

North Florida Water Utilities Authority

May 18, 2026 at 09:30 A.M.

The North Florida Water Utilities Authority (NFWUA) met in a scheduled meeting at the Judicial Annex Building 218 Parshley Street Southwest, Live Oak Fla. 32064.

The meeting was opened with the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Board Attendance:

Chairman, Rocky Ford

Vice-Chairman, Commissioner Franklin White

Board Member, Commissioner Timothy Murphy

Board Member, Commissioner Leo Mobley

Board Member, Commissioner Steven Dicks

Others in Attendance:

County Manager, David Kraus

County Assistant Manager, Kevin Kirby

County Commissioner, Robby Hollingsworth

County Commissioner, Kevin Parnell

Suwannee County Administrator, Jason Furry

NFWUA Attorney, Grady Williams

Executive Director, Shannon Roberts

Deputy Clerk, Melissa Williams

Powell Consulting CPA- Richard Powell

Customer Service Support Specialist, Wendy Parnell

Additions and Deletions: None

Approval of Agenda

MOTION by Commissioner, Franklin White to approve agenda. SECOND by Commissioner, Timothy Murphy. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comment:

Chairman, Rocky Ford requested to hold public comments till the end.

Discussion and Actions:

1. Approval of Minutes:

Meeting minutes approval for 04/20/2026 - NFWUA Board Meeting

MOTION by Commissioner, Timothy Murphy to approve the minutes from 04/20/2026 for the NFWUA meeting. SECOND by Commissioner, Franklin White. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Bills & Vouchers:

Requesting approval of the payments for bills and vouchers during period from April 8 – May 13, 2026 -Richard Powell, (Powell Consulting)

Approval of Bills and Vouchers

See attached documents:

- The bill payment list, totaling \$77,968.86 for checks issued since the last meeting, was presented.
- The Board had no concerns after reviewing the list.
- **Conclusion:** The bill payment list was approved by a motion.

MOTION by Commissioner, Franklin White to approve the payment of bills and vouchers in the amount of \$77,968.86 during the period from April 8 – May 13, 2026. SECOND by Commissioner, Steven Dicks. The motion carried unanimously.

3. NFWUA Financial Report- Richard Powell, (Powell Consulting)

Financial Report Review (April)

See attached documents:

- The financial report for the end of April, seven months into the fiscal year, was presented.
- The balance sheet shows total assets of \$608,265, with \$527,990 in cash.
- Liabilities, mainly customer deposits and accounts payable, total \$85,716. The net equity is \$522,549.
- The revenue and expense statement (October through April) shows total revenue of \$1,044,038 and total expenditures of \$718,142, resulting in a net profit of \$324,553.
- Commissioner, Tim Murphy asked a question regarding a \$750 vehicle usage charge. Powell Consulting, Richard Powell explained as a required charge for employees' commute value per IRS regulations.
- **Conclusion:** The financial report was approved by a motion.

MOTION by Commissioner, Leo Mobley to approve the NFWUA Financial Report October 1, 2025 – April 30, 2026. SECOND by Commissioner, Steven Dicks. The motion carried unanimously.

4. NFWUA continuing services award principles- Executive Director, Shannon Roberts

Engineering Services Selection and Procurement

See attached documents:

A new process for assigning projects under continuing professional services contracts was discussed and approved. The goal is to ensure compliance with Florida statutes requiring selections based on qualifications, not cost.

- The approved principles aim to base assignments on qualifications, promote fair work distribution, maintain transparency, and document decisions. Key criteria include ability, past performance, location, workload, and volume of prior work.
- Executive Director, Shannon Roberts stated it is a good outline and to go see the process.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford spoke about the qualification.
- The purpose of this document is to formally establish how NFWUA assigns engineering projects under the continuing professional services contracts.
- Commissioner, Timothy Murphy spoke about the continuing contract and the difference in the amount for Columbia County-\$4 million and Suwannee County at \$7 ½ million.
- NFWUA Attorney, Grady Williams spoke about the five professional engineers plus one. He spoke about the attached contract. Please look at the Selection Principles area one and five and in the attached documents. See area (F) that talks about the safe harbor and references to initial ranking of successful responding firms.
- Stew Lilker made a comment about the agenda.
- The approach outlined in the document seeks to achieve the following:
Ensure Assignments are based on qualifications not price competition

Promote fairness and equitable distribution among qualified firms.

Maintain transparency and consistency in assignment decisions

Document decision-making to withstand audit, protest, or public scrutiny

Avoid any appearance that NFWUA is circumventing competitive procurement laws.

The Executive Director, Shannon Roberts will use RFQ rankings to make recommendations to the Board for final approval.

- Discussion also covered Florida statute 287.055, which states firms "may not be required to bid against one another." This allows the Board to negotiate with one firm and, if unsuccessful, move to another, but not solicit competing bids for the same project. A suggestion was made to explore an expansive vendor list to improve the procurement process.
- Moses Clepper spoke about the Florida Statute 287.055 and save the qualification and change to rebid would save money.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford spoke about once they talk, it moves to the next contractor.

MOTION by Commissioner, Franklin White to approve of NFWUA continuing service award principles and incorporation into procurement policy. SECOND by Commissioner, Steven Dicks. The motion carried unanimously.

5. Arcadis Work Order for Ellisville Lift Station – Executive Director, Shannon Roberts

Work Order for Arcadis: Ellisville Lift Station & Force Main Project

See attached documents:

- A work order for Arcadis was presented for professional engineering services for the Ellisville Lift Station and Force Main project, which supports the BISD implementation.
- The project will analyze the existing lift stations' capacity and determine necessary upgrades.
- The total cost is \$248,866, which is under the \$350,000 budget. The work is fully funded by DEP Grant # L0288.
- The project has a four-month duration, with an estimated construction cost expected at the two-month mark.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford likes the time frame.
- Commissioner, Timothy Murphy spoke about the time frame being good with the budget coming up.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford made a comment about the grant and the amount which is \$2 million dollars.
- Executive Director, Shannon Roberts spoke about applying the unspent money from the grant in Ellisville. Maybe on train 1 and 2 to keep Busy Bee on track.

- Chairman, Rocky Ford made a comment that NFWUA are working for both counties Columbia and Suwannee.
- Arcadis was selected based on their qualifications, past performance, and ability to work quickly.

MOTION by Commissioner, Steven Dicks to approve the work order for Arcadis for the Ellisville lift station upgrades. SECOND by Commissioner, Timothy Murphy. The motion carried unanimously.

6. Hazen – Sawyer work order for NFWUA Engineering Services- Executive Director, Shannon Roberts

Review and approval of work order for NFWUA Engineering Services

See attached documents:

- A work order was proposed for Hazen and Sawyer to provide a dedicated staff engineer to the utility authority.
- The engineer will handle plan reviews, technical document reviews, GIS mapping, and policy development.
- The contract is on a "not to exceed" basis of \$100,000 (\$50,000 for the engineer's time and \$50,000 for other resources within their firm).
- Hazen and Sawyer were selected as the top-ranked firm from thirteen respondents.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford spoke about Hazen having their price sheet rates signed.
- Commissioner, Timothy Murphy spoke about the CEI work.
- Executive Director, Shannon Roberts stated he would go to another firm for the CEI.
- It was clarified that this work, including CEI, is typically covered by grant funding.
- Moses Clepper made a comment about his support was to have Columbia and Suwannee on this Utility Board, any employee I object to. Do not add any more financial burden and keep a record. One million dollars or close to it for the tax payors, going in the wrong direction.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford made a comment to Moses Clepper that this is a grant.
- Moses Clepper made a comment to use the grant.
- Stew Lilker made a comment about CEI doing engineering or construction. Spoke about Fort White and the problems.
- Executive Director, Shannon Roberts spoke about the utility approach-separate firm.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford made a comment that DOT recommends separate.
- Executive Director, Shannon Roberts made a comment about separate firms.
- Stew Lilker made a comment about is there a policy in writing.
- Conclusion: A motion was made to approve the work order for Hazen and Sawyer.

MOTION by Commissioner, Franklin White to approve the work order for Hazen and Sawyer. SECOND by Commissioner, Timothy Murphy. The motion carried unanimously.

7. NFWUA review of formation agreement – Executive Director, Shannon Roberts

Review and discussion of NFWUA formation agreement language with possible Board action

See attached documents:

- Sale of the NFMIP Wastewater Plant: A major point of contention was Columbia County's recent sale of the NFMIP water and wastewater plant to the City of Lake City. Suwannee County Board members expressed frustration over a lack of communication and collaboration, feeling it violated the spirit of the interlocal agreement.
- Commissioner, Franklin White spoke about how he represents Suwannee County and this Board. The agreement should be combined not discussed, no payment or brought to NFWUA. When you give up the plant, does the water go with it?
- Chairman, Rocky Ford stated yes.
- County Manager, David Kraus spoke about water use.
- Commissioner, Franklin White asked if there was revenue or was this a one-time sale.
- Columbia County's Rationale: The decision was defended as financially sound, as the plant was always intended to be turned over to the city, falls within the city's utility service area, and the agreement has the city assume debt. This avoids future operational costs for a plant with no current customers and saves the county money.
- County Manager, David Kraus stated that this was a one-time sale, the county wants to get out of the utilities business.
- Commissioner, Franklin White asked why the revenue could not come to the NFWUA?
- County Manager, David Kraus stated that this was a 3-party plant and city territory growth. NFWUA could not do it themselves.
- Discussion ensued:
- Counterarguments: Critics argued the authority had significant bargaining power that was not used, as the city was under a consent order. The deal was seen as rushed and "poorly negotiated."
- Stew Lilker spoke about the County Manager, David Kraus and that was no secret, there is 2 Columbia County Commissioner every opportunity to bring it to this Board. A vote of confidence is only done in Europe on election day.
- Moses Clepper spoke about needing more proof, NFWUA not moving in the right direction. Public does not know about the agreements. There are grounds to dissolve this Board, talking about Executive Director Shannon Roberts.
- Bo Hancock made a comment about providing wastewater for both counties.

- Wayne Hannaka raised concerns about the authority's lack of a clear return on its \$1.5 million investment and agreed with Chairman Rocky Ford. The public does not know about the NFWUA and rather it will work or not.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford spoke about Columbia County and Suwannee County was being fined. NFWUA is handling the problems.
- County Manager, David Kraus made a comment about the NFWUA running the utilities and that is your return on your investment.
- Commissioner, Franklin White made a comment and was upset the sale was not discussed.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford spoke about that the county was negotiating with the city. Why did we do it overnight? Had a year for a payment, whole thing makes Columbia County look bad.
- Commissioner, Timothy Murphy stated that County Manager, David Kraus and Assistant County Manager, Kevin Kirby backed the sell of the Mega Park Wastewater Plant.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford made a comment that the County Manager, David Kraus should have come to the NFWUA.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford stated that was a financial situation and was not informed, million and a half for the plant being built to hand over to the city. Everybody is having trouble dumping sewers in Florida, handing it over to the city debt paid.
- Commissioner, Timothy Murphy supports when it is a financial good decision, Mega Park wastewater has only one customer.
- Discussion ensued:
- Chairman, Rocky Ford made a comment about being under a consent order to Margaret Street, millions of dollars we had other choices.
- Commissioner, Robby Hollingsworth spoke about there being no customer and do not have one coming either to the Mega Park will have to clean it and shut it down. When are we getting a customer, maybe in 3 plus years. The plant was built to the city's spec. Ellisville will make money from day one for NFWUA. Thanking Suwannee County and Columbia County, NFWUA does a good job. Politics will hurt a Board, appoint people to the Board like Waler Graham who worked in Dade County in utilities. Need to do it in 30 days
- Chairman, Rocky Ford asked the question do you think a separate Board would have a difference opinion?
- Commissioner, Franklin White asked the question why was it rushed?
- Commissioner, Robby Hollingsworth stated that it was built to the city's specs.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford asked the question could NFWUA negotiate with the city, we were paying the city.
- Discussion ensued:

- Commissioner, Franklin White spoke about maybe we should negotiate with the city, it is not political it is financial. We needed a discussion.
- Commissioner, Steven Dicks spoke about the NFWUA has taken on projects that have problems. Give it to someone to fix and clean up the problems in Ellisville with DEP. It was never expressed about Mega Park, why was it put on the Raftelis/ Interlocal agreement. Concerns were raised that a precedent was being set where the authority fixes problematic projects (like Ellisville) only for the counties to sell them off.

NFWUA Attorney, Grady Williams made a comment about the input on the Interlocal.

- Future of the Authority: The conflict led to a broader debate on the authority's viability. One member suggested the lack of cooperation could be grounds to dissolve the two-county authority. In contrast, it was noted the authority recently secured a two-million-dollar grant, demonstrating its potential value. A request was made for both counties to conduct a "vote of confidence" to reaffirm their commitment, though this was met with some opposition.
- Board Composition: A suggestion was made to remove county commissioners from the Board and replace them with experienced, non-political individuals. Columbia County is reportedly advertising to replace commissioners on the Board.
- Commissioner Timothy Murphy made a comment about needing to do better job to communicate with the Board. He talked about Walter Graham would do a good job for NFWUA and also talking about the payment of the future Board members and going public with it.
- Executive Director, Shannon Roberts stated we deferred it and there were no instructions to move forward.
- Commissioner, Timothy Murphy stated to go public.
- NFWUA Attorney, Grady Williams asked a question about will this be the BOCC Board?
- Commissioner, Timothy Murphy stated to decide, so County Manager David Kraus can move forward.
- Executive Director, Shannon Roberts stated that NFWUA will pay the new members of the Board.

Asset Transfer and Financial Independence

- The transfer of assets from the counties to the utility authority was identified as a critical step toward financial independence. Once assets are transferred, the authority can set its own rates and manage its finances without county subsidies.
- Commissioner, Franklin White stated he does not disagree to get off the Board and transfer the assets and move forward.
- Suwannee County noted it has an \$8 million shortfall for one of its plants and assumes that debt will be transferred along with the asset.
- Chairman, Rocky Ford made a comment
- Concerns were raised that a precedent was being set where the authority fixes problematic projects (like Ellisville) only for the counties to sell them off.

Public Comments:

- Stew Lilker made a comment and pointed out a discrepancy between the contract for the NFMIP plant sale approved by Columbia County and the version approved by the City of Lake City. With a closing date of May 29th, it was suggested that an injunction or re-holding public hearings were needed to align the contracts.
- Moses Clepper made a comment and cautioned against rushing the asset transfer, as it could be difficult to undo if the authority fails. And making sure that all the boxes are checked.

Board Comments:

Chairman, Rocky Ford made a comment about it being a financial independent to transfer assets.

Commissioner Franklin White made a comment about the Suwannee County it has an \$8 million shortfall for one of its plants and assumes that debt will be transferred along with the asset.

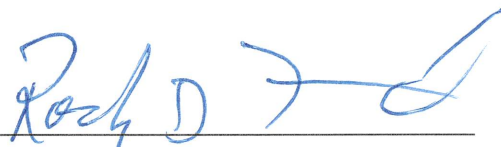
Attorney Comments: None.

Director Comments: None.

Adjournment:

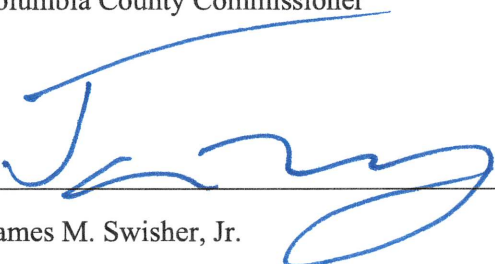
There being no further business, meeting was adjourned at 11:27 A.M.

ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rocky Ford", written over a horizontal line.

Rocky Ford, Chairman

Columbia County Commissioner

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James M. Swisher, Jr.", written over a horizontal line.

James M. Swisher, Jr.

Clerk of Court & County Comptroller