

Keep Lake Beautiful Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes  
315 West Main Street  
BCC Chambers – County Admin Building  
Tavares, Florida 32778  
October 8, 2025

**CALL TO ORDER:**

Banks Helfrich called the meeting to order at 3:33 p.m.

Banks Helfrich led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Members/Staff Attending:**

Commissioner Liaison: Leslie Campione  
Municipal Representative: Judith Fike, City of Groveland  
Municipal Representative: Mayor Ed Freeman, Town of Lady Lake  
Civic Organization Member: Melissa Simmes  
Citizen Representative: Dr. Terri Pfister Soos  
Citizen Representative: Cynthia Pagut  
Citizen Representative: Banks Helfrich  
Office of Solid Waste Director: David Salinas  
Office of Solid Waste Associate Director: Shannon Dawkins  
Keep Lake Beautiful Facilitator: Hillarie Burgess  
Financial Associate: Ellen Nielsen

**Members - Not Attending:**

Business Owner/Chamber Representative: Deborah Jayne

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**APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

A motion was made and seconded by Mayor Freeman and Melissa Simmes, respectively, to approve the April 9, 2025, minutes. The motion was carried unanimously.

**INTRODUCTIONS, UPDATES, AND PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENTS/COMMENTS:**

Mr. Helfrich welcomed the Committee and extended a warm greeting to new member Cynthia Pagut. He then addressed the group, stating that he had no issue continuing as Chairperson for another year but was equally open to stepping aside if someone else wished to take on the role. He asked the Committee for their thoughts. Mayor Freeman responded that Mr. Helfrich was doing a great job. Ms. Simmes agreed, adding that while others were welcome to express interest, she felt Mr. Helfrich had done an excellent job. She would be supportive of him continuing.

A motion was made and seconded by Mayor Freeman and Ms. Simmes, respectively, to retain Mr. Helfrich as the Chairperson. The motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. Helfrich acknowledged the result and confirmed he would remain as chair for one more year.

Turning to the position of vice chair, Mr. Helfrich asked Ms. Simmes for her input. She responded that she was comfortable continuing in the role but would gladly step aside if someone else was interested.

A motion was made and seconded by Mr. Helfrich and Mayor Freeman, respectively, to retain Ms. Simmes as the Vice Chair. The motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. Helfrich congratulated Ms. Simmes, and she returned the congratulations.

Mr. Helfrich then opened the floor to citizen questions and comments, noting that a guest was present and inviting any remarks. Mayor Freeman introduced Tim Everline, Mayor Pro Tem of Howey, and shared that he had invited Mr. Everline to observe the meeting.

Mr. Helfrich welcomed Mr. Everline and acknowledged seeing him regularly at his own town hall, expressing appreciation for his attendance. The meeting then moved on to the Keep Lake Beautiful updates.

Ms. Burgess thanked Mr. Helfrich and welcomed everyone to the Keep Lake Beautiful Advisory Committee meeting. She introduced herself as Hillarie Burgess, the Keep Lake Beautiful Facilitator. Mr. Dawkins then introduced himself as Shannon Dawkins from Solid Waste.

Ms. Burgess proceeded to begin the presentation. She noted that the official notice of the meeting had been published on September 14, 2025. She then provided a brief overview of the presentation outline. Before moving on to the ethics training portion of the meeting, she took a moment to welcome new member Cynthia Pagut and invited her to briefly introduce herself.

Ms. Pagut greeted the group and shared that she and her husband moved to Florida about four years ago. She explained that she has a background in environmental education and outreach. She expressed her excitement to be part of the committee. She added that one of the main reasons they chose to move to Lake County was because of how beautiful it is, making it especially fitting for her to be involved with this committee. Ms. Burgess thanked her and welcomed her to the group, and Mr. Helfrich commented that she was certainly on the right committee for that. Ms. Burgess noted that she is filling the Citizen Representative seat.

Ms. Burgess reminded the group that ethics training is due by December 31st of this year. She mentioned that printed affidavits were available near the agendas for anyone who needed a copy. She noted that the affidavits must be notarized and can be emailed back to her, as this would be the last in-person meeting before the deadline. Ms. Burgess also said she would send a reminder with the training link and the affidavit.

### **Completed Projects:**

Ms. Burgess provided an update on the recent Litter Index Survey, which is part of the Keep America Beautiful President's Circle requirements. She reported that this year's score improved slightly compared to last year, decreasing from 0.17 to 0.16. She noted, however, that during the time of the survey, the grass was quite long in many areas, which may have limited visibility and affected what the survey team was able to observe.

Mr. Helfrich asked Ms. Burgess to explain what the litter index was. She explained that the survey covers six areas of Lake County, and a crew of four individuals drives through each area, rating the visible amount of litter on a scale from one to four, one being the best and four being the worst. The ratings are then averaged to produce the final index score. Mr. Helfrich acknowledged the purpose of the index as a way to quantify the amount of litter in the county, and he noted that the slight decrease indicates an improvement over the previous

year. Ms. Burgess confirmed that the difference was 0.01.

Mayor Freeman commented that Area 2, from Lady Lake to Tavares, was identified as the cleanest area. Commissioner Campione mentioned that Area 1, which is her district, unfortunately, had the worst rating. Mayor Freeman remarked that this might be due to the greater amount of grass in that area. Commissioner Campione added that her district includes a high number of roadways and locations where individuals can easily discard trash without being seen, which she believes contributes to the problem. Mayor Freeman referenced the common sight of illegally dumped items such as sofas and tires. Ms. Simmes pointed out that District 4 also appears to cover a larger area. Commissioner Campione agreed, confirming that District 4 is the largest geographic area in the county. Despite the challenges, she expressed that it was encouraging to see some progress being made.

Ms. Burgess announced that Keep Lake Beautiful received the President's Circle Award for 2025. She noted that the governance report was filed this year, which includes reporting all KLB activities and updating any changes to Keep America Beautiful. She also confirmed that KLB is current on its quarterly filings with Keep Florida Beautiful. Additionally, she shared that the annual Keep Florida Beautiful conference is scheduled for November 5–7 in Coral Gables.

Mr. Helfrich asked if anyone from the committee would be attending the conference. Ms. Burgess confirmed that she would be attending this year. Mr. Helfrich said no committee members were attending.

Continuing her update, Ms. Burgess discussed the upcoming Great American Cleanup. She shared that they are working on getting the declaration signed and hope to have it completed by the end of October. As part of this initiative, KLB will be committing to the 5-4-3-2-1 framework, which aligns with the celebration of America's 250th birthday. She provided a few examples of planned activities that support the framework and noted that the campaign will run from July 2025 through July 2026. Mr. Helfrich asked for clarification on the timeline, and Ms. Burgess confirmed that it runs from July of this year to July of next year. She added that, even though the declaration has not yet been finalized, they have already begun promoting the initiative at recent cleanup events and are actively working on it.

Ms. Burgess shared that a volunteer survey was distributed via email and remained open from August 4 to September 18. It was sent to 577 volunteers, and 18 individuals responded, resulting in a 3% response rate. Although participation was low, the responses included useful feedback. The most common theme was the need for improved communication, with several respondents requesting more advanced notice for events, greater visibility through newspapers and social media, and follow-up communication after project completion. Ms. Burgess stated she is reviewing ways to increase volunteer engagement and analyzing the volunteer list to better understand factors contributing to the low response rate. Ms. Simmes inquired about the timeframe covered by the 577 volunteers. Ms. Burgess clarified that this figure reflects the number of volunteers on the list she received when she assumed her role, although exact dates are unavailable. The list has continued to grow since that time.

Mayor Freeman inquired whether KLB currently has a Facebook page or a similar social media presence. Mr. Dawkins responded that there is no dedicated page at this time, noting that the creation and management of such platforms must go through the Communications Department. He added that this topic is on the agenda for further discussion and is currently a work in progress.

Mr. Helfrich suggested pausing the discussion to explore ways to increase the number of volunteers. Commissioner Campione emphasized the need for a social media presence, a sentiment echoed by Dr. Pfister Soos, who noted that this has been raised in previous meetings.

Ms. Simmes clarified that Lake County does have a Facebook page and that posts related to Keep Lake Beautiful could be shared there with the proper approval process. She explained that event and communication content must be submitted through official channels for posting. Ms. Burgess confirmed that some KLB events have already been posted on the Lake County Facebook page.

Commissioner Campione pointed out that while some posts are made on the county's Facebook, there has not been consistent posting on the main county website, and there may be a need to either boost visibility or consider creating a dedicated website or platform for KLB.

Dr. Pfister Soos suggested that a dedicated Facebook page for KLB would allow followers to receive updates and reminders without overwhelming the main Lake County social media feed. She also mentioned receiving a recent communication survey from the county, which asked residents how they prefer to receive updates from local government and affiliated organizations. In her response, she recommended the creation of more specific pages or subscription options for different groups, allowing residents to receive targeted updates based on their interests.

Mr. Helfrich inquired about the promotional materials that were brought to the meeting, asking, "How much swag do we have?" Ms. Burgess responded that the existing items were purchased last year and include the remaining promotional materials along with a few additional items.

Mr. Helfrich suggested focusing efforts on recruiting younger volunteers, particularly through outreach in schools, referencing his own background in performing for children. Dr. Pfister Soos noted that she had previously discussed this idea with Ms. Burgess, particularly the opportunity to engage high school students who are seeking community service hours for graduation and scholarship requirements. She highlighted the potential of the "Adopt-a-Spot" or "Clean Up a Spot" program as a structured way for schools to participate.

Dr. Pfister Soos added that she had compiled a list of graduation resource facilitators across the school district and mentioned that the county's marketing team is working on a flyer that could be distributed to them. Once completed, the flyer would help promote the program and encourage student involvement at the high school level.

Mr. Helfrich inquired about the minimum age requirement to serve on the committee. Ms. Burgess confirmed that committee members must be at least 18 years old. Mr. Helfrich acknowledged that most high school students would therefore not be eligible to serve. Ms. Simmes asked for clarification on volunteer eligibility, and Dr. Pfister Soos explained that high school students can volunteer even if they are not old enough to serve on the committee.

Mr. Helfrich clarified that his question referred specifically to having a high school student serve as a committee member. Commissioner Campione reiterated the 18-year minimum but suggested that a creative solution could involve forming a student-focused subcommittee or advisory group. Dr. Pfister Soos agreed and suggested a subcommittee structure, while Commissioner Campione mentioned the potential to collaborate with existing student government bodies to establish a parallel initiative.

Dr. Pfister Soos added that most high schools already have community service-based organizations, which could align with KLB's goals. These groups could be a starting point for broader student involvement.

Mr. Dawkins interjected to bring the discussion back to the agenda, noting the number of items still to cover. Dr. Pfister Soos and Commissioner Campione acknowledged the need to move forward, agreeing to revisit these ideas later.

Mr. Helfrich noted that these were valuable points for future consideration and then turned the meeting back over to Ms. Burgess to continue. He assured Mr. Dawkins they would conclude the meeting before 5 p.m.

Ms. Burgess provided a brief overview of the current and upcoming grant funding, beginning with a summary of what is eligible and ineligible under the recently completed grants, as well as the upcoming Viva Florida grant.

She reported that the fiscal year 2024–2025 has concluded, and as of now, the remaining funds carried over total \$2,644.14. The second distribution from the Great Greatest Grant is still pending. Additionally, all funds from the previous FDOT grant have been fully expended.

Ms. Burgess then reviewed the adopted and projected budget for the current fiscal year. The adopted amount for the year is \$3,000. KLB anticipates receiving \$1,375 from the Viva Florida grant, which is already encumbered for the Astor Library Native Garden Project. A new FDOT grant is also expected, for which a solicitation has been received, and the agreement is currently pending. The projected amount from the FDOT grant is \$15,000.

She noted that the next slides in the presentation broke down the budget into pie charts for a visual representation, but the figures remained consistent with what was previously shared. The current actuals stand at \$2,644.14, and all projected funds have been encumbered for specific initiatives.

Ms. Burgess also outlined the proposed spending plan, which includes allocations for existing programs, while allowing flexibility to reallocate funds to new projects should opportunities arise. If no new initiatives are introduced, the funds will be spent as currently planned.

Ms. Burgess encouraged committee members to share any project ideas related to the upcoming FDOT grant, reminding everyone that proposals should align with the grant's primary focus areas—specifically litter prevention and litter reduction.

Mr. Helfrich asked whether beautification projects were also eligible under the grant. Ms. Burgess clarified that while beautification efforts can be considered, FDOT is placing stronger emphasis on projects that directly address litter-related issues.

Ms. Burgess provided an overview of completed projects:

- **Clermont Earth Day (April 19, 2025):** Supplies were lent to Clermont, and an outreach table was set up. The event saw participation from 190 volunteers who collected approximately 300 pounds of litter. Ms. Burgess thanked Mr. Helfrich for his support at the event.
- **10-Year Anniversary Celebration (April 26, 2025):** The celebration included a truck reveal and installation of garden signs in the native garden. Commissioner Campione and Mr. Helfrich spoke at the event, along with Commissioner Smith, Councilwoman Fike, and Dr. Terry Pfister Soos, who were also in attendance.
- **Fruitland Park Community Cleanup:** 26 volunteers participated despite the heat, collecting a total of 14,241 pounds of litter, bulk items, and tires. Ms. Burgess thanked Commissioner Campione, Ms. Jayne, and Dr. Pfister Soos for their involvement.
- **Astatula Community Center Native Landscaping (May 27, 2025):** Fifteen volunteers planted 217 native plants. The project was funded by the FDOT grant, with total costs of \$1,267.03 for plants, pine straw, and edging. Mr. Helfrich also assisted with planting.
- **Paisley Community Cleanup (June 21, 2025):** Twelve volunteers collected 9,222 pounds of litter, tires, and bulk items. This was the first event to promote the Greatest American Cleanup initiative.
- **Mount Plymouth Sunken Gardens (June 24, 2025):** Fifteen native sandhill species were planted, funded by the FDOT grant with a total cost of \$154.65.

- **Astor Solarization Project:** The kickoff involved clearing the garden site and laying plastic to suppress weeds before planting. Mr. Helfrich confirmed the plastic would be removed before planting. The Northlake Outpost covered the project in an article.
- **Astatula Town Hall Beautification (July 5, 2025):** Seven volunteers planted native plants along the front of the town hall, with expenses totaling \$368.75 funded by the FDOT grant.
- **Montverde Butterfly Garden (July 18, 2025):** Twelve volunteers planted 142 native plants, funded by the FDOT grant at a cost of \$615.50.
- **Howey-in-the-Hills Town Hall Beautification:** 168 drought-resistant native plants were installed to reduce water usage, funded by the FDOT grant for \$838.60. Commissioner Campione noted Banks assisted at this site.
- **Realtors Association Waterway Cleanup (July 31, 2025):** KLB provided supplies and volunteer management support for cleanup efforts on the Lake Beauclair Canal involving kayaks, boats, and roadways. Thirty volunteers collected 300 pounds of debris.
- **Lake County Central Solid Waste Facility Beautification:** Ninety-eight native plants were planted around the welcome sign, and a butterfly garden was started near the administration building. Mr. Helfrich assisted with planting.
- **Lake County Waterways Cleanup (September 20, 2025):** A total of 161 volunteers participated across five locations, collecting 1,253 pounds of trash from waterways and shorelines. Commissioner Campione praised the large turnout, and Mayor Freeman noted the scale of the effort.
- **Altoona Community Cleanup (National Public Lands Day):** In partnership with the Forest Service and Ocala National Forest Alliance, volunteers worked at the Pitman Center and in the forest. Although only one volunteer was present at the site, about 10 to 15 others collected litter in the forest. The event collected 8,322 pounds of litter and 58,540 pounds of tires, with support from the Lake County Sheriff's Office.

Ms. Burgess presented an overview of cleanup activities, noting that four cleanup locations had been organized between April and the present. She also provided a summary of events held from July 2024 to July 2025, totaling 25 events with 535 volunteers contributing time valued at \$54,555.00. A slide was presented showing the cumulative totals of materials collected during this period. Mr. Helfrich inquired about a discrepancy in the reported weight of tires collected, specifically referencing a total of 17,000 pounds in one slide and 54,000 pounds in another. Ms. Burgess clarified that the data presented was limited to the July 2024–July 2025 timeframe and did not include past events. Mr. Helfrich acknowledged the clarification and confirmed that the total would be higher when combining all events.

### **Pending Projects:**

Ms. Burgess reported on several upcoming events, noting participation in multiple outreach activities, including the Fall Festival of Plants and Learning, the Lake County Senior Expo, and Cassia Day, where informational tables will be set up. For the Astor Library Native Demonstration Garden, plastic used for solarization will be removed on October 18, 2025, in preparation for planting, which is scheduled for November 1, 2025. The next community cleanup event is planned for November 15, 2025, in Sorrento.

Ms. Burgess provided an update on the America in Bloom initiative, noting that the most recent meeting was held on August 12 in Eustis. The meeting included discussions on grants and budgets, as well as a tour of the Clifford House in downtown Eustis. The next meeting is scheduled for November 4, 2025, from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. at the Leesburg Library. In response to a question from Mr. Helfrich regarding committee representation, Ms. Burgess confirmed that Ms. Jayne is the first representative for it.

### **Items for Discussion**

Ms. Burgess presented the proposed meeting dates for 2026 and requested committee approval pending any necessary adjustments. Mr. Helfrich asked the committee to review the proposed dates, confirming that all meetings are scheduled for Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m.

The committee tentatively agreed to schedule the next meeting for February 11, 2026. Regarding the April 8 date, Ms. Pagut noted that she may be unavailable due to an expected family addition, with a due date in early April. Mr. Helfrich offered to move the meeting to April 15 to accommodate her, but Ms. Pagut indicated she would likely be unable to attend regardless. Mr. Dawkins stated that if everyone agreed with the proposed dates, the Committee could proceed with a vote. Commissioner Campione noted that as long as a quorum is maintained, it is acceptable for some members to be absent.

For the July meeting, Mr. Helfrich suggested changing the date from July 22 to July 15 due to a scheduling conflict. Ms. Simmes confirmed her general availability on Wednesdays, and other members expressed support for the proposed change. Ms. Burgess noted that she would need to confirm the availability of the chambers for the new date. Mr. Helfrich asked Ms. Burgess to follow up on the matter.

The October 14, 2026, meeting date was confirmed as acceptable by the Committee. Mr. Dawkins recommended proceeding with a motion to adopt the proposed meeting dates, contingent upon confirmation of chamber availability for July 15. He asked whether the Committee wished to make a motion to approve the dates with that contingency. Mr. Helfrich agreed and requested that a motion be made.

A motion was made and seconded by Dr. Pfister Soos and Mayor Freeman, respectively, to accept the proposed dates and times, except for July 22<sup>nd</sup> be changed to July 15<sup>th</sup>. The motion was carried unanimously.

Dr. Pfister Soos asked whether, if a quorum is not present—as was the case for the last July meeting—the Committee could still meet to receive quarterly updates and continue discussion, while postponing any items requiring a vote, such as approval of minutes, until the next meeting.

Mr. Dawkins responded that a quorum is necessary in order to proceed with a meeting and that, without one, the meeting cannot be held. He added that staff would still provide members with the necessary information individually, particularly now that one-on-one updates are being conducted.

Commissioner Campione asked for clarification, noting that her understanding was the Committee could still meet informally to share updates, even without a quorum. Mr. Dawkins explained that the previous meeting had been canceled because there were not enough members present to meet quorum requirements.

Commissioner Campione observed that some committee still meet when a quorum is not met but simply refrain from voting on any business items, and she asked whether that might be a better use of staff time than conducting individual one-on-one meetings.

Dr. Pfister Soos added that, in her experience with school councils, meetings sometimes continue for informational purposes even when a quorum is not present, allowing both members and the public to receive updates.

Commissioner Campione suggested that staff consider whether the Committee could follow a similar approach—continuing to meet for informational updates only, while deferring any votes or official actions until a subsequent meeting with a quorum.

Ms. Burgess agreed that staff could consider the suggestion. Mayor Freeman added that such an approach could be used as needed and would not need to be adopted as a formal policy. Commissioner Campione agreed.

Ms. Simmes expressed support for the idea, noting that it would be beneficial for members who travel to attend meetings to still review materials, even if no official actions are taken. Commissioner Campione added that if it becomes apparent upon arrival that a quorum is not present, the Committee could still proceed with the informational portion of the meeting and postpone votes until the next meeting, so that the public still receives updates.

Mr. Dawkins stated that staff make efforts to contact members in advance to confirm attendance and minimize the likelihood of last-minute quorum issues.

Ms. Burgess provided an update on ongoing research into the development of litter stations and shared that she has been in communication with the Parks and Trails, which expressed interest in placing two litter stations—one at the South Lake Trail and another at North Lake Regional Park. The stations are still in the design phase, with two options currently being considered: a fixed station, similar to a dog waste station, and a movable station using a bifold sign structure.

Ms. Burgess explained that the goal is to launch a pilot program in partnership with either other County departments or municipalities. The pilot will assess how many supplies the stations will be going through and what costs are involved before determining if the program can be expanded through KLB.

Mr. Helfrich asked if the stations would be located in county parks. Ms. Burgess confirmed that the two primary stations would be in county parks and noted that Tavares has also expressed interest in participating in the pilot program.

Mr. Helfrich asked whether a decision needed to be made between the two design options at this time. Ms. Burgess responded that both options could be implemented and that it was not necessary to choose only one.

Mr. Helfrich asked about funding and whether the FDOT grant would cover the project. Ms. Burgess replied that KLB would provide the stations and supplies, the partners would maintain the stations, and the KLB would replenish the supplies.

Mr. Helfrich expressed support for the pilot program and asked for feedback from the Committee. Commissioner Campione asked whether a single design needed to be selected; Mr. Helfrich confirmed that it did not, and Commissioner Campione indicated her support.

Mayor Freeman noted that, based on previous one-to-one discussions, he was concerned that some community members might take the pickers home, citing examples from his own community. Mr. Helfrich responded that the pilot program would help determine how much is lost.

Dr. Pfister Soos suggested adding labels to the pickers to encourage returning the picker. Commissioner Campione agreed. Mayor Freeman proposed a deposit system similar to Aldi's shopping carts, where a coin is required to take a picker and returned when it is brought back. Mr. Helfrich noted he believed that the pilot program has funding and expressed his support, adding that it also raises awareness for Keep Lake Beautiful. Mayor Freeman agreed. Commissioner Campione emphasized that park users are the target audience, as they are most likely to participate. Ms. Burgess stated she would continue moving forward with the design and implementation of the pilot program.

Ms. Burgess provided an update on efforts to develop new litter prevention signage, including both roadway signs and potential billboards. She noted that KLB currently has four signs in place, but they are outdated and in

need of replacement. The plan is to redesign the signage with a refreshed, impactful message aimed at preventing littering and to place at least four updated signs in existing locations, while also identifying additional high-visibility areas for installation.

Ms. Burgess requested that Committee members submit ideas for a new slogan or message that would resonate with Lake County residents—something short, catchy, and focused on anti-littering behavior.

Mr. Helfrich mentioned a previously suggested slogan, “Don’t Be a Litter Monster,” as a potential option. He also pointed out that signage from the now-defunct Lake County Soil and Water Conservation District remains posted in certain areas, and suggested repurposing those sign structures for the new litter prevention signs. He specifically identified two locations: one at the entrance to Lake County via the Ocala National Forest and another along Highway 50 when entering the county from the west.

Commissioner Campione asked for clarification on whether suggestions were needed for locations, logo, or the catchphrase. Mr. Dawkins confirmed that feedback is needed for both the logo and the locations. Commissioner Campione recommended targeting rural, unincorporated communities—particularly those recognized as “distinctive Lake County communities”—for new signage placement. She noted that these areas are often more prone to littering and that the County’s Public Works Department maintains a list of these locations, which could be used to guide placement decisions.

Mayor Freeman asked if there is a drop-off center in Commissioner Campione’s district. Commissioner Campione replied that there are a couple. Mayor Freeman noted that in his experience, items such as sofas and washing machines are often dumped in the same locations shortly after county or town pick-ups. He suggested placing signs at these locations indicating proper disposal sites that are free for residents.

Commissioner Campione responded that most of the time, disposal is free. Mr. Dawkins clarified that it depends on the material; items that can go to convenience centers are free, while other chargeable items cannot. Mayor Freeman shared that at the Lady Lake convenience center, he often sees sofas and washing machines in the bins. He also noted limits on the number of tires residents can bring.

Commissioner Campione mentioned construction and demolition debris. Mr. Dawkins confirmed that such debris cannot go to convenience centers and must be taken to the central facility.

Commissioner Campione asked if Mayor Freeman was thinking about locations nearby where the county has had to go and pick up items.

Mayor Freeman replied that he was thinking about places that consistently require cleanup, noting that many people may not even be aware of proper disposal options. He shared that when he directs people to the convenience center on Jackson Street, residents respond positively, realizing they can properly dispose of items like old gasoline or used oil. He suggested that promoting these centers more, such as on a Facebook page, could be helpful.

Commissioner Campione proposed another idea: including information about proper disposal in municipal water bills, as a way to increase awareness among residents. Mayor Freeman agreed, noting that municipal water bills are already sent out, and he would ask. Commissioner Campione added that it is county-wide, not just the unincorporated area, but this approach could help raise awareness. Mayor Freeman concurred.

Mr. Dawkins stated that, from a solid waste perspective, the department appreciates the efforts of the cities and volunteers in promoting the convenience centers and directing residents to the Solid Waste website. He added that the department can work with Public Works to identify illegal dumping hotspots and consider placing signs

at those locations. Mayor Freeman noted that individuals who dump illegally are often ordinary residents who, when no one is around, dispose of items in the roadside or nearby weeds.

Dr. Pfister Soos added that while the discussion has focused on larger items, the department could consider roadway locations identified in the litter survey. Comparing data year to year could help prioritize areas with the highest frequency or volume of litter for signage. Mayor Freeman agreed that prioritizing signage in those areas is essential. Dr. Pfister Soos concurred.

Mr. Helfrich added to Commissioner Campione's earlier comment about Lake County's distinctive communities, noting that Ferndale, Okahumpa, and Yalaha each have a sign, and suggested adding "Keep Lake Beautiful" to those signs.

Commissioner Campione agreed, noting that they could potentially piggyback on existing signs if there is enough space, and mentioned that several other communities in northeast Lake, including Paisley, also have signs. Mr. Helfrich reiterated that "Keep Lake Beautiful" could be added to the signs, using the current sign as an example. Commissioner Campione noted that this could enhance the signs with an additional message. Ms. Burgess responded that these were great ideas.

Mayor Freeman said he was unsure of the cost of the signs, but noted that expenses could become a concern. Commissioner Campione replied that the county produces signage in-house through its sign shop, so they do not need to contract it out. She added that while they want to avoid sign pollution or excessive signage, creating signs in-house does save on costs. Mayor Freeman said he understood and agreed that piggybacking on existing signs would be a good approach. Commissioner Campione agreed.

Mr. Dawkins confirmed that the County has already begun evaluating potential sites and reviewing right-of-way ownership for future sign placement.

Ms. Burgess indicated that at the next meeting, the group will vote on the proposed message. She encouraged members to submit any ideas beforehand so that the suggestions can be reviewed, narrowed down, and prepared for the vote.

Dr. Pfister Soos asked if the proposed messages would be available prior to the meeting. Ms. Burgess confirmed that they would be distributed in advance for preview.

Ms. Burgess then briefly introduced the topic of billboards, noting that current six-month pricing for billboard space is relatively high and may not be feasible at this time. However, she suggested this could be a consideration for the future once the messaging is finalized and a broader litter campaign is developed.

Commissioner Campione noted that sign companies sometimes experience lull periods between customers purchasing signage. She suggested exploring the possibility of approaching these companies to display the group's message during those downtime periods as a form of donation. Ms. Burgess shared that she had already spoken with Clear Channel, who indicated that they offer standard pricing and do not provide complimentary slots during lull times—but acknowledged that other companies might operate differently and agreed to continue exploring options.

Ms. Simmes noted that digital billboards may be the more practical option and pointed out that Clear Channel operates several of them in the area.

Mr. Helfrich mentioned that there are independent billboard companies that may offer free billboard space,

provided that the organization covers the cost of producing the sign, which he estimated to be around \$500. He suggested that this could be an option worth exploring and recommended that Ms. Burgess reach out to independent billboard companies to inquire about potential opportunities.

Dr. Pfister Soos recalled a previous one-on-one discussion with Ms. Burgess regarding the possibility of donations or sponsorships exceeding a certain amount. She asked whether Ms. Burgess had been able to look into that matter further. Mr. Dawkins responded that the topic would likely be addressed in an upcoming presentation, noting that Ms. Burgess has a slide prepared about the sponsorship policy. Mr. Helfrich added that this discussion ties directly into the broader topic of sponsorships.

Mr. Dawkins confirmed that the upcoming item on sponsorship policies, which Ms. Burgess would be presenting, would address that question. Mr. Helfrich noted that the billboard discussion was a good segue into the sponsorship topic.

Ms. Burgess provided an update on the guidelines for sponsorships, explaining that Lake County does not have a dedicated sponsorship policy specific to Keep Lake Beautiful (KLB). Instead, the program follows the County's donation policy. As outlined by that policy, KLB committee members are permitted to solicit donations of up to \$1,000 in value. Any such donations must be approved through the County's internal process. Ms. Burgess clarified that, as the KLB facilitator, she is not allowed to solicit donations herself. However, it was approved by vote in 2022 that committee members may actively seek donations or sponsorships, provided they remain under the \$1,000 threshold.

Mayor Freeman suggested offering public recognition to donors, such as featuring their logos or acknowledgments on the organization's Facebook page. He noted that he could likely secure a \$1,000 donation from Waste Management quickly, but recommended enhancing the appeal of sponsorships by providing some form of visible exposure or acknowledgment to contributing organizations.

Commissioner Campione noted that KLB already promotes sponsor logos at events. Mr. Dawkins affirmed that sponsor recognition is currently in place and reiterated that committee members are welcome to pursue sponsorships in accordance with the donation guidelines.

Mr. Helfrich asked whether the policy would apply to any type of donation. Ms. Burgess confirmed that it would, clarifying that as long as the donation amount is under \$1,000. She added that if anyone identifies potential donors, they should be directed to her so she can guide them through the appropriate process.

Ms. Burgess introduced the proposal for the committee members to attend municipal council meetings in their respective areas to promote KLB's mission and generate volunteer interest. She explained that the initiative would require someone to serve as a representative at each location and noted that she is preparing a shared messaging document to ensure consistency in outreach. She indicated that a motion by the committee is required to move forward.

Mr. Helfrich shared that he regularly speaks at seven city council meetings, one school board meeting, and one county commission meeting each month in South Lake County. He explained that he typically presents on a specific topic and suggested that one of his spring topics could focus on KLB to help raise awareness about the program. He noted that these speaking opportunities generally allow three to five minutes, depending on the setting, and emphasized the value of using them to promote KLB.

Commissioner Campione mentioned that the councils meet three to four times per month, offering additional opportunities for outreach. Mr. Helfrich proposed that, rather than speaking during the standard three-minute

public comment period, KLB could request a place on meeting agendas to provide a short presentation. Commissioner Campione agreed, stating that an agenda presentation would be ideal, as it would allow more time to share information and make a greater impact. Mr. Helfrich added that he would be willing to represent KLB in South Lake County at city, county, and school board meetings and invited others to consider covering the northern, eastern, or western areas of the county.

Dr. Pfister Soos suggested making a motion to approve moving forward with the outreach idea and proposed that members could then sign up for individual meetings to participate. Ms. Burgess agreed with this approach.

Mr. Helfrich inquired whether the proposed initiative would take place next year in recognition of the program's 10-year anniversary. Ms. Burgess clarified that the current year marks the 10-year milestone. Dr. Pfister Soos suggested that, once the program is approved and a unified message is developed, implementation could begin. She noted that other cities, such as Eustis, have organized community cleanup efforts where participants bring their own equipment, and suggested that increased awareness of the "Clean Up a Spot" program could help other municipalities better utilize the available resources. Dr. Pfister Soos recommended establishing a clear timeline following approval and coordinating presentations at upcoming council meetings.

A motion was made and seconded by Dr. Pfister Soos and Mayor Freeman, respectively, to move forward with the municipal council meetings. The motion was carried unanimously.

Mr. Helfrich suggested coordinating the timing of the initiative, proposing March or April, and developing a shared message for presentations to city councils. He initially considered 10- to 15-minute presentations. Commissioner Campione advised keeping the presentations shorter, noting that councils have busy agendas and that key points could be covered in approximately five minutes, including statistics on the organization's accomplishments and guidance on how councils can connect with the program. Mr. Helfrich agreed and added that they could request to present to each city council. Commissioner Campione confirmed that presentations could be scheduled with all councils upon request.

Mr. Dawkins stated that there is already has a direction for the initiative and will continue developing the shared message to enable members to present and solicit support at city council meetings. Commissioner Campione noted that coordinating presentations should be relatively straightforward, as the County Manager has established relationships with all city managers and can assist in facilitating access, with the remaining task being the coordination of which representatives will attend each meeting. Ms. Burgess added that she will follow up on the coordination efforts and help determine which representatives will attend each city council meeting and when.

#### **Other Business:**

Ms. Burgess confirmed that the next meeting of the committee will be held on February 11, 2026, at 3:30 p.m. in the Board of County Commissioners Chambers.

Mr. Helfrich asked if there were any comments or questions.

Mayor Freeman added his perspective regarding billboards, stating that he believes they are the antithesis of the "Keep Lake Beautiful" initiative. He noted that billboards along roadways, such as 441, obscure the natural scenery behind them, and expressed that, in his opinion, smaller signs would be more effective and certainly less expensive.

Mr. Helfrich asked to return to the slide regarding the publication of meetings, initially referring to the

Gainesville Sun as the local publication. Ms. Burgess clarified that the meetings are published in the Daily Commercial. Mr. Helfrich confirmed that the Daily Commercial serves the Leesburg area, noting he had initially thought it was Gainesville. Mr. Dawkins added that the County Communications Office manages all submissions for meeting publications and ensures that all content is properly vetted.

Mr. Helfrich asked whether the County publishes all of its meeting notices through the Daily Commercial. Mr. Dawkins clarified that the County submits meeting information to the staff member responsible for postings, who ensures that all publications are properly vetted. Mr. Helfrich confirmed with Commissioner Campione that all meeting advertisements are placed in the Daily Commercial, to which Commissioner Campione added that the County selects advertising placements to obtain the best rates while meeting statutory requirements. Mr. Helfrich then asked Mayor Freeman how his office handles meeting publications. Mayor Freeman stated that their meetings are published online rather than in a newspaper, which he confirmed complies with statutory requirements.

### **Reports/Updates:**

The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, February 11, 2026, at 3:30 p.m..

### **Adjournment**

With no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:34 p.m

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BANKS HELFRICH, CHAIRMAN

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Date