



**MINUTES OF A REGULAR MEETING OF
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS OF
LAKE WORTH DRAINAGE DISTRICT
HELD AT THE DELRAY BEACH OFFICE ON
August 13, 2025 AT 8:30 A.M.**

Board Members Present:

John I. Whitworth, III
Stephen Bedner

James M. Alderman
Carrie Hill

Jeffrey Phipps, Sr.

1. Call to Order

President Bedner called the meeting to order at 8:30 A.M.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Phipps led the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Service Award Recognition

- Mike Hoechst, Equipment Crew Leader – 20 Years

Mr. Strowd recognized Mike Hoechst for his 20 years of service at the District. The Board thanked Mr. Hoechst for his dedicated service and presented him with an engraved survey marker as a token of recognition.

4. Agenda Revisions – Tommy Strowd, Executive Director

Mr. Strowd stated agenda item #11 has been postponed.

5. Abstentions by Board Members from Items on the Agenda

There were no abstentions.

6. General Public Comment (limited to 5 minutes)

Mr. Strowd introduced one general public comment at the end of the meeting.

7. Approval of minutes, check register and financial statement for the previous month

A motion was made by Supervisor Phipps to approve the minutes, check register and financial statement for the previous month, seconded by Vice President Hill and approved unanimously.

PUBLIC HEARING

8. Preliminary Operating Budget for the Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2026 – Christopher Johnson, Director of Finance

Mr. Johnson reported that, in accordance with District policies, the public hearing was noticed on July 29, 2025, via advertisement in the *Sun-Sentinel*. The advertisement included the preliminary assessment rate of \$48.50, which sustains the District's total budget of \$18.59 million. He noted that the budget reflects an increase of approximately \$1.25 million compared to 2025, primarily due to higher repair and maintenance costs; rollover of \$420,000 in capital items from 2025 to 2026, including radial gate replacements for control structures 4 and 8; and implementation of the classification and compensation study. Mr. Johnson emphasized that there is no change in the assessment rate compared to the prior year. He then invited any public comments before proceeding with his presentation.

President Bedner asked if there was any public comment. There was no public comment.

President Bedner closed the Public Hearing.

DISCUSSION

9. Resolution 2025-03 - Approval of the Final Operating Budget for the Fiscal Year ending September 30, 2026 – Christopher Johnson, Director of Finance

Mr. Johnson noted that the District is at the final stage of the Fiscal Year 2026 budget process, following public hearing and leading to final budget adoption. He reported that there have been no changes to the budgeted revenues or expenditures since the July 2025 meeting. At the assessment rate of \$48.50, net of discounts, the District will generate just over \$15 million. The balanced budget includes a carry forward of approximately \$2.6 million, much of which reflects capital project rollovers.

Staff recommended approval of the FY2026 operating budget of \$18,590,000, with a non-ad valorem assessment rate of \$48.50.

A copy of the final budget worksheet and Resolution 25-03 are attached hereto as part of the meeting record.

A motion was made by Supervisor Phipps to approve staff recommendation, seconded by Sr. Vice President Alderman, and approved unanimously.

10. Approval of employee health benefit renewals for FY2026 – Melissa Skora, Human Resources Administrator

Ms. Skora stated that the Broker conducts evaluations of rates through a Request for Proposal from multiple carriers for all lines of coverage. She highlighted that

regular dependent eligibility audits are performed, plan designs and employee education are used to incentivize smart health care choices, and surcharges are applied for tobacco users and dependents. Wellness incentives are also provided.

Ms. Skora noted that Cigna's initial quote reflected a 25.9% increase, which was later reduced to 7.7%. No competitive or comparable quotes were received from other carriers, and it was determined that it is best to renew with the current carrier. She noted that the trend in Florida is typically 9–10%.

For vision, life, and disability coverage, a rate guarantee is in place with Standard until September 30, 2026. Standard quoted a flat renewal for dental coverage. Ms. Skora presented a benefit summary chart reflecting the current rates and the proposed rates for 2026.

Staff recommended approval for continuation of medical insurance with Cigna and continuation with Standard for vision, dental, life and disability

A motion was made by Supervisor Phipps to approve staff recommendation, seconded by Vice President Hill, and approved unanimously.

11. **Approval to assign easements for a portion of the L-46 Canal to the City of Boca Raton. Location: L-46 Canal, east of Military Trail. (Project #RI-25-0052) – Reagan Walker, Assistant Executive Director – **ITEM POSTPONED****
12. **Approval to issue a right-of-way permit to Toll Brothers for installation of five (5) monitoring wells within the south right-of-way of the C. Stanley Weaver Canal and one (1) monitoring well within the south right-of-way of the L-23 Canal. Location: L-23 Canal, west and east side of Military Trail (CSW), east side of Lawrence Road. (Project #RW-25-0151) – Nicole Smith, Permit Supervisor**

Ms. Smith stated that Toll Brothers, Inc. is in the process of acquiring the Cypress Creek Golf Course. As part of the acquisition, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has required Toll Brothers to install monitoring wells and evaluate groundwater quality. Samples will be collected quarterly in accordance with FDEP requirements. Once monitoring is completed, as determined by FDEP, the wells will be properly abandoned and the right-of-way restored.

Ms. Smith noted that the monitoring wells will not impede LWDD access or maintenance operations. Installation will be performed using direct push technology with a track-mounted Geoprobe rig and augers. She further stated that all costs associated with installation, sampling, and abandonment will be covered by Toll Brothers, Inc.

Ms. Smith also provided several site plans showing the location of the proposed wells.

Staff recommended approval to issue a Right-of-Way Permit to Toll Brothers, Inc. for the installation of six (6) temporary monitoring wells within the CSW and L-23 Canal rights-of-way. The recommendation was subject to the following conditions:

- Receipt of a Certificate of Liability Insurance listing LWDD as an "Additional Insured" (received).
- Monitoring wells to be installed as far south as possible within the right-of-way.
- Compliance with LWDD Operating Policies and Permit Conditions.
- Payment of the permit fee of \$8,700.00 (paid).
- Application fee of \$580.00 per well.
- Use fee of \$870.00 per well.

Ms. Walker stated that there were several public comments related to the item. Written comments received by Julie Nicholas on behalf of the Cypress Creek Property Owners Association and resident Jordan Cooper were read aloud by Mr. Strowd and Ms. Walker. Both comments expressed concern and opposition regarding the authorization to install monitoring wells. A copy of the written public comments are attached hereto as part of the meeting record.

Residents in attendance were called upon in alphabetical order.

Several Cypress Creek residents commented regarding their objections to authorizing the installation of the monitoring wells. The residents expressed concerns regarding development of the golf course, potential impacts of environmental monitoring, and lack of communication by the developer with the residents. Residents speaking in opposition to the authorization of installation of monitoring wells include Geno Blair, Christine Chavers, Roger Dunson, Megan Hoffman, and Rick Quinones.

Residents speaking in support of the authorization to install monitoring wells included Benjamin Bailey and Sylvia Winkles.

Mr. Michael Goldstein, representing Toll Brothers, stated that the application meets all LWDD technical criteria for approval, as confirmed by staff. He explained that state law requires delineation of contamination beyond property boundaries to protect public health and that the work is being conducted under Florida Department of Environmental Protection oversight.

Mr. Goldstein noted that FDEP has approved the placement of monitoring wells within the LWDD right-of-way. He acknowledged residents' concerns but stated that property valuation is not part of the Board's technical review, adding that research shows property values typically increase following environmental cleanups.

Supervisor Whitworth inquired about how long the wells will be in place. Mr. Goldstein indicated the wells would be in place at least 36 months, with a maximum of 5 years.

Sr. Vice President inquired about testing results to date and how they would remediate if they found additional contamination. Mr. Goldstein shared previous results and indicated that the additional testing was to identify the horizontal extent of the contamination so that remediation efforts could be defined.

Board members inquired about the current water source for irrigation. The consultant indicated that based on results, additional testing may be needed to determine the depth of the contamination.

Mr. Goldstein indicated that Toll Brothers has not closed on the property. If the contract is canceled, Toll Brothers would not be responsible for remediation; however, the property owners would be made aware of the contamination as it exists today.

Mr. Strowd explained staff's recommendation based on LWDD's authority. He stated that LWDD does not have any authority in changes to land use. The conflict between the residents and the developer is not LWDD's issue to resolve. The developer is following DEP's protocol to determine the migration of contamination in the groundwater from historic land use. The proposal is regarding the placement of the wells within the LWDD right-of-way to monitor the contamination. Staff's role is to review the implications of installation of the encumbrance on our right-of-way. The concerns laid out by residents and the board are legitimate, but LWDD does not have authority to resolve the concerns and environmental issues.

Mr. Goldstein indicated they would limit the term of the permit to alleviate board concerns.

A motion was made by Supervisor Whitworth to approve staff recommendation with a one-year expiration, seconded by Supervisor Phipps. The motion passed with a vote of 4-1 with a dissenting vote from Sr. Vice President Alderman.

There was a recess called at 9:40 a.m. The meeting was reconvened at 9:45 a.m.

Mr. Strowd announced that there was one more public comment by Mr. James Pearce regarding Lake Ida levels.

Mr. Pearce requested greater transparency, clarification, and communication regarding water management activities affecting Lake Ida water levels. He suggested establishing a protocol for severe drought conditions, including guidelines on how much water can be safely withdrawn from Lake Ida and surrounding lakes, as well as thresholds for when water restrictions should be implemented. He also emphasized the importance of balancing aquifer health, irrigation needs, and environmental impacts.

In response to Mr. Pearce's comments, Mr. Strowd explained that water levels in the E-4 Canal are influenced by multiple entities, including the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, through joint operations of interconnected canals. He noted that while the District does have protocols consistent with those agencies, water management decisions cannot be fixed to strict levels because they depend on varying hydrologic, environmental, and climate

conditions. He emphasized that formal water shortage protocols and restrictions are established by state or regional agencies, not the LWDD, and are publicly noticed when enacted. Mr. Strowd acknowledged the challenges of maintaining transparency, noting the high degree of uncertainty in predicting rainfall and water availability, but affirmed the District's commitment to working with communities regarding their concerns.

STAFF REPORTS

13. Executive Director's Report

Mr. Strowd reported on current rainfall deficits and drought conditions, noting that both the past dry season and the beginning of the wet season have been significantly below normal. He explained that Lake Okeechobee levels remain low and may approach the water shortage zone if conditions persist, creating potential risks for regional water supply. He discussed the impacts of recent regulatory changes to Lake operations, which reduced protections for water supply storage, and cautioned that southeastern Palm Beach County could face drier conditions compared to other regions. Mr. Strowd emphasized that future water availability will depend heavily on tropical rainfall and that the LWDD will continue coordinating with the South Florida Water Management District and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers while monitoring conditions closely.

Mr. Johnson provided an update on the investment portfolio, noting a total return of 1.34% over the last three months compared to the 1.18% benchmark. For the year, the portfolio achieved a 5.87% return, exceeding the 5.68% benchmark. He added that all investments are in U.S. Treasuries with AAA and AA ratings.

Ms. Walker highlighted that Gabe Margasak has been creating social media posts and content for public engagement. She introduced a video he produced showcasing a day at the office for the Aquatics Crew.

14. District Counsel's Report


No additional items to report.

15. Board Reports & Comment

No additional reports or comments.

16. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 10:31 A.M.



Sr. Vice President – James Alderman

Recording Secretary – Sandra Acosta