

**MINUTES REPORT
BUILDING INDUSTRY OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE (BIOC)
THURSDAY, October 9, 2025**

Committee Members Present

Steve Gabor
Bobby Lyons
Marc Malaniak

Committee Members Absent

Matthew Johnson
Steve Wojcechowkyj

Lee County Government Representatives

Christy Barker, Senior Manager, Operations
Erika Compean Garcia, Sr Team Executive Assistant
Tad Delnay, Building Official
Audra Ennis, Permitting and Regulatory Review Manager
Billie Jacoby, CRS Coordinator/Reg Review Supervisor

Jack McStravic, Deputy Bldg Official
Janet Miller, DCD Planning
Antia Richards, Senior Fiscal Officer
Marc Washburn, Manager of Strategic
Performance – Customer Advocate

Call to Order/Affidavit of Posting

Mr. Gabor called the meeting to order at 8:30 a.m. Mr. Gabor asked if the meeting was adequately posted. Ms. Miller stated it was. Please note that the attorney's office previously reviewed the Notarized Affidavit of Posting and advised staff that it was legally sufficient.

Approval of Minutes – July 10, 2025

Mr. Malaniak made a motion to approve the July 10, 2025 minutes. The motion was seconded by Mr. Lyons. The motion was called and passed 3-0.

Revenue/Expense Reports/Fees/Fund Balance Report/Staffing Levels/Levels of Service

Ms. Richards gave an overview of the revenue/expense reports, the Community Development Fiscal Overview for September 2025, the revenue budget projections, and the technology expenditures (distributed at the meeting). The BIOC requested the technology expenditures at their last meeting. During the revenue/expense review, it was noted that there is a monthly loss of \$674,974 and the year-to-date loss is \$4,736,330. She noted this might change slightly due to salary increases taking place at the end of October. The final spreadsheet provided is for the new fiscal year approved by the BOCC regarding "*Revenue Budget Projections*." The revenue anticipated for FY25/26 is \$14,640,764 and staff anticipates spending \$21,590,609.

Mr. Lyons asked where the deficit would come from.

Ms. Richards stated it would come from the fund balance.

Mr. Lyons stated that the County normally has a balanced budget.

Mr. McStravic stated that staff was currently working on this. He noted that in 2021 our permit fees were reduced because we had a surplus in the fund balance. However, there was never a date when the reduced fees would expire. Staff plans to request that the Board of County Commissioners approve an increase to our permit fees. The County is currently doing a study, but so far it looks as if staff will request a 30% increase. He noted that the 30% increase is still not as high as our fees were originally and they are also not as high as surrounding jurisdictions. For instance, when it comes to residential construction on a 2,500 square foot home, we currently charge \$835, yet Charlotte County

charges \$1,320. Mr. McStravic noted that another issue is that the statutes changed due to the hurricanes, which placed more requirements on the county. Staff now had to meet certain timelines for plan review, which caused the county to hire additional staff so that they could maintain the statute requirements as well as industry standard review times.

Mr. Gabor stated he was concerned with how fast we were draining the fund balance. In looking at the budget from last year, it is clear we are going up in budget. He noted that activity has been reduced, so it was his hope that the budget would be reduced as well. He felt the county could be more efficient rather than increasing the budget. Regarding expenses, he noted we spent \$19M last year and now we are at \$21M.

Mr. Delnay stated staff are mindful of the slowdown and are holding onto positions as they become vacant. Staff from different sections are being utilized to assist in areas that have vacancies rather than hiring additional staff.

Mr. Malaniak asked what is driving up expenses from year to year.

Mr. Delnay stated that staffing was one item driving up the expenses.

Ms. Barker stated the IGS charges are another factor as they have increased significantly.

Ms. Richards stated there are additional factors such as costs for training. Many of the county's positions require specific training that the county must maintain. There are also memberships that must be maintained in order for certain positions, such as inspectors, to do their jobs. There are also salaries and health benefits because the county pays for a lot of the health benefits for employees.

Mr. Malaniak stated that at our current pace, our fund balance is going to be \$730,000 at the end of the year if everything goes as planned. The data provided today shows that we are operating just under a \$7M loss. It seems that if we do not increase the fees, the county will have budget issues. However, in a depressed market, it is preferable to have reduced costs.

Mr. Delnay referred to the credit card convenience fees, which were discussed at the last BIOC meeting. The convenience fees were implemented on August 1st and so far, the county has received a savings of \$266,000, which they would have to pay if they had not imposed those fees on the consumer. Out of the \$266,000, \$236,000 were related to permitting fees.

Mr. Gabor asked if that was taken out of the expenses for 2026.

Ms. Richards stated it had not been included because at the time that the budget was prepared, putting the convenience fees on the consumer had not been in place yet.

Mr. Delnay stated staff is reviewing the county's fees, but there will not be another BIOC meeting until January. Once staff finalizes the exact fee increase that they are going to propose, it will be presented to the Board of County Commissioners. He asked if staff could reach out to the BIOC prior to presenting the fee increase to the Board of County Commissioners so that they could review the data. He noted it would speed up the process when they present it to the Board.

The members of the Building Industry Oversight Committee unanimously agreed.

Mr. Gabor stated he felt the BIOC needed more clarity on the expenses so that they could better understand them. On the one hand, it is said that the county is reducing staff levels, yet the budget is going up due to staffing. He asked if the reduced staff was reflected in the budget.

Mr. Delnay stated it is not yet reflected in the budget.

Mr. Lyons asked what the review times are.

Mr. Stravic stated that for regulatory staff there is typically a total of 30 business days for the process, but staff are able to operate within 20 business days in order to keep up with industry standards. This means that for clean submissions, there is a 20 business day turnaround. He also noted that staff are not working as much overtime now that things are stabilizing to where staff are staying caught up with current workloads. Currently, staff is finishing the reviews in 12 days, which again, is keeping up with the industry standard. He reiterated that when there are statute changes, it puts additional requirements on the Building Department because they must hire additional staff in order to meet the statutory requirements.

Mr. Malaniak asked if there are penalties if the county does not comply with the statute.

Mr. McStravic stated it would cause a reduction in permit fees. If the county does not meet the statute requirements, they will be asked to pay a percentage back to the State.

Mr. Delnay noted that the private provider trades went from 20 days to 5 days for review. If the County does not meet the timeframe, they must give the State a 10% reduction per day.

Mr. McStravic referred to the private providers and noted that now that review times are stabilizing, customers are coming back to the county for their inspections instead of hiring private providers.

Mr. Delnay stated that staff is also reviewing the planning codes and processes currently in place in an effort to streamline them so that, overall, we function more efficiently.

Ms. Barker elaborated and stated that the county tries to look at all of their processes as it relates to the fees being charged to the consumer to ensure we are as efficient as possible so that the internal cost is closer to the fees we are charging. She noted that with the proposed fee increase, it will get us closer to what our internal costs are. For instance, with overtime, staff will start evaluating overtime year over year and improving efficiencies and then determining how close we can get to the actual cost. Eventually, if we streamline enough, the county can potentially reduce costs again. In order for this to happen, the county must review everything from every angle. For instance, with current computer applications being used, staff is negotiating with vendors on their renewal fees. Overall, staff is evaluating our applications and subscriptions to see if they are needed, if so, is there a cheaper version etc. However, the fee increase at this point has become necessary.

Mr. Gabor felt it would be beneficial for the BIOC to understand how much we expect to be under that budget. For instance, if the credit card fee was factored in. Also, since we are not filling positions, that would naturally bring the balance down. Out of the \$21.6M budget for 2026, what is the real number based on the changes that have been made?

Mr. Delnay stated staff can put something together.

Mr. Lyons stated the BIOC would be happy to meet again before this goes to the Board. The other members agreed.

Mr. Malaniak stated that based on what was reported earlier, it seemed that permits are relatively flat.

Mr. Delnay stated that is correct.

Mr. McStravic stated that the hurricanes affected everything. Staff initially promoted a fee reduction because they were carrying too high of a balance. However, due to the hurricanes, the county had to hire additional staff to keep up with the statutes and volume of permits being received. In hindsight, the county should not have reduced their permit fees. In addition, Mr. McStravic noted that we do not charge resubmittal fees even though it would take three or four times before it would get completely through the process causing more review time from staff.

Mr. Gabor stated that in addition to staff providing the BIOC with what the real budget numbers will be and what they feel an appropriate fee increase would be, he also wanted to see more comparisons of our fees versus other jurisdictions not just Collier County.

Mr. McStravic stated staff had that information, but they reviewed what they were currently. However, there are instances where the fees for other jurisdictions go up and down. For instance, The City of Fort Myers have increased their fees, yet their fees have decreased for small homes. Pinellas County charges \$4,500 on a 2,500 square foot home.

Mr. Malaniak did not feel Pinellas County was a good example because their area does not experience much growth.

Mr. McStravic stated that Polk County charges \$1,920, but our fees are half of that. Initially, our fund balance was higher than our expenses but that was reversed to where the expenditures exceeded the fund balance due to statutory requirements.

Mr. Malaniak asked if staff knew how many residential permits were pulled in 2025.

Mr. Delnay stated he only knew how many total permits were pulled not just residential.

Mr. McStravic stated staff is working on this type of data now, but they did not have all the information yet because some of the information is received in phases.

Mr. Malaniak stated that in 2026 the industry expects things to remain flat versus this year. They do not anticipate any growth unless something significantly changes in the market.

Ms. Richards noted that interest rates have decreased.

Mr. Delnay stated the county has been utilizing temporary employees, but staff has taken their work away to make sure we have enough work for the full-time employees. If overtime is needed, it is cheaper to pay for a temp than to pay for a full-time employee, so the county tries to utilize temps as another option.

Mr. McStravic noted staff is tracking whether or not the temps are worth it. If they are not producing, the county is no longer utilizing them.

Mr. Delnay stated the county had to use third party inspectors and plan reviewers during the hurricane volumes to help staff get through their backlog; however, the county has not been utilizing them since March or April.

Mr. Lyons asked if the county was through the major hurricane permits/volume.

Mr. Delnay stated that is correct.

Mr. McStravic stated it can be seen by the revenue number that we have made strives this past month, but the expenditure side as increased. He felt part of the reason is that the reduction of fees never had an expiration date.

Mr. Malaniak stated that through attrition it made sense not to fill those positions because carrying the cost of overtime versus another employee would be cheaper than insurance.

The Committee had no further business to discuss.

Agenda Item 5 - Adjournment

Mr. Lyons made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mr. Malaniak. The Chair called the motion, and it passed 3-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:47 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 8:30 a.m. unless staff opts to hold an additional meeting before the end of the year.