are entitled to get out jail.

Commissioner Feltner asked if the \$2 million is mostly for Titusville.

Judge Crawford responded mostly at this point. He stated because the Board has allocated that money toward Melbourne already, there is a couple of things that needs to be fixed in Melbourne; right now, if a deputy is standing in a certain spot in Melbourne, he has to lean forward and look around the corner to see other people in the courtroom because of the way things are shaped; and they could work around that, but mostly Titusville.

Commissioner Feltner stated the \$5.5 million that the Committee worked on, is largely Viera and Melbourne, and an additional \$2 million would address the concerns in Titusville.

Judge Crawford indicated they are not asking for it all at once. He stated it is realized what the budget is; that is not something that they even considered, but it would be nice to have it all at once while they are doing this construction and do it all at the same time; but they understand that is probably not going to happen.

Commissioner Feltner advised the Board would see the courthouse plan soon; he thinks that it will come before the Commission, but one of the things they are doing is court operations at Melbourne had greatly reduced over the years; it was strongly suggested and he thinks the courts have come through with this plan to use the space efficiently, or as efficient as possible; and that includes the busy Melbourne courthouse, again.

Judge Crawford stated they have the blessing of the State Attorney, the Sheriff, and the Public Defender's office, ultimately that is where most of the issues lie; the judges have signed off on it; there are judges moving to Melbourne and Titusville, who are not there now, and all but one is happy about it; and he is doing it anyway, so it will happen.

Commissioner Feltner stated the law library was referenced, too; he mentioned that will be at the Viera courthouse; and a large portion of the law library is going to be the new Jury Room, that is one of the trades that has been made in the Courthouse Plan.

Clerk Sadoff added the current Jury Room holds less than 200 people; since she started in 1997, they have doubled the amount of judges; the amount of jurors called are much more; it becomes a fire and security hazard, even when they tried bringing them in at different times, it did not work; she does not get all the jurors that are summoned either; that could be an issue; and having the Jury Room expanded was a big deal to the constituents, because of the fact that the space was needed for them to sit and wait, and have the proper area to serve. She mentioned they could have to go back and forth to the Jury Room, if the judge does not need

them, and then maybe another pool would take them. She stated that is very important to all of them.

Commissioner Goodson asked if they were to receive the \$2 million and if everything went perfect, could the years be projected that this would serve for Brevard County, or is that strictly on population, he does not know.

Judge Crawford replied he believed that it would; he stated he knows they are not going to get a building anytime soon; they think this is a good alternative; as judges, they rotate the schedule, as far as taking jurors; there are many judges who will resolve as many cases as they can on a Monday, knowing they are not going to be able to get a juror because of the numbers that the room is limited to; they will start on a Tuesday, let some start on Monday; and that is about all they can do right now. He stated he does not see them coming back and asking any time soon; he noted he does not think they have asked in a long, long time; and as painful as \$2.5 million sounds, compared to a new build, they think it is reasonable.

Clerk Sadoff added the judge has, with the Steering Committee, a plan; one of the plans is for the courtroom; and it would give additional courtrooms.

Judge Crawford stated there are two additional courtrooms coming; they are expanding deposition rooms because it is kind of like the family law cases, the deposition rooms may be from here to here, and that is it; and putting six to eight people in a room with a court reporter, is bad by the end of the day; people need to leave and come back; they believe that the plan for Viera is the best use of that space; and he thanked everyone who has helped with that. He mentioned Titusville being very lacking and it is not consumer friendly at all; and frankly, dangerous until they get the criminals out of there.

#### **B.4. Brevard County Tax Collector**

Chair Steele inquired if anybody from the Tax Collector's Office is here today. He stated Lisa Cullen, Tax Collector, did call him, she had to be in Tallahassee, because she speaks every year at the Association of Tax Collectors; she asked him for an excuse for her absence; he has given it to her; he wanted to explain why she was not here; he thought, maybe she would have sent somebody, but she did not; and they are moving forward.

#### **B.5. Brevard County Property Appraiser**

Chair Steele inquired if anybody from the Property Appraiser's Office is here today.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, responded they did hear from the Property Appraiser's Office and the Supervisor of Elections' Office, for notice that they would not be in a position to participate today, because of the timing, from their perspective of similar to what they heard with the Sheriff, by not being able to give the Board information for the upcoming budget.

#### **B.6. Brevard County Supervisor of Elections**

Chair Steele inquired if anybody from the Supervisor of Elections' Office is here today.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, responded they did hear from the Property Appraiser's Office and the Supervisor of Elections' Office, for notice that they would not be in a position to participate today, because of the timing, from their perspective of similar to what they heard with the Sheriff, by not being able to give the Board information for the upcoming budget.

## **County Departments**

### **B.8. Fire Rescue**

Fire Chief Patrick Voltaire, Fire Rescue, advised it has been his honor to wear the uniform for 24 years; and he expressed appreciation to the Board for allowing him to stand in front of them today to talk about the fire department. He stated he would focus on looking at the financial overview, with the Board's support of the Fire Assessment in 2018 and 2021, by allowing Fire Rescue to aggressively commit allocating funds to what is important to all personnel, infrastructure, and equipment; and through this presentation, he is going to show what that commitment has accomplished, the challenges faced since this approval, and what the road is looking like ahead. He stated on July 17, 2008, the Board authorized a reduction of the Fire Assessment by approximately 15 percent; in Fiscal Year 2009, they began a drawdown from the reserves from \$14.2 million the following Fiscal Year department-wide reserves were reduced to approximately \$12.2 million; a chart on the slide shown picks up after an additional \$5 million was drawn down from the reserves from Fiscal Year 2011-2014; and they pick up in Fiscal Years 2015 and 2019 for approximately an additional \$6 million was reduced in the reserves. He continued saying on April 24, 2018, as reserves continued to drawdown, the Board provided them with an increase in the Fire Assessment that allowed continuation of Fire Rescue operations without further reserve draw downs; as noted on the chart, that between 2018 and 2021 the reserve level remained a consistent \$1.2 million; they kept their expenses in-line for the next three years; they knew this could not be sustained; and in 2021, he came to the Board asking it to make a tough decision for a significant Fire Assessment increase. He added at that time, they committed to the Board to accomplish various goals as part of the seven-year plan; first, and foremost, the Board told him to take care of personnel; after that, the Board directed him be committed to take care of the infrastructure, including necessary expansion, and taking care of projected capital and equipment needs for new capital and equipment replacements; and throughout the remainder of this presentation, it will be seen how he has honored these commitments, and what is planned moving forward. He continued by saying the funding system is based on a 55/45 split between Fire Assessment which takes care of fire stations and fire operations; Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is funded by ambulance revenues and the General Fund; EMS is a Countywide service that provides Advanced Life Care (ALC), equipment, and everything related to EMS; and regardless of where a person resides or has an episode in Brevard County, a rescue from Brevard County Fire Rescue (BCFR) will be there to provide aid, and transport to the appropriate Hospital. He mentioned the blue on the chart shown designates the ambulance billing revenues; as one may have noticed, coming out of Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), they began to collect more, but significant General Fund contribution increases have been required to bridge the gap in funding for the Countywide EMS service, consistent with the commitments that are highlighted; the yellow on the chart shown is labeled other revenue, that signifies funding from Federal reimbursement programs to offset EMS billing revenue when pertaining to Medicaid, Medicare, and the contracted rate of payments, as well as the contracted Ambulance Service for Patrick Spaceforce Base, starting in 2022 the significant dedication to EMS through General Fund commitment; and as they proceed through this presentation, the 55/45 split of the commitment of the General Fund is so important to them. He stated on the next slide, the red line designates separations, which includes resignations, retirements, or separations for disciplinary reasons from 2018 through 2023; the blue line designates hiring, which includes who is on board with BCFR; prior to 2018, BCFR was in a challenging state, they were not keeping up with new hires to replace separations, and mandatory overtime has been a reoccurring problem; for years, the hiring and other efforts were not enough to successfully address mandatory overtime concerns; this contributed to attrition issues that had been faced within BCFR operations; and they knew they had to think outside of the box and change the way they do business. He went on to say with Board support they had done that to get where they are today, starting with the Lean Six Sigma; process improvements were made by increasing the

on boarding process; this allowed for them to go from two to three new hire groups in 2018; a full-time recruiter was hired to attend local job fairs and is in the local high schools, capturing those young folks who may not be sure what their next step is after graduation, or maybe they have wanted to be in fire service their entire life; and now they have been able to provide that conduit to help the local kids that are coming out of high school to flow into BCFR as qualified recruits. He mentioned Annette Barrios, Fire Rescue Recruiting Specialist, has played a large part in working with the Brevard Public Schools partners to develop the Firefighter Recruit Program at Palm Bay High School; he stated they are hoping to continue this relationship and not stop there, as they plan and hope to move this Program to Cocoa, and to the North Brevard areas; the County Manager's Office and the Fire Rescue Leadership Team are committed to working closely with their partners at the Brevard County School Board to further enhance this spectacular Program; another top initiative is the Scholarship Program; this Program has proven extremely successful; he noted in 2023, they built a cumulative number of 62 scholarships; they are currently accepting scholarships; and there is no goal projected on the chart shown, as they want to onboard as many promising recruits as possible, that desires being a part of BCFR. He stated this is one of the many great initiatives that the Board and the County Leadership Team has implemented, that shows positive results; they are confident this being one of the most worthwhile investments made for the organization; each scholarship recruit commits to stay with BCFR for a minimum of two years and each scholarship costs approximately \$6,000 per recipient; this is one of the best investments made; as a result of these initiatives, BCFR has been able to increase from three to six new hire classes per year; he knows they are going to need to remain committed and augment these initiatives, because the local fire departments around are seeing what BCFR is doing, and they are trying to jump on board; he knows they cannot be stagnant; the Board's strong support of what it has accomplished is greatly appreciated; he is proud to share what they have accomplished; and he thinks the data and numbers speak for themselves. He advised as part of the Board's approved Fire Assessment in 2021, BCFR committed to the Board 39 additional floaters over a three-year period, and this initiative was focused on helping reduce overtime, especially mandatory overtime; the chart being shown has an increase in staffing from 454 to 534, with three new Fire Stations coming online which is Stations 49 in West Viera, Station 27 in West Port St. John, and a new Rescue in South Palm Bay; the extra personnel to facilitate this growth will be in the field by 2028; with the biggest increase in the numbers for the firefighter/paramedic position; and that is the most versatile and critical position needed to keep the engines and ambulances staffed for Advanced-Life Support (ALS) capabilities. He stated the next slide illustrates Fire Rescue Stations and their locations; the blue is EMS or ambulance only stations, the green is Fire and EMS, or fire ambulance stations combined with both units in the house, and the red is a fire engine only out of the station; as the slide shows prior to Fiscal Year 2022, a large amount of funds were not spent on infrastructure; simply, as displayed in prior slides, they did not have the funds to commit additional resources, and continue operations without further drawing down limited reserves; in 2023 and beyond, because of the Board's investment BCFR remains committed to do this right; they are proud to highlight the large investment that the Board authorized as part of the Fire Assessment increase; he noted they are also addressing the EMS needs in a similar manner, additional General Fund dollars have been needed, included, and approved by the Board thus far; it is BCFR's plan to submit a new budget proposal for Fiscal Year 2024-2025, that will enable them to continue moving forward as planned within the overall budget parameters, recently set as goals by the Board; and the intent is to stay the course per the Board's direction. He indicated a similar slide shown is Cumulative Price Increases for every department; he believes this graph does tell a story of what is happening, but what is not in this graph is the assumptions made while developing that long-range plan built in 2020; they assumed a normal CPI growth, as they have experienced, these increases have greatly exceeded those assumptions; they remain committed to allocating resources to accomplish the goals the Board has established and approved; and they will remain sensitive to the attrition rates and work to adjust employee salaries, so they can continue recruiting and retaining those recruits, and the more seasoned

members alike. He went on to say he knows the seasoned veterans and new recruits are valued by the Board and the entire leadership team; they recognize the challenges they face to accomplish all of those goals spoken about; he is not going to say it is not a challenge, because it is; and as the Fire Chief, he knows the Public Safety Office Director, the County Manager, and the entire leadership team are committed to making sure they find a way to get all of this done, and continue down the path the Board has approved. He stated this slide shown is an overview of their big-ticket items they will address over the next four years, from a new purchase and replacement perspective, moving towards an appropriate annual replacement strategy; BCFR is a large system that operates in high-volumes of equipment; on the last slide, he highlighted the price increase of Fire Engines going up 100 percent over the last few years; also, in this slide is another challenge, delivery time; they currently have nine ambulances on order from 2023; and the Board authorized BCFR to purchase ahead in Fiscal Year 2024, for the purchase of four ready-built van-style ambulances. He noted the times they are in requires them to think outside of the box and to continue moving forward; fire trucks are on a 30-month bill time, where it was less than one year, prior to COVID; Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) is on the chart for Fiscal Year 2025 and a spike in the next slide shows that; they are keeping their eye on the SCBA, as they work on a 15-year certified lifecycle; they want to maximize that timeline and make a purchase as the updated version comes out in that year; and he wanted to ensure the Board noticed the spike in Fiscal Year 2025. He continued by saying a temporary Fire Station is an interesting thing in their Key Additional Purchases; some might ask what is a temporary Fire Station; on the previous slides, he is hopeful the Board noticed all the big improvements that they have and had planned for the Fire Stations; it is important to stay in those areas and serve the community during those rehabilitation efforts; and sometime they cannot find other means of temporary housing, so starting with Fire Station 86 they will have a temporary Fire Station allowing them to remain in that area and serve the community just the same. He mentioned he is looking forward to one day when all of the Fire Station upgrades are complete and they still have a temporary Fire Station to remain resilient for the community, in case of a major emergency anywhere; if they need to pivot and serve those folks, they will have that temporary Fire Station ready at any time; today he is seeking Board affirmation on a long-range plan, as outlined; he looks forward to any other direction the Board may want to offer; this is it for BCFR operations; and he will now turn it over to the County Manager, Frank Abbate, to focus on the lifeguard operations, which are part of BCFR budget.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, stated for lifeguards, if the Board would recall that it gave specific direction to him and the County Attorney to meet with all of the cities to deal with the issue of who and how they would pay for lifeguard services moving forward; this past year, because of a variety of drowning's that occurred in the previous year, the Board had expanded lifeguard services, and what it wanted to see being done was to go to the cities and try to negotiate with them to split the cost of lifeguard services within municipalities; they had done that and they had multiple meetings over the last year with the cities; it shows they provided them with the results can be seen in the graph provided, as it dealt with a full-time annual tower costs that is on the chart, as well as seasonal costs, the number of hours that were involved, and what would be covered, which would be all of the ancillary equipment for the tower; they had roaming patrols with all of the related equipment; and they shared that with each of the cities. He advised what is shown on this chart only relates to lifeguard services within municipalities where the has the lifeguard services currently available and it is paying for a portion of those services, and that is on the left-hand side of the chart; in each of those instances, those were for seasonal services; what also could be seen is in Fiscal Year 2023 how many towers were in each of those communities; as a result of those discussions, located on the right-hand side of the chart, is what the cities have indicated to them, they were willing to pay for this coming year; interestingly enough, the City of Cocoa Beach made it clear to him and the County Attorney that they not only did not want to pay 50 percent; and they did not think they should be paying for any services, even though they were paying and are scheduled

to pay \$89,000 for the seasonal this year. He went on to say in the case of Indianalantic and Melbourne Beach, the amounts could be seen on the chart shown that they have communicated to him and the County Attorney that they would be willing to pay for the services that they would like to see, and that is in the Fiscal Year 2025 towers, the amount of money; it is not the 50 percent allocation that the Board was requesting; this is the feedback received thus far; he received a call yesterday at 11:30 a.m. from Indian Harbour Beach, who did not have lifeguard services, and was told they are interested in providing lifeguard services, perhaps, they think that maybe they could do it cheaper; and from their perspective, but they are looking at, but did not want to sign up to do any of the services proposed to them. He concluded by saying they met with each of the cities, even those that currently do not have services, just to make sure they saw everyone, and offered them the opportunity of what the Board had asked; he and the County Attorney are available to answer any questions the Board has; and they are seeking Board direction as to what it would like to do as they get ready to prepare for the upcoming budget, in light of the information they have available thus far from the cities.

Commissioner Feltner inquired if they still have a tourism tax component of the lifeguard services funded going forward, so that 20 percent comes from tourism tax and 80 percent comes from General Fund; and if that is the way it is going to be done going forward.

County Manager Abbate replied that obviously is going to be up to the Board.

Chair Steele asked Commissioner Tobia if he had something.

Commissioner Tobia responded affirmatively. He stated he would have a motion after this. He advised historically in 2023 the Board discussed this about a cost share with the cities; however, it was probably a little bit of a short notice to give to the cities time to make that correction; he went against his better judgement and thought that the cities would be partners; and the County took an extra step, the cities asked for an additional \$898,000 because of safety, and the Board took that step to provide extra lifeguards, not only was the County paying 100 percent, it was paying 100 percent plus that \$898,000. He stated on May 23 the Board authorized by 5:0 vote, which is what County Manager Abbate was talking about, to go meet with the municipalities regarding lifeguard service cost share program at 50 percent. He provided the Board with a couple of handouts; he thinks the County did this in good faith; he has an email from the Mayor of the Town of Indianalantic and he read aloud, "I look forward to working with our Town Manager and County Manager Abbate to reach an agreement moving forward past this Fiscal Year."; and there was pretty good intent that the cities were interested in help, sharing this cost with the County. He advised the County Manager went out there and he worked hard, but he actually did not come to a resolution, and many of the cities decided what little they were paying was not even enough; he was kind of insulted on the highlighted handout by what the City of Cocoa Beach mentioned; this was read at a meeting and this was on their agenda, and he read aloud, "The actual residents of Cocoa Beach, as opposed to tourists that swim in the ocean at Cocoa Beach are over-all well-informed and good swimmers. It is usually the tourists who typically need lifeguard services when they do not know how to deal with rip tides or go into the ocean when weather conditions make it unsafe, or the tourists themselves are very poor swimmers."; and he thinks that is not a way to increase tourism. He added he thinks that is a pretty good indication how the cities have responded to the County's ask to cost share on this; he has come to a potential solution that he thinks would meet everyone's needs, potentially providing for more lifeguard services, as well as help with public safety; the third page in that handout is a grant program and his suggestion is very simple, 50 percent would be offered across the beaches, regardless of who maintains the beach, and would come from General Fund; the other 50 percent would be paid either by the municipality, for municipality maintained beaches, or General Funds for County-maintained beaches; the municipalities can choose to fund funding towards providing their own lifeguards if they believe,

as Indian Harbour Beach does, that they are cheaper or they can continue to use County services; and either way they would be reimbursed that 50 percent. He advised if this were done the County would have realized an annual savings of just over a million dollars; he is not suggesting this million dollars go into roads or paychecks, or anything like that because he thinks it needs to go into public safety; that is on the fourth sheet with two suggestions; one, as the County Manager just alluded to, Indian Harbour Beach does not have lifeguard services; they are interested in getting those lifeguard services and with the savings that were realized when the cities, if they decide to participate, the County could help fund other lifeguard services; a seasonal tower is about \$130,000, the County would provide a grant for half that, so they could have lifeguard services in Indian Harbour Beach, as well as Satellite Beach if they decide to or other beaches so that could be expanded; two, expand services at the Brevard Department of Health; there currently is a need at the Brevard County Department of Health for expansion, this expansion would be approximately \$500,000 cost to the County, and the expansion would provide more clinic space for Brevard residents while shifting office space; and the additional clinic space would allow for privacy in the Department's programming, when they deal with sensitive issues, as that could cause all sorts of problems. He stated he has a motion; the motion just effectuates the grant program that he just set up; and the allocated savings is for the Brevard County Department of Health and for other beaches that decide to partake in that cost share.

Commissioner Pritchett seconded the motion for discussion.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if anybody knows how many people died out there.

Chair Steele responded 14.

Commissioner Goodson inquired how many people died during the presence of lifeguards.

County Manager Abbate replied zero.

Commissioner Goodson remarked so they died after lifeguards went home; and he inquired out of that 14 were there any at Cocoa Beach that had lifeguards that died.

Commissioner Tobia responded the report received back was pretty telling; there was not one death where a lifeguard was present; he stated it was extremely telling that the lifeguards were working hard and were very effective; lifeguards cannot work at midnight, but when they were working in the areas in which they were working, they were highly-effective; and there was not one death.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if one would assume that they were swimming after sitting at the bar, having four drinks, then gets out there, and only God knows.

Commissioner Tobia replied that unfortunately, they were children or younger folks who had passed away; he thinks any life lost is tragic; he wants to prevent that as much as possible; and he wants to make sure that the cities help the County prioritize safety.

Commissioner Goodson stated he totally agrees, but sometimes stupid will not ever be able to be helped; he agrees with Commissioner Tobia; and he likes what Commissioner Tobia is doing.

Commissioner Feltner stated he would bet good money that every hotel in Brevard County has a rule of not going into their pool between 11:00 p.m. and 6:00 a.m.; and they do it for exactly that reason.

Commissioner Goodson inquired for the bar or because nobody is watching.

Commissioner Feltner replied they do not want anyone going from the bar to the pool.

Commissioner Goodson remarked he got it and he is with Commissioner Feltner.

Chair Steele asked what the number is of people saved and pulled out of the ocean by the lifeguards.

Chief Voltaire responded it was hundreds; and he stated he does not have the exact number.

Chair Steele advised if he remembers correctly 450 people and that is a huge amount of people pulled from the ocean and saved.

Commissioner Pritchett stated she thinks there is really no debate on whether or not a lifeguard is there or not; it is definitely going to have an impact on saving lives; the question is if the County is just responsible to have them; and she inquired if this is proposed to the cities, does the County have any ability to have them pay it. She mentioned throwing out a really out-of-the-box idea and she has probably said this before, she inquired if it is possible to take the beaches back and bring them under the County, and not having them be controlled by cities anymore; she stated why, when they went through Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) the County tried to keep the beaches open, it could not do so because the cities started closing beaches, and it was almost making it hard for the County to keep the beaches open; she realized then that the public access to beaches...

County Manager Abbate interrupted by saying he needs to inquire through Morris Richardson, County Attorney, and he believes the beaches being talked about are where there are municipal parks; and he inquired if that is where the challenge would be in that regard.

County Attorney Richardson responded that is correct.

Commissioner Pritchett stated she does not know why they are not paying 100 percent of the lifeguards; she knows this was discussed before; she thinks it is just going to have to be a responsibility and they are going to have to step-up to the table; she thinks this is a very fair proposal; she would have gone with 100 percent when moving it over; there is a responsibility for having assets, they need to be taken care of, make sure people are safe in a public area; and that is why she seconded Commissioner Tobia's proposal.

Commissioner Tobia asked if he could read the motion.

Chair Steele responded affirmatively.

Commissioner Tobia stated one, to create a matching grant program for lifeguard services, which will be available to all municipalities that maintain beaches along Brevard County's coast, for beaches owned by municipalities; this program will provide for a grant of 50 percent of the County's cost for lifeguard services within each municipality, with a match requirement of 50 percent from said municipality; the funding of this grant will be paid for out of General Funds; the grant program will also allow each municipality to choose their level of service with the County, or use funding for their own lifeguard services; two, direct staff to inform municipalities, with a deadline prior to July 1 for their response for level of service; three, there will be a savings from the General Fund, even if every municipality decided to take advantage of this grant; and allocate available funds of approximately \$500,000 to the Brevard County Department of Health's relocation of office space for the purpose of expanding their clinic.



Commissioner Feltner inquired if there is no tourism tax that is going to be part of this and he sees strictly funding from the General Fund.

Commissioner Tobia replied yes, that is correct; he stated it became a little bit difficult where the County would use Tourist Development Tax (TDT) revenue for the County beaches, as opposed to the municipal beaches and then advertising, it just added a layer of bureaucracy that they do not necessarily need to deal with, and realizing the savings.

Chair Steele stated his only concern is what does the County do if they say no; most of the people that have called him, in regards to this, have indicated to him very clearly the County is the one through the TDT that are bringing the visitors to the beach, and the County is who should be paying for it; a couple of mayors had said to him to a certain extent that is true, because of the TDT and because of the County advertising it has great beaches; and the County brings a variety of people to the beach, so the question then is if the County is bringing them to the beach why is it not paying for it, and that was their question; and he is just stating what he had talked to people about. He continued saying he does not know what is going to happen, in the event that they all say no.

Commissioner Tobia stated there are three main cities; they have Cocoa Beach, Indialantic, and Melbourne Beach; he will start with Cocoa Beach and the 50 percent cost share would amount to about \$750,000; parking revenue at just Cocoa Beach for Fiscal Year 2024 is budgeted at \$3.7 million and they are making five or six times the amount in parking revenue, not to mention the more than \$400,000 Brevard County provides Cocoa Beach in Tax Increment Financing (TIF) spending; they are going to hear that Cocoa Beach does not have enough money, but they do have enough money in their current budget for \$7,000 in City Hall character pictures; and he does not know what that is, but he may want to go to Cocoa Beach to find out how they are wasting \$7,000.

Chair Steele remarked there are many characters in Cocoa Beach.

Commissioner Tobia stated \$800,000 for an irrigation system on a golf course that regularly is closed due to flooding; Indialantic is being asked for \$230,000 in cost share, but they have parking revenue of three times that amount at \$747,000; and they too, are going to claim they do not have enough money but they magically have \$6,000 for holiday lighting, \$2,500 for a Halloween party, and \$256,000 for plants in the median of Fifth Avenue. He went on to say then there is Melbourne Beach, which is his favorite, and they were asking for \$127,000 in cost share; their parking revenue is a little bit more modest at \$202,000, which is plenty, they, too, will claim poverty, but they spend money on decorative light poles, town banners, restoring dolphin carvings, and free classes in Yoga, Tai Chi, Qigong, and a Mime Musical Tree Class; his staff looked up Qigong, it can be thought of as a movement done for certain situations, as opposed to Tai Chi for which is a series of movements that would work on the entire body in a flowing sequence; he read that and he still does not know what that means; the point is, they will be prioritizing this over safety at the beaches; if they want to make that argument to their taxpayers and their residents, they are welcome to do so; but the County needs to make an argument here, that it wants to be partners and it wants to take the realized savings by expanding lifeguard services to where they are currently not available. He stated the cities are going to be mad, but part of their responsibility of being a City, is keeping their residents and the people that visit their area safe.

Commissioner Pritchett inquired Cocoa Beach is making over \$3 million in parking revenues on the beaches.

Commissioner Tobia replied parking revenue for Cocoa Beach is budgeted for 2024 at \$3.752 million.

Commissioner Pritchett asked if their cost share of the lifeguards are \$770,000.

Commissioner Tobia responded \$756,182 would be their 50 percent.

Commissioner Pritchett stated a good guess would be if TDC were not advertising Cocoa Beach they probably would be getting that type of parking revenue in; they are running a pretty good net bottom line there, not only that, but the businesses that are also very successful because of all the tourism dollars; and she does not think they really want to make that argument, that is just a really bad business argument to make with the Board because she thinks it is smart enough to know better.

Chair Steele remarked he did not make it, they did.

Commissioner Pritchett stated she knows, she just thought she would do it in public since that.

Commissioner Feltner echoed what Commissioner Pritchett said just a moment ago; absolutely, on the beaches, tourism has a positive economic impact in every municipality; and there is no debating that fact.

Chair Steele opined they are pretty close to the vote now. He stated he is going to support the motion today; his prediction is none of them are going to do this and they are going to be right back where they started; he is willing to try; but it is not going to work.

County Manager Abbate inquired he believes the direction he is getting is to develop this grant program and offer it to the cities; if they do not participate, the budget would be built without lifeguard services for municipalities that do not participate in the program; and that is what the Board is telling everyone.

Commissioner Pritchett clarified there were ways before that they had been able to change colors of funds; she asked if there is a way, if they do not participate with this, and they have to add extra funds there, as to what the Board does as a County, for the cities that it can raise rates on that to help cover these costs; she knows there is a way to do it; but she does not know why the County Manager is looking at her like that. She inquired if there is any other funds that the County reimburses to the cities that they would not have to cover their lifeguard cost. She remarked it is something to think about while moving into the future; and she is not putting the County Manager on the spot right now, but he could think through it.

County Manager Abbate replied he is not sure of any; he would need to look at it, if that is the Board's direction; and he is not aware of what that could be.

The Board approved creation of a matching grant program for lifeguard services, which will be available to all municipalities that maintain beaches along Brevard County's coast, for beaches owned by municipalities this program will provide for a grant of 50 percent of the County cost for lifeguard service within each municipality, with a match requirement of 50 percent from said municipality, which allows for each municipality to choose their level of service with the County, or use their own funding for their own lifeguard services; approved the funding of the grants to be paid for out of the General Fund; directed staff to inform municipalities, with a deadline prior to July 1, 2024, for their response for the level of service; and with the savings to the General Fund, approved allocating funds of approximately \$500,000 to the Brevard County Department of Health's relocation of office space for the purpose of expanding their clinic space.

**Result:** APPROVED

**Mover:** John Tobia

**Secunder:** Rita Pritchett

**Ayes:** Pritchett, Goodson, Tobia, Feltner, and Steele

\*The Board recessed at 2:23 p.m. and reconvened at 2:27 p.m.

## **B.9. Public Works**

Marc Bernath, Public Works Director, stated with him is Susan Jackson, Public Works Assistant Director and Road and Bridge Manager, Tammy Thomas-Wood, Public Works Operations Manager, Corrina Gumm, Public Works Traffic Operations Manager, and Skip Bell, Facilities Manager; the primary focus of today's brief is going to focus on Road and Bridge and Traffic successes and challenges; the first slide shown is Road and Bridge and a historical tenure trend; it shows actual spending and centerline miles for the Road Program over the last 10 years; prior to 2018 there was no formal road program with recurring and dedicated funding, also with aging roads and increased population, it created a perfect storm for roads to fall into a poor defiled state; and since 2018 they exceeded their goals annually and treated 710 miles of the total 770 represented on the chart, as depicted since 2018. He added, in accordance with Board direction, staff have been laser focused on the original goal of avoiding roads from falling into reconstruction; in Fiscal Year 2020-2021 there are some anomalies of higher spending, that is because of additional funding that were taken from a cost in feasible Babcock Road Widening Project, and decided to resurface or reconstruct the County portion of that road; but otherwise, the dedicated spending continues to increase with paving costs. He mentioned being aware of several that had made the comment that increased costs have been seen and there is nothing different here; since 2019, they have seen a 46 percent increase in what it costs to do the Paving Program; and he is not going to cover some of the other areas, he did want to just mention that when they looked at the Infrastructure Program, and they saw 150 to 200 percent on some of the roads, bridges, and facilities. He went on to say road preservation is still in a pilot program; it started in 2022, that is really to protect the Board's investment, and extend the life expectancy of the roads, and maintaining it at a higher level for a longer period of time verse a traditional pave, and decline approach; time will be the ultimate test; but these treatments have been proven across Florida and nationally, and by all measures are meeting the plan at this time. He stated in 2019 and 2023, they had a third-party consultant perform a Pavement Condition Assessment with pavement condition indices dedicated and depicted in orange and blue; effectively, the Pavement Condition Index (PCI) is a report card of sorts and it shows the Countywide PCI average is now an 85 out of 100; there has been a significant increase in the miles of roads that are good which is depicted on the left from 86 to 100 PCI and a decrease in all other categories, but specifically at-risk roads, which straddle from 31 of a very poor to 56, which is fair; and all great indicators that the overall road network health and investment by the Board, and trust in Public Works is well-placed. He continued to say as indicated on the slide shown, during the same period centerline miles increased by 18 or 4.8 miles per year through developer-built public roads as well; and this did slightly increase the overall PCI and contribute to that, but it also means more of 18 miles of roads, sidewalks, mowing, and drainage that will need attention in the future within existing resource constrained staff. He stated shifting to road infrastructure backlog miles as depicted, they significantly drove down their backlog and their at-risk which is falling into reconstruction miles per Board direction and down from 101 to 42 miles; some quick observations in the District 1 area, which has the most miles and still has some work to be done, as with the rest of the County it continues to decrease; in the District 2 area, it has the most backlog due to the amount of aging road infrastructure, and several projects such as Hampton Homes where they have deferred paving, as well as for Utilities and for Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) areas so that they do not needlessly waste money; they are looking to temporarily shift going forward the District 2 apportionment of resurfacing towards reconstruction, so they can fund the projects

that are needed; in the District 3 area, it has the least amount of roads in the County and District 4 has the newest roads, and both of them are tracking well by continuing to march down on their backlogs and at-risk roads; and District 5 has the most miles of reconstruction, but similar to District 2, the plan is to shift some of the District 5 resurfacing funding to supplement and expedite District 5 reconstruction going forward. He stated the next slide is the projection for a five-year plan; the past several slides discussed where they are and previously, as well as this year; this represented the five-year projected road funding and mileage plan moving into 2025 and beyond; they began scaling back on resurfacing centerline miles, primarily to stay within the budget, as they focus on more costly multi-lane arterial and collector roads; for example, Wickham Road, Aurora Road, Evans Road, and many others, as well as more costly reconstruction; and while they are continuing to increase the preservation, they are planning to stay within 16 percent of the overall budget. He continued by saying over the next five years they are planning to treat 762 miles, as compared to the prior five years where they only did 560, so more miles, preserving them longer, and keeping them at a higher rate with some manageable backlog, but pending SOIRL and other utility conflicts where they do not want to go in and resurface or reconstruct for them to come in behind them and tear up the road; and they plan to complete all reconstruction and most at-risk roads over the next five years. He stated beyond 2029 the program pivots to resurfacing and preservation focus in perpetuity to protect the investment and extend the network in a higher condition without roads ever falling into a poor failed condition again; it is the dedicated reconstruction funding that sets up a modest shift to focus on capacity and other shortfalls that will be discussed in the next several slides; and he noted they are looking at a potential Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Federal grant opportunity with a zero dollar match for road preservation. He stated he wants to thank the Board for its support of the Drainage Program and its continued support with resources and equipment; over the last seven years, they continued allocating labor and equipment resources to grow and sustain the Countywide drainage maintenance crew as depicted on the right of the chart; the goals of increasing the staffing there was to be more proactive, reduce average cleaning times from 10 to 12 years, and beyond down to three to five years; they are reducing flooding in flood prone areas and also improving drainage; and nowhere is that more evident than on Merritt Island during Hurricanes Ian and Nicole in 2022. He stated in addition to the three drainage crews, they have four Kaiser Walking Excavators purchased with American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funding that operate full-time under the Road and Bridge maintenance teams cleaning ditches, where the drainage crews cannot access; they also have three long-boom track hoes, two funded from ARPA that clean the wide and deep canal, such as the satelli canal, deer run canals, Mims and Scottsmoor ditches, and many others; the chart reflects a combined mileage of Countywide and Road and Bridge maintenance efforts, specifically for Countywide drainage; and they were averaging about 25 miles of drainage per year in 2017 and 2018 where now they are averaging 80 to 90 miles per year. He added they continue to grow on and build on past successes with the resources the Board has provided them; and not depicted, but critical is proactively cleaning culverts and structures using Vacon equipment, replacing old and failing metal culverts under County roads, and more than 40 drainage projects which are currently in the engineering shop and/or out on the street doing construction. He provided the Board with another slide showing the Bridge Program for the next five years; he noted there are 50 bridges; the top graph shows a significant funding gap that is influenced by costly bridge replacement, as they continue to age and deteriorate; Public Works first brought this issue forward in Fiscal Year 2020, it started accumulating funds for several key bridge replacements; and, however, there is no dedicated recurring funding as shown on the graph, they have funded \$10.4 million over this five-year period, but there is also a \$17 million unfunded requirement. He mentioned Fiscal Year 2025 shows much higher than the rest of the graph in green and that is largely due to Sea Ray Bridge, which is funded, and the bids were received earlier today; in the same year, the Merritt Island West Central Bridge, as well as North Banana River Drive South and Tucker Lane designs are unfunded and needed; in Fiscal Year 2026 through 2029 only routine maintenance and rehabilitations has reoccurring funding shown in green; the bar chart below that represents

bridges requiring targeted maintenance, rehabilitation, and replacement per year, based on Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) or the County's third-party consultant; and shown to the left are projects the Public Works team has actively been working on the past few years. He highlighted the James Jay Clark Pedestrian Bridge Recoating Project is awarded and should be starting in April or May; the Sea Ray Bridge construction, as he alluded to has received bids today and should be starting in the coming months; there are four Merritt Island bridges having feasibility studies, however, out of the four only the Girard Bridge is on the National Bridge Inventory, based on the length of the bridge which limits the Federal grant possibilities; but they are still reviewing other options. He stated in the coming months he is planning to bring forward the cost of the Central Mainland Benefit District, and then later to the Board, to position themselves for that grant; the Merritt Island Central Avenue Bridge is in design and to be awarded in the coming months; that still leaves them today with no viable solution for the North Banana River Drive Bridges, which there are two; Micco Bridge is in construction and proceeding as planned; for Mathers Bridge staff has continued to invest in preventative measures, major component replacements, and security; and corrosion protection is coming. He stated he is shifting once more to sidewalks, they have long recognized the need to address sidewalk deficiencies, due to aging infrastructure, tree roots, settling, utilities, cuts, and heavy equipment, et cetera on the sidewalks; they lack the resources to address paving capacity, other project safety, and sidewalks all at once; the proposed plan would address safety, as well as Americans with Disability Act concerns; the program would focus only on repair and replacement, not new sidewalks; similar to where the County found itself with roads back in 2017; there are many sidewalks to address; and what they are proposing is a five-year plan to start working towards this backlog from within existing Public Works funds. He mentioned there being 720 miles of sidewalks and they grow each year, as he alluded to previously, with new development; the problem continues increasing with the age of the sidewalks; it is impossible at this time to give a true magnitude of the problem, as they have not performed a comprehensive assessment, but staff has estimated 30 percent require repair and replacement at a cost of \$27 million; the plan is a modest first step planning over five years to spend \$4.64 million from existing Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU), as well as gas taxes over the next five years where they will be prioritizing equitably based on needs, condition, and mileage; but as he alluded to, they still need more to make up the funding gap. He advised traffic operations analyzes traffic volumes and monitors roadways at or nearing capacity; by capacity in its simplest terms he is referring to congestion, not maintenance repairs or the road paving program; updated on the slide shown is a list of roads based on the latest 2022 Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) counts; the 2023 data should be available in the summer of 2024; arranged by Transportation Impact Fee Benefit District, the majority of the capacity challenges still remain in the Central and South Mainland Benefit Districts; the roads listed in red are overcapacity; and the new roads that have been added to the list since the last time he briefed the Board are italicized in black, including Barnes Boulevard from Murrell Road to U.S. 1, Pineda Causeway from I-95 to Wickham Road, and St. Johns Heritage Parkway from U.S. 192 to Emerson Drive. He continued to say there are several nearing capacity roads that went down unexpectedly during this 2022 count; the data, however, is on the tail end of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), and is expected to bounce back; several of the roads will be re-examined in this new count this summer, they will re-evaluate, but they have several projects, including Grissom Parkway, Riverside Drive, and certain segments of Hollywood Drive are in different stages of the study and/or design process; but they are expecting those numbers to bounce back and will either continue with those proposed projects, or make a determination if they are no longer needed. He stated continuing to implement Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) solution to reduce congestion and increase safety, using advanced technologies consistent with the Brevard County ITS Master Plan is still the most economic and affordable way forward; last year a vehicle detection system upgrade project was completed at 19 signalized intersections on Palm Bay Road and nearby signals; when the before and after studies were looked at, it showed signal operation and traffic flow improvement; they are continuing to identify similar corridors throughout the County that would

benefit from this type of technology; they have increased the number of signals from 292 out of the 376 signals managed, that are now online for the Traffic Management Center (TMC) monitoring and operating capabilities; and the degree they can manage unfunded capacity improvements projects through ITS relies on the continued expansion of ITS infrastructure, staff, and the development of the new TMC which will be on the street for construction later this spring. He stated knowing the list of unfunded capacity continues to grow, a third-party Countywide Traffic Mitigation Congestion Study was initiated last month; it will be focused on strategic improvement to safety and travel reliability, identify roads congested or forecasted to be congested to guide them on what future projects they can afford to do, utilizing a combination of ITS low-cost technology measures in combination with high benefit high-cost intersection capacity, efficiency improvements such as turn lanes, or intersection improvements; the strategies that have the greatest benefit and potential would be prioritized; and that report is expected next January. He reiterated that the staff produced a revenue generating options report for capacity and maintenance, and provided it to the Board in February 2022; he provided that to each new Commissioner during their in briefs; it provides many ways they could raise funding to address some of the capacity challenges; there is too much to go into here; but his team and he are happy to discuss further at any Commissioner's convenience.

Chair Steele stated he assumes they are charging impact fees.

Mr. Bernath replied they are.

Chair Steele inquired how much those impact fees are.

Mr. Bernath responded impact fees actually fall under Planning and Development; he stated he could not give that specifically; and he thinks John Denninghoff, Assistant County Manager, may be able to help.

Mr. Denninghoff replied the usual measure used when talking about impact fees for transportation purposes, they charged impact fees for other things as well, but for transportation is a little over \$4,400 per single-family unit.

Chair Steele asked once received, how those monies are spent, are they spent to help Mr. Bernath, are they spent in another area, are they just spent, or are they put in the General Fund.

Mr. Denninghoff responded those go to Public Works for transportation improvements to increase capacity or deal with the capacity-generated problems, that are associated with the transportation system.

Chair Steele stated he would think there are quite a few impact fees coming in; he inquired if the Board needs to raise impact fees, or do something to be able to get some additional money; and he asked what needs done here.

Mr. Bernath replied that is obviously a decision for the Board; he mentioned earlier that the largest concerns are in the Central and South Mainland Benefit Districts; he does not think there is enough new development to actually keep up with the cost of the infrastructure, the capacity challenges that have been laid out in the slide shown.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if the impact for a home, total is around \$10,000 something.

Mr. Denninghoff replied he could not recall the exact amount for all of the impact fees combined; he stated yes, it is definitely more; and the greatest number is for transportation by

quite a bit.

Commissioner Goodson remarked and then it would be a different amount for commercial.

Mr. Denninghoff responded yes; he stated for each individual category there is a long table and a list of different classifications for each one of them; for example, most people would think that a drive-thru restaurant like McDonalds actually has very high impact fees, but the studies and the science behind it is all pretty solid; every different category of commercial and residential has a different number; but usually, they talk about single-family residential for the most part.

Commissioner Goodson stated when he said \$4,400, that would kind of scare people; and that is not near enough; but when saying \$10,000 per house, that is a lot of money.

Mr. Denninghoff advised when looking at the total for all of the impact fees, it is a significantly larger number.

Chair Steele expressed thanks to Commissioner Goodson for asking that question.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, stated there is a variety; the Board has considered impact fee increases in the past; there has been a moratorium in the past; there are certain legal requirements that recently came into play that if any consideration for increasing impact fees were given, they have to go through that process; and Tad Calkins, Planning and Development Director, is present to address that, and/or Morris Richardson, County Attorney, who are very familiar with those issues.

Mr. Richardson advised Mr. Abbate is correct, there is a process before raising the impact fees that involves a study that has to be performed to establish the basis for those impact fees; if they are reasonably based on the need for transportation impact fees, specifically, for the capacity improvements that are required and the appropriate cost for those; it is a process that would have to be gone through; he knows the County did conduct a study in the not too distant past, that was received by the Board; and he believes it to be about a yearlong process, if he is correct.

Mr. Calkins advised it was a yearlong process; that study, he thinks was presented to the Board in 2016; County Attorney Richardson is correct, there is a study and then there is a process for the amount that the fee can be increased, based on the current fee and that study; and it is laid out in statute and it is a rather involved process if the Board wanted to consider that.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if that is a State or a County requirement.

Mr. Calkins replied it is under Florida statutes.

Commissioner Goodson inquired in doing that, there is a rate that can only increase like five percent, two percent, 10 percent, or what.

Mr. Calkins responded there are limitations on how much it can be increased; and he stated he is not certain of the exact amount.

Mr. Denninghoff remarked there is a requirement for super-majority if going more than five percent; the study has to be done within so many months whenever enacting an increase is enacted to support that; in order to increase impact fees, at this point, they would have to do a new study; and go through the expense and the time to do that.

Chair Steele inquired how long that would take to be able to implement a new impact fee, is it a

year, or is it 18-months.

Mr. Calkins replied he thinks the last study done was probably about a year before it went back to the Board.

Mr. Denninghoff responded it would take close to a year; it is a pretty extensive effort and the reason it is so extensive is they have to look at how they are spending and have been spending money for the last several years, in terms of supporting increases in capacity for transportation; he is only referring to transportation in this case; how much they are spending on maintenance versus capacity, and what the revenues are for that, that are supporting it all; they look at the growth, they look at the changes in the traffic volumes, and demand on the roadway system; and they calculate all that out and it becomes a study that then could withstand a legal challenge, as well as accurately represent the situation for the Commission to consider. He reiterated if it was above a certain amount, above where it currently is, regardless of why it was at the number that it is at; he has not looked at it in quite a long time; but he believes it would take a majority, plus one.

Commissioner Pritchett expressed thanks to Mr. Denninghoff; she stated she remembers this back through the years when this was such a daunting thing when she first came in; that study done was actually with Commissioner Robin Fisher and he left it for her; she looked it over and she called Mr. Denninghoff, and they talked; all of that has to be weighed out with how it affects businesses coming in; it was mentioned there was an ability to do a gas tax, a penny on something at one time; when they talked, it would kind of share the love with everybody who drives through here, but she remembers him mentioning that and they had talked about it as a Commission for a while; but they really started doing a lot better.

Mr. Abbate mentioned there being a variety of potential options; impact fees are one, there are several other ones, and Public Works Director Bernath referred to the February 2022 report, it outlines them all very thoroughly, what is involved, how much money could be generated by each of them, and which ones require Board action by majority or supermajority vote; some of them have to go to the voters; that was outlined and that is what Public Works Director Bernath referenced earlier; and he thinks that is what Commissioner Pritchett was talking about with gas tax earlier, as one of those options.

Commissioner Pritchett stated yes, because they were looking at it at that time, they did not have to do it because they were starting to get good increases in revenues, but that seemed like a less painful impact for the people that are here; if giving more impacts to businesses they are going to share with the rest of the community; she remembers Mr. Denninghoff saying that was a really good option, but at that time they were not ready to do anything different; and she does not know if they want to find that. She inquired if it that was considered by the blue ribbon panel report.

Mr. Denninghoff replied he forgot the year, but he thinks it was 2014 that the Blue Ribbon Committee met in this room over a period of about nine months, and they issued a report and made a presentation for the Board; he stated what they suggested, if he recalls because he has not reviewed it in quite a long time, but his recollection is, is that they recommended a couple things; at the time the moratorium on impact fees was still in place, they recommended that be removed; they also recommended that an increase in gas taxes be implemented; they looked at the infrastructure sales tax, as an option at that time as well; what they had suggested was to do the gas tax which the Board could implement by itself with a super-majority; but they wanted to look at the infrastructure sales tax as soon as it would be implement into rolling back whatever increase was associated with the gas tax, as an interim measure. He went on to say because the size of the challenge was of such magnitude, that impact fees and gas taxes by itself simply would not really get the job done; the only thing that



was really going to do it was infrastructure sales tax; they talked about the report that Public Works Director Bernath put together and it was very comprehensive, and it shows all of that in there; obviously it is a few years old now, but the concepts are all the same; and the statutory underpinnings for it all is still the same.

Commissioner Pritchett stated in moving forward those Commissioners who are left will be left with this because a few are about to be leaving, but that might be some data to look at moving forward on how to make decisions; at the time none of the Commissioners wanted to raise any extra taxes on the community, but they are starting to grow and do better, and that might be something for those Commissioners, if the data was provided, for them to look at; at that time they were looking at a daunting amount of roads and reconstruction and what they did was started working on roads to keep them from getting into that situation, and they really dug their way out of that hole; and it is really showing. She stated she just wanted to throw that out to Mr. Denninghoff, because she had been so hard on him through the years and she thought she had better give him something nice; and she expressed her thanks to him, in front of all his peers here.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if in permitting, tying on to a County road by a developer with the usual deceleration and acceleration lanes, sidewalk, lighting, and four-laning is helping offset some of the construction for the County, by enforcing stricter designs.

Mr. Denninghoff responded in some circumstances it can help, because they can program in with a proposed development by programming either with the additional public funds, or entirely by the development improvements needed in a specified or local area. He stated as far as the general capacity of the general system, it really does not help very much; even with the gas taxes, which is an important amount of money, it just is not enough to do it; it would have to be double or triple the impact fees to even begin to be a substantial amount of money; and even at that point, in terms compared to the problem that they have it is a lot of money. He advised the issue is impact fees cannot be bonded, for example if it were going to try to leverage the money so there could be improvements now, and avoid inflation; they could be paid and pay the debt service on bonds with impact fees, the impact fees could not be used in order to get the bonds; and they would have to dedicate and commit either gas tax revenue or infrastructure sales tax revenue, or even the General Fund, not saying they would do that, he is just saying that impact fees are just not something that can be legally used to bond.

Commissioner Feltner appreciates Mr. Denninghoff pointing that out because that was on the tip of his tongue; he stated he thinks the reason for that is there is nothing to say that there will be new construction new year; he thinks they assume that; but as far as servicing debt, that could not be a guarantee.

Mr. Denninghoff remarked that is correct, that is the exact problem with the impact fees.

Commissioner Feltner stated also on the gas tax, it is not sustainable, and those are the words from FDOT that says people are driving electric car or cars are more efficient, or all of these things; it was really easy when everyone had to put gas in their vehicle and pay at the pump, the gas stations were the collectors of the tax; but that is not the way it is now, and it certainly will not be in the future.

Mr. Denninghoff remarked that is correct; he stated the actual revenue per mile driven by a vehicle is going down; the total revenues are going up because the total number of cars is going up, but that is being eroded away by the electric vehicles as stated; and the improvements to gas mileage is there, but the impact on the road is the same, the car is still on the road, and taking up part of the capacity. He stated that is a problem; and it is kind of like inflation, in effect, it is hurting the actual spending power the County has based on the amount

of demand there is on the road, meaning traffic volume.

Mr. Bernath stated in that February 2022 report, it actually showed that through a combination of multiple options Mr. Denninghoff laid out for example, the infrastructure sales tax, the gas tax, and there was one-half dozen of them that staff showed were available to the Board; with all of them implemented, they could catchup in 20 to 25 years; he has not looked at the report in a while; but if they do not start somewhere, it is very difficult to catch up.

Chair Steele advised that was the purpose for the question in the beginning so at some point in time, maybe this Board, and probably the next Board needs to come up with a solution to raise some additional monies for certain; and he does not think they will be able to do so today.

Commissioner Tobia inquired if Commissioner Pritchett could think of a more regressive fee than an impact fee and a gas tax.

Commissioner Pritchett responded no she could not; but she stated that is why it is going to be for them, because she is not going to be doing it.

Commissioner Tobia stated he is thinking about future Boards and equity sounds good until it adds five percent onto a person's first home; it does not have an impact on someone buying a very expensive home; even today, for a first time home buyer is quite a bit of money; but these are issues.

Commissioner Feltner pointed out people who move here and buy an existing home has no impact fee there, if they buy a 20-year old home; they are not paying an impact fee just because they moved here from up north; it is only for those folks, they could be Brevard County residents for many years, and who are maybe downsizing; they are the ones paying the impact fee; and he thinks that is just a hard concept for folks to understand, that it is not a tax on new residents.

Commissioner Pritchett advised if they look at it they might want to look at something that is very small, that builds up; she did want to throw-out that they did not have to do anything because they came up with an incredibly creative idea that helped kind of level the playing field with something that was overwhelmingly expensive to dig-out; and she suggested the Board to just put the thinking cap on and see what it comes up moving forward.

## **B.10. Human Resources**

Melissa Powers, Human Resources Director, stated today her focus on this presentation will be in three areas; first, is the Group Health Plan to include a discussion of the premium contribution history, the health plan financial summary, and the sustainability and simplification; second, is the Property/Casualty Insurance Program to include projected premiums, and the reserves; and third, is the recruiting/retention challenges and successes to include information regarding vacancy trends and recruiting efforts. She stated as a reminder the Group Health Plan covers more than just Board of County Commissioners (BoCC) employees; the charter offices and other various agencies participate in the program; in total, the Plan currently covers 4,162 employees and retirees, 3,559 dependents, and totaling 7,721 covered lives; the employer contributions are paid by the department and agencies; and they are the primary source of funding for the program. She mentioned this rate applies to all full-time active employees; since the program began, the County has built-up significant reserves in the Group Health Plan Fund and because of this the County reduced contribution rates or kept them flat for several years; the highpoint of the reserve fund was in 2019; as reserves declined the employer contributions began increasing again in 2022; and in 2023 and 2024 the contribution rates increased by eight percent. She advised the Group Health Plan is a fully-funded

self-insured program that means the County pays for administrative fees, claims, and stop-loss coverage or reinsurance for large medical claims over \$1 million; and this includes medical and pharmacy claims. She stated the slide shown is the contribution rate history that she just spoke about; and currently for this year is \$1,071 per employee, for full-time active employees per month. She mentioned this slide shows the revenue and expenses of the Group Health Plan for the past five Fiscal Years; the end of year balances or the reserves is dropping each year, as the Plan's expenses are exceeding the revenue; and the increasing pharmacy claims. She stated the next slide shown is the Plan's trend as of December 2023; the Plan has an overall trend of about two percent for medical and pharmacy claims; this means the cost of medical and pharmacy claims is rising at about two percent overall; when it is broke out, the medical claim trend is pretty flat; the pharmacy trend is running at about nine percent; the pharmacy claims are definitely driving the trend; the red line shows the medical and pharmacy claims; the green line shows the revenue less administrative costs; and the blue bar indicates the number of people in the Plan. She advised the annual reporting requires her to show financial summaries of the Plan on a calendar year; when looking at the calendar year reporting, it also shows that the expenses are exceeding revenue, which is causing the reserve to be depleted; as the cost of claims goes up, the required reserve levels also go up; this shows how the fund balance and reserves are going down and getting closer to the required reserve levels; and this leads to how to ensure sustainability of the program. She went to say how they could positively affect the financial health of the Plan, some of the possibilities had recently been presented to the Employee Benefits Insurance Committee (EBIC), and first, is continuing to increase the primary source of funding of the Plan, which is employer contributions; second, is the over 26 dependent surcharge and currently it is at \$100 a month, per dependent; they are looking into increasing this to better cover the cost in the Plan; third, they are looking at compressing the Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) and the PPO Preferred into one single PPO option; four, they are continuing to explore narrow networks for targeted services, which have been a success; and MedFast is a good example with members only paying a flat \$30 co-pay when going to a MedFast Urgent Care Center that are available throughout the entire County. She advised Board input and direction on these ideas is valuable; in addition to addressing sustainability, they want to do what they can to simplify the Plan for members; some of the ideas presented to EBIC include looking at the Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) and the Flexible Spending Account (FSA) fund structure; those are two types of health savings accounts that are currently offered; currently, they have two cards for two different accounts, and with two different vendors; this has created confusion and frustration with employees; they are looking to transition into a single FSA account; and in doing so, they are looking at ways to make that transition in a fair way and looking at possibly allowing HRA credits to move incrementally over into the FSA. She added another area that they are looking to simplify is pharmacy co-pays; currently, for many pharmacy claims there is a co-pay and a co-insurance, and they are looking to change that to a single, flat co-pay; they want to work on additional education and they feel that, that is key; while the Wellness staff does a fantastic job, really reaching out, and trying to educate the employees every day; they are looking at expanding that overall; and not just focusing on open enrollment. She stated now she is going to shift to the County's property/casualty insurance program, specifically looking at trends and projections in the property/casualty premiums, and to look at the funding; she recently received input from the County's insurance broker on projections for premium rate increases on various lines of insurance for the County; with regard to property, they have projected about a 10 percent premium increase in 2024 and are collectively looking at a projected increase of nine percent; and she noted that these projections, with regard to the other lines are assuming that there is no change, or increase in the sovereign immunity cap. She stated similar to the Group Health Plan, the charter officer's participate in many of the Property Casualty Programs, including Workers' Compensation; she showed a look at the current and projected premium costs; overall, not including property, the broker is expecting an overall nine percent increase in premiums, with the important caveat of assuming that there is no increase in sovereign immunity caps; there are currently bills pending in the Legislature that

may indeed do that; she indicated that the Property Insurance Policy period runs a little different, it is from June; it is a June policy renewal, and that property insurance is split between two Fiscal Years; there was a significant increase in the property premium last year; and about a 10 percent increase, again, this year it is expected. She advised they just looked at the cost of insurance premiums and the slide shows the total revenue and expenses for Workers' Compensation, Property, Auto, and General Liability; deficits are shown in all four programs in 2023; the end of the year balance is down to about \$11 million; and the Board approved premium increases for Fiscal Year 2024, but they will need to do more to catch up.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, interrupted by saying before going on he will address this issue because this is an important one for the new and upcoming budget; when looking at those numbers, it shows the revenues that came in for each of those lines of insurance, including Worker's Compensation, Property, Auto, and General Liability; the expense far out exceeded the revenues collected and that has been occurring for several years; when seeing an eight percent increase anticipated in the premiums charged and multiply that by the revenue; and there is a similar experience shown the next year, they are going to be in the hole very quickly; \$10 million looks like there is plenty of money in reserve, that is supposed to pay for all the prior year claims that are still out there; this is something that is going to require significant increases; and the Board will still need to find additional revenues to help support the program. He advised he wanted to ensure the Board is fully aware of understanding what that chart means; and staff is very well aware of it and it will be making the appropriate recommendations to the Board for moving it forward, so it could continue having a sustainable program in those different areas, as well as in the Group Health Insurance Program.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if there is an opinion on when those pending lawsuits will settle, or is it just a no telling.

Mr. Abbate replied they settle every year. He stated there is a variety, especially in the Workers' Compensation arena, some claims settle within one year, some never settle, and the medical and indemnity claims go on for extended periods; and he responded it varies claim by claim.

Commissioner Goodson remarked he thought it might be in a better class of insurance than he is.

County Manager Abbate replied no.

Ms. Powers went on to say she is going to shift to recruiting, where she has some good news; overall, more people were hired than lost in 2023, but this excludes Brevard County Fire Rescue because Fire Chief Voltaire addressed his department, specifically; and there were 247 new hires, 22 rehires, 198 separations including 37 retirements, and leaving a net gain of 71 people to the County.

Commissioner Goodson inquired what a rehire is.

Ms. Powers replied someone who previously worked for the County and has come back.

Commissioner Goodson stated they left in good standings and just decided to come back.

Ms. Powers stated affirmatively.

Mr. Abbate pointed out the Board is going to see it in another slide, but that 71 gain, is not 71 additional employees it is 71 of the 350 vacancies they have; that previously was heard from the Sheriff and others; from a staffing level he just wanted the Board to know they are still

trying to make up ground; and the Board will hear about that.

Ms. Powers advised this is consistent with the Countywide overall trend, vacancy, and turnovers; after struggling through COVID, the average monthly vacancies have gone down, and they do range in the 300 vacancy position range; the annual turnover rate has gone down, which are all good signs; and what is driving these positive results, in part, is due to shifting to an active recruiting process, staff positions are being created in key departments in an effort to move from passive recruiting to active recruiting, and including a position in Human Resources for Career Development Manager, Brevard County Fire Rescue for Recruiting Specialist, and Public Works Community Outreach Specialist. She mentioned some of the recruiting initiatives are targeted recruiting, including a lot of outreach to Veterans' Programs; they are reaching out to Patrick Space Force Base with their Career Transition Office, Department of Defense Skills Program; what these two Programs focus on is reaching out to active military who are in the process of getting out of the military and coming into civilian life; they are trying to give them an opportunity to come to the County, develop skills, and find a home; they also have multiple Military Veterans' Job Fairs in Viera and Palm Bay; overall, just general community job fairs and outreach; and over all sponsored and/or attended 15 additional job fairs in 2023. She advised another initiative being done is really developing the relationship with Brevard Public Schools; they developed a fantastic relationship with the Career Technical Education (CTE) Program and reached out to them and have had success bringing students in for internships; in the past year they had placed students in Public Works, Planning and Development, Solid Waste, Tourism, and Libraries; and the development of the Brevard Public Schools Fire Academy has been very positive and successful. She stated the Board has been sensitive to what has been going on with staffing levels, attrition, and the overall challenges in the labor force; the Board addressed Consumer Price Index (CPI) to maintain competitiveness in the labor market, especially with regard to the blue collar and non-bargaining unit staff; most recently in Fiscal Year 2023, the Board approved a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) of 5.38 percent, or \$1 an hour, whichever was greater; and in the current Fiscal Year 2024, the Board approved a COLA of five percent, or \$1 an hour, whichever was greater. She advised of the chart being shown is the change in CPI, which is depicted in blue, and the County's COLA increases is depicted in orange from Fiscal Years 2011 through 2024; and the final chart is the cumulative increase of CPI and COLA increases showing that the Board's action in developing COLA has pretty much been able to remain close to CPI.

Commissioner Tobia welcomed Ms. Powers as a new Director. He stated he does not envy her role and he appreciates her; the boss man interrupted her four or five times; it was very clear that he might have been a former Human Resources Manager, in that vein; he hopes they continue that graph moving forward, so they match the CPI; he knows that is a management decision; but it is one that he will pay attention to very closely.

#### **B.11. Parks and Recreation**

Mary Ellen Donner, Parks and Recreation Director, stated today she is present with Steve Kimball, Parks and Recreation Assistant Director; the first slide depicts how many Parks and how many acres totaling 6,280 acres, with 321, but really that is 241 awesome employees to take care of; there are three areas in the Parks Operations Areas; first, is the North Area and it encompasses all of District one, with 20 Parks in unincorporated Brevard, and 21 Parks in municipalities; second, is the Central Area and it has 46 Parks, with 29 Parks in unincorporated Brevard, 17 Parks in municipalities, and it encompasses all of District two; and third is the South Area and it encompasses Districts three, four, and five, with 27 Parks in unincorporated Brevard, and 12 Parks in municipalities. She advised there had been discussion about Interlocal Agreements with depictions of City of Cocoa, City of Rockledge, City of Titusville, and Brevard Public Schools, with expiration dates, and how many Parks are in each of those jurisdictions; another topic discussed lately is the property the County has conveyed over the

years; the slide shows who and when the County gave the Parks to; and there is one anomaly which is the City of Cocoa, Lee Wenner Pier still belonging to the County. She advised from the Operations side, there are 15 Community Centers spread throughout the North, Central, and South Areas, three Nature Centers, one Cultural Center, three pools and three campgrounds; in all those pools and campgrounds, and Community Centers they have phenomenal programs such as After School Programs, Summer Camp Programs, Summer Food Service, about 45 athletic recreational partners using the fields; and there are 154 fields to operate and maintain. She stated the revenue sources are how they do all of that; she showed the overall department operating revenue sources are General Fund and Voter approved Ad Valorem Taxes; Budget Office Director Hayes previously talked about the color of money; typically, these voter approved Ad Valorem Taxes can only be spent within the areas they are collected; there is Balance Forward and Other Operating Revenue Sources; she provided the breakdown of the North Area Parks having about \$27 million, the Central Area Parks has a little over \$17 million, and the South Area Parks having a little over \$34 million; that all adds up to about \$79 million; and the total operating budget for the department is a little over \$100 million, but they are just talking about the Parks and Recreation section of the department in this presentation. She advised on this slide is a depiction from 2011 to current 2024, the colors of money are able to be seen; the color purple is Hurricane repairs in the North Area Parks; the blue is Ad Valorem; the red is actually Supplemental, which is a Supplemental General Fund that has been added to the General Fund and the Ad Valorem taxes to enhance the infrastructure, which has been a priority of County management; and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) is going to go to Parrish Park Trailhead, as well as the fourth field at the Chain of Lakes softball field. She stated the next slide is the Central Area Parks; it shows when the County Manager got here, because there was a lot of interest in improving the infrastructure within Parks and Recreation; some of the Park improvements that were of note in the Central Area, include renovations to Stradley Park, as well as all of the beach crossovers over the last couple of years have actually been replaced; about 10 playgrounds were done as well; and this year they have on-tap the lights at Mitchell Ellington Park.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, advised one of the areas looking for Board direction is what they had been doing in areas that is to incrementally improve areas in three areas; one, Road and Bridge with the road paving was heard; second, the Board has not heard of it today, but did the same thing in County facilities on a Countywide basis; the Board heard a little bit about what the judge had to say, but they have been doing that throughout all of the different County facilities; third, is the Parks, and what is seen here in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) is incremental additions every year to further catch-up on deferred maintenance, which has occurred over probably a 20-plus year period that had been done in a variety of areas; and some areas had received additional attention more than others, because when seeing the difference between North, Central, and South, and why the South is so much higher in the revenue it has available compared to the Central. He mentioned it because they did additional Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU); they need less General Fund support, so the General Fund monies were available in Parks and Recreation, and those were allocated into areas where it would have the most use because the South Area is already made up and had done a lot of things that the other two areas were not able to do; what they are looking for from the Board, is to make sure, like in other areas, that they are aligned in continuing to do these things moving forward; he asked to jump ahead two slides to show one other new thing done; and they added this year something that was very successful in Public Works and it has been for a number of years, which dealt with a specialized construction crew. He advised they would do specialized construction projects in an affordable way, compared to if they were bid out, using County staff, and catching up or doing new projects; that program is still working in Road and Bridge and Public Works; however, they partnered Public Works with Parks and Recreation through Facilities for this program, if the Board approves it, moving forward; it is focusing on bathroom areas in different Parks throughout the County with a specialized crew that is dedicated only to those Parks; and they could get the Parks in better condition Countywide, and

in an area that is fairly important for shower areas on the beaches. He stated the restroom areas are important in all areas; they do not always get the necessary attention that they should, especially as citizens and visitors go into those facilities; they have been working hard and are having a lot of success; and that is really what that slide was about.

Ms. Donner continued by saying to touch on the Capital Improvement Projects for the South Area, in District 3, they made improvements at South Mainland, the restrooms at Spessard Holland were redone, many renovations were made at Long Point Campground, upcoming this year lights will be installed and improvements made at Flutie Athletic Complex, and made improvements at Hoover Athletic Complex; in District 4, they are doing a disabilities building that will house the Countywide Program in Wickham Park; this new disabilities building is slated to open almost any day; a new restroom is in the process of being installed at Canova Beach Dog Park; a lot of playground replacements had been done; in District 5, Hoover happens to be in this District, a lot of improvements over the years were made at Max K. Rodes Park, and this year putting a new restroom in at Police Foundation Park; and currently renovations are being done on the football field at Max K. Rodes Park. She went on to say the next slide illustrates 272 Countywide CIPs from 2018 to 2023; the CIP Significant Project Completions shown are broken down by North, Central, and South from 2017 to 2023; Mr. Abbate addressed the next slide, it actually had a couple of quick wins on the Bathroom Renovation Projects as Cherie Down Park and Robert P. Murkshe Memorial Park were completed; and there are two that are almost done at Juan Ponce de León Landing and Val M. Steele Park. She concluded by saying she appreciates the support by everyone for the Parks and Recreation staff and Programs, that they provide to the community; and she is available for any questions.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if the After School Programs are free.

Ms. Donner responded no.

Commissioner Goodson remarked there is a fee.

Ms. Donner replied some areas are reduced based on income; but there is a charge.

Commissioner Goodson inquired if the Summer Food Service Program is free.

Ms. Donner responded it is; she explained it is a pass-through grant from the Federal government to the State government; any child under the age of 18; they do not need to be in a Summer Program of Parks and Recreation; and they could come to one of the sites and receive free lunch.

## **B.12. Natural Resources**

Virginia Barker, Natural Resources Management Director, stated she is going to talk about the Save Our Indian River Lagoon (SOIRL) Program this afternoon; the Board just unanimously approved the Citizen Oversight Committee's (COC) recommended 2024 annual update to the SOIRL Project Plan; she provided a handout that is going around and it is shown on the screen, summarizing the 300-plus paged Plan on one piece of paper, and for the Board to see how the funds are allocated between the different types of projects to address the major sources of nutrient pollution; and how many of each type of projects are completed or underway. She advised the pie charts show how the allocation of funding has changed since project inception in 2016; the shift of funding shown in gray is from the Muck Removal Projects that dominated the original Plan, to the yellow to orange rainbow of Wastewater Related Projects and blue Stormwater Pollution Reduction Projects dominating the 2024 Plan; they have completed 88 projects of which 43 had been completed by the cities, and 45 by the County; collaboration with the cities is important for addressing hotspots and for getting

projects done Countywide; and the table also shows almost 1,500 completed homeowner projects, including quick connects to existing sewer lines, septic upgrades to advanced nitrogen reducing systems, and leaky sewer lateral repairs. She went on to say to reduce the risk of sewage over flows to the Lagoon, the SOIRL staff worked with Utility Services staff to smoke test over 40,000 homes; they replaced 264 missing or broken cleanout caps that used to let floodwaters drain directly into the sewer system and contribute to sewage overflows; 649 leaks were identified, the owners were notified of the leaks in their yards, and they offered fund reimbursements to help make the repairs; but very few owners took responsibility to make that happen. She added she came back to the Board for its approval of allowing provisions of enforcement; they worked with Code Enforcement and now have over 97 percent of the leaks repaired; and staff is focused on getting the last three percent done. She mentioned inflation, explaining the graphs show the engineer's estimate versus the contractors low bid, with the percent difference in the purple columns; the left graph is multi-million dollar projects; the right graph is some smaller projects; a lot of variability could be seen; but overall it has seen about 30 percent inflation by 2021, 50 percent inflation now, and anticipating 75 percent cost increases by the end of year 10 in 2026. She stated at the same time as they had inflation in project costs, there has also been significant revenue growth to the program; the increases shown in the right-hand column are a combination of inflation, adjustments for projects included in the Plan, plus the addition of new projects added as part of the annual Plan updates; near the bottom shows the contingency row starting out at zero, however, that total of \$302 million was relative to the \$340 million of anticipated revenue, so a little over 10 percent was held back; in 2018, a contingency fund was formalized which amounts to five percent of the funded programs in any given year; and that five percent has been updated annually ever since 2018. She stated growth and staffing is being shown as Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) on the right-hand graph and has been regulated to keep pace with increasing workload, indicated by program expenses in the left-hand graph; in year one, they hired two engineers, two biologists, and one accountant to get the program growing; she provided a shout out to the Budget Office staff, the County Attorney's Office, and the Clerk's staff for helping them establish good governance policies for this program; and they now have a dedicated team of two engineers, seven biologists, two accountants, and one environmental supervisor. She added these graphs show workload increasing annually as more projects get underway and more projects receive matching grants; the left graph shows the quadrupling of project workload, color-coded for construction, projects in design, monitoring, grant contracts, and completed projects; the right graph shows the homeowner projects that were slow, until they received grants that allowed them to expand eligibility, and increase the financial incentives for homeowners to participate; and now contractors are helping to disperse program information when they are called for a repair, they provide the repair cost that would be up to the owner, or tell them that they are eligible for an upgrade or a connection to sewer for which the SOIRL program would provide a certain amount of funding. She mentioned they started without dedicated staff for these homeowner programs; then they added one FTE; and there now are two dedicated staff members for the homeowner programs. She talked about the tremendous increase in grant funding over the last few years; this Fiscal Year after budget preparation, the Legislature approved \$20 million in appropriations for Lagoon projects; then they competed for, and won, another \$44 million from the new \$100 million of State grants, specifically for IRL projects; grants, basically doubled the accounting workload; payment for each invoice is split between the SOIRL Trust Fund and the specific Grant Fund; copies of those payments were compiled and submitted to the grant agencies for reimbursement; there are also extra internal and external audits for grants, which take time; as grants increased they added a second accountant; they are planning to fill a contract manager position this year, bringing them to three FTEs; and depending on the timing of grant contracting and project construction, they may need another accountant position next year. She stated this slide shows \$23 million of Legislative appropriations that was approved last year after budget preparation, for SOIRL projects; the top five are the \$23 million of SOIRL projects; there is also \$5 million shown for Utilities and \$6 million for city projects, etcetera; in addition to funding in the Legislation, there



is also regulatory things, and the creation of the \$100 million grant program for the Lagoon; when the State created this new \$100 million grant program, she wanted them to know that staff is ready, and not just for the first year of funding, but for this to be a recurring program, as proposed by the Governor; they wrote project proposals for over \$200 million in project requests to compete for the \$100 million in new grant program; this resulted in \$44 million in specific project awards; in addition, Legislature created a new IRL Protection Program, that requires the State to perform more water quality monitoring, enforce their Basin Management Action Plans, requiring local governments to assess the feasibility of expanding sewer service to developments of over 50 lots that are less than an acre in size, and stopped State approval for conventional septic in the Lagoon Watershed; starting January 1, 2024, all new septic systems must be Advanced Nitrogen Reducing Septic Systems; and she listed some other 2023 Legislation that impacts the Lagoon. She advised this is a preview of the 2024 appropriations, as of yesterday, but probably changing as they speak; it is known that the Governor recommended a recurring \$100 million grant program for the Lagoon; there is \$100 million in the current House Appropriations Bill; whereas, there is \$25 million in the current Senate version; the Lagoon is currently in the running for \$5.3 million for five specific projects listed in green; and there is also several million for Utilities Projects, Public Works Projects, and other County Programs. She stated the cities are also in the running for significant State funding in this appropriation cycle; she highlighted Cocoa being at the top of the list and last year they asked the Board for \$545,000 of contingency funds for a septic-to-sewer project; the Board approved the funds, conditioned on Cocoa securing State matching funds; the second row shows \$3 million listed for that project; she searched for other Lagoon projects outside of Brevard to see what neighboring counties are doing; the projects listed at the bottom of the screen and only one or two grants per local government versus the dozen on the prior slide for Brevard; and this illustrated that the delegation had been working very hard for the Brevard citizens. She noted another bright spot is sales tax, meaning that people who shop here contribute whether they live here or not; tourists contribute about 20 percent of sales tax collected in Brevard that means for every \$4 collected from residents, another dollar is collected from tourists; with grants and other contributing partners, they turn that \$5 collected into \$8.25 to spend; and the residents are getting double value, over \$8 worth of projects for every \$4 paid in sales tax. She advised that this slide is about how Lagoon water quality and harmful algal blooms respond to reducing pollution; the left map is a satellite image of the 2011 super bloom, it shows algal bloom intensity and distribution with hot colors indicating more intense bloom levels; the rest of the maps are from a water quality model developed by the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD); working from left to right across the screen, they show how bloom levels are expected to decrease as pollution is reduced or removed; starting with the first panel is how much pollution was in the Lagoon back in 2011; and the next panels are if excess pollution is reduced by 25 percent, by 50 percent, by 75 percent, or all the way on the right-hand side to the targets that have been mandated by State and Federal government. She advised clean, clear water is needed and a clean, sandy bottom to allow seagrasses to recover which will allow fish abundance to rebound; currently, they have reduced about 40 percent of the excess nutrient pollution; all SOIRL projects combined will reduce excess pollution by 70 to 75 percent; seagrass cover continued to decline from 2011 to 2020, because conditions, though improving, were still unsuitable for seagrass; however, encouraging patches of seagrass showed up in 2022; and significant patches of seagrass grew in 2023, including 40 percent cover recently measured in the Mosquito Lagoon. She concluded by saying in some ways getting started seemed like the hardest part, but each year as they complete the easiest projects available, the next projects are harder, and cost more per pound of pollution reduction benefit; as an example, the average stormwater project costs increased over 30 percent between year one and year five of the program; they expect projects in year 10 to cost about 260 percent more than the easiest and most cost effective projects completed in year one; there are years to go, but they are making progress; they have turned the ship; the IRL is showing them with fewer, smaller, and shorter blooms; more episodes of gin clear water, and expanding patches of seagrass; and that it has the capacity to rebound if they keep

pressing forward, reducing nutrient pollution. She expressed thanks to the Board for its support to restore this national treasure for the community and the economy.

### **C. PUBLIC COMMENTS**

Chair Steele stated he thinks the Board should stick with three minutes for Public Comment to hear what everyone has to say.

Christina Fleming stated she lives in District 3 and is a retired firefighter after 25 years; she is speaking today because the Board is working on setting the Budget; she has been doing some research and in that research in 1998 they signed a Referendum as a voter; they were supposed to have the millage rate as 0.6431 and it has yet never reached that level, it has always been below it; there is some money that the County might be able to look at and find; she is a taxpayer and is willing to pay that millage because she knows what it is for; and she also knows there are other departments that they can find money for in other places. She asked what the County's expenditures is for salaries and what do they anticipate it is going to be moving forward; she asked what the County's overtime budget is, because in a workshop those are things that they should know; and the people should know what they are. She mentioned with communication, people always communicate from the bottom up and play a game of telephone; as the telephone happens, stories change depending on how many people are in that telephone line; remember if there is descent in the bottom, something changed along the way of the telephone line to the Board of County Commissioners; she also believes that there are many a solution to fix the retention and recruiting problem; with recruiting one has to dangle the piece of candy; and in order to have retention they have to see past the candy to what is further on down the line. She noted if the County only continues to hire new hires, it will never have the quality employee as they learn the County and as they learn the County's way, and as they grow within the County, so constantly having new hires that do not know the area, that are still learning their job, as they progress and are kept here, then they get a great quality fire department; and pretty soon the County is going to have an unqualified fire department because it is going to have fresh out of school kids, and not have the people who have been there for 18-plus years and who want to work for the County because they love the County. She mentioned she was with the County for 25 years; when she was hired she told them she would for Brevard for Life (BFL) and she was; she was starting to get a little disappointed at the end; she only retired because it was a necessity for her family, and her husband still works for the County; therefore, she will continue to stand there and fight for her guys and gals because they deserve it, the best that they can get it; as the Board looks for their budget, please look in the budget to see where there is money or was money; and that is all she has to say.

Michael Bramson, Brevard County Firefighters Union President, stated before he begins his short statement he wants to start with a revelation; before migrating from the FRC area to Viera, some of the first responders behind him joined him for breakfast and a table talk; the reason this is important for a meeting such as today is because it is an indication of what is called 'culture'; culture is probably the most critical aspect for the survivability of the Fire Department; and that is accepted nationwide and worldwide. He went on to say it is an understanding that they are all there for a workshop and that implies that there will be many opportunities for adjustment, changes, additions, and most importantly clarification on some discrepancies and some communication errors in today's presentations; and with that being said he is expecting that the landscape of Brevard County will be very dynamic over the next eight months with an increase of emotions and intentions, some of which may or may not be heard today, or is going to be heard. He commented he would like to address some emissions of today's conversations and those emissions, probably not intentional, he would like to address one item that he is allowed to speak of, and that is for the support of services for the people that put the tires on Brevard's apparatus and put the shirts on Brevard First

Responders; he calls those people the fleet and supply; he brings this awareness to the men and women who keep the wheels turning and that allows them to respond to those calls, right on the back of the interlocal decision between the County and the Fire Department during the Interlocal Telecommunication Agreement of last week. He noted he brings that in address because every time there is something they talk about the expansion of their services, and the expansion of their service has multiple multipliers; the one that always seem to be at the very bottom, which is always the most crucial in anything they do in the paramedical military organization, is those supportive services; and in closing he would like to thank the Board for its time and for allowing them to come in and listen to what is going on in the County and being a part of Brevard County. He commented he has some optimistic hope of what can be put together in the next eight months.

Joshua Madsen stated he lives in District 4 and has been with the County for 23 years, a little over, nearly a quarter of a century; his wife, the same; she has been on for 24 years; he hopes the new guys are not making the same mistake he did; he hopes the Board has a better direction and future ahead for these guys; he has been there for a long time and his last raise over the last four years was a total of eight percent; inflation was 22.37, so he lost 14 percent by staying; he asked does he keep doing the same job, does he do 14 percent less; he commented no he still does the same job; and he had hoped many years ago that he would be where he wants to be close to his retirement years, and he is not. He mentioned his wife got hurt and she was out for the last two of her higher five years because she tore her Anterior Cruciate Ligament (ACL) on the job; that takes out her two high years; for people who want to be dedicated to this place and want to have a future and a career, the County has to look at its senior people; the new guys come on, the County dangles that carrot like a previous speaker said; they get on the job and look at the people who are dedicating their lives here; and they see that they have not been taken care of. He went on to say the County Manager, or he likes to say Micro-manager, has been a conservative County Manager for good times, but now they have never kept up with anyone else and now they cannot; \$15 per hour as a starting fire fighter/Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) for the next eight years, and they do not see a dollar more; that is only because they had a horrible negotiation against a good negotiation, and the State had to come in and supplement that money, that is not even in the contract; he does not know if the Board even knows what the firefighters get paid but \$15 per hour for a trained professional is not a lot of money to put their lives on the line; and they do not just do fire, so that is a whole big thing. He mentioned 85 percent of their calls are medical calls, paramedics running the citizens emergencies; charter cap can always be beat by a super majority vote, they know that, four out of five; it is time to change the culture of this County; the new guys are not going to stick around; a lot of the guys that have been there and were dedicated, they are going to be gone; and on a call people will know it, because people will see who has been around awhile running the call and they will know the guys that are new. He commented he thinks around 70 percent of his department has less than five years on the job, so in a career where the old guys have the knowledge, the County is going to lose a lot of that; another lady spoke earlier about \$13 per hour is what she is paying her starting staff, that is \$2,080 per month; he asked if the Board knows what rent is in Brevard County, or the cost of living in Brevard County; this is not the old conservative living County that it used to be; this is South Florida now and it needs to start competing with those places or they are going to lose everybody; and he hopes the Board can talk to the Public Safety Director and the Fire Chief face-to-face, without someone in between filtering up and down and then they can hear from the people what happens and what it takes to actually run a fire department. He stated they need a Fire Chief and a Public Safety Director running the Department not someone who has never been in the field and does not have a hand on the pulse. He thanked the Board for its time.

Commissioner Pritchett asked what the starting pay is that they are doing with the fire fighters now because the Board gave a big chunk of change to try to put it down on those lowers.

Mr. Madsen outburst from the audience they never got it.

Commissioner Pritchett advised that is going to be with the union to work out, but the Board tried to get it so that their starting was \$45,000 or \$50,000; she asked if that ever happened because the Board gave a lot of money towards that to happen for the firefighters; and she asked if they are only being paid \$15 per hour.

Frank Abbate, County Manager, responded when the Board implemented the contract about three years ago; and he thinks the average increase was about 10 percent.

Commissioner Pritchett asked to have a copy of all the firefighters pay and what their yearly salaries are so the Board can look at it; she stated she thinks that is going to be important; she wants to know what that is being distributed at because the Board really tried to fix that a while ago with a big amount of money; and that would be something she really wants to look at.

County Manager Abbate noted staff has that data available.

Michael Benton stated he is going to talk about his family a little bit so the Board knows where he is coming from; his father moved to Brevard County in the 1940s; he moved down to live with his aunt who had just moved down from South Carolina; she used to deliver messages for the military serving the country, literally running messages in Charleston, South Carolina; a few years later his grandmother moved down to Brevard County with his grandfather when he was injured serving his country; and he grew up running around the Eau Gallie area, running around in the woods, and there were lots of good fishing spots. He mentioned the Eau Gallie River is still there but most of his fishing spots are gone; there are zero-lot-line neighborhoods; to talk about his family and all this, is to show the Board the perspective he has and his vested interest in Brevard County; lots of people are newer here, but everyone in Brevard County is important; he thinks with the massive growth in Brevard County that is disproportionate when looking at the services; and the reason he thinks the services are disproportionate is because of lack of experience. He noted he worked at a pizza place, it is not something that is unique to fire rescue; working there one sees new faces come and go all the time; his mother ordered pizza tonight, he is probably not going to pray for the person making that pizza to have a least a year's experience, but if she were to call 9-1-1, it is going to be an emergency, and he is going to want to know that the people who are coming to help her, and mitigating her emergency are experienced, not working on mandatory overtime, and on their child's birthday, and he wants to know that that person's mind is focused on the emergency at hand. He stated he thinks to mitigate this problem is through employee retention; it is great hiring all these people, even the Sheriff's Department said they were hiring all these people right out of high school; earlier Commissioner Goodson mentioned someone indulging in too much alcohol and they are swimming in the ocean; that is not a far-fetched solution; and there are lots of people who have emergencies. He went on to say some of these people who make poor decisions could be someone's mother, son, uncle, or child; it happens and as a first responder it is their priority to treat everyone with dignity and respect; he has a very profound appreciation for life because of his experience; he has been a fireman in Brevard County for 19 years; experience is important; and he hopes the Board will take this into consideration when it is allocating the funds.

Sandra Sullivan stated in the presentations what she noticed is some of the numbers are not there that were there last year; she just wanted to bring some reality to the conversation; last year for transportation there was a \$699 million deficit on capacity needs; and in that presentation, this area here in the dark is what was presently funded; she attends Transportation and Planning Organization (TPO) meetings and they talk about how there is a fiscal cliff coming in 2025; she agrees with that; and it is not just transportation, in Solid Waste from last year, there was a \$95 million bond in 2023, and a \$77 million bond in 2025. She continued by saying looking at the requests for appropriations from the State, a lot of it is

asking for payment for funding to pay for new facilities like a new sewage plant, two water plants, et cetera; it becomes very evident that there is a crisis coming; pertaining to the document that was being discussed about the options and how the County could pay this, with every problem there is an opportunity and right now there are two one-half cent sales tax; there is one for the School Board of Brevard County and one for the Lagoon; she brought the Board an Attorney General report that said it cannot have two one-half cent sales taxes, just like she brought it the two Attorney General Opinions that it cannot use Tourist Development Tax (TDT) for lifeguards; and apparently that was correct. She stated there is a huge amount of inflation; there is an opportunity right now, restructure these two infrastructure surtaxes into a one cent sales tax, no increase in tax overall; but they put that money into the School Board which has been renewed twice so sunset that, they both sunset in 2026 and use it to fund things like stormwater; transportation, primarily is a big focus because that is a critical need, also utilities, et cetera; and at the same time that is not going to fly unless the Board increases impact fees, which it talked about today. She noted impact fees have not been increased for transportation in 23 years, and 32 years for the other ones; with all of this inflation, how can the Board not increase those fees; the County is restricted by the State as to how much it can increase those fees; if the Board were to look around the State, many other counties have recently increased their impact fees for growth because with growth, especially with the increased density being seen with the high-rises, those are very intensive on the infrastructure; look at Port St. John, it was \$50 million to build a sewage treatment plant back in 2018, it is \$170 million now; the Board has to find a way to be creative to fund this; and there is an opportunity right now with both the Save Our Indian River Lagoon and the school tax sunseting at the same time, with the Referendum coming in November.

Carlos Sandi stated he just wanted to give a little perspective; he is one of the new hires that was spoken about earlier; he thinks it is important for the Board to hear from the lower level, what the culture is, and what the word is; he is a new hire with Brevard County Fire Rescue (BCFR) so he is just beginning his journey; he does not have 20-plus years of experience on the job but he would argue that his opinion still matters; he was fortunate enough to receive a partial scholarship from the County in order to attend fire school and for that he is extremely grateful; he was also fortunate enough after fire school to be hired and placed at a station with a crew that he has full trust and confidence in; a crew that trains and teaches him to be a firefighter and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provider that the public can place their trust in; and he loves his job. He went on to say he is also a husband, and in about three weeks a father to his newborn son; he needs to know that while he and his team are placing their lives on the line every single shift, that the powers that be have their backs; he needs to know that every effort is put forth to make sure that they have sufficient training and equipment to keep their promises to the public; every time he leaves the house for a shift he makes a promise to his wife and that promise is to come home; and the other promise he has made to his family is to provide for his household financially to the best of his ability. He noted it is no secret that every department in the State of Florida is hiring, many with substantially higher pay; he can tell the Board for a fact that several people he was hired with, his friends, have already interviewed with and accepted positions elsewhere and will be leaving BCFR after being with the department less than three months; there has to be incentive to come and also to stay in order to properly staff and protect the communities they serve; if the Board was not aware the general consensus is that BCFR is a stepping stone department, start here and then go somewhere else once the opportunity arises; and he would venture to say that is not helpful to the budget considering the cost required to recruit, hire, and train new department members. He stated he does not need to and will not get into inflation and the cost of living, everyone is feeling the effects of that and that problem cannot be solved here; if changes are not made with regard to BCFR wages and culture, the firefighters, paramedics, and EMTs that serve this community faithfully will be put in an untenable position; and a choice will have to be made, either stay and suffer or go to another department, another city, and another county.

Commissioner Pritchett commented she would guess that Mr. Sandi is not making \$45,000 to \$50,000 per year.

Mr. Sandi advised she is guessing correctly.

Commissioner Pritchett advised he is supposed to be; and she thanked him.

David J. Van Meir Breeden stated he is 28 years old, a firefighter with BCFR, and he has lived in this County for almost 28 years; he has worked on boats and cars, cleaned windows, served in the Air Force, and part of the most recent 2024 hiring class, as well as being sponsored; it was a huge blessing; and he thanked the Board for allowing the County to give him that opportunity. He mentioned the nice thing about the yellow shirts is that people cannot tell the new hires apart from the senior firemen, the paramedics, the chiefs, and the lieutenants that are also here today; his highest priority is to the County and this job, but his first priority is to his wife; he has to be able to provide for her and their future children; he is not looking to get rich; he does not need a boat or some nice property in Grant-Valkaria; but, he would like to be able to buy a house in the County he grew up in, lives in, and serves in.

Kristin Lortie stated she is the moderator and founder of the Brevard Cares Citizen Group, where she is a proponent of citizen engagement and citizen participation in meetings like this; she has been kind of distracted this meeting, and it has nothing to do with the firefighters; she is sympathetic to their comments and she is glad they are in attendance to exercise their rights to citizen engagement; she has been distracted because the room was not sized well enough; she came to learn and wanted to participate, but the room did not hold everyone, so she had to start out in the Space Coast Room downstairs watching it on the television; and during that time she put in speaker cards according to the Agenda which says that if someone wishes to speak to any Item on the Agenda, to please fill out a speaker card. She mentioned that has not been the case; what has happened is there is one public comment at the end whereas everyone knows at a normal Commission meeting that residents can speak to any Item as it goes along; that would have been helpful for some of these wonderful presentations heard, to be able to accompany the presentation with the speakers; there was actually one speaker who had to leave, she had put in a card and could not even stay, so there is no benefit from that; and she put in three cards herself that were denied, including one on the vote that the Board took on the lifeguards. She mentioned the Board took a binding vote during a Workshop; there is no meeting backup that is available for residents to be able to see Commission Tobia's proposal at the moment; the public had no right to actually speak prior to the meeting; she was even at the meeting and put in a card; her understanding of the right to speak is that citizens are supposed to be enabled and given the right to speak prior to a vote; she objects to a binding vote being taken at a County Workshop which was not simply forwarded to an Agenda Item to a meeting so that people who are not at this meeting could actually weigh in on that vote; and she finds that objectionable. She commented she does not think that the Board should be participating in that and allowing it; she was downstairs trying to get the attention of the lady that was monitoring that room; it is very unsettling to not have the participation that is needed to have a robust civic engagement in County business; these are marvelous presentations and she is so glad to be there even watching it on video; but the public has not been given the stated right to access in which some people came prepared to speak to. She stated she is disappointed that the speakers could not all be in the same room; people take the time to attend in person and they want the right to engage; it would have made a more robust meeting to allow the citizens to speak on Items that they cared about; the Citizen's Academy and some of these presentations are helpful; she was versed in some of this at the Citizen's Academy which she is grateful for and would recommend to all of the citizens of Brevard County to take; on Tuesday she attended the Supervisor of Elections who did the logistical and accuracy testing; she felt very confident and comfortable in the election; she wanted to make note of that since he was not in attendance here, perhaps he is too busy doing the election; everyone should know that

someone is doing a good job in Brevard County, including the Board; she is leaving disappointed in how this happened; she is glad the Workshop happened as she supports these workshops; and she would request that the Board reconsider the public participation as it moves through the Workshop and prior to any binding Board votes because she objects.

Chair Steele advised Ms. Lortie her objection has been noted and he will look into it.

Brent Wahlenberg stated he is 66 years old and he was born in West Melbourne; his dad was a fish guide back then; and the shores of the Lagoon were foam. He mentioned the chemical reaction going on the shore of the Lagoon is, without it, he could go into a lot of things but, without it people can throw all the money in the world at the Lagoon, but that is not going to fix anything, but with it, it can feed everybody; and he has been on his own campaign fixing the Lagoon for 15 years. He noted the County basically placed the shell back on the shore; the entire Lagoon is acidic and it threatens everything; the foam on the shore is now on the beaches; one can sit and watch the acid base reaction, which is what causes the foam on the beaches; people can sit and watch the beach turn to liquid and float away; that is the cloudy water; and that same chemical reaction should be going on in the Lagoon. He commented come to find out Henry Flagler who built the Ponce de León Hotel, pulled coquina out of the Lagoon and stamped it in a mold; if one goes to St. Augustine the whole city is coquina, but that was his success; he did that all the way down to Miami, pulling it from the shore; and if that was not enough they paved U.S.1 pulling coquina from the shore. He noted he is about to make a documentary that is going to blow things wide open, he thinks, but he would rather come in here and have the Board question what he has to say; and if it has questions, or wants to tell him he is wrong, lay it on him.

Marcus Braga stated he is a new hire, fresh out of high school, and is 19-years old; many of the people here know him as the son of the firefighter in Osceola who was unfortunate enough to take an axe to the head while on shift, and early last year was even more unfortunate to go into cardiac arrest in their own living room which he and his brother got to work on him; he was not covered by the Heart and Lung Bill which claims to cover all firefighters; and, however, this has not deterred himself to pursue a career as a firefighter. He commented the concern he has with Brevard is not a new one, it is very well known, it is often the first thing that comes to mind when asking other firefighters about them, and that is the pay; he believes BCFR's pay is not reflective of its duties in comparison to adjacent departments in Brevard County; as far as duties are concerned, they are called firefighters, but 95 percent of the job is to transport patients to the hospital; this leads to those on rescues to have more calls in general, as well as spend more time away from the station while they drive to and from the hospital, versus those who get to go back to the station immediately after they leave a scene; and it leads to those on rescues to miss meals, miss opportunities to get a workout in, and miss out on sleep all while getting paid no more than those who are not on rescue and get paid relatively the same as those who work in departments that are not required to transport. He noted he believes Brevard's pay should reflect the amount of work being done and a pay increase for everyone capable of transport or implement a rescue incentive for those on the rescue; he also agrees with what Chief Voltaire said about the sponsorship being a phenomenal idea for BCFR, but Brevard's problem does not lie in the hiring, it lies with retention; for every class that is hired, they lose just as many to other destination departments; and for every person forced through medical school, all it does is make them more marketable to other departments with a better medic incentive and possibly a better rescue incentive. He stated he thinks the County can hold people from sponsorships with Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) but when the cost of the MOU can be paid off by the difference between a single years' pay between this department and a destination department it does not do anything except waste time and resources on a very temporary solution; when he first started his time in the field at the start of the Fiscal Year, everybody at his station except the lieutenant was in the process of applying for a different department; he loves BCFR and what they did for him and his dad, but he would one day like a

wife, kids, and a house; and the way things are now there is no way he can afford even one of those off his current salary.

Upon motion and vote, the meeting adjourned at 4:24 p.m.

**Result:** APPROVED

**Mover:** Tom Goodson

**Second:** Rob Feltner

**Ayes:** Pritchett, Goodson, Tobia, Feltner, and Steele

ATTEST:

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RACHEL M. SADOFF, CLERK

\_\_\_\_\_  
JASON STEELE, CHAIR  
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS  
BREVARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

As approved by the Board July 9, 2024.