

Tallahassee Reports

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The Reports

Incumbent City Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox is seeking a third term representing Tallahassee City Commission Seat 5 after first winning election in 2018. **A1**

There are six candidates on the ballot competing for Tallahassee City Commission Seat 3. Meet the candidates. **A1**

The Leon County School Board approved two initiatives during its July 14 meeting designed to address some of the district's most significant challenges. **A3**

Leon County Government and the Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) recently recognized outstanding neighborhoods in our community. **A2**

TPD crime incident numbers for June 2026 are in. For the month of June, property crime incidents were down when compared to June 2025, however violent crimes were up. **A5**

Over the last four months there have been 2473 SFR construction permits issued, the highest four-month total since May-August 2023. **B1**

Tallahassee Reports previews the upcoming girls high school cross country season. **B3**

Leon County Rejects Flock Camera Grant

By Steve Stewart

The Leon County Commission voted July 14 to reject a federal grant that would have expanded the use of Flock Safety automated license plate reader cameras in surrounding Big Bend counties, citing concerns over privacy, government surveillance and the collection of motorists' data. The grant, administered through the Leon County Sheriff's Office, would have provided funding for Flock camera systems in Wakulla, Jefferson, Liberty and Taylor counties. Although the cameras were intended for installation outside Leon County, the proposal generated significant public opposition from residents who

FLOCK, Page A4

By Steve Stewart

For the first time in more than a decade, Tallahassee voters will choose a new mayor without an incumbent on the ballot, setting the stage for a contest that could reshape both the city's leadership and its political culture.

Former state senator Lorraine Ausley, businessman Michael Shawn Foust, City Commissioner Jeremy Matlow, and attorney Daryl Parks are vying to succeed Mayor John Dailey, who opted not to seek another term.

The race comes after years of increasingly sharp divisions on the Tallahassee City Commission, where public clashes among elected officials have led many residents and civic leaders to describe the atmosphere as toxic.

With four candidates offering different visions for the city's future, the 2026 mayoral election has become more than a debate over policy — it is

also a referendum on whether Tallahassee can reset the tone of local government and move beyond the political rancor that has defined recent years.

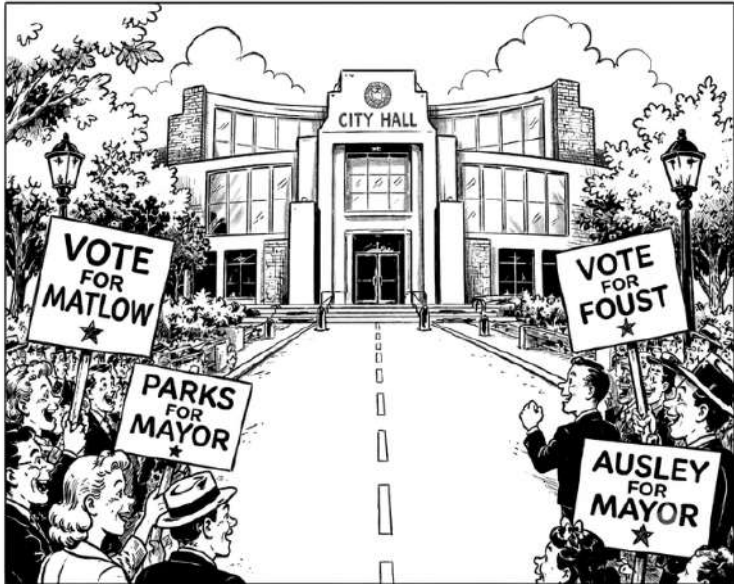
Provided below is a summary of positions taken by the candidates on several important issues during the various political forums.

Visit TallahasseeReports.com for complete campaign coverage.

TMH Deal, Country Club Sale, & Tone at City Hall

The four candidates offered contrasting views on some of the city's most consequential recent decisions while agreeing that restoring trust and a more productive tone at City Hall will be a central challenge for the next administration.

During a forum, the candidates discussed the transfer of TMH hospital assets to FSU Health, the city's purchase of Capital City Country Club, and the increasingly contentious



atmosphere among city commissioners.

The candidates' views on TMH reflected one of the sharpest divides in the race. Ausley and Parks voiced support for the partnership with Florida State University, saying the creation of an academic health center could transform

health care, attract investment and create high-paying jobs. Ausley described the agreement as a rare opportunity to position Tallahassee as a regional medical hub.

Foust also supported the partnership but criticized the way the agreement was han-

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Incumbent Dianne Williams-Cox Draws Two Challengers



Dianne Williams-Cox



Tiffany Hill



Dot Inman-Johnson

By Steve Stewart

Incumbent City Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cox is seeking a third term representing Tallahassee City Commission Seat 5 after first winning election in 2018. Her challengers include Tiffany Hill and Dot Inman-Johnson.

During the forums, the candidates shared their positions on several important community issues. We start with these issues and finish with biographical information about each candidate.

The "Three-to-Two" Divide and Decorum

A major point of contention on the city commission is the persistent 3-2 split on the City Commission. Williams-Cox noted that while 5-0 votes often occur but go unreported, the 3-2 majority is what "keeps the train leaving the station," allowing the city to pass balanced budgets and fund essential services.

Inman-Johnson argued stated the majority has the power to fix this divisiveness by being more open to the minority.

Hill suggested the need for "civility and respect" and proposed using a mediator to work out differences privately rather than in public.

Succession and Administrative Oversight

Leadership styles were further contrasted with the candidates' views on the City Manager and the timing of his replacement.

Williams-Cox gave current City Manager Reese Goad an "A" grade for driving diversity and inclusion initiatives and the overall operation of the city.

Hill and Johnson both issued failing grades, a "D", respectively, criticizing him for appearing to answer only to a specific majority of the commission rather than the entire body and the public.

Hill and Inman-Johnson argued

SEAT 5, Page A4

City Commission Seat 3: Six Candidates Vie for Open Seat

By Steve Stewart

There are six candidates on the ballot competing for Tallahassee City Commission Seat 3. The seat is currently occupied by City Commissioner Jeremy Matlow, however his decision to run for mayor has resulted in an open seat which attracted a diverse set of candidates entering the race.

The candidates include Darryl Alfred Jr., Tom Derzypolski, Talethia O. Edwards, Maxwell Herrle, PJ Perez, and Norm Roach.

Political Background

While the Tallahassee City Commission seats are non-partisan, the candidates shared their personal party affiliations and political journeys during a recent forum.

Darryl Alfred said he is a registered Democrat. He mentioned being raised in a "vote blue no matter who" household but emphasized that he does not want to focus solely on party affiliations.

Tom Derzypolski said he is a registered NPA (No Party Affiliation). He stated that he chooses to be an NPA because he seeks the "best leadership for the moment" rather than following a specific party.

Norm Roach has been registered as an NPA for over a decade. His political journey included being a Democrat in his youth and then a Republican for approximately six years before deciding that parties serve themselves rather than the people.

Talethia Edwards said she is a registered Democrat and stated she has been one her

SEAT 3, Page A3

Leon County Approves Moratorium on Data Centers

The Leon County Commission voted unanimously Tuesday to impose an 18-month moratorium on new large-scale data center development, giving county staff time to study the potential impacts of the rapidly expanding industry before considering future projects.

The action, approved during the board's July 14 meeting, extends beyond the one-year pause initially proposed by Commission Chair Christian Caban last month. The temporary moratorium halts the processing of development applications for qualifying large-scale data centers while the county evaluates whether changes to its Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code are needed.

Commissioners said the additional time will allow the county to examine issues including electricity demand, water consumption, land-use compatibility, environmental impacts and infrastructure needs associated with large-scale data centers, which have become increasingly common as artificial intelligence and cloud computing drive demand for computing capacity.

The vote follows the commission's June direction to prepare a moratorium ordinance. Similar temporary moratoriums have been adopted or considered by several Florida communities as local governments weigh the facilities' economic benefits against their significant utility and infrastructure demands.

INSIDE



Tallahassee Reports' Top Leon County Girls Cross Country Runners to Watch for 2026-2027 Season. B3

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Community News

Leon County and CONA Recognize Outstanding Neighborhoods

By Staff

On July 14, Leon County Government and the Council of Neighborhood Associations (CONA) recognized outstanding neighborhoods and neighbors through the 45th Annual Neighborhood Recognition Program. This year’s winners were recognized for going above and beyond in the last year to make our community a better place to live, work, and play. “Leon County is proud to recognize the dedicated residents and neighborhoods that strengthen our community through service, leadership, and collaboration,” said Leon County Commission Chairman Christian Caban. “From beautification projects to volunteerism and civic engagement, these efforts create lasting benefits for

residents throughout our county.”

The 2026 winners include:

Small Neighborhood of the Year (200 homes or fewer) – Avondale Neighborhood Association. Avondale demonstrated a strong commitment to resident engagement by using community feedback to guide meaningful neighborhood improvements while continuing to foster a connected, vibrant community through popular annual events and traditions.

Large Neighborhood of the Year (more than 200 homes) – Griffin Heights Neighborhood Association. Griffin Heights exemplified community leadership by fostering resident engagement and implementing initia-

tives that enhanced neighborhood pride, improved quality of life, and supported sustainable revitalization and economic opportunity.

Unincorporated Neighborhood of the Year (outside the city limits) – Highgrove Homeowners Association. Highgrove demonstrated exceptional community stewardship by investing in infrastructure improvements, advancing sustainable practices, and fostering a welcoming, connected community through resident engagement, longstanding traditions, and service initiatives.

Neighbor of the Year- Michelle Olson. Michelle exemplifies the true spirit of community through selfless service, compassionate leadership, and unwavering commitment to her neighbors. Since joining the neighborhood one year ago, she has made a lasting impact by volunteering her time, strengthening neighborhood initiatives, and enhancing the quality of life in her community. Whether improving shared spaces, helping neighbors in need, or fostering connections, Michelle consistently goes above and beyond to make her neighborhood a better place to live.

“For 45 years, Leon County has recognized the extraordinary contributions



of our neighborhoods, whose dedication continues to enrich communities and create lasting impact across our county,” said County Administrator Vincent S. Long. “Through this program, we celebrate their accomplishments and the partnerships that inspire continued progress for generations to come.”

The Neighborhood of the Year Award winners received a sign to display at their neighborhood entrances. The Neighbor of the Year Award winner received a personalized plaque highlighting their leadership and service to the community. “Leon County neighborhoods are strongest when residents come together with a shared commitment to improving the places they call home,” said Leroy Peck of CONA. “CONA is proud to partner with Leon County in celebrating the neighborhood organizations whose dedication strengthens neighborhoods and builds a stronger community.”

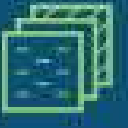
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Local News

LCS Approves International Teacher Recruitment, Student Re-enrollment Initiative

By Steve Stewart

The Leon County School Board approved two initiatives during its July 14 meeting designed to address some of the district's most significant challenges: staffing classrooms with qualified teachers and reversing years of declining student enrollment. Board members voted to approve the district's partnership with an international teacher recruitment program, allowing Leon County Schools to hire educators from abroad to fill difficult-to-staff positions. District officials have said the program helps

recruit certified teachers in subject areas where local applicants remain in short supply while providing a cultural exchange experience for students and staff. The board also unanimously approved hiring Caissa Public Strategies to lead a targeted student recruitment and retention campaign aimed at bringing former Leon County Schools students back to the district. According to the agenda item, the district will utilize a cooperative purchasing agreement originally established by the Houston Independent School District for communications support services.

Under the agreement, Caissa will contact families of students who previously attended Leon County Schools and encourage them to re-enroll. The company will be compensated based on results rather than a flat fee, receiving \$935 for each former student who returns and is counted in the district's October full-time equivalent (FTE) enrollment survey. If a student re-enrolls and is first counted during the February FTE survey, the company will receive \$450, provided it has not already been paid for that student. The student recruitment effort comes as Leon County Schools

continues to experience declining enrollment, a trend that directly affects district funding because Florida distributes education dollars largely based on student enrollment. District leaders hope the outreach campaign will reconnect with families who have left the school system while highlighting the programs and services available in Leon County Schools. Together, the two unanimous votes reflect the board's strategy of investing in both the workforce needed to educate students and the enrollment needed to sustain the district's long-term financial stability.

City Commission Seat 3: Six Candidates Vie for Open Seat

SEAT 3, From Front Page

entire life. Max Herrle said he is a lifelong member of the Democratic Party, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, and a believer in the power of unions and labor. PJ Perez is currently a registered Democrat. He noted that he was an NPA for a long time while working as a teacher to maintain the trust of his students.

City Manager Reese Goad's Tenure

The candidates' evaluation of City Manager Reese Goad varied sharply. Norm Roach gave Goad an A-minus, whereas PJ Perez and Max Herrle both gave him an F, with Perez citing his role in commission "divisiveness." Darryl Alfred assigned a D, stating residents do not feel he is accountable, while Tom Derzypolski gave a B-minus, partially crediting him for "incredible" city departments. Talethia Edwards declined to give a grade, citing a lack of direct experience working with him.

Stance on the Sale and Potential Impact of Hospital Assets

The candidates' views on the actual transfer of assets ranged from cautious hope to direct opposition. Norm Roach explicitly supported the idea, calling it a "good move" focused on improving healthcare delivery and costs. Tom Derzypolski viewed the sale as a "pivot point" for the community to attract research and pharmaceutical jobs, though he remained displeased with the process. Darryl Alfred remained hopeful because FSU has provided much for the community, and he wants to see the partnership expand healthcare access for underserved areas. Max Herrle expressed a desire to believe in FSU's ability to make TMH a world-class facility but emphasized that community trust must be rebuilt. Talethia Edwards stated she is not in agreement with selling public property assets but acknowledged the vital importance of expanded healthcare services. PJ Perez expressed fear regarding the loss of local control over healthcare and potential influence from the state government, urging that the under-insured must have a seat at the table.

The Sale of the City Golf Course

One of the most contentious issues was the city's decision to sell the golf course to the Capital City Country Club. Norm Roach supported the decision, arguing it was a good partnership that saved the city from spending \$30 million on upgrades and Talethia Edwards suggested that putting the property on the tax rolls could be beneficial. Tom Derzypolski expressed strong criticism regarding the process used to sell the city golf course to the Capital City Country Club. He characterized the deal as part of a series of "backroom shenanigans" that lead the public to question city leadership and bring distrust to the process. Darryl Alfred stated the sale "sickens" him, arguing it was rushed and undervalued while failing to respect the graves of people buried on the property. Max Herrle asserted that the treatment of the site was racially motivated, stating that if the bodies were white, the city would never have sold the land. PJ Perez characterized the future of the site as a "Tallahassee Mar-a-Lago" that would exclude the public.

Candidate Biographies

Darryl Alfred Jr. is campaigning on a message centered on neighborhood engagement, economic opportunity and quality-of-life improvements. A Tallahassee resident, Alfred works as a Realtor and rideshare driver, saying those jobs have given him firsthand insight into the concerns of residents from across the city. He has described the conversations he has with passengers as informal "town halls" that shaped his decision to seek public office. Alfred's campaign focuses on practical solutions to issues affecting working families. He has identified affordable housing, transportation, neighborhood investment and support for local entrepreneurs among his top priorities. Alfred has also spoken about increasing transparency at City Hall and making city government more responsive to residents. He argues that elected officials should spend more time listening to citizens before making major policy decisions.



Norm Roche brings decades of public service experience to the Seat 3 race. Roche is running after a career that includes service as a county commissioner in Pinellas County and leadership roles in business and public administration. He entered the race saying his experience managing budgets and overseeing public services would provide a seasoned perspective on the Tallahassee City Commission. Roche has campaigned on fiscal responsibility, infrastructure investment and accountable government. He has argued that city leaders should carefully evaluate spending decisions while maintaining essential public services and investing in roads, utilities and other long-term infrastructure needs.



During candidate forums, Roche highlighted his previous elected experience, saying it has prepared him to evaluate complex budgets, work collaboratively with colleagues and make difficult policy decisions. He has also stressed transparency and consistent communication with residents as key responsibilities of elected officials. Tom Derzypolski brings a background in public relations and communications to the nonpartisan race. Derzypolski is the founder of a Tallahassee-based public relations firm and has said his professional experience helping organizations communicate and solve problems has prepared him for public office. When announcing his candidacy, he said he wanted to represent "real families, real challenges, and a city that works for all the people who live here."

His campaign emphasizes government accountability, responsible growth and expanding economic opportunities. Derzypolski has said Tallahassee should focus on attracting higher-paying jobs, supporting small businesses and improving the city's competitiveness while maintaining fiscal responsibility. During candidate forums, Derzypolski discussed the importance of strategic economic development, including continued investment in Tallahassee International Airport as an economic asset. Derzypolski has also stressed transparency in local government and improving communication between city leaders and residents. He says public officials should clearly explain policy decisions and provide opportunities for meaningful citizen input. Talethia Edwards campaigns on community advocacy and neighborhood investment. Edwards has built her campaign around her experience as a community organizer and advocate. She has worked with neighborhood groups and civic organizations, saying those experiences have given her a strong understanding of the challenges facing families throughout Tallahassee. Her campaign priorities include affordable housing, equitable economic development, improved public safety and expanding access to city services. Edwards has said local government should ensure that economic growth benefits all neighborhoods and that residents have a greater voice in decisions affecting their communities. During candidate forums, Edwards discussed the importance of investing in neighborhoods while supporting economic development projects that create jobs and strengthen the city's tax base. She has also emphasized collaboration between the City Commission, community organizations and residents to address housing costs, infrastructure and quality-of-life concerns. Edwards has called for increased transparency in city government and believes stronger public engagement can improve trust between residents and elected officials.



Max Herrle campaigns on affordability, utility costs and government reform. Herrle has spent several years working in local politics and public policy. A political consultant and community advocate, Herrle has worked on campaigns for local elected officials and has been active in discussions involving neighborhood planning, transportation and city government. Herrle's campaign centers on making Tallahassee more affordable. He has made reducing city utility bills the cornerstone of his platform, arguing that residents face increasing financial pressures from housing, insurance and energy costs. He has proposed reviewing the city's electric utility, reducing unnecessary spending and identifying efficiencies that could lower monthly bills for customers. Beyond affordability, Herrle has advocated for expanding housing choices, improving pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, and increasing transparency in city government. He has said residents should have greater input on development decisions and believes public engagement should occur before major projects are approved. During candidate forums, Herrle emphasized that Tallahassee should pursue economic growth while ensuring neighborhoods are protected and city investments produce long-term value. He has argued that local government should prioritize fiscal responsibility alongside infrastructure improvements and environmental stewardship.

PJ Perez focuses on neighborhoods, education and smart growth. Perez, a longtime educator, is running on a campaign emphasizing public service, neighborhood investment and responsible growth. Perez has taught in Leon County schools for more than 15 years, including at SAIL High School and Tallahassee Collegiate Academy. He moved to Tallahassee to attend college and chose to remain after beginning his teaching career, saying his experiences as an educator and parent inspired him to seek public office. His campaign priorities include affordable housing, transportation, environmental sustainability and increasing opportunities for working families. Perez has argued that Tallahassee's growth should be guided by long-term planning that protects established neighborhoods while encouraging economic development that benefits all residents. Perez has also emphasized improving public trust in city government through greater transparency and community engagement. During public forums, Perez has discussed balancing economic development with environmental protection and maintaining Tallahassee's quality of life. He has expressed support for attracting new businesses while ensuring city policies remain focused on affordability and sustainable growth.



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The Race to Reset City Hall

MATLOW, From Front Page

dled, saying residents deserved a more transparent process and greater public discussion before such a significant decision was made.

Matlow remained the most critical of the deal, arguing the city moved too quickly in transferring a valuable public asset without ensuring taxpayers received the best possible outcome. He has continued to question the transparency and terms of the agreement.

The candidates also differed on the city's acquisition of Capital City Country Club. Matlow opposed the purchase, saying the city should prioritize other needs, including infrastructure and essential services. Foust raised concerns about the financial implications and whether the investment represented the best use of public funds. Ausley and Parks were more supportive, pointing to the potential recreational, environmental and community benefits of preserving the property for public use.

Beyond individual policy debates, the candidates acknowledged that the tone of city government has become a major issue in the mayor's race. The current commission has been marked by public disagreements and personal clashes, creating what some residents have described as a toxic political environment.

Parks made restoring civility a centerpiece of his campaign, saying Tallahassee needs leadership focused on bringing

people together and finding common ground. Ausley emphasized collaboration and the need for commissioners to work as a team to address challenges facing the city.

Foust said the city needs a more professional and businesslike approach to decision-making, while Matlow defended his willingness to challenge the status quo, arguing that disagreement and accountability are necessary parts of government.

With Mayor John Dailey choosing not to seek another term, the 2026 election gives voters an opportunity to choose a new direction for City Hall — not only on major policy questions, but also on how local leaders work together.

Blueprint Projects and Infrastructure

A sharp divide emerged over the Airport Gateway project. Jeremy Matlow advocated for shutting down the project, arguing it has ballooned to nearly \$200 million and created "luxury roadways" while existing neighborhoods lack basic sidewalks and suffer from flooding.

Daryl Parks disagreed "greatly," stating that jobs should be the top priority and that projects like the Airport Gateway and Welaunee represent essential opportunities for employment.

Michael Foust suggested prioritizing infrastructure repairs on the Southside.

The 287(g) Agreement with ICE

The agreement between local law enforcement and federal immigration authorities was a "lightning rod" issue: Jeremy Matlow advocated for repealing the agreement, stating it is not in the local budget to perform federal immigration enforcement.

Daryl Parks and Michael Foust were in favor of keeping the agreement; Parks supported police enforcing the law, and Foust argued for educating the public to understand it better..

Lorraine Ausley expressed a "great deal of concern" regarding the agreement but emphasized that immigration is primarily a federal issue.

City Employee Pay Raises

The candidates differed on the implementation of a proposed 4% across-the-board raise for city employees.

Lorraine Ausley and Michael Foust both supported the across-the-board raise for all public sector workers.

Jeremy Matlow opposed raises for employees making over \$150,000 a year, citing an "extreme imbalance" in pay.

Daryl Parks opposed a blanket raise, suggesting the city should instead prioritize specific departments based on their needs and history.

City-County Consolidation

Regarding a straw poll on exploring government consolidation, Michael Foust was the

only candidate to vote "yes," arguing that it could be done correctly despite past failures .

Ausley, Matlow, and Parks all voted "no," citing the history of failed attempts and the need for better cooperation rather than full consolidation.

Leadership and the "Three-to-Two" Divide

The candidates also differed on the cause of the current City Commission's fractured 3-2 voting bloc. Matlow characterized the divide as a necessary struggle against policies like raising taxes or selling public land to billionaires. Conversely, Parks and Ausley emphasized a lack of civility and bridge-building as the root cause, while Foust attributed the issue to "political infighting".

During one forum, the candidates were asked to provide a letter grade for the current mayor's tenure.

Michael Foust gave the mayor a B plus, describing him as "solid" and "overall a good

mayor," though he noted the mayor could be more public-facing.

Jeremy Matlow gave the mayor an F, arguing that the city is not moving in the right direction and citing "mismanagement" and poor treatment of other elected officials as reasons for the failing grade.

Daryl Parks and Lorraine Ausley both refused to give a specific letter grade. Parks stated the mayor had done a "fairly good job" but needed to address crime. Ausley acknowledged that while "amazing things" occurred during his tenure, many citizens feel "left out" and "unheard".

Property Taxes

All three candidates opposed a statewide amendment to phase out most non-school home- stead property taxes, with Matlow warning it would raise costs for renters and business owners.



Mayoral candidates Loranne Ausley, Mike Foust, Jeremy Matlow, and Daryl Parks.

Incumbent Williams-Cox Draws Two Challengers

SEAT 3, From Front Page

that the next city manager should be selected after the November elections so the newly elected commission can establish its own culture. Williams-Cox maintains the current commission should "do our job until the end" and select the manager before the new officials are installed.

TMH Asset Transfer

The city recently voted to sell its stake in TMH to Florida State University (FSU) as part of a plan to create an academic medical center. The transaction sparked significant debate among the candidates regarding its value and process.

Dianne Williams-Cox described the sale as a "historic" achievement that would expand specialized healthcare access in North Florida. She emphasized that the city "slow walked" the process over a year to ensure transparency and provided educational resources to the public.

Dot Inman Johnson strongly opposed the process, claiming negotiations occurred behind "closed doors". She argued that a major public asset was sold for "peanuts" without the city obtaining the appropriate appraisals.

Tiffany Hill expressed disappointment, citing a lack of completed documentation at the time of the sale, specifically mentioning "seventeen documents" that were still unsigned.

Capital City Country Club Sale

The commission's decision to sell the golf course back to the Capital City Country Club drew sharp criticism from the challengers. The transaction put the course in private hands but

required that the property remain a golf course.

Williams-Cox stated the sale was in the city's best interest because the city was paying to maintain grounds it did not fully own, such as the field house, pool, and tennis courts. In addition, the property would yield property tax revenue.

Inman-Johnson noted that the city had leased the land to the club for a dollar a year for decades before selling it for "almost nothing". She also raised concerns that a development company is now planning to build on the site.

Inman-Johnson highlighted the discovery of slave graves on the property, arguing that the land should have been set aside and memorialized. Williams-Cox noted that the cemetery area has been memorialized and remains under city control.

Hill added that residents have been fighting against these investors, fearing the area will be turned into a "concrete jungle".

Candidate Biographies

Dianne Williams-Cox

A lifelong Tallahassee resident, Williams-Cox has built her career in education, business and public service. She holds a bachelor's degree from Florida A&M University and a Master of Business Administration from Nova Southeastern University. Before joining the commission, she spent decades working in higher education administration and community engagement while serving on numerous nonprofit and civic boards.

The commissioner has consistently

advocated for strategic economic development, arguing that attracting new employers and supporting small businesses are essential to broadening Tallahassee's tax base and creating higher-paying jobs. She has also highlighted the importance of investing in youth programs, neighborhood safety and infrastructure improvements.

At candidate forums, she has emphasized balancing fiscal responsibility with investments in public services, while maintaining that Tallahassee should continue pursuing sustainable growth that benefits all residents.

Dot Inman-Johnson

Former Tallahassee Mayor Dot Inman-Johnson is attempting a return to elected office by challenging incumbent Dianne Williams-Cox. Inman-Johnson became Tallahassee's first African American woman elected to the City Commission, serving from 1984 to 1994, including a term as mayor. She narrowly lost a bid for another commission seat in 2024 before entering the 2026 race.

At candidate forums, Inman-Johnson has said the city must encourage responsible economic growth while carefully managing taxpayer dollars. She advocates listening more closely to residents and strengthening communication between city government and neighborhoods. Her campaign also highlights the need to support small businesses and create opportunities that help residents build long-term financial stability.

Inman-Johnson says her decades of civic involvement and previous

service on the commission make her well prepared to address today's challenges. She is asking voters to return her to City Hall by emphasizing her experience, historical perspective and commitment to community-centered leadership.

Tiffany Hill

Business owner Tiffany Hill is making her first bid for elected office as a candidate for Tallahassee City Commission Seat 5. Hill entered the race in early 2026, presenting herself as a fresh voice focused on government accountability, economic opportunity and practical solutions to city challenges. She says her experience operating a business has given her firsthand knowledge of the issues facing entrepreneurs and working families.

During candidate forums, Hill has promoted greater transparency in city government and increased public engagement in major policy decisions. She has encouraged city leaders to evaluate programs based on measurable outcomes and prioritize projects that deliver long-term value for taxpayers.

As the only candidate in the race without previous experience on the City Commission, Hill argues that voters have an opportunity to bring a new perspective to City Hall. Her campaign presents her as a pragmatic problem-solver focused on accountability, economic growth and improving the quality of life for Tallahassee residents.

Leon County Rejects Flock Camera Grant

FLOCK, From Front Page

urged commissioners not to facilitate the technology's expansion. Commissioners ultimately voted to remove the Flock funding from a larger homeland security grant package while approving the remaining grant requests.

Flock Safety's automated license plate readers capture images of license plates and use artificial intelligence to identify a vehicle's make, model, color, body style and other distinguishing features. Law enforcement agencies use the systems to investigate crimes, locate stolen vehicles and receive alerts when vehicles connected to criminal investigations are

detected. Supporters say the technology has become an effective investigative tool, while critics argue it creates an expansive surveillance network capable of tracking the movements of law-abiding citizens.

Several residents spoke against the proposal during the commission meeting, raising concerns about privacy, civil liberties and the security of data collected by the camera network. Speakers questioned whether the benefits of the technology outweighed the risks associated with expanding automated surveillance and storing vehicle location data.

Commissioners echoed many of those concerns. Commissioner Christian Caban said he supports law enforcement but opposes the widespread deployment of automated license plate readers, describing the systems as an invasion of privacy. Other commissioners acknowledged the technology's value in solving crimes but said they were uncomfortable with Leon County helping expand its use into neighboring jurisdictions.

The local debate reflects a broader national conversation over the balance between public safety and personal privacy. According

to Flock Safety, its camera network is used by thousands of law enforcement agencies and communities across nearly every state to recover stolen vehicles, locate missing persons and assist criminal investigations. At the same time, organizations such as the Electronic Frontier Foundation and the American Civil Liberties Union have warned that widespread deployment of automated license plate readers can enable mass surveillance and raise concerns about data retention, access and misuse. Recent reviews of Flock camera programs in cities including Los Angeles

have highlighted those same issues as agencies reconsider the technology's privacy implications.

In addition to rejecting the grant, commissioners directed county staff to return in September with an analysis of whether Leon County has the legal authority to regulate, prohibit or require the removal of Flock cameras within the county. The review is expected to examine the county's legal options as communities across Florida and the nation continue to debate the role of automated surveillance technology.

Local News

Property Crime Down in June, Violent Crime Incidents Trending Up

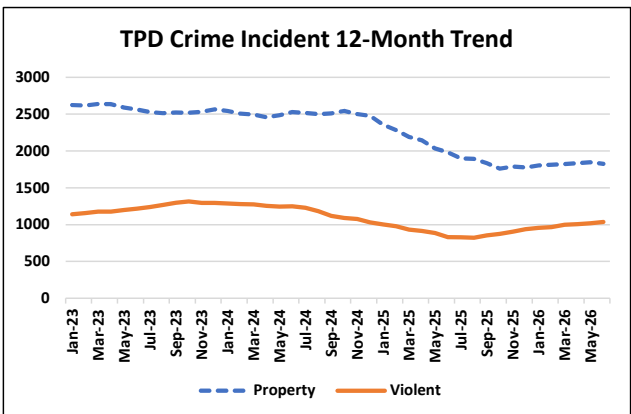
By Steve Stewart

TPD crime incident numbers for June 2026 are in. For the month of June, property crime incidents were down when compared to June 2025, however violent crimes were up. The numbers show that year-to-date (YTD), though June, property crime and violent crime incidents are up when compared to YTD numbers through June 2025. The broader 12-month trends show that violent crime incidents are trend-

ing up while property crimes remain relatively flat after a major decline in 2025. (See graph)
The YTD Numbers

The incident data -tabulated by TR – show that YTD property crime incidents were up 6.4% and violent crime incidents are up 24.1% through June when compared to the same time period one year ago. Property crimes encompass burglaries, thefts, and incidents of vandalism. Violent incidents include aggravated assaults, armed robberies, and physical altercations. A look at specific crimes reveals the YTD increase in property crime was driven by increases in residential (11.9%) and commercial burglaries (51.2%) when compared to 2025. The

Auto Burglary & Theft category – which accounts for approximately 55% of all property crimes – is down 5.1%. The violent crime data shows that robbery incidents were up 17.4% while assault & battery incidents were up 26.1%.
12-Month Trends
The chart below shows the 12-month trends of property and violent crime incidents from January 2023 through June 2026. Property crime incidents began to decline in December 2024 and reached a 3-year low in October 2025. For the most part, since then property



crime has remained flat. Violent crime incidents peaked in October 2023 and reached a 3-year low in June 2025. Since then, violent crime incidents have been trending up.

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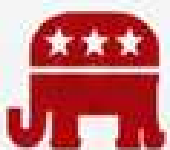
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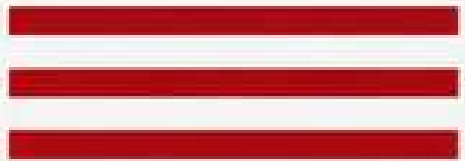
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Single-Family Construction Permits Hit 3-Year High

According to filings with Leon County and the City of Tallahassee, over the last four months there have been 247 permits issued, the highest four-month total since May-August 2023. The graph below shows the four-month period began with 58 permits in March, 70 in April, 66 in May, and 53 in June.

June Permits

For the month of June, the number of single-family residential construction permits were down 7.0% when compared to June 2025. There were 53 permits issued in June 2026, compared to 57 permits issued one year ago. There were 66 permits issued last month, May 2026.

The 3-Mnth Avg. data (Apr. – Jun.), which smooths out the month-to-month volatility, shows a 19.5%

increase in the number of permits issued over the same 3-month period one year ago.

June Permit Value

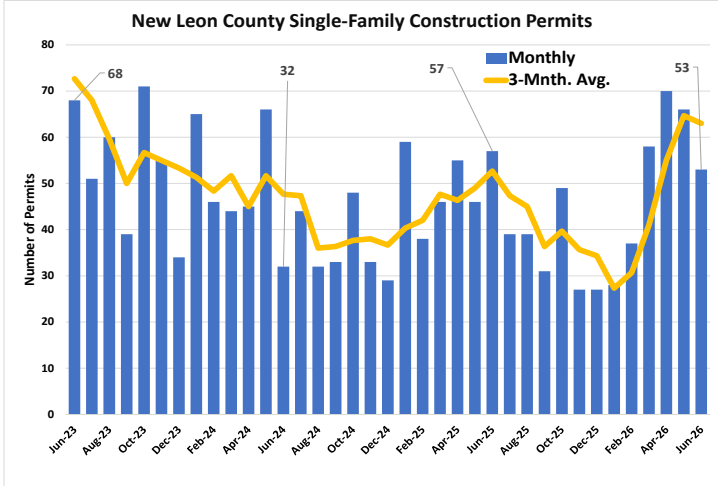
The June permit value was down 9.3%, from \$16.2 mill in June 2025 to \$14.7 million in 2026.

The 3-Mnth Avg. data show a 3.5% decrease in monthly average permit value during this period. The 3-month average permit values decreased from \$14.3 million in June 2025 to \$13.8 million in June 2026.

Long Term Trend

The chart below shows the number of permits issued each month for the last 37-month period. A 3-month average line is also included. The highlighted numbers relate to permits issued in the month of June back to 2023.

The chart shows that the 3-month average declining trend that began in June 2025 has been reversed. The year-to-date (YTD) numbers through June



show 2026 permits (312) are ahead of the number of permits issued during the first six months of 2025 (301) and 2024 (298).

New SFR Permit Report				
	Jun-25	Jun-26	Chg	%Chg
Permits	57	53	-4	-7.0%
Value (millions)	\$ 16.2	\$ 14.7	\$ (1.5)	-9.3%
3-Mnth Avg.	52.7	63.0	10.3	19.5%
Value (millions)	\$ 14.3	\$ 13.8	\$ (0.5)	-3.5%

Source: Leon County, Office of Econ. Vitality

Leon County Ranks 13th in Wages, 37th in Job Growth

The latest Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages (QCEW) data shows that Leon County economy ranks 37th among the 67 Florida counties in job growth from 2019 to 2025. The data also shows that 2025 Leon County annual wages ranked 13th in Florida.

The analysis below provides a comparison between Leon County and a peer group that includes 11 other counties. For comparison purposes, the peer group includes counties that produced between 100,000 and 200,000 jobs in 2019.

Leon County Added 12,000 Jobs Since 2019

Leon County added more than 12,000 jobs over the past six years, ending 2025 with an average of 165,332 jobs. The pace of employment growth (7.67%) ranked 7th in the peer group of ten counties. See table below.

Among the 11 peer counties included in the comparison, Alachua County (4.99%), Escambia County (5.97%) and Seminole County (6.64%) recorded lower growth rates than Leon County.

The strongest performers were Pasco County, which added 28,535 jobs for a 23.44% increase, followed by Marion County at 15.15%, Collier County at 13.79%, Sarasota County at 12.92% and Manatee County at 11.93%. Lake County also posted double-digit growth at 17,314 jobs, or 17.09%.

Statewide, Florida employers added

more than 1.03 million jobs during the period, an increase of 11.68%.

The gap narrows somewhat when looking only at the post-pandemic period from 2022 to 2025. During those three years, Leon County added 9,452 jobs, representing 6.06% employment growth.

That growth matched the statewide average of 6.03% but still ranked below six of the peer counties. Pasco again led the group with 11.22% growth, followed by Manatee (9.20%), Lake (8.56%), Collier (7.83%), Sarasota (7.71%) and Marion (7.45%). Leon outperformed Volusia (4.69%), Alachua (3.85%), Escambia (3.26%) and Seminole (3.00%).

The data suggest Leon County has experienced steady job gains but has not kept pace with many of Florida's fastest-growing counties over the longer six-year period. However, its performance since 2022 indicates the county's labor market has largely kept pace with statewide employment growth as Florida's economy has continued to expand following the pandemic.

	2019-25		2022-25	
	Jobs Added	Growth	Jobs Added	Growth
Pasco County	28,535	23.44%	15,161	11.22%
Lake County	17,314	17.09%	9,349	8.56%
Marion County	16,032	15.15%	8,446	7.45%
Collier County	20,906	13.79%	12,522	7.83%
Sarasota County	22,252	12.92%	13,922	7.71%
Manatee County	15,555	11.93%	12,301	9.20%
FLORIDA	1,037,215	11.68%	563,959	6.03%
Leon County	12,201	7.67%	9,452	6.06%
Volusia County	13,458	7.65%	8,482	4.69%
Seminole County	13,347	6.64%	6,247	3.00%
Escambia County	8,273	5.97%	4,642	3.26%
Alachua County	6,698	4.99%	5,227	3.85%

Leon County Wage Growth Ranks Among Florida's Strongest

Leon County workers have experienced one of the stronger increases in wages over the same period. The QCEW data shows that Leon County economy ranks 13th among the 67 Florida counties in annual wages in 2025. From 2019-25, Leon County wages grew 39.6%, which ranks 22 among the 67 counties. The table below lists the top 20 Florida counties ranked by 2025 annual wage.

Among the 10 peer counties in the comparison, Leon ranked fifth in wage growth.

Florida's average annual wage

climbed from \$51,744 in 2019 to \$72,732 in 2025, an increase of 40.6%. Leon County's 39.6% increase was just one percentage point below the statewide average.

Only four peer counties recorded stronger wage growth than Leon. Manatee County led the group with a 43.3% increase, followed by Pasco County at 42.1%, Sarasota County at 41.6% and Collier County at 40.1%.

Leon County outperformed Lake County (38.5%), Marion County (38.0%), Escambia County (37.0%), Volusia County (36.2%), Seminole County (35.6%) and Alachua County (34.5%).

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Local Sports

Tallahassee Reports’ Top Leon County Girls Cross Country Runners to Watch for 2026–2027 Season

By Robert Stewart

As the 2026–2027 high school cross country season approaches, the Chiles girls team enters the year with one of the state’s strongest returning groups after winning the 2025 FHSAA Class 3A state championship. The Timberwolves bring back multiple experienced varsity runners who were key contributors throughout last season’s championship run, giving Chiles a strong foundation as they look to contend for another state title.

For this preview, Tallahassee Reports has selected its top returning runners from Chiles while also highlighting standout returners from other Leon County programs.

Emma-Claire Tanenbaum, Chiles

Chiles sophomore Emma-Claire Tanenbaum enters the 2026–2027 season after emerging as one of the area’s top runners during an outstanding freshman season. Tanenbaum earned first-place finishes at both the FHSAA 3A District 1 and FHSAA 3A Region 1 meets, setting a personal record of 18:23.13 at the regional championship at New World Golf in Jacksonville. She also led the Timberwolves at the FHSAA 3A State Championships, placing fifth overall with a time of 18:33.70 while helping Chiles capture the team state title. With championship experience already under her belt, Tanenbaum returns as one of the top runners to watch this season.

Kaia Ables, Chiles

Chiles senior Kaia Ables returns for her final high school cross country season after putting together another strong season in 2025. Ables claimed individual victories at the St. JPII Panther Invite and recorded a fifth-place finish at HOKA Nights of Thunder. She also established a personal record of 18:52.30 at the FSU Invitational before finishing 21st at the FHSAA 3A State Championships with a time of 19:23.80. As one of the Timberwolves’ veteran leaders, Ables will once again play a key role as Chiles looks to defend its state championship.

Charlotte Sikes, Chiles

Chiles sophomore Charlotte Sikes heads into the 2026–2027 season after an impressive freshman year that featured four top-10 finishes. Among her best performances were a third-place finish at the St. JPII Panther Invite and a sixth-place finish at HOKA Nights of Thunder. Sikes also recorded a personal-best time of 19:02.13 at the Asics Invitational before contributing to Chiles’ state championship effort with a 34th-place finish at the FHSAA 3A State Championships with a time of 19:44.80. With another year of experience, Sikes has the potential to continue developing into one of the area’s top distance runners.

Chloe Molen, Chiles

Chiles junior Chloe Molen returns after another consistent season in the Timberwolves’ lineup during the 2025 campaign. Molen earned a fourth-place finish at the FHSAA 3A District 1 meet and placed fifth at the St. JPII Panther Invite. She also established a personal record of 19:08.50 at the FSU Invitational before finishing 42nd at the FHSAA 3A State Championships with a time of 19:56.30. With postseason experience and a proven ability to contribute in championship races, Molen will remain an important part of Chiles’ lineup this season.

Madeline Brockmeier, Chiles

Chiles junior Madeline Brockmeier enters the upcoming season after contributing to the Timberwolves’ state championship run in 2025. Brockmeier recorded notable finishes throughout the season, including sixth at the St. JPII Panther Invite and seventh at the FHSAA 3A District 1 meet. She also set a personal record of 19:35.00 at the New World Fall Spectacular before placing 31st at the FHSAA 3A State Championships with a time of 19:40.20. As an experienced returner, Brockmeier is expected to play another important role as Chiles looks to remain among the state’s top cross country programs.

Tatum Hendon, Leon

Leon senior Tatum Hendon enters the 2026–2027 season after showing steady improvement throughout her freshman campaign. Hendon recorded a personal-best time of 20:30.00 at the New World Fall Spectacular, where she finished 22nd in a competitive field. Hendon capped off the year with a 15th-place finish at the FHSAA 3A District 1 meet in 20:54.80 and placed 36th at the FHSAA 3A Region 1 Championships with a time of 20:56.95. With a full varsity season under her belt and continued progression throughout the year, Hendon returns as a runner capable of leading Leon and continuing to climb the local rankings.

Leah Boutwell, Florida High

Florida High senior Leah Boutwell enters the 2026–2027 season after a strong season that saw her qualify for the FHSAA 2A State Championships. Boutwell recorded a season best time of 20:13.19 at the FHSAA 2A Region 1 meet, where she finished 31st to earn a spot at the state meet. She also turned in strong postseason performances by placing fourth at the FHSAA 2A District 1 Championships and fifth at the Suwannee Invitational. Boutwell concluded her season at the FHSAA Cross Country State Finals, finishing 86th with a time of 21:03.40. With state meet experience already under her belt and a season low just over the 20-min-

ute mark, Boutwell returns with a chance of leading Florida High’s lineup this season.

Anniston Willis, Florida High

Florida High sophomore Anniston Willis enters the 2026–2027 season after showing promising results while only competing in a portion of the 2025-2026 season. Willis opened the season by winning the Dolphin Dash Invitational with a time of 20:44.20 and followed that performance with a seventh-place finish at the St. John Paul II Panther Invite, where she posted a personal-best time of 20:40.40. She also competed at HOKA Nights of Thunder, finishing 25th in 21:03.00. Although she was unable to complete the full season, Willis demonstrated the ability to compete near the front of the field early in the year. Willis could play a vital part in helping the Seminoles get back to the state meet and continue their postseason success.

Marguerite Miller, Maclay

Maclay senior Marguerite Miller returns for her final high school cross country season after serving as a consistent contributor throughout the 2025-2026 season. Miller recorded a personal-best time of 21:46.00 at the New World Fall Spectacular and qualified for postseason competition, finishing 31st at the FHSAA 1A District 2 Championships before placing 33rd at the FHSAA 1A Region 1 Championships with a time of 21:58.64. She also turned in a 15th-place finish at the St. John Paul II Panther Invite and competed in several of the state’s top invitationals, including the FSU Invitational and The Southern Showcase. With another year of experience and postseason competition under her belt, Miller will be a key runner for Maclay as the Marauders look to build on last season’s success.

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Lincoln Alum Selected by the Cubs as the 75th Pick in the MLB Draft

By Robert Stewart

Former Lincoln High School standout and Florida State first baseman Myles Bailey took the next step toward a professional baseball career on Saturday, July 11, when the Chicago Cubs selected him with the 75th overall pick in the second round of the 2026 Major League Baseball Draft. Bailey became one of the top Seminoles selected in this year’s draft after emerging as one of college baseball’s premier power hitters during his two seasons at Florida State, where he earned multiple Freshman All-America honors and was on pace for an All-America sophomore campaign before a season-ending injury.

College

In two seasons at Florida State, the first baseman quickly developed into one of the nation’s top players. As a freshman in 2025, he earned Freshman First Team All-America honors from Baseball America, D1Baseball and Perfect Game while also being named to the ACC All-Freshman Team, ACC All-Tournament Team and the Tallahassee Regional All-Regional Team. He started all 56 games at first base, batting .327 with 66 hits, 19 home runs, 56 RBIs and a .663 slugging percentage. His 19 home runs ranked second in the ACC, and he led the Seminoles with eight game-winning hits while helping

Florida State reach its second consecutive NCAA Super Regional and an ACC runner-up finish.

He delivered several standout performances during his freshman campaign, including a five-hit, five-RBI game with a home run against No. 3 Clemson to clinch the series, a pair of home runs at Notre Dame and a six-home run stretch over five games late in the season. He also homered in the NCAA Super Regional at Oregon State and earned an invitation to the USA Baseball Collegiate National Team Training Camp following the season.

Entering his sophomore year as a team captain, he was recognized as one of college baseball’s elite players. Before suffering a season-ending injury on March 28, he was named to the Golden Spikes Award Midseason Watch List, earned Midseason First Team All-America honors from D1Baseball and Perfect Game, and was selected as the ACC Player of the Week and Baseball America’s National Team of the Week on March 23.

Despite appearing in just 26 games, he produced some of the best numbers in the country, batting .363 with 13 home runs, 33 RBIs, a .913 slugging percentage and a .582 on-base percentage. He totaled 29 hits, 36 runs scored and 35 walks while recording multiple dominant performances, including



two-home run games against North Florida and No. 10 NC State, along with another two-homer series against No. 12 Wake Forest. His sophomore season was cut short by injury, but his production over the first half of the year solidified his status as one of the top prospects in the 2026 MLB Draft.

High School

During his four-year career at Lincoln High School, the Tallahassee native established himself as one of the area’s premier baseball players. He finished with a .357 career batting average, collecting 86 hits, 74 RBIs, 23

home runs and 82 runs scored across 94 varsity games. As an upperclassman, he emerged as one of the state’s top power hitters, belting 10 home runs with 30 RBIs as a junior before adding seven home runs and 22 RBIs during his senior season.

His performance earned numerous individual honors throughout his high school career. He was named Lincoln High School’s Most Valuable Player twice, received Big Bend Player of the Year honors, and was recognized nationally as both a Perfect Game All-American and a Baseball Factory All-American.

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