

**REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE WORKSHOP OF
THE ESCAMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS**

SEPTEMBER 4, 2025

Present: Commissioner Michael S. Kohler, Chair, District 2
Commissioner Ashlee M. Hofberger, Vice Chair, District 4
Commissioner Steven L. Barry, District 5
Commissioner Lumon J. May, District 3
Commissioner Steven R. Stroberger, District 1
Honorable Pam Childers, Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller
Codey Leigh, General Counsel, Clerk and Comptroller's Office
Wesley J. Moreno, County Administrator
Alison Rogers, County Attorney
Ashley Danner, Office Assistant IV, Clerk and Comptroller's Office
Jose Gochez, Operations Manager, County Administrator's Office

Location: Ernie Lee Magaha Government Building, Board Chambers, First Floor
221 Palafox Place, Pensacola, Florida

Report prepared by: Ashley Danner

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Kohler, Chair, called the Committee of the Whole (C/W) Workshop to order at 9:17 a.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Commissioner Kohler led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

3. Was the Meeting Properly Advertised?

The Board was advised by Ashley Danner, Office Assistant IV, Clerk and Comptroller's Office, that the meeting was advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on August 28, 2025, in the Board's weekly meeting schedule.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Board Items

I. Discussion Concerning the Escambia County Animal Welfare and Adoption Center

A. John Robinson, Animal Services Director, reviewed a PowerPoint Presentation, which was attached as backup, titled *Animal Welfare & Adoption Center* and:

- Overviewed the ways the proposed design for a new Animal Welfare and Adoption Center would address the current issues Animal Services faces with the limited space of current facilities, including providing proper movement for incoming and outgoing animals, more rest and office areas for staff and volunteers, meeting and training spaces, storage for disaster response equipment, and better veterinary services;
- Reviewed the need for more parking areas than the current facility provides for staff and visitors, and how it may increase adoption rates;
- Addressed the issue of overcrowding in lobby areas of the current facility, and how the size of the reception space is unsafe for visitors and animals because of the lack of proper avenues of animal movement, as well as the noise level discouraging potential adopters;
- Summarized how the proposed facility could help address animal issues in the community through a variety of programs, such as offering low-cost spay and neuter services, continuing and expanding their pet food pantry, community education opportunities, as well as continued and further partnerships with local volunteer groups and charities;
- Reviewed the health and safety benefits of the proposed Center, including how pods allow for easier isolation of dangerous animals or those with medical needs; separation of areas based on need to limit cross-contamination; better security setups for staff, visitors, and animals; and the addition of climate control the current facility lacks;
- Explained the benefits of the Fear Free design of the proposed facility, including training for staff to reduce stress of the animals, the expectation of increased adoption rates through a less overwhelming process, access to play yards that are designed for each isolated pod; and
- Briefly addressed the potential for adjusting or replacing Ordinances currently in place to change language that has since updated, and to better align with current State Statutes;

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued...

I. Continued...

- B. In response to Commissioner Stroberger's inquiry, Director Robinson spoke about the lack of low-cost spay and neuter options in the County and the inability for Animal Services to provide them currently, he supports the need for those options so residents do not have to travel to other states to afford the procedures. He also answered that volunteering options at the Center begin flexibly at age 12;
- C. At Commissioner Kohler's request, Director Robinson clarified the number of kennels requested for the new facility was based on a Feasibility Study that had been conducted. He also advised the importance of devising ways to lower the number of animals coming into the facility through various programs. Director Robinson and County Administrator Moreno confirmed that there are options identified for potential locations for a new facility, as well as methods to compensate for smaller acreage in the proposed design;
- D. Director Robinson also advised that while there is notable intake of animals from the City, they do not currently contribute to costs at the Animal Shelter, unlike in other municipalities, and he briefly described software to track percentages of animals acquired from different Districts. The Board further discussed the potential of having a conversation with the City regarding funding assistance for shelter services;
- E. The Board discussed the proposed \$33 million cost of the new facility and that funding could potentially come from LOST reserves; also discussed was the need for reduction of cost for the Center, potentially through cutting down non-animal services;
- F. Commissioner Hofberger highlighted the importance of lessening the length of stay of animals in the shelter along with adding to the number of kennels; Director Robinson offered information about the current length of time most animals spend in the shelter and the percentage of kennels taken up by animals up for adoption in comparison to held strays; and

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AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued...

I. Continued ...

G. At Commissioner Hofberger's request, Director Robinson also further clarified the requirements to be considered a "no kill" shelter, and confirmed that the County Shelter is not one. He also explained the prioritization for responding to calls made to Animal Services about loose animals.

FOR INFORMATION: The Board briefly discussed adding the old Baptist Hospital property as a discussion item to the evening Meeting's Agenda.

5. Adjourn

Commissioner Kohler, Chair, declared the C/W Workshop adjourned at 10:29 a.m.