

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

JANUARY 8, 2026

Present: Commissioner Ashlee M. Hofberger, Chair, District 4
Commissioner Steven L. Barry, District 5
Commissioner Michael S. Kohler, District 2
Commissioner Lumon J. May, District 3
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
DeLana Allen-Busbee, Operations Supervisor, Clerk and Comptroller's Office
Jose Gochez, Operations Manager, County Administrator's Office

Absent: Commissioner Steven R. Stroberger, Vice Chair, District 1

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

Report prepared by: DeLana Allen-Busbee

AGENDA ITEMS

1. Call to Order

Commissioner Hofberger, Chair, called the Committee of the Whole (C/W) Workshop to order at 9:01 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 DeLana Allen-Busbee, Operations Supervisor, Clerk and Comptroller's Office, that the meeting was advertised in the *Pensacola News Journal* on December 31, 2025, in the Board's weekly meeting schedule.

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Board Items

I. Discussion Concerning Midtown Commerce Park

A. Presentation:

Debbie Bowers, Assistant County Administrator, reviewed a PowerPoint presentation, which is filed with the Workshop documents, titled *Midtown Commerce Park*, and:

- Reviewed a brief history of the property and advised the Board that there are specific uses allowed on the acreage due to restrictive covenants in the deed through the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA);
- Outlined parcels that staff have identified for various uses, including a potential stormwater pond, a Fire Training Facility, and a portion to be donated to New Hope Church;
- In response to inquiry from Commissioner May, Ms. Bowers and Chips Kirschenfeld, Natural Resources Director and Deputy County Administrator, advised that in order to lift restrictions on the property, additional environmental and soil testing could be conducted to determine the level, if any, of contamination on the contiguous parcels;
- Ms. Bowers reviewed additional adjacent parcels around the site, including a portion staff identified for use by Animal Shelter Services, outlined marketable acreage, and advised that staff planned to bring action items forward in the near future regarding vacating areas and rights-of-way; and
- In response to Board inquiry, Ms. Bowers advised that the capped area (which is the process in which a contaminated portion is physically capped during environmental remediation) was still buildable, but would need the correct engineering completed, and could be a more expensive option.

(Continued on Page 3)

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued...

I. Continued...

A. Continued...

The Board:

- Discussed donating approximately three acres to New Hope Church for a public use purpose and/or a community center, the desire to have residents participate in the discussions, as the project will have a lasting impact on the community, and how the CRA should be included as part of the discussion as well;
- Heard comments from Adam Harrison, Fire Chief, regarding his vision for the new training facility and discussed potential return on investment, future programs at the facility, the \$1 million in State funding set aside for the project, and the expected level of participation from the City of Pensacola; and
- Was advised by Commissioner May, in regard to a prior conceptual plan of the area, that he wants to capture and keep the intent of residents of that neighborhood, many who have since passed away, and ensure their legacy is maintained as the sites are developed.

Christopher Platé, Executive Director of FloridaWest:

- Advised that more economic development product, with a variety of building and lands, is needed, and that he envisions precision manufacturing, warehouse space, and supply chain development on the parcels;
- Mr. Platé explained that some master planning is needed in order to maximize the development, and that FloridaWest intends to do additional research on the capped area to better identify how to market, sell, and develop that portion; and
- Discussed potential Triumph opportunities for the area, and advised that FloridaWest would be comfortable handling the master planning, if the BCC could handle the appraisals.

(Continued on Page 4)

AGENDA ITEMS – Continued

4. Continued...

I. Continued...

A. Continued...

The Board:

- Discussed having staff conduct the environmental and soil testing, whether affordable housing was an option for a portion of the area, leasing the property rather than selling it due to restrictions on the site and how funds would be distributed, ensuring that a substantial portion of the lease fees and other funds remain in that area, likely in the CRA, and that the development on the site should not be solely projects that are exempt from ad valorem taxation; and
- Requested that staff bring back a cost analysis for the environmental testing to the January 22nd BCC Meeting, and also to work with Mr. Platé to determine other funding options, such as potential grants and tax incentives for the area.

B. Board Discussion – Discussion was held throughout the presentation and is referenced above.

The Board agreed to discuss “customary use” at the next Committee of the Whole and also bring an action and discussion item to the second BCC meeting in February.

5. Adjourn

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