

**In The Matter Of:**  
*Central Florida Tourism Oversight District*

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*Board of Supervisors Meeting*  
*July 24, 2024*

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*Legal Realtime Reporting*  
*P.O Box 533082*  
*Orlando, Florida 32853- 3082*

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CENTRAL FLORIDA TOURISM OVERSIGHT DISTRICT

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS MEETING

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LOCATION: Central Florida Tourism Oversight  
District  
1900 Hotel Plaza Boulevard  
Lake Buena Vista, Florida 32830

DATE TAKEN: July 24, 2024

TIME: 10:31 a.m. - 12:05 p.m.

REPORTED BY: SANDRA D. BROWN, FPR,  
Court Reporter and Notary Public  
State of Florida at Large

**PRESENT:**

**BOARD MEMBERS:** Charbel Barakat, Vice Chairman; Brian Aungst, Jr.; Ron Peri; Bridget Ziegler; Craig Mateer

**SPEAKERS:** Pastor Socrates Perez, Horizon West Church; Eddie Fernandez, CFTOD Operational Safety Consultant; Eric Ferrari, Fire Chief; Roger Smith, Deputy Fire Chief; DJ Ward; Katherine Luetzow, Planning & Engineering Manager; Christine Ferraro, Director - RCES; Jennifer Albritton, Manager, Business Affairs - RCES; Susan Higginbotham, Chief of Finance; Jon Shirey

**CFTOD STAFF:** Stephanie Kopelousos, District Administrator; Paula Hoisington, Deputy District Administrator of Administration; Mike Crikis, Deputy District Administrator of Operations; Kurt Ardaman, Esquire, General Counsel for CFTOD; Daniel Langley, Esquire, General Counsel for CFTOD; Roy Payne, Esquire, General Counsel; Eddie Fernandez, CFTOD Operational Safety Consultant; Eric Ferrari, Fire Chief; Alycia Mills, Executive Assistant; Matthew Oberly, External Affairs Director; Rocky Haag, External Affairs Coordinator; Tanya Naylor, Director of Security and Emergency Management; Ron Zupa, IT Service Delivery Manager; Samarth Thomas, Systems Administrator; Katherine Luetzow, Planning & Engineering Manager; Mary Balliet, Senior Human Resources Generalist; Tiffany Kimball, Contracting Officer; Yenni Hernandez, Chief Information Officer; Susan Higginbotham, Chief of Finance; Joey Rodriguez, Chief Building Inspector and Interim Building Official; Christine Ferraro, Director - RCES; Ella Hickey, Building & Safety; Jason Herrick, Director of Public Works and Utilities Advisor; Roger Smith, Deputy Fire Chief; Wendy Duncan, Manager - Laboratory Operations; Douglas Henley, Director of Facilities; Craig Sandt, Principal Construction Manager; Joel Edwards, Deputy Fire Chief; Holly Hagans, Security and Emergency Management Coordinator; Heidi Powell, Manager - Financial Reporting Analysis; Jennifer Albritton, Manager, Business Affairs - RCES

## P R O C E E D I N G S

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1  
2  
3 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All right. It is --  
4 seeing that it is actually 10:31, I will call this  
5 meeting of the Central Florida Tourism Oversight  
6 District to order. Welcome, everybody. I think  
7 it's been, what, about six weeks since we got  
8 together? Nothing of consequence has happened in  
9 the world. I'm glad. It's been very quiet, and  
10 that's good. It's good to be back. Good to be  
11 back.

12 We'll start with our invocation. Introducing  
13 our guest, Socrates Perez is a dedicated local  
14 pastor with deep roots in the Orlando community.  
15 He was raised in Orlando and graduated from West  
16 Orange High School in Winter Garden. He earned his  
17 bachelor's degree from Rollins College in Winter  
18 Park.

19 Socrates has been blessed with a strong  
20 foundation in Jesus and the church. His diverse  
21 background has given him unique opportunities to  
22 experience and appreciate the Christian faith  
23 through various cultural expressions. I'll say  
24 Pastor Perez serves as the worship pastor at  
25 Horizon West Church where he oversees service

1 programming and is proud of the congregation's  
2 spirit of worship. He is committed to bringing  
3 hope and reconciliation to the world with love and  
4 grace of Christ.

5 That -- that makes two of us, Pastor. Would  
6 you please lead us in prayer?

7 PASTOR PEREZ: Thank you for the introduction.  
8 Good morning, everyone. I feel honored, deeply  
9 grateful for the opportunity to share this moment  
10 with you as you begin your day together. And as a  
11 Christian pastor, so much of my point of view is  
12 informed by the Bible, so, naturally, as I've  
13 thought of you, I have been reminded of the words  
14 of the Apostle Paul who says to acknowledge those  
15 who work hard among you and to hold them in high  
16 regard.

17 And today I want to say thank you for being in  
18 the business of serving the people who live in and  
19 visit this incredible area that you oversee. Thank  
20 you for your service. And on behalf of the church  
21 to which I belong, Horizon West Church, we hold you  
22 in high regard.

23 As I understand it, this invocation is a way  
24 of seeking wisdom and favor from God in all of the  
25 collaborative work and critical decision-making

1 that will be taking place today potentially  
2 affecting massive amounts of people. I heard about  
3 the traffic. This might affect a lot of people,  
4 right? And -- but sometimes we ask -- we ask God  
5 for favor without stopping to ask what he wants  
6 from us, and other times we think we know what God  
7 wants. We think we know he wants the right words  
8 spoken in prayer or the right song sung, the right  
9 religious practices like fasting.

10 And we mistake religious piety and activity  
11 for the actual desire of God's heart, which is to  
12 love and care for fellow human beings created in  
13 His good image and beloved by God. And I believe  
14 that the Bible makes His desire clear throughout  
15 scripture. In Isaiah 58, it says, Is this not the  
16 kind of fasting that I have chosen? This is what  
17 the Lord says, To loose the chains of injustice, to  
18 untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed  
19 free and break every yoke. Is it not to share your  
20 food with the hungry, provide the poor wanderer  
21 with shelter; when you see the naked, to clothe  
22 them and not to turn away from your own flesh and  
23 blood, then your light will break forth like the  
24 dawn, and your healing will quickly appear, then  
25 your righteousness will go before you.

1           And I believe it's clear that God desires that  
2 we care for all people, particularly for vulnerable  
3 people, those who are mistreated, hungry, without a  
4 home, and He calls us to consider and care for  
5 those that society tends to discard. And so when  
6 we fulfill these things, we partner with God, not  
7 against Him, in order to bring about his favor in  
8 our lives, in our work, and in the world around us.

9           And so I encourage you all today and every day  
10 as you make the important decisions and seek God  
11 for His direction and blessing that you would  
12 consider and act upon that which truly serves the  
13 heart of God. And that is that we would do  
14 justice, love mercy, and walk humbly before Him  
15 seeking the interest and welfare of others above  
16 ourselves.

17           I invite you at this moment, let's bow our  
18 heads together and pray this morning. God, I give  
19 thanks this morning for the people in this room. I  
20 believe that they are not here by accident, but  
21 that you have a plan and purpose for their lives  
22 and for this time. I know that you love them, and  
23 we know that every good and perfect gift comes from  
24 you, so we begin expressing gratitude for life,  
25 health, relationships, the resources you've blessed

1 us with so that we can in turn be a blessing to  
2 others.

3 Your word says that if anyone lacks wisdom  
4 they should ask God who gives it freely without  
5 finding fault. So today we put our hope and our  
6 trust in you, and I ask that you would grant  
7 wisdom, discernment, direction, and favor on my  
8 brothers and sisters in this room. Jesus, while on  
9 earth, you said blessed are the peacemakers, and in  
10 a deeply divided world, we ask that you would help  
11 us to be agents of peace and reconciliation. Help  
12 us to bring about unity, to be a beacon of light as  
13 we foster an environment of mutual respect and care  
14 for all people created in your image.

15 We recognize your desire for us to be a  
16 blessing to others, and we ask for your help as we  
17 seek to care for all people, especially those who  
18 are vulnerable. God, we want to partner with you  
19 and the good work that you want to fulfill in and  
20 through us. Thank you for choosing us for the  
21 moments ahead. In humility we pray this bold  
22 prayer that you would guide us to seek the interest  
23 of those we serve even above our own.

24 And, finally, I ask God that you would just  
25 encourage and strengthen my friends in the room



1 right now. If they feel burdened, that your  
2 presence would bring them peace. If they feel  
3 downcast, that your presence would bring them joy.  
4 If they feel discouraged, that you would fill them  
5 with your hope. And if they are tired, that you  
6 would strengthen and revitalize them to not grow  
7 weary of doing what is good, for at the proper time  
8 they will reap a harvest if they do not give up.  
9 Help them to know today that they are appreciated  
10 and that their labor is not in vain. I ask all of  
11 this in the power of the name of Jesus Christ.  
12 Amen.

13 ATTENDEES: Amen.

14 PASTOR PEREZ: Thank you for letting me join  
15 this morning, and thank you for your service.

16 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Thank you, Pastor. That  
17 was -- that was very timely for a lot of reasons,  
18 and so I appreciate that message. Thank you so  
19 much.

20 Now, why don't we rise and please join me in  
21 the pledge of allegiance.

22 ATTENDEES: I pledge allegiance to the flag of  
23 the United States of America, and to the Republic,  
24 for which it stands, one nation, under God,  
25 indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

1           VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Thank you. Now we will  
2 hear from Eddie Fernandez, who will present our  
3 safety minute. As many of you are probably  
4 preparing yourselves -- I know I am -- families  
5 across Central Florida are preparing to send their  
6 kids back to school. So it sounds like it may be a  
7 topical message for us. I want to thank  
8 Mr. Fernandez for putting the safety minute  
9 together for us. Eddie, please.

10           MR. FERNANDEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and  
11 members of the Board. And to all of our guests we  
12 want to remind everyone, as we usually do, on the  
13 evacuation procedures. In the event that there is  
14 an evacuation necessary, and you're facing the  
15 front of the room, there are the double doors on  
16 your left and right. The ones on the right will  
17 lead you out the front of the building where you  
18 entered this morning. If you exit the ones on the  
19 left, there is an exit on the backside of the  
20 building and a trail that you can follow around the  
21 building into the parking lot area.

22           Our employees will don safety vests and come  
23 out to the bottom floor and go to the ends of the  
24 parking lot. So if we do need to evacuate, please  
25 meet with them over on those ends of the parking

1 lot until we have the clear to come back into the  
2 building.

3 We also have a first-aid kit, and an AED at  
4 the security desk up front if it becomes necessary  
5 to use. Mr. Chair, as you were saying, our safety  
6 theme for this morning, back-to-school safety.  
7 August is National Back to School Safety Month in  
8 the United States, and we very soon will start to  
9 see school buses on our roads, in addition to  
10 students walking, riding bike, and in some cases,  
11 driving themselves to school.

12 If you have children that will start traveling  
13 to and from school before and after the sun is out,  
14 please make sure that they're wearing something  
15 that makes them more visible to drivers. Review  
16 important road rules with them and make sure they  
17 understand where to stand and how to walk safely,  
18 where to walk safely. Talk with student drivers  
19 about the importance of obeying all traffic laws.

20 We'd also like to remind everyone about  
21 Florida's back-to-school sales tax holiday, which  
22 qualifies for back-to-school supplies, and that  
23 occurs between July 29th and August 11th. Thank  
24 you very much for your time and enjoy the meeting.

25 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Thank you, Eddie. That

1 was great. The next item on our agenda is public  
2 comment. I don't have a giant stack of cards in  
3 front of me. Does that mean we have no -- anyone  
4 for public comment? Okay. All right. Well, we're  
5 coming into budget season, so I -- I suspect that  
6 may change in the near future.

7 We'll move on to the consent agenda items,  
8 Agenda Item No. 6.

9 MR. AUNGST: Mr. Chair, I move to approve the  
10 consent agenda.

11 MS. ZIEGLER: Second.

12 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All right. Well, good.  
13 I was going to -- thank you for that. Just a quick  
14 recap, the consent agenda includes three items  
15 approving the meeting minutes and the settlement  
16 between the District and DPR Construction, Inc. Do  
17 we want to have some discussion of that, Stephanie?

18 MS. KOPELOUSOS: I think we're good.

19 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: We're good? All right.  
20 Very good. Is that a second? Then we will move to  
21 a vote. I heard -- all of those in favor, say aye.

22 THE BOARD: Aye.

23 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Any opposed? Hearing  
24 none, let the record reflect that the consent  
25 agenda passes unanimously.

1           Very good. All right. Now I'd like to invite  
2 the district administrator to deliver the  
3 management report and present the excellence award.  
4 Stephanie, the floor is yours.

5           MS. KOPELOUSOS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And  
6 I would like to call our fire chief up to the  
7 podium to talk about the most exciting thing we  
8 have in the management report.

9           CHIEF FERRARI: Good morning.

10          MS. KOPELOUSOS: Bitter sweet, shall I say.

11          CHIEF FERRARI: Yes, very much so. Good  
12 morning, members of the Board, District  
13 Administrator Kopelousos. I'm Eric Ferrari, the  
14 fire chief, and I have the mixed emotion today to  
15 announce the retirement of firefighter/paramedic DJ  
16 Ward who is in the room with us today. He proudly  
17 served this department and this jurisdiction for  
18 the last 25 years.

19           You can tell, the brother and sisterhood of  
20 the fire department is alive and well by the crews  
21 that have showed up to recognize his service and  
22 give him a good send-off.

23           So just a little bit about him, especially in  
24 the last few months, he and I actually have grown  
25 pretty close and shared a lot of good conversation

1 about his career. He is well-known for his  
2 temperament at the patient's side. You know, no  
3 matter what the situation going on and how chaotic  
4 a call can quickly become, firefighter/paramedic  
5 Ward has an even keel temperament, which I think  
6 has served him well his entire career.

7 I believe Deputy Chief Roger Smith, also  
8 served with him, might want to say a comment or  
9 two. He's a man of many words. I caution you.

10 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: I look forward to hearing  
11 him.

12 MS. KOPELOUSOS: And while he's coming up, I  
13 just want to, DJ, thank you personally. Thank you  
14 for what you've done for the fire service, but for  
15 our jurisdiction, but also thank you for the time  
16 you spent with me yesterday.

17 MR. WARD: Thank you.

18 MS. KOPELOUSOS: I appreciate that.

19 DEPUTY CHIEF SMITH: Good morning. As Chief  
20 Ferrari said, I'm Roger Smith. I'm the deputy  
21 chief. DJ and I have had the fortune to work  
22 together. He was hired a few years before me, so  
23 he had more experience and more seniority. We  
24 worked together both as firefighter/paramedics on  
25 the rescue, and most recently he was assigned to my

1 shift when I was a shift commander.

2 When I was a young, very green paramedic, as  
3 Chief Ferrari said, he always had a calm demeanor,  
4 didn't let anything get him excited. When it was  
5 my turn to treat the patient or I was the lead  
6 paramedic, if he saw me moving in the wrong  
7 direction, he would lean over and say, You think  
8 that we ought to do that? And he would help me and  
9 many other young, new paramedics on the way to  
10 better patient care and better decision-making that  
11 you don't get in school, that you only get from  
12 field experience.

13 As a shift commander, I could count DJ as the  
14 rock of the station, the guy that people bounced  
15 ideas off of, the guy that kept everybody calm, the  
16 guy that would also be the voice of reason when a  
17 discussion was becoming heated or heading in one  
18 direction, he had the ability to pull people back  
19 to center and look at an opposing viewpoint.

20 So I was very fortunate when DJ moved to my  
21 shift within the last year or so of his career. I  
22 enjoyed working with him very much, not only as a  
23 coworker but as a supervisor. And like Chief  
24 Ferrari said, we are very sorry to see him go.  
25 He's a very valued member of our department.

1           CHIEF FERRARI: Just one final comment. I  
2 know DJ has a couple comments to share, but in the  
3 latter part of DJ's career, we spent a lot of time  
4 talking about mental health and mental health in  
5 the fire service.

6           Actually, oddly enough, Chief Smith and I just  
7 returned this morning from an executive development  
8 conference in Tampa. It's a week-long conference  
9 at the Fire Chief's Association. The fire chiefs  
10 across Florida convene every year and discuss  
11 relevant topics. And last night in the closing  
12 ceremony, the fire chief of Miami-Dade got the  
13 distinguished award of fire chief of the year. And  
14 in his speech he talked about -- he's the ninth  
15 largest department in the nation, and talked about  
16 how his department is committed to mental health  
17 and all the programs he has in place. And he  
18 looked out in the audience and said, I implore you,  
19 if you think you're doing enough, push the envelope  
20 and do more.

21           They've had some unfortunate suicides in their  
22 department, and it's plagued in the industry, as we  
23 know, at least in the fire service. And DJ has a  
24 very -- a very specific part in that -- in that  
25 role that he has brought to light some issues in



1 our own department and forced us and opened our  
2 eyes to push the envelope even further.

3 And in the last few months, I have to commend  
4 him for working closely with our peer support team  
5 and myself, and even as recently as yesterday,  
6 meeting with the district administrator to continue  
7 to push the message about the importance of mental  
8 health in the fire service. And I really want to  
9 thank you for that. But what a great send-off;  
10 that he's had a monumental career treating patients  
11 and has saved lives throughout his career here, and  
12 now his turn facing -- given a good send-off to  
13 take care of his own, his fire department family.  
14 Thank you, DJ.

15 (Applause.)

16 MR. WARD: Thank you. I really want to thank  
17 you guys for the recognition. I want to thank  
18 Chief Ferrari and Chief Smith for being here, Chief  
19 Moldthan, and all of my shift mates back there.  
20 That's my crew back there, my boys and girl -- my  
21 girl, my work wife.

22 But I had a wonderful career here, but I wish  
23 it had been better. I wish I had been able to be a  
24 better employee because about a couple years into  
25 my career, I had my first pediatric code. And I

1 work a lot with kids, I coach kids, and I spend  
2 almost all of my free time doing something,  
3 volunteering with children or something like that.

4 So that hit me hard, and I've had the  
5 unfortunate luck of being a person who got probably  
6 more pedi codes than anybody has. So my mental  
7 health declined throughout my career, and so my  
8 desire to be a good employee declined -- or to have  
9 a good career. I had a lot of aspirations when I  
10 started out. What I ended up doing was just  
11 living, surviving. A lot of that is my fault. I  
12 take -- I take responsibility for that, but a lot  
13 of it was a stigma that is attached that you don't  
14 ask for help or that you don't seek help, and we  
15 need help.

16 And I know that now because I tell everybody  
17 now that maintenance is a lot easier than repair.  
18 So I would implore you as -- as administrators and  
19 as the governing body of this District to make  
20 mental health a priority among all employees. It's  
21 not just firefighters. Because my story is --  
22 sounds really sad and tragic, but it's ordinary.  
23 It's an ordinary story.

24 I'm going to read some names now. Excuse me.  
25 We have -- we have Dixie County Battalion Chief

1 Andrew "Andy" English; Lieutenant Jeff Huggins;  
2 Lieutenant Brendon Holcomb, Lieutenant Alexander  
3 Acosta, Lieutenant Yarbrough in St. Johns County,  
4 and just a few days ago, or a couple days ago, an  
5 Osceola communicator all completed suicide. This  
6 has just been happening in the last couple of  
7 months in the Central Florida area. We have to do  
8 better. I'm asking you to do better. And what  
9 would I say peer support is? I want everybody to  
10 be peer support.

11 Peer support boils down to a simple story. A  
12 man falls into a hole and a doctor walks by, and  
13 the man looks up and he says, I need help, Doctor,  
14 I need help. And so the doctor looks at him, and  
15 he writes a prescription, and he throws it down  
16 into the hole, and he says, Here, take this, and he  
17 walks on. And the man is, like, okay. And then a  
18 priest walks by, and the man says, I need help, I  
19 need help. And the priest says a prayer and moves  
20 along. And then a friend walks by, and he says,  
21 Hey, John, John, I need help, I need help. And  
22 John jumps down into the hole, and he's like, John,  
23 what did you jump down into the hole for? And he  
24 goes, Well, I've been down here before, I know the  
25 way out. That's what peer support is.

1           So I implore you to get behind peer support  
2           and to get behind mental health for these  
3           firefighters that are still -- because I have hope  
4           now. That's the goal of mental health is to have  
5           hope, and I have hope. And that's what I hope for  
6           this department. I have no dog in the fight  
7           anymore for mental health for these guys, but --  
8           except that I love them, and I want to see all of  
9           them, even the new guys that I used to not pay  
10          attention to two years ago. I love all of them,  
11          too, now because I got help, and I want them to  
12          have a good safe career, so thank you. Thank you  
13          for your time.

14                    (Applause.)

15          MS. KOPELOUSOS: Wait. DJ, can we get a  
16          picture real quick?

17          MR. WARD: Oh, yeah.

18          MS. KOPELOUSOS: Can we do just a quick  
19          picture with the Board and the fire chief?

20          MR. WARD: Sure.

21          MS. KOPELOUSOS: Roger, come on. Act like you  
22          belong here. Yeah, come on.

23          MR. WARD: I don't know if -- come on, crew.

24          MS. KOPELOUSOS: Everybody.

25          CHIEF FERRARI: Do you want us tall people in

1 the back?

2 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Chief, I'm not going to  
3 comment.

4 MR. WARD: Is there a panoramic?

5 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Everybody get in. Yeah,  
6 let's do the firefighters first, and then we'll do  
7 the Board with him. Wait a minute. Time out.  
8 Move DJ in the middle. If you can't see the  
9 camera, it can't see you.

10 (Photograph taken.)

11 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Thank you.

12 MR. WARD: Thank you.

13 MS. KOPELOUSOS: I'll be quick with the rest  
14 of my report, Mr. Chairman.

15 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Sure.

16 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Just a couple things to  
17 report. As you can imagine, we're knee deep in the  
18 budget now. I think Susan may kill me before it's  
19 over, but she's been very patient. But we'll  
20 continue to work on that, and we'll talk more about  
21 that at the end.

22 Just to give you an update, one of our driving  
23 things is the comp plan. So we've done --  
24 procurement went out under traffic counts. That  
25 came back; they're moving forward on traffic counts

1 already, so we're coordinating that appropriately.

2 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Great.

3 MS. KOPELOUSOS: The procurement went out for  
4 the consultant. We want to have someone onboard,  
5 as we discussed, that would review and be a part of  
6 the policy, pieces of the comp plan that went out.  
7 The letters of interest are due back on  
8 August 12th. So that's out there now. So we're  
9 moving quickly on that, so we can have what we need  
10 necessary to complete that in the time that was  
11 agreed to in the agreements.

12 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Great. Thanks,  
13 Stephanie.

14 MS. KOPELOUSOS: That is all I have. Thank  
15 you, sir.

16 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. Now, I guess,  
17 we'll get into these -- is that the easement? We  
18 have to do the easement report, right?

19 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Right.

20 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All right. Well, then --

21 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Katherine will be quick.

22 MS. LUETZOW: Good morning.

23 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Good morning. Sorry.  
24 Thank you.

25 MS. LUETZOW: No worries. Within your Board

1 package, you received a copy of the semi-annual  
2 easement report. This was provided in accordance  
3 with Resolution 565 and contains the list of all  
4 the easements that were of a routine nature that  
5 were executed during the time period of January to  
6 June of this year. So unless you have any specific  
7 questions, that's all I have. Thank you.

8 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Mr. Chairman, if I might add,  
9 the resolution that she referenced was a resolution  
10 that was passed in 2015 that allowed the district  
11 administrator to have the ability sign off on all  
12 of the easements. I think at this point in time it  
13 is more appropriate that on the permanent easements  
14 the Board would review those, and we would bring  
15 those back to you normally under consent unless  
16 it's a weird one.

17 There will be certain temporary easements that  
18 I think would -- particularly construction-wise  
19 that would be to keep things moving, okay for me to  
20 still sign off on; those that had any long term  
21 that we would bring back for the Board. So this  
22 will be the last time we do it this way. If y'all  
23 agree, we'll bring it back. If we have to bring  
24 back another resolution that pulls that back, then  
25 we'll do that, as well.

1           VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. I think -- yeah, I  
2 think that's a great idea. I know we talked about,  
3 yeah, some -- some temporary easements are not so  
4 temporary, and so it's important to kind of dial in  
5 on, you know, what some of those may merit more  
6 consideration, so we're going to continue to give  
7 that some thought. But I think revising that --  
8 those revisions sound very reasonable, so thank  
9 you. Thank you for looking into that, Stephanie.

10           With that, we will move on to the next item on  
11 our agenda. 7.3, the Third Amendment to the  
12 Amended and Restated Labor Services Agreement for  
13 the Reedy Creek Energy Services Fiscal Year 2025  
14 annual adjustment to the operational services fee  
15 in an amount not to exceed \$35,157,921. And for  
16 that, I would like to invite our guest, Chris  
17 Ferraro, up to discuss this feat. Chris, the floor  
18 is yours. Thanks.

19           MS. FERRARO: Thank you. Good morning,  
20 District Administrator, and Board members. Thank  
21 you for your time and the opportunity this morning  
22 to talk to you about the fiscal year '25 annual  
23 adjustments to the labor services agreement between  
24 the Central Florida Tourism Oversight District and  
25 Reedy Creek Energy Services. This is for the suite



1 of comprehensive utility services provided to the  
2 District.

3 So I'm usually here each month talking to the  
4 District staff and the Board members about projects  
5 to improve the District's critical infrastructure,  
6 and today I get the very unique opportunity to talk  
7 about the -- all of the RCES organization, which is  
8 very near and dear to me.

9 As you all know, I've had a whole career in  
10 the utility industry, over 30 years. We're going  
11 to stop with the specific numbers of years, but  
12 over 30 years, and I have to say it is a great  
13 privilege to work with the RCES team. I consider  
14 them some of the best-skilled professionals and  
15 tradespersons I've seen throughout my career. So  
16 I'll get past that mushy stuff and put my engineer  
17 hat back on and take you through the details of  
18 this agreement for today.

19 So there is, as everyone knows, an RCES/CFTOD  
20 Labor Services Agreement for utility services that  
21 extends through 2028. Inside of that agreement in  
22 Section 7.1.3, there is a requirement for RCES to  
23 submit an annual adjustment each fiscal year. That  
24 needs to be submitted before July 1st of the  
25 prior fiscal year. So on June 28th, RCES met that

1 requirement and submitted the amendment to the  
2 District. And just looking at all of the terms  
3 that are in there, at a very high level, there are  
4 no material changes, reductions, or additions in  
5 scope from the utility services provided in fiscal  
6 year '24 to fiscal year '25.

7 All of the duties that RCES performs are  
8 described in great detail in the labor services  
9 agreement, and then we put even more detail into  
10 the annual adjustment of services, but at a very  
11 high level. RCES provides labor services during  
12 normal and emergency conditions, so we're here day  
13 over day, and we're in the buildings during  
14 hurricanes for maintenance, repair, renewal, and  
15 administration of the eight District utility  
16 systems. It also gives us an obligation to cause  
17 or perform all repairs and replacements of parts as  
18 needed for efficient and economic utility  
19 operation.

20 The labor services agreement also provides  
21 labor for commissioning of certain capital assets  
22 and expense funded programs and purchases. Inside  
23 the labor services agreement, we also provide  
24 financial services, and we're knee deep or else hip  
25 deep, I'm not sure, into the budget on the utility

1 side as well, and we'll be talking to you. We have  
2 our financial services manager, Bryan Aboud, in the  
3 room, and we've been working on those  
4 recommendations for the Board's consideration on  
5 utility rates and budget for fiscal year '25.

6 Our RCES utility business affairs team  
7 administers and manages the District's electric and  
8 natural gas supply portfolio, and I think you'll  
9 hear from Jen Albritton in a little bit about that  
10 later on today. From time to time RCES also  
11 supports the District staff with annual financial  
12 audits, reviews from rating agencies, and we file  
13 all required permits with regulatory agencies on  
14 behalf of the District.

15 Getting into the numbers, so the operational  
16 services fee proposed in fiscal '25 is \$35,157,921.  
17 Also required in the agreement is an operational  
18 services fee cap. That is \$1 million higher than  
19 the operational services fee at \$36,157,921. So  
20 for clarity, in the utility budget that will come  
21 in front of you for consideration, the amount of  
22 35.2 million will be included. Additional Board  
23 action would be required to extend into that  
24 million dollars in the operational services fee  
25 cap.

1           That represents -- that fee represents about  
2           404,000 billable hours for operational services at  
3           an average annual billable rate of \$87.11. This is  
4           a 1.9 percent increase over fiscal '24's amount of  
5           34.5; in dollars, it's 655,000 and change. The  
6           increase in rates is really driven by the salary  
7           increases to the folks working at RCES offset by a  
8           raw rate and actual hours drew up across all of the  
9           roles in RCES.

10           The table at the bottom of the slide provides  
11           that detail. You can see the 1.9 percent increase,  
12           and you can also see in fiscal '25 we're  
13           forecasting about 800 hours of additional labor  
14           supporting the District utilities, and an overall  
15           rate increase of 1.7 percent in fiscal '24. The  
16           rate was \$85 and change, and now we're 87 and  
17           change.

18           Also included in the scope of the annual  
19           adjustment for labor services agreement is a  
20           forecast of the fiscal '25 utility capital program.  
21           We're forecasting about \$42 million in the overall  
22           program for fiscal '25. Again, all of this would  
23           come through and flow into the budget, but to  
24           forecast our labor we need to forecast the projects  
25           that will support -- or proposed to support in

1       fiscal '25.

2               Those hours for design and support services  
3       are about 24,000 hours proposed for fiscal '25.  
4       The dollars for that funding are included. It's  
5       capital labor, so it's inside of the cost estimates  
6       for projects that you'll see in the budget  
7       proposal. This is a significant decrease from  
8       fiscal year '24, about a 27.7 percent decrease,  
9       almost \$950,000 or more from last year's fee.

10              There's two primary drivers of the why that  
11       fee is decreasing. The first is a continuing shift  
12       in RCES to use our internal engineering staff to  
13       supervise professional engineering services of  
14       others. That allows us to scale and support asset  
15       refurbishment, as well as property expansion. So  
16       instead of doing all the design in-house, we're  
17       doing design -- we're having our engineers act as  
18       design managers.

19              The second is the RCES support in design and  
20       construction of the utility relocations that are  
21       significant and associated with district roadway  
22       project of World Drive North Phase III. That  
23       project is funded outside of the labor services  
24       agreement, funded through ad valorem bonds, and  
25       that amount we're forecasting is about 600,000, and

1 it's the same team that does that support for World  
2 Drive North Phase III.

3 So that's outside of the labor services  
4 agreement but the same group of people support, so  
5 some of that effort and those resources will go to  
6 the roadway work. There is more details by funding  
7 source in the table below, but you can see we're  
8 netting to about a 28 percent increase -- decrease  
9 in cost.

10 Summing it all up and rolling it all up, the  
11 two pieces of the operational services agreement  
12 and the design and support services that RCES  
13 proposes to provide to the District, it's about  
14 428,000 billable hours of effort at an overall  
15 blended rate of \$88.04. When you net it all  
16 together and you compare it to last year, it is a  
17 1 percent decrease in cost, an amount of about  
18 \$.3 million in decreased cost over the forecast in  
19 fiscal year '24 billing forecast. So I think  
20 that's a pretty good story. We're happy to share  
21 that.

22 Okay. So now I went engineer on you, and I  
23 have a pie chart. So the \$88.04, what's inside of  
24 that rate for the District for the services that  
25 are provided? So you can see in blue in the pie

1 chart, those are really the benefits that go  
2 directly to the employees of RCES. That's the  
3 hourly rate and all of the employee benefits that  
4 the folks inside RCES receive. So that's the  
5 biggest chunk of the pie at 75 percent and \$66 and  
6 change.

7 Next biggest chunk is overhead labor. I am in  
8 here, but there are many other people that are also  
9 in here. It's the executives of RCES, the senior  
10 leadership team, and the roles that support all  
11 eight utilities, like our enterprise asset  
12 management folks, our administrative labor, our  
13 analytical support are in that overhead labor.

14 Next biggest piece are allocations. These are  
15 costs that flow to RCES from support from the Walt  
16 Disney Company. So in our organization I receive  
17 safety services support, human resources support,  
18 and casting support, and recruiting support for the  
19 staff at RCES. That's about \$7 of the 88.

20 Next largest bucket is margin. So margin is  
21 unchanged from fiscal '24. It's at 4 percent.  
22 This is dollars collected beyond the hourly rate  
23 and the expenses of the RCES organization.

24 Routine operating expenses are \$2.28, about  
25 2 percent of the \$88 rate. That's for specific

1 personnel related safety supplies, office supplies,  
2 and some depreciation of assets. The smallest  
3 slice of the pie shown in orange is the overtime  
4 rate of \$1.37. That represents about a 4.1 percent  
5 overtime rate in the classifications that are  
6 eligible for overtime across the whole RCES  
7 organization.

8 Finally, I'll talk about how we fund -- the  
9 utilities would fund this operational services  
10 agreement. So funding for the fiscal '25  
11 operational services agreement amount of 35.2  
12 million is an expensed to the utility systems, and  
13 it would be paid through the rate structure of the  
14 fiscal '25 utility rates, and it's broken down and  
15 itemized by utility, too. This is a base-up bill  
16 on a personnel by personnel basis, and that labor  
17 gets appropriated to the appropriate utility  
18 system.

19 As previously discussed, the design and  
20 support services fee of about \$2.5 million is  
21 capital and flows into the capital projects and  
22 into those estimates. The capital work has three  
23 funding sources. We can fund capital projects with  
24 planned work capital that's inside of the year  
25 capital that is paid by the current year's utility



1 rates. There's also an unrestricted reserve fund,  
2 which is where we have prior pre-collections that  
3 are funded by utility rates in previous years.

4 There's also available funding through utility  
5 bond funds that are available, and some of those  
6 bond-funded work are also included in that design  
7 support services fee of \$2.5 million. That  
8 concludes my report. Are there any questions?

9 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Chris, thank you. Any --  
10 any questions from the other members? I might have  
11 a couple, but any questions from the Board?

12 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Can I make -- can I make one  
13 comment just kind of as moving forward?

14 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Sure.

15 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Part of this report is due to  
16 y'all based on the last labor services agreement,  
17 and part of the settlement agreement in July. Last  
18 year when y'all did this, Raftelis was a consulting  
19 firm that came in and did an evaluation of it. I  
20 checked with them, for less than five grand they  
21 can do an evaluation based on what they did last  
22 year, and then the newest numbers and can provide  
23 that to us before the August meeting.

24 So if you'll are interested in doing that, if  
25 y'all will give us the ability to do that, we will

1 enter into a 30-day extension, Chris and myself,  
2 and then we can -- we'll bring this back to you  
3 with the Raftelis evaluation in August.

4 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: I think -- I think that's  
5 a great idea, Stephanie, and I would be  
6 supportive -- is that something, especially given  
7 the time frame what sounds like a very reasonable  
8 cost just to have a little bit of third-party  
9 reassurance and, you know...

10 MS. KOPELOUSOS: And after all the work they  
11 did last year --

12 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Sure.

13 MS. KOPELOUSOS: -- I think it puts them in a  
14 decent position to do that.

15 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Makes a lot of sense. Is  
16 that something that would require a vote then  
17 or...?

18 MS. KOPELOUSOS: (Shakes head.)

19 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. All right. Very  
20 good. Chris, could you -- can we back the slide up  
21 to the design and --

22 MS. FERRARO: Sure.

23 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: What was that slide? The  
24 design and something?

25 MS. FERRARO: The clicker, my apologies. Yes,

1           sir.

2                   VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: I noticed -- so there was  
3 a -- yes, 27.7 percent decrease. Can you get into  
4 that a little bit? I mean, is that a volume of  
5 projects that have decreased, or -- I mean, that  
6 seems like a significant -- and obviously to the  
7 extent that reflects cost savings, great, but can  
8 you break that down a little bit? Where is that  
9 kind of coming from?

10                   MS. FERRARO: Certainly. So the two factors  
11 that I talked about are kind of that external  
12 management of design, right? So we have a number  
13 of engineers inside of RCES, but we're limited by  
14 the scope of work they could produce if we did all  
15 of the designs ourselves. So we're moving to a  
16 model where through the District's procurement  
17 process and through the CC&A process in Florida  
18 where we procure engineering services from outside  
19 firms and the engineers inside of RCES.

20                   They would implement the specifications that  
21 we have, and our engineers would review and  
22 approve. So some of those costs will shift, right?  
23 So RCES costs are going to go down, right, and then  
24 as we engage other outside firms, the design effort  
25 is still required, but in order to scale we would

1 engage outside firms.

2 So what you'll see is, you know, we're  
3 probably going to be right around this range going  
4 forward, but the capital projects will also incur  
5 the costs of the outside services. But that lets  
6 us scale. If we don't do it throughout outside  
7 folks, then we're limited to the resources that are  
8 in-house, and it's hard for us to be flexible  
9 enough to support all of the asset replacement that  
10 needs to occur, and very concerned about the  
11 property expansions that are coming and meeting all  
12 those of needs, as well.

13 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Sure. Yeah, I was going  
14 to say, so it's -- I think you're absolutely right,  
15 the need to scale is going to be fundamental.  
16 We've got a lot of growth in front of us, so it's  
17 glad -- I like that that's baked into the structure  
18 a little bit. So probably -- it sounds like maybe  
19 next year there may be a --

20 MS. FERRARO: There will be a bit of a rebound  
21 next year depending on the level of effort that  
22 will be required to support World Drive North Phase  
23 III, so that same group of design and construction  
24 professionals right now is supervising -- looking  
25 for Craig -- \$30-plus million of utility

1 relocations along World Drive North Phase III. I  
2 don't know if that's right. If it's not, Craig,  
3 call me out. Big job.

4 MR. SANDT: Big job.

5 MS. FERRARO: Big job. So that engineering  
6 staff and team right now are partnering with our  
7 district folks and the consultants to support those  
8 utility relocations. It just isn't shown here  
9 because it's funded by something different. So  
10 that's about \$600,000. At some point, we'll  
11 redirect those resources back into the capital  
12 projects for the rest of the program, but right now  
13 we're working together to support those  
14 relocations. So you'll see a rebound when World  
15 Drive North Phase III utility relocations wrap up.

16 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Great. Well, thank you.  
17 And I like the pie chart. Maybe I'm showing my  
18 age. It looked a little bit like Pac-Man. I like  
19 that. I like that.

20 MS. FERRARO: I'm going to go with you. I  
21 like it.

22 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: But, anyway, I  
23 appreciate, Stephanie, on Raftelis, bringing them  
24 in. I look forward to hearing from them -- would  
25 it be next month, it sounds like?

1 MS. KOPELOUSOS: (Nods head.)

2 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Great. Thank you.

3 Chris, thank you for expertise and the thorough  
4 presentation as always. We will now move on to the  
5 general business section of the meeting. There's  
6 quite a bit -- quite a bit under -- under this  
7 section. The District team has been hard at work  
8 over the last month or so. Five items to cover  
9 under general business. First, we will hear from  
10 Jennifer Albritton from Reedy Creek Energy  
11 Services, who will present items 8.1 and 8.2.  
12 Jennifer.

13 MS. ALBRITTON: Good morning. Thank You. I  
14 really appreciate being here today. So this is the  
15 ten-year renewal for Contract No. 5114 utilizing  
16 Florida Gas Transmission Company for natural gas  
17 firm transmission system for an estimated annual  
18 cost of 2,570,000.

19 So CFTOD uses natural gas for various utility  
20 requirements and entered into a natural gas  
21 pipeline transportation service agreement, Contract  
22 5114, with the Florida Gas Transmission Company,  
23 FGT, in October of 1993. The agreement allows  
24 CFTOD to use FGT's pipeline system to transport  
25 natural gas supply to CFTOD's natural gas

1 customers.

2 The District, through this item, would  
3 exercise its contractual right to extend the  
4 agreement for another ten-year period beginning on  
5 August 1st of 2025 through July 31st of 2035.

6 So this graphic here actually shows the  
7 interstate pipeline serving the state of Florida.  
8 Over on the left-hand side, it shows the three  
9 major pipelines. That's Florida Gas Transmission,  
10 Gulf Stream, and Sabal Trail. These three large  
11 pipelines bring approximately four BCF or billion  
12 cubic feet of gas into the state of Florida every  
13 single day.

14 Florida Gas Transmission is a pipeline that's  
15 shown in blue, and extends all the way down to  
16 south Florida. They also have the capacity to  
17 deliver directly to CFTOD. The box that's on the  
18 right-hand side actually shows the firm  
19 transportation rates for Florida Gas, Gulf Stream,  
20 and Sabal Trail. Florida Gas Transmission is the  
21 most competitive rate of all three that we have in  
22 the state.

23 Okay. This graphic actually shows FGT in more  
24 detail. The FGT pipeline is actually a 5,000 mile  
25 pipeline that extends all the way from south Texas

1 into south Florida. The seven receipt points that  
2 are actually highlighted on this are the delivery  
3 points on FGT for CFTOD. Those are actually  
4 injection points where we receive gas. So the  
5 pipeline takes the gas and transports it to CFTOD.  
6 These points are periodically reviewed to ensure  
7 that these locations offer advantageous pricing to  
8 CFTOD.

9 In summary, CFTOD utilizes Florida Gas  
10 Transmission interstate pipeline to transport  
11 natural gas supplies to the CFTOD customers; the  
12 Florida Gas Transmission rates; the lowest firm  
13 interstate transportation rates; the ten-year  
14 renewable period is August 1st, 2025, through  
15 July 31st, 2035. The estimated annual cost is  
16 2,750,000. It is funded through utility rates, and  
17 this is a request to review the FGT Contract No.  
18 5114. Any questions?

19 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. Questions from the  
20 Board? Thank you, Jennifer. Is there a motion to  
21 approve the ten-year renewal Contract 5114?

22 MR. MATEER: Move approval.

23 MS. ZIEGLER: Second.

24 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All those in favor, say  
25 aye.



1 THE BOARD: Aye.

2 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All opposed, say nay.  
3 Hearing none, let the record reflect the motion  
4 passes unanimously. Thank you.

5 Now Item 8.2. Jennifer.

6 MS. ALBRITTON: Yeah. This is the first  
7 amendment of the agreement for purchase and sale of  
8 electric capacity and energy with Florida Municipal  
9 Power Agency, All Requirements Power Supply, with  
10 an estimated annual capacity cost of \$6,004,000.  
11 The District purchases electric capacity and energy  
12 to serve customer demands and meet the Florida  
13 Reliability Coordinating Council capacity planning  
14 and reserve requirements.

15 The capacity of the supply portfolio is sized  
16 to meet the peak load plus the reserve requirement.  
17 In 2022, the District entered into a purchase  
18 agreement with Florida Municipal Power Agency to  
19 supply capacity and energy beginning in January  
20 2025 through December of 2029.

21 After entering into the Florida Municipal  
22 Power Agency agreement, a planned resource's  
23 availability shifted to the fall of fiscal year  
24 2026. A replacement resource is required to supply  
25 the capacity needs and to comply with the reserve

1 requirements of 15 percent for the state of  
2 Florida.

3 In addition to the Florida Municipal Power  
4 Agency, CFTOD made capacity increase within the  
5 Florida power market, including Duke Energy  
6 Florida, Florida Power & Light, and the Orlando  
7 Utilities Commission. The three alternatives did  
8 not have the capacity nor did not have competitive  
9 pricing.

10 This first amendment allows CFTOD to change  
11 the term of the contract and to increase the  
12 contract quantities for fiscal year 2025. This  
13 amendment will enable CFTOD to supply customer  
14 demands and meet the FRCC capacity planning and  
15 reserve requirements.

16 In summary, this first amendment provides a  
17 replacement resource for a previously planned  
18 resource. This amendment will enable CFTOD to  
19 supply customer demands and meet the FRCC capacity,  
20 planning and reserve requirements. This resource  
21 is budgeted for fiscal year '25 in the amount of  
22 \$6,004,000 and will be funded through utility  
23 rates. The request is to approve the first  
24 amendment of the agreement for the purchase and  
25 sale of electric capacity and energy with Florida

1 Municipal Power Agency. Any questions?

2 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Jennifer, thank you. So  
3 just -- to make sure I'm clear of the details on my  
4 end, it sounds like there was an unplanned  
5 shortfall of supply, no fault of our own, just  
6 these things happen sometimes --

7 MS. ALBRITTON: Correct.

8 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: -- and so you went out to  
9 the market and tried to identify a short-term  
10 supply for that. And you spoke to that a little  
11 bit.

12 MS. ALBRITTON: Yes.

13 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Can you talk about that  
14 process and kind of how -- what you can share about  
15 that process, and I guess just confirm for us your  
16 comfort that, you know, this is -- this is the best  
17 market price available.

18 MS. ALBRITTON: Sure. What we did is we knew  
19 that we had a capacity shortfall so we needed to  
20 replace that. So we went to different counter  
21 parties within the state of Florida asking for that  
22 shortfall amount to see if they could supply it,  
23 and if they could supply it, what the competitive  
24 pricing would be.

25 So upon looking at that, looking at the

1 analysis for who did have the availability, they  
2 were not a comparative resource, so we went with  
3 the most competitive price.

4 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. Very good.  
5 That's -- I appreciate that. Is there a -- unless  
6 there are any other questions, is there a motion to  
7 approve the first amendment of agreement for the  
8 purchase and sale of electric capacity energy with  
9 Florida Municipal Power Agency?

10 MR. PERI: So moved.

11 MR. AUNGST: Second.

12 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Motion and a second. All  
13 those in favor, say aye.

14 THE BOARD: Aye.

15 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Any opposed? Hearing  
16 none, let the record reflect that the motion passes  
17 unanimously. Jennifer, thank you for those  
18 informative presentations.

19 On to 8.3, the award of a contract for  
20 professional engineering services for the  
21 replacement of Motor Control Center A & B located  
22 within the Studios North Central Energy Plant  
23 for -- approximately, \$322,000 plus 10 percent  
24 contingency, along with RCES' design/support  
25 services fees of 160,000 for a total of

1 approximately \$514,000. We will hear from Chris  
2 Ferraro from RCES regarding the award. Chris.

3 MS. FERRARO: Thank you. So we're going to  
4 talk about chilled water today. A little break  
5 from wastewater and trash hauling and disposal.  
6 Today we're going to talk about something cool on  
7 this warm day in Florida.

8 So a little bit of background on the project  
9 itself. So the District owns, operates, and  
10 maintains five central energy plants throughout the  
11 District for chilled water production and  
12 distribution. The plant that's shown in the  
13 picture here is the Studios North Central Energy  
14 Plant that is originally -- that's the original  
15 plant installed with that park installed in 1988.  
16 So there are two plants that served Disney's  
17 Hollywood Studios. One was installed later in 2015  
18 to support an expansion of that area.

19 So inside of this central energy plant there  
20 are 8,000 tons of chillers installed. You can see  
21 the picture there. There's eight cooling towers,  
22 and there are four, 480-volt motor control centers  
23 driving chiller pumps, fan pumps, and other devices  
24 and equipment within that plant.

25 So we're proposing the design to replace two

1       obsolete motor control centers designated A and B.  
2       Motor control centers C and D were replaced  
3       previously in 2019. So this will be a full upgrade  
4       of that equipment. It is no longer consistent with  
5       the District's design standards.

6               So from a project scope perspective, we went  
7       out with a letter of interest to procure  
8       professional services for the design of the  
9       replacement of these control centers in December.  
10       We received three responses as noted. We are  
11       recommending approval today of Salas O'Brien who  
12       was the highest scored bidder of those three.

13               As we've said before, we're moving into the  
14       full CC&A process, and looking at that highest  
15       score and ranking them. Thank you to Tiffany again  
16       and her team for support. I have to thank Tiffany  
17       every time I come to the meeting here. The  
18       additional part of this request is for design and  
19       support services for RCES to oversee this design of  
20       the motor control center replacement.

21               From a project funding perspective, the  
22       utilities division, we are recommending approval of  
23       Contract C006499 with Salas O'Brien for  
24       professional engineering services, and this amount  
25       runs all the way through to the end of the project

1 right to record drawings in the amount of  
2 \$322,408.91 plus a 10 percent contingency, and  
3 design and support fees for RCES in the amount of  
4 \$160,000.

5 The RCES amount at this time does not  
6 contemplate construction inspection because we want  
7 to see the complexity of the design and the level  
8 of effort required, so we'll be coming back to the  
9 Board for further authorization to take us through  
10 the construction period.

11 The overall request is \$514,650 approximately,  
12 and we are seeking Board approval to use the funds  
13 inside of the existing utility revenue bond 2018-2  
14 issuance. It's a taxable borrowing.

15 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Great. Chris, thank you.  
16 Is there anything you can share about Salas  
17 O'Brien? Have we -- have we worked with them  
18 before or...?

19 MS. FERRARO: We have worked with them before,  
20 and they're great partners, very technically  
21 skilled, and they've always been very amenable to  
22 work with. We have a number of professional  
23 engineering services partners, and some of them --  
24 I'm sure we'll have new partners as we come through  
25 the CC&A process, but we've had great experience

1 with Salas O'Brien in the past.

2 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Wonderful. Great.  
3 Unless there are any other questions, is there a  
4 motion to approve the contract for professional  
5 engineering services to replace motor control  
6 center A & B?

7 MR. AUNGST: So moved.

8 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Second?

9 MS. ZIEGLER: Second.

10 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All those in favor, say  
11 aye.

12 THE BOARD: Aye.

13 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Any opposed? Hearing  
14 none, let the record reflect that the motion passes  
15 unanimously. Thank you, Chris.

16 MS. FERRARO: Thank you.

17 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Agenda Item 8.4, Proposed  
18 Budget Millage Presentation. We will hear from  
19 Susan Higginbotham, the District's chief financial  
20 officer, who will present the District's proposed  
21 budget and millage rate for fiscal year '25 --  
22 2025. Susan.

23 MS. HIGGINBOTHAM: Good morning. I'm over  
24 here.

25 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Hey, there you are.



1           Yeah --

2                   MS. HIGGINBOTHAM:   Here I am.   Yes, I will be  
3           presenting our proposed budget.   As you know, we've  
4           started -- all departments started in May, so we've  
5           done quite a lot of work to get here, but we're  
6           still not done.   So we'll be talking about where we  
7           are and where we have to go.

8                   First thing is our assessed values.   Our  
9           assessed values is the basis that our millage rate  
10          is applied to to generate our ad valorem revenue.  
11          We receive assessed values as of January 1st of  
12          each year from Orange County and Osceola County  
13          property appraisers.

14                  You can see for fiscal year '25, our total  
15          assessed value, \$16.3 billion, and that's around  
16          7 percent over our assessed value from prior year,  
17          which was \$15.2 billion.   Also on this slide as a  
18          reminder to show you where we were on our millage  
19          rate, two years ago in fiscal year '23, we had a  
20          millage rate of 13.9 mills; and current year,  
21          fiscal year '24, we have a total millage rate of  
22          12.95 mills.

23                  Recap of where we are on our revenues in our  
24          current year, fiscal year '24.   We are expected to  
25          come in slightly higher 195 million.   We budgeted

1 194.5 million. Again, these are projections. As  
2 we get closer to the presentation in August and  
3 September, we might see this change a little bit,  
4 but this is our projection at this point.

5 Expenditures, we budgeted a total  
6 197.7 million for fiscal year '24. Right now we're  
7 projecting a total of 188.8 million, total  
8 expenditures, which is a savings. We are expecting  
9 about \$6.9 million of rollover for some operating  
10 projects that we do not think will be completed by  
11 the end of fiscal year '24, which is  
12 September 30th. So when that happens, any money  
13 saved rolls to our ending balance in fiscal year  
14 '24, which goes to our beginning balance of fiscal  
15 year '25.

16 Here we have some options, and Stephanie is  
17 going to present this slide.

18 MS. KOPELOUSOS: So I just want to walk  
19 through where we are with our options. We've given  
20 you kind of a variety of options to look at. I'm  
21 going to go backwards with option 5, and then go to  
22 4. Option 5 would be the rollback credit. So that  
23 would mean you roll back the millage to whatever we  
24 collected in last year's budget.

25 The fourth option is -- would go with the same

1 millage rate that we have this year. So keep in  
2 mind because we have agreed to bonding, the  
3 additional bonding we would need to -- that's why  
4 you see the debt millage rate is 4.17. That's got  
5 to stay consistent because we've committed to that.  
6 And then we would lower the operating millage  
7 accordingly since one has to -- to keep the same  
8 millage.

9 Option No. 3 would be based on increasing the  
10 debt service but keeping the operating millage at  
11 the same rate. That would be a millage rate of  
12 13.16. Option No. 2 would go back to the -- last  
13 year y'all reduced the millage. It would go back  
14 to the previous year's millage rate of 13.9.

15 Option No. 1 would be truly the maximum, which  
16 would be increasing to give us -- it's a little  
17 bit -- it's about a 5 percent increase over if we  
18 had the 13.9 millage rate for current year. It  
19 would be a 5 percent over that.

20 I think the challenge for us is there's quite  
21 a bit of maintenance work and construction that  
22 needs to be done. We're still working on a  
23 five-year and a ten-year CIP plan that would really  
24 give you a broad look at what we're doing and what  
25 needs to be done in the future for y'all to get a

1 better sense of, but those are things that need to  
2 go up.

3 I think you see with the investment that --  
4 that Disney is making in this area, we're going to  
5 see some -- the increase in infrastructure needed,  
6 and so we just need to be prepared for that.  
7 What -- if you want a recommendation, my  
8 recommendation would be No. 2. Let's go back. I  
9 want -- I want to make sure we're all clear. We're  
10 voting on a maximum millage. What -- we just have  
11 to have these numbers into the State to make sure  
12 that's the highest we can go.

13 We still have a lot of time before September,  
14 including the workshop in August, for us to  
15 continue to work through, refine what we're asking  
16 for, especially related to equipment. We're seeing  
17 equipment taking a year, two years, three years to  
18 get some of our equipment, particularly related to  
19 fire rescue. So we're making sure that we're being  
20 prudent with you on what we're asking for.

21 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. Great. Any -- any  
22 questions -- there may be some discussion on this.  
23 I have some thoughts, but any questions or comments  
24 from the Board?

25 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Can I make one comment,

1           though?  When you look at option No. 1, that would  
2           require a unanimous vote of the Board; option 2 and  
3           3 would require four out of the five; and option 4  
4           and 5 would require a majority vote, three of you.

5           VICE CHAIR BARAKAT:  Okay.  All right.  Good  
6           to know.  Well, I will recognize Supervisor Aungst.

7           MR. AUNGST:  Thank you, Mr. Chair.  Yeah, just  
8           some questions just on process.  So today we have  
9           it on the agenda as proposed budget and millage  
10          presentation.  You're looking for a vote to set the  
11          maximum rate that it will not exceed in September  
12          so that the State can be prepared for whatever it  
13          is that we come back with, right?

14          So today we're setting the maximum rate, and  
15          so one of the things I'm most concerned about is I  
16          want to make sure that our taxpayers and our team  
17          members have everything they need from us as a  
18          district to be successful.  And I know you are  
19          engaged in a lot of conversations right now with  
20          various taxpayers.  Obviously, the Walt Disney  
21          Company, our folks that have leases in Disney  
22          Springs and other areas of hoteliers that are --  
23          that are here on deals with Disney, and I know  
24          those conversations are ongoing.

25          I also know we've got some needed equipment

1 that's being ordered. I think -- did we order the  
2 new ladder truck?

3 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Not yet.

4 MS. HIGGINBOTHAM: Not yet.

5 MR. AUNGST: Is it part of this budget?

6 MS. KOPELOUSOS: We are working on that.

7 That's the one that is a three-year lead time. We  
8 still have our current one in the shop, so we're  
9 working towards that.

10 MR. AUNGST: Right. Okay. I'd like to see  
11 that ladder truck part of this budget. And so,  
12 Mr. Chair, my thought is, you know, since we have  
13 flexibility and we're still involved in  
14 conversations, I really don't have a problem with  
15 setting the maximum rate as the maximum rate since  
16 it gives us flexibility.

17 I do want to make sure our taxpayers are fully  
18 supportive of whatever the millage rate ends up  
19 being. I don't want it to be too high by any  
20 stretch of the imagination, and particularly  
21 looking out for those business owners in Disney  
22 Springs and the other hoteliers. So those are my  
23 thoughts. I certainly wouldn't want to set it too  
24 low today, so those are my thoughts. Thank you.

25 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Thank you, Supervisor

1 Aungst. Any other -- any other questions, comments  
2 on that front? I have a few, but I'll wait till  
3 the end.

4 MS. ZIEGLER: Mr. Chair, I'm all the way at  
5 the end.

6 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Go ahead.

7 MS. ZIEGLER: Yeah, I was just going to say I  
8 would echo that. I think that looking at last year  
9 and then looking at what's ahead of us, I think,  
10 again, I can't stress enough that this is not a set  
11 millage rate, this is the maximum amount. I know  
12 that there will be ongoing discussions from now  
13 until August that really will allow the team to  
14 sharpen their pencils so we have a more accurate  
15 assessment of what we indeed do need.

16 So I am very support -- I'm fully supportive  
17 of option 2. You know, I would defer to my other  
18 Board members, as well as the administrator, as to  
19 option 1. I understand it's the maximum, but when  
20 we look ahead and the volume and many of the items  
21 that were just referenced, but also what I don't  
22 want is to squeeze staff too much to the point  
23 where we have unforeseen consequences and actually  
24 ends up being more costly, or we're not completing  
25 things at the level and caliber that is expected,

1 not only from this Board but people who visit over  
2 here.

3 So I am in between those two. I never thought  
4 I would be that, but I understand this is kind of a  
5 different situation and understanding the projects  
6 that are coming online. I'm very excited about  
7 looking at that CIP. So just to give my fellow  
8 Board members some insight into where I stand  
9 today.

10 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. Thank you.

11 MR. MATEER: I'd just say I support option 2,  
12 as well, on the recommendation of the district  
13 administrator.

14 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. All right. Well,  
15 my comments -- I guess we may need to take a couple  
16 votes. In terms of my comments, I guess, you know,  
17 philosophically, I have a general, I would say,  
18 discomfort, you know, the notion of aggressively  
19 raising millage rates. I walk into this inclined  
20 to keep a comfortable -- you know, get us where we  
21 need to be to get the job done, but not really more  
22 than that. I think the District takes a lot of  
23 pride in running a lean and mean operation. I  
24 think that's what's important.

25 That being said, I am -- there's a lot of work



1 in front of us. One work that's -- we've got some  
2 catching up to do. Obviously, we've been -- we've  
3 busy with a lot of different things over the past  
4 year, but now we're staffing up to move -- to scale  
5 up, I think to use the phrase from our utility  
6 friends. You know, we're going to be scaling up  
7 pretty quickly. There's catch-up work, and we've  
8 got to get out in front of new work in the years to  
9 come.

10 We're still in the preliminary stages of the  
11 budget process. To that extent, you know, given  
12 that this is a maximum number, that we cannot go up  
13 from this number, but we certainly can go down, and  
14 I would be inclined to go down, but I don't want to  
15 box in -- box us in at this early stage. So from  
16 that standpoint, I would be inclined to support  
17 option 1. So I think -- did I understand that  
18 the -- to go with option 1 we'd need a unanimous?

19 MR. PERI: Uh-huh.

20 MS. KOPELOUSOS: (Nods head.)

21 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. So why don't we  
22 work our way --

23 MS. KOPELOUSOS: You would need a unanimous in  
24 September.

25 MS. HIGGINBOTHAM: Not today you don't.

1           VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Oh, not today. Okay.  
2 Well, good. Well, what am I talking about? What  
3 are we doing? Okay. I got excited. I thought we  
4 were going to get a vote. All right. Well, good.  
5 I guess that's -- so that's -- thank you for that.  
6 Appreciate the context.

7           MR. PERI: I have initially a question. Okay.  
8 So we're setting a maximum. We're notifying the  
9 State of a maximum. Are we then legally  
10 constrained if we -- let's suppose we select option  
11 2, and after doing analysis and the rest we really  
12 determine the millage rate should be 14.0. Okay.  
13 Do we have the ability then to go -- is it the  
14 State that is setting this as an absolute limit,  
15 and is there a way, if we were to make a decision  
16 today that indicates really -- it is our goal to  
17 stay below, you know, say option 2, but we really  
18 don't have -- I mean, obviously, a lot of things we  
19 have to do. We don't have full information on  
20 everything.

21           And the future being the hardest thing to  
22 predict, I would -- you know, my preference would  
23 be option 2, but I would like to understand what  
24 happens if we were to get to a point where we said,  
25 you know, the total millage rate needs to be a

1 little bit above that.

2 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: You're saying, could we  
3 ultimately land somewhere between option 1 and  
4 option 2, or I suppose option 2 and option 3?

5 MR. PERI: I don't mean for now --

6 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Yeah, I'm just saying  
7 eventually.

8 MR. PERI: -- but if -- yeah, in other words,  
9 if we were to go through everything and say you  
10 know what, we didn't realize that it was going to  
11 be as costly.

12 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Why -- would one of y'all  
13 like to speak to that?

14 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Yeah. There's a process. It  
15 is quite laborious if we want to go above.

16 MR. PERI: Okay.

17 MS. HIGGINBOTHAM: Yes.

18 MS. KOPELOUSOS: So my recommendation is set  
19 it -- it's easier to set it higher today than go  
20 through that process, but there is a process that  
21 we could go through.

22 MR. PERI: Okay. And then who gets most  
23 affected? If we select option 1, are we saying  
24 that, okay, the various businesses in the District  
25 then are going to be initially making their plans

1 based on that? Is that the primary concern?

2 MS. HIGGINBOTHAM: Yes. It gets printed on  
3 their notice of proposed taxes or their trim  
4 notice.

5 MR. AUNGST: Trim notice.

6 MR. PERI: Okay. Got it.

7 MS. HIGGINBOTHAM: So whatever you decide  
8 today will be sent to all the property -- all the  
9 taxpayers and invites them to come to the public  
10 hearing.

11 MR. PERI: Okay.

12 MS. HIGGINBOTHAM: Again, we can lower it as  
13 we work on refining the budget. To raise it, it is  
14 possible, it's very laborious.

15 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: So in terms of what --  
16 just procedurally in terms of the -- is there a  
17 vote needed at this point?

18 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Yes.

19 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: To select the maximum  
20 number?

21 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Correct.

22 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. So then -- Brian,  
23 do --

24 MR. AUNGST: I just was -- I just was going to  
25 say, you know, I think a lot of work has gone into

1           this, and I know Susan is working year-round, like  
2           not just, you know, March through September, but a  
3           lot of work has gone into this. Stephanie is  
4           hitting the ground running like a marathon in a  
5           sprint's pace. So I don't know that I have enough  
6           information today to set it too low. That's my  
7           concern, right?

8                        So I would rather go with option 1 today with  
9           the goal and the direction to the staff to work  
10          with the taxpayers and making sure we set it as low  
11          as we -- let's set it as low as we have to to  
12          accomplish what it is that our taxpayers are trying  
13          to accomplish. Does that make sense? That's my  
14          view. So I would be in favor of option 1 today  
15          knowing that there's going to be a lot more work  
16          between now and September.

17                      MS. ZIEGLER: Mr. Chairman, may I -- I just --  
18          there was one piece, and I know the administrator  
19          mentioned this previously. If you think about our  
20          taxpayers, there's a large variance in what --  
21          their operation, their size, and I know that  
22          because of this change, understanding and having  
23          the opportunity to really understand what that  
24          impact would look like. While we're all here,  
25          they're running their businesses and may not

1 realize that that is, in fact, the maximum and then  
2 get that trim notice and -- you know, we don't have  
3 to -- we understand what the economy looks like  
4 right now, so there is some hesitation.

5 Again, I think it errs on the side of caution,  
6 and again looking at the work that y'all have done  
7 as far as do you feel comfortable if we're at  
8 option 2? Is that -- is that substantial enough,  
9 or is it more opportune to have a little bit more  
10 flexibility?

11 Again, I think more -- we're having the  
12 conversation, we understand we can go down. I  
13 believe all of you will be very prudent as far as  
14 fiscally responsible and what those decisions are,  
15 it's just also the shock factor that I want to be  
16 cautious of for our taxpayers.

17 MS. KOPELOUSOS: And as I committed to you,  
18 Supervisor, that I'm going to get out and meet with  
19 the businesses, particularly, the mom-and-pops that  
20 are in the area. But, look, our partners are all  
21 up and down this -- this road, as well as at Disney  
22 Springs. So we'll continue to commit to that and  
23 making sure they understand what we're doing and  
24 what that need is.

25 MS. ZIEGLER: Wonderful. I think that's

1 important to note just publically, as well. Thank  
2 you.

3 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Supervisor Peri.

4 MR. PERI: Yeah. Is it -- did I hear  
5 correctly that the recommendation of the district  
6 administrator of the District is option 2?

7 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Yes.

8 MR. PERI: Then I would support option 2.

9 MR. MATEER: Yeah. I would say too much money  
10 is not always a good thing, and I think we've heard  
11 from the experts to say they believe that we should  
12 fall within option 2, so I would support option 2.

13 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay.

14 MS. ZIEGLER: I'll echo that, too. Yeah, I  
15 think it's a good spot to land in.

16 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All right. I guess I  
17 would -- I'll wrap it up. We may have a slight  
18 difference of opinion, and that's okay. Again, as  
19 I said, I'm really -- my inclination would be -- I  
20 mean, I'm not inclined to get too aggressive on the  
21 millage at all, but I am weary at this stage of  
22 boxing ourselves in.

23 I think option 1 gets us to -- is it 4 or  
24 5 percent above the prior years?

25 MS. KOPELOUSOS: It would be 5 percent -- the

1 way we got to option 1 was, as you and I discussed,  
2 the 5 percent over what -- if the millage rate was  
3 13.9, if you maintain that millage rate from last  
4 year to this year, it would be a 5 percent.

5 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. Yeah, I'm -- at  
6 this stage, I would be inclined to give us the  
7 maximum flexibility to make sure as -- sharing  
8 Supervisor Aungst's perspective that I would want  
9 to be -- I want us to be at the lowest number we  
10 need to get -- to provide the District the right  
11 resources to get the job done and do -- continue to  
12 provide the first-class services that we are  
13 expecting.

14 So that's where I'm at on this. I think it's  
15 unlikely we would land there. I don't -- but I  
16 don't want to be handcuffed at this stage. I guess  
17 I would be -- I would be unlikely to support option  
18 1 as a final result unless it was truly justified  
19 in the numbers, but I think at this stage, I think  
20 option 1 is the better course, understanding and  
21 mitigating maybe some of the nervousness that there  
22 may be in the taxpayer community.

23 I think, Stephanie, if we were to land on  
24 option 1, I think you having those conversations, I  
25 think, would mitigate some of the concern in terms



1 of shaking folks up. So that's where I'm at on  
2 this. Supervisor Peri.

3 MR. PERI: Yeah. I've run a few businesses  
4 over the years, and businesses will make their  
5 decisions based upon the projection that we give.  
6 If we give the projection of option 1, there may be  
7 new building, there may be business expansion that  
8 won't happen. Decisions to be taken in the next  
9 month or two, and they are not going to assume  
10 based upon what they are told that we're going to  
11 come in less. They're going to presume that we are  
12 preparing them for the likely case, not the worst  
13 case, because that's how government operates  
14 broadly.

15 Okay. Taxes go up, things happen, they all  
16 know that Disney has been approved for this massive  
17 development, and I think if we set it too high, it  
18 is going to influence negatively decisions in the  
19 District.

20 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay.

21 MR. PERI: So I would still say option 2 is  
22 our best way to go because I think that's -- well,  
23 I would hope we'll come in less than that, but at  
24 least that's not an unreasonable thing for people  
25 to plan, and you're really talking about an amount

1           that matches where we were before.

2           VICE CHAIR BARAKAT:   Okay.

3           MS. KOPELOUSOS:   Chairman, it might be  
4           important if you want to ask for any public  
5           comment.  I know there's a lot of people here.

6           VICE CHAIR BARAKAT:   Yeah, for sure.  I would  
7           welcome some public comment, if there's any.  Do we  
8           have anyone who would like to get up and speak to  
9           this issue?

10          MS. KOPELOUSOS:   No one wants to talk about  
11          the budget?

12          MR. SHIREY:   Bear with me for just a moment.  
13          Good morning, everyone.

14          VICE CHAIR BARAKAT:   Good morning.

15          MR. SHIREY:   So my concern is just -- thank  
16          you, appreciate that.  My concern is this:  There  
17          is a ton of work that needs to be done just in the  
18          fire department alone.  And I'm only speaking from  
19          that because that's all I know.  I'm sure every  
20          department head across the entire district probably  
21          shares very similar concerns.

22          You know, you guys have done incredible work  
23          bringing the fire department back up to what we  
24          considered full staffing.  But just as a reminder,  
25          that full staffing number is our pre-COVID levels

1 of staffing. This has not added any additional  
2 units to the road, this hasn't added stations, it  
3 hasn't staffed our two specialty apparatus. Our  
4 Bronto truck, which as was alluded to, is in the  
5 shop and has been for a while. We also have a  
6 heavy rescue or squad truck that is unstaffed, as  
7 well.

8 The NFPA, the National Fire Protection  
9 Association, recommends 43 firefighters as our  
10 initial response to a high-rise or large commercial  
11 or industrial structure fire. With our 32 per day,  
12 16 of which are on ambulances, so very likely to be  
13 off running medical calls, potentially off property  
14 all together transporting to one of our local  
15 hospitals. The number that we can reliably say can  
16 respond to a fire is 16 on any given day. Just  
17 something to consider as you guys are debating over  
18 this millage rate.

19 Again, I tend to agree with all of you. I  
20 don't love the idea of raising taxes, but I think  
21 giving yourselves the flexibility with the higher  
22 option 1, you can always roll that back, but like  
23 has been said, it's very, very difficult to  
24 increase it if you set it too low. Thank you.

25 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Thank you, sir.

1 Appreciate that. Any other -- any other comments  
2 from the public? Okay. Well, I guess maybe what  
3 might make the most sense, unless there's further  
4 comments or discussion from the Board, what may  
5 make the most sense is I might -- we'll start  
6 with -- I will entertain a motion for the -- for  
7 option No. 1, and then maybe we conduct a vote, and  
8 if that passes, great; and if not, then we can move  
9 on to option No. 2. Would that -- would that be  
10 appropriate?

11 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Uh-huh.

12 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All right. Well, in  
13 that -- in that case, I will entertain -- is there  
14 a motion to move forward with option No. 1?

15 MR. AUNGST: So moved.

16 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. I will -- I will  
17 second it.

18 And then we may need -- sounds like we may  
19 have a -- should we do a roll call? Would that be  
20 appropriate?

21 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Yeah, that's fine.

22 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All right. In that case,  
23 why don't we start -- well, I guess one of you-all  
24 call the roll?

25 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Chairman.

1 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Aye.

2 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Supervisor Aungst.

3 MR. AUNGST: Aye.

4 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Supervisor Peri.

5 MR. PERI: Nay.

6 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Supervisor Mateer.

7 MR. MATEER: Nay.

8 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Supervisor Ziegler.

9 MS. ZIEGLER: Nay.

10 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All right. So that  
11 motion fails.

12 MR. MATEER: Make a motion for option 2.

13 MS. ZIEGLER: Second.

14 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: All right. Shall we  
15 then? I guess --

16 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Roll call. Chairman.

17 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Aye.

18 MR. AUNGST: Aye.

19 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Supervisor Peri.

20 MR. PERI: Aye.

21 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Mateer.

22 MR. MATEER: Aye.

23 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Ziegler.

24 MS. ZIEGLER: Aye.

25 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Very good. The motion

1 passes unanimously. Option No. 2 it is.

2 MS. HIGGINBOTHAM: Okay. Thank you very much.

3 MS. KOPELOUSOS: And we'll just -- yeah, on  
4 the last slide just shows what's coming up. We do  
5 want to talk about the budget hearing and the time,  
6 so we'll get back to you on that. We may need to  
7 do it a little later based on folks' schedules, so  
8 we'll keep you updated on that and advertise  
9 appropriately.

10 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. Thank you,  
11 Stephanie. And, look, just to recap that, I want  
12 thank our -- Susan and the finance team, partners  
13 at Reedy Creek Energy Services, and our district  
14 employees for the very hard work and the excellence  
15 they provide our taxpayers. All your services on  
16 this invaluable part of the experience that  
17 millions of visitors enjoy annually and to the  
18 public, thank you for participating in the work we  
19 do, and thank you for the public comments.

20 And we look forward to really digging deep and  
21 sharpening our pencils on the budget in the months  
22 to come. And I invite you-all to continue to --  
23 those that will be impacted by this to come  
24 prepared to comment at the upcoming meetings.

25 On to Item 8.5, final item on the general

1 business agenda. We have -- relating to the  
2 appointment of general counsel. I know, Stephanie,  
3 with help from Supervisor Mateer, has engaged in  
4 the search for an appointment of a general counsel.  
5 And with that, I will hand it over to her for  
6 discussion.

7 MS. KOPELOUSOS: Sure. Thank you, Chairman.  
8 Just want to be brief in my comments. One of the  
9 things when the new board came in, they looked at  
10 outside versus inside. I think that's been a  
11 discussion all along. We -- we certainly have good  
12 outside counsel on a lot of different areas. As --  
13 when I came in, I thought it was important for our  
14 team to have someone here day-to-day, so just want  
15 to introduce and give him an opportunity to talk.

16 Roy Payne, who has been in this community for  
17 a very long time. He has served as an attorney  
18 with the City of Orlando for over 30 years. Comes  
19 with quite a bit of experience and certainly can  
20 hit the ground running. So I'll let Roy -- turn it  
21 over to him for a few comments and then for your  
22 discussion.

23 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: We will recognize the  
24 distinguished gentleman, Mr. Payne.

25 MR. PAYNE: Thank you, Vice Chairman. First

1 of all, I'm very excited to be here. That's one of  
2 the things I want everybody to understand. It's  
3 exciting to be here, it's exciting to have this  
4 opportunity, and I do appreciate it.

5 I was at the City for a little over 33 years.  
6 Even had a few cases with Kurt over that time  
7 frame. All good. All good. But -- so it -- even  
8 though I had been there as long as I had, it was a  
9 great experience, great people, learned a ton. It  
10 was time -- it was time for a change, and this  
11 opportunity felt like the perfect kind of change,  
12 and so far it has been.

13 It's been great. The employees have been  
14 great. The support has been great. I really  
15 couldn't understate how much I appreciate the  
16 employees we have and the support that they've  
17 given me.

18 So it -- you know, the District, as you know,  
19 is a very unique animal. It's a special kind of  
20 organization. It makes it interesting, it makes  
21 the learning curve a little more than maybe I was  
22 expecting just because things are done quite  
23 differently here than your typical municipal  
24 corporation or county.

25 But it's been -- it's been refreshing to be a



1 part of this. And just, you know, being at an  
2 organization previously where there's a lot of  
3 constituencies involved, it's refreshing when  
4 everybody is sort of pulling in the same direction.  
5 And not that you don't have issues and discussions  
6 that you need to have, but it is very unique, and I  
7 think everybody should appreciate it as much as I  
8 do.

9 But, again, it's an opportunity I look forward  
10 to, and I hope it comes to fruition. But, you  
11 know, I look forward to working with all of you. I  
12 look forward to being a part of this organization  
13 in the future. You know, it's -- what Stephanie  
14 wanted, I think, in the beginning is to have  
15 somebody on-site, open door, all of that, and I  
16 feel the same way with any questions you guys and  
17 ladies may have. You know, that's what we're  
18 about.

19 I appreciate the efforts from Kurt and Dan  
20 over the last year and a half or so. I have  
21 nothing but respect for them, and I think, you  
22 know, we will move forward, and I hope to be a part  
23 of that. And if you have any questions of me, I'm  
24 happy to answer them.

25 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Okay. Roy, could you

1 tell us again how many -- how many years of service  
2 at the City of Orlando?

3 MR. PAYNE: Thirty-three and a few months.  
4 And I have -- I have four daughters. We are his,  
5 hers, and ours. My youngest is 12-years-old, and I  
6 still haven't got her to understand I don't work at  
7 Disney. I see Mickey Mouse every day. I don't  
8 see -- I think eventually I'll get her to  
9 understand that I'm not in Disney proper, but she's  
10 very excited about coming to lunch and going to the  
11 Rain Forest Cafe or something across the bridge  
12 there. But the older ones are, I think I was  
13 telling somebody, are more into Universal. Sorry,  
14 but they'll come back around, I'm sure.

15 You know, it's -- so it's been -- even the  
16 three or four weeks I've been here have been very  
17 entertaining for me and my family and very -- it's  
18 just been -- it's a great group of employees. I'm  
19 sure you know that, and it's just a -- you know,  
20 I'm looking forward to it.

21 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Thanks, Roy. I know -- I  
22 mean, look, I think over the last couple of years I  
23 think, obviously, the Governor and his team and  
24 everyone on this Board has made a lot of effort to  
25 educate the public on how this Board and this

1 District is different from Disney, but we haven't  
2 gotten all the 12-year-olds yet. So we're -- we  
3 have some work to do. We'll take that -- we'll  
4 take that as a positive comment. Very good. Any  
5 other -- any other questions from the -- from the  
6 Board?

7 MS. ZIEGLER: Mr. Chairman --

8 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Yes.

9 MS. ZIEGLER: -- I just wanted to add, there's  
10 oftentimes the discussion about internal and  
11 external. And certainly this past -- well, as you  
12 mentioned, this District is very unique. Just look  
13 at the trim notice and how completely reverse it is  
14 from a usual conversation that we would be having  
15 on a governing board, a taxation board.

16 And so -- but I do think that tremendous work  
17 has been done over the last year and a half, and  
18 I'm really happy with where we are landing. It  
19 has -- you know, we didn't know what the next day  
20 would be when we started this, but to look at where  
21 we have come, I think everyone in this room, I  
22 think on this Board, really have a lot of optimism  
23 about where we're going.

24 And so what I think is really helpful and the  
25 value of being in-person here, to continue to

1 provide that support to the staff, just keeps us  
2 moving forward in the direction that I like to see  
3 us going, so I'm very excited about this.

4 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Any other comments?

5 MR. AUNGST: Mr. Chair, if I might, I just  
6 wanted to say, Roy, welcome. It was a pleasure  
7 meeting you and getting to spend some time with you  
8 and very much appreciate that you'll be here with  
9 Stephanie in person every day and working with our  
10 awesome team and providing them a very good,  
11 extremely knowledgeable, very, very well-respected  
12 in the legal community and well-known in the  
13 Central Florida legal community resource.

14 I do want to say to Kurt Ardaman and Dan  
15 Langley, you have done exceptional work for us.  
16 You have been extremely trusted advisors and  
17 counselors. You have helped us navigate from the  
18 very, very beginning of this -- of this iteration  
19 of the District to this very successful landing  
20 place, as Supervisor Ziegler said, and you are a  
21 key, key crucial element of the success that you've  
22 laid the foundation for.

23 So you've really put us in a position to be  
24 successful. And you've put us in a position where  
25 now we can have someone here full-time that is

1 working on the bread-and-butter, easements,  
2 right-of-ways, you know, things that a normal city,  
3 county, local government attorney do. So I just  
4 want to, again, thank you so much for everything  
5 you've done for being there for me. And I know for  
6 the other Board members, as well as the district  
7 administrators and our team in helping us navigate  
8 to this great spot. And also hope and look forward  
9 to, Roy, working with you-all in the future with  
10 us, so thank you.

11 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Any other comments? I'll  
12 make a couple before we -- just, Roy, just to echo,  
13 it was a pleasure -- a pleasure getting to meet you  
14 and getting to know more about your background,  
15 and, obviously, 33 years at a place like the City  
16 of Orlando, a lot of moving pieces, a very  
17 complicated place, look, I don't think there's  
18 anywhere -- this is a unique place.

19 This District is unique on a fundamental  
20 level. Truly no place in Florida, no place in  
21 America, but coming in from a complicated  
22 background -- you know, there's nothing simple  
23 about the City of Orlando. There's a lot going on  
24 there. It's a big place, it's getting bigger and  
25 getting better every day, and you come with a great

1 reputation from that city, so I think you'll be  
2 able to come here and hit the ground running. So  
3 I'm excited to have you aboard.

4 And, obviously, look, Stephanie has placed a  
5 lot of trust and faith in you. She speaks very  
6 highly for you, and I'm here in support of our CEO,  
7 effectively, you know, so I'm happy to move forward  
8 on that front, and I look forward to getting to  
9 work with you and getting to know you better in the  
10 months and years ahead.

11 MR. PAYNE: Thank you.

12 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Thank you. That being  
13 said, I want to comment and thank our friends, Kurt  
14 and Dan, from Fishback Dominick. Gentlemen, bottom  
15 line, we wouldn't be here without you. The work  
16 that you've put in, certainly the year that I've  
17 joined the Board but going back further, this --  
18 the learning curve was incredible coming in. We  
19 didn't know what we didn't know. You-all have  
20 helped us build policies and procedures that  
21 will -- have made this a best-in-practice,  
22 best-in-government going forward, and we're going  
23 to continue to build on that work and that  
24 foundation you-all have built. You know, it is  
25 incredible, and I can't thank you enough for it.

1           On a -- in terms of dealing with litigation  
2           and building the foundation and getting us --  
3           putting the puzzle pieces in place, the 3D chess  
4           pieces that you helped manage, that team, and your  
5           involvement in that team to the settlement  
6           agreement, to the development agreement, again, so  
7           complicated. I'm not sure anybody -- you know, I  
8           can't thank you enough for the work you've put in  
9           going on.

10           And, obviously, there's going to be a lot of  
11           work going forward, some areas where your expertise  
12           is unique and your involvement in the District is  
13           unique, and I hope that we'll -- I think there are  
14           going to be opportunities to continue to work  
15           together in the future.

16           So this is not a -- it is not a goodbye. It  
17           is just turning the page on what is going to be a  
18           tremendous chapter in the book of this District's  
19           history, so can't thank you-all enough. And I  
20           guess with that --

21           MR. ARDAMAN: Mr. Chairman, can I make a quick  
22           statement?

23           VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: I would love your  
24           comments, yeah.

25           MR. ARDAMAN: I understand that this is a

1 great opportunity for the District. I've known  
2 Roy, like he said, for decades and all of our  
3 dealings together, both in opposition and together,  
4 has been great. He's been great for the City of  
5 Orlando, and it's a great choice. And I think it's  
6 a benefit to the District to have general counsel  
7 in-house. There are some good things that only an  
8 in-house counsel that's really in-house all the  
9 time can provide. So Stephanie has recommended I  
10 think a very good choice for the Board.

11 As Roy -- Roy and I have talked a little bit,  
12 and I've talked to many of you about this, and this  
13 District is the most unique local government  
14 district in the state of Florida, probably in the  
15 United States. It's not only a special district,  
16 but a water management district, it's a road  
17 district in some combination pieces and parts.  
18 You've got multiple statutory provisions integrated  
19 with the constitution, and then we've got our own  
20 special legislative treatment of all of that.

21 So it's unique, and we have offered to assist  
22 Roy in anything he needs and Stephanie, of course,  
23 and the Board members as you requested going  
24 forward. So we're happy to provide that special  
25 counsel assistance, and any time that that's needed



1 we are glad to stand in and step up to assist the  
2 Board, the staff, Roy, in those capacities.

3 We've got a pre-existing Board-approved  
4 agreement, so there's no need for any further  
5 hiring, and we appreciate all the great times that  
6 we've had here. Been a little roller coaster now  
7 and then, and we love working with staff.  
8 Continue -- will help Roy through that transition  
9 and learning whatever else he needs to learn and  
10 handing off what we can. So, again, it's been a  
11 great pleasure. And, Dan, anything you'd like to  
12 tell the Board?

13 MR. LANGLEY: Well, I just want to say it's  
14 been a pleasure working with the staff. They are a  
15 tremendous group of people, and, of course, the  
16 Board. And so as Kurt said, we're here for  
17 continued service as you desire. Thank you very  
18 much and congratulations, Roy.

19 VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: Thank you both. So --  
20 and appreciate that. I think, at this point, it  
21 would be appropriate then to have a vote. I  
22 will -- I will go ahead if I can. I will go ahead  
23 and motion that we -- that the Board approve the  
24 appointment of Roy Payne as general counsel to the  
25 Central Florida Tourism Oversight District. Is

1           there a second?

2           MS. ZIEGLER:   Second.

3           VICE CHAIR BARAKAT:   Second.   All those in  
4           favor, say aye.

5           THE BOARD:   Aye.

6           VICE CHAIR BARAKAT:   Any opposed?   Hearing  
7           none, let the record reflect that that vote passes  
8           unanimously.   Great congratulations to Roy Payne.  
9           Welcome aboard.

10          MR. PAYNE:   Thank you, thank you.

11          VICE CHAIR BARAKAT:   And Dan and Kurt, again,  
12          thank you so much for your service.   I can't thank  
13          you enough.   And, Stephanie, kudos to you on a  
14          great -- on a great hire.   We're excited for the --  
15          for the future.

16          Great.   All right.   Man, look at us, an hour  
17          and a half.   All right.   A little long by current  
18          standards, but here we are.   That being said, do  
19          any members have any additional comments before I  
20          request a motion to adjourn?   Okay.   Hearing none,  
21          motion to adjourn.

22          MR. AUNGST:   So moved.

23          MS. ZIEGLER:   Second.

24          VICE CHAIR BARAKAT:   Second.   All those in  
25          favor, say aye.

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THE BOARD: Aye.

VICE CHAIR BARAKAT: We are adjourned at of  
12:05 p.m.

(The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF FLORIDA  
COUNTY OF ORANGE

I, SANDRA D. BROWN, Florida Professional Reporter, certify that I was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing proceedings and that the transcript is a true and complete record of my stenographic notes.

Dated this 8th day of August, 2024.

*Sandra D. Brown*

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SANDRA D. BROWN  
FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL REPORTER

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