

Tallahassee Reports

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The Reports

Daryl Parks held a press conference on July 27, 2026 to address what he described as “deeply troubling” revelations regarding the campaign tactics used by his opponent, Mr. Matlow. **A1**

The Leon County School Board approved a \$615 million operating budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year in a 4-1 vote. **A1**

The principal of Kate Sullivan Elementary School will not return for the upcoming school year after an investigation by Leon County Schools. **A3**

Florida House District 9’s Republican primary will choose between first-time candidates Jibri Knight and Tracy Robinson on Aug. 18. **A3**

The Florida Board of Education unanimously approved Henry Mack as the state’s new education commissioner. **A6**

The latest information from the TIA shows the June 2026 passenger traffic decreased 5.4% when compared to traffic one year ago. **B1**

The Tallahassee metropolitan housing market continued to post stronger home price growth than the statewide average in June. **B1**

Uthmeier Warns Catholic Church to Accept Vaccine Exemptions

By Ana Goñi-Lessan
The News Service of Florida

Attorney General James Uthmeier is putting the Roman Catholic Church on notice – if they take taxpayer funded vouchers for their schools, they should accept vaccine exemptions for students, too.

In a letter sent Friday to the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops, Uthmeier, citing the Catholic Catechism, Pope Leo and scripture, argued Catholic doctrine does not allow its schools to reject vaccine exemptions for religious reasons.

“I therefore urge Catholic

VACCINE, Page A6

Parks Condemns Matlow's "Deceptive" Campaign Tactics

By Steve Stewart

Daryl Parks held a press conference on July 27, 2026 to address what he described as “deeply troubling” revelations regarding the campaign tactics used by his opponent, Mr. Matlow. Parks accused the Matlow campaign of employing online manipulation and misleading tactics designed to “confuse voters” and “divide our city.”

At the center of the allegations is a Facebook page originally titled “Pause the TMH Deal Vote No on December 10th,” which was later renamed “Tallahassee Conservatives”. Consistent with media reports, Parks, noted the page was administered by Matlow’s campaign manager and that the Matlow campaign ran political advertisements through that same account.

TR first reported that mayoral candidate Jeremy Matlow and his campaign manager were tied to a fake Facebook page designed to impact local elections. After the story was published, Matlow’s campaign



Daryl Parks held a press conference on July 27, 2026 at City Hall to address what he described as “deeply troubling” revelations.

manager, Kristellys Estanga resigned. Estanga’s political consulting clients have included U.S. Sens. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, and former Tallahassee Mayor Andrew Gillum.

Matlow has denied any

involvement with the Facebook renaming controversy.

Parks characterized these digital tactics as “deceptive” and “divisive,” alleging that the name change was a calculated effort to make it appear as though conservatives were

attacking city commission seat 3 candidate Talietha Edwards, a Black woman. Parks argued this was a “deliberate attempt to inflame division” and “manipulate public perception” within the local race.

The Capital Conservative

PARKS, Page A4

Leon County School Board Approves \$615 Million Budget Amid Ongoing Financial Challenges

By Steve Stewart

The Leon County School Board approved a \$615 million operating budget for the 2026-27 fiscal year Tuesday, July 27, adopting a spending plan that reflects declining enrollment, shrinking reserves and difficult cost-cutting decisions.

The budget passed on a 4-1 vote, with District 1 board member Alva Smith casting the lone dissenting vote. The approved budget is approximately \$32 million smaller than last year’s.

Superintendent Rocky Hanna said district leaders continue to face many of the same financial pressures that shaped last year’s budget.

“None of us are happy about this budget situation,” Hanna said. “Our staffing plan, we only funded at 98% this year. Our emergency reserves are at the lowest that I’ve seen now in my 11th year as superintendent.”

The district previously announced \$7.8 million in budget reductions for the coming school year, citing continued enrollment declines. The cuts affect staffing, administrative operations, arts and athletics programs, and funding for community organizations.

Hanna said district operations have already absorbed significant reductions in an effort to protect classrooms.

“We cut our district cost centers, all

district operations, by over 6% this year by consolidating positions and reducing operating expenses,” Hanna said. “We’ll continue to look at ways to cut at the district and not affect the classroom, but at some point, the classroom is going to be affected.”

Smith argued the district has not gone far enough to reduce spending before asking employees to shoulder the burden.

“I’m going to be a no on the budget this year until we find a way to make the deep cuts to support our teachers and support staff,” Smith said.

Board Chair Marcus Nicolas disagreed, saying substantial work has already been done to reduce costs and that school consolidation has been discussed as a possible future option.

The budget also leaves little room for teacher pay increases. Hanna said the district may ultimately seek voter approval of a property tax increase to generate additional local funding for teacher and staff salaries.

The Leon Classroom Teachers Association posted a comment a social media account addressing the teacher pay issue.

The statement said “We have consistently advocated for consolidating non-school operations before considering the consolidation or closure of schools. At the same time, the District cannot continue to make two conflicting arguments: that declining enrollment requires school consolida-

LCS, Page A4

City Commission Seat 5 Candidates Clash Over Airport, Governance at NEBA Forum

By Steve Stewart

Tallahassee City Commission Seat 5 candidates gathered Tuesday for a forum hosted by the Network of Entrepreneurs and Business Advocates (NEBA). Incumbent Diane Williams-Cox, retired Army veteran Tiffany Hill, and former mayor Dot Inman-Johnson presented competing visions for the city’s economic future and governance.

Current City Commissioner Dianne Williams-Cxx won the straw poll of NEBA members with 87% of the vote. Inman-Johnson received 12% and Hill garnered 1%.

A central theme was the role of the Tallahassee International Airport in economic development. Inman-Johnson labeled the airport the “biggest obstacle” to business recruitment, arguing that “simply changing the name from regional to international did not make it an international airport”. Williams-Cox defended the city’s progress, highlighting the development of an international processing center to facilitate global shipping. Hill emphasized a “people-inclusive” approach, suggesting the city must sit down with small businesses to identify specific permitting and incentive needs.

The candidates also sparred over the FSU/TMH academic health center. Williams-Cox championed the partnership as a way to leverage technology and improve

NEBA, Page A4

Donalds Up 5 Points Over Jolly, Moody leads Nixon by 8 Points & Vindman by 10

By Mitch Perry
The Florida Phoenix

A new poll of likely midterm election voters in Florida shows Republicans maintaining steady leads in the marquee gubernatorial and Senate races on the ballot in November.

The survey of 848 likely Florida midterm voters conducted earlier this month by the Public Opinion Research Lab (PORK) at the University of North Florida shows Southwest GOP U.S. Rep. Byron Donalds with a 5-point lead over Democrat David Jolly in the race for Florida governor, 46%-41%.

In the contest for U.S. Senate, Republican incumbent Ashley Moody leads both Democrats running in the Aug. 18 primary to face her in November, but the survey shows Jacksonville state Rep. Angie Nixon is closer than retired Army lieutenant colonel in prospective one-on-one matchups.

The poll shows Moody up over Nixon, 50%-42%. Moody leads Vindman, 50%-40%.

That survey comes despite the fact that Vindman is crushing Nixon in fundraising.

Vindman has reported raising \$16.7 million. Nixon has reported raising a little more than \$625,000, with approximately \$118,000 cash on hand at the end of June.

The poll was conducted between July 8-17 and has an overall margin of error of +/- 3.8 percentage points.

INSIDE



TR’s Top Leon County High School Volleyball Teams to Watch During the 2026-2027 Season. B3

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Local News

Kate Sullivan Principal Not Reappointed After LCS Investigation

By Steve Stewart

The principal of Kate Sullivan Elementary School will not return for the upcoming school year after an investigation by Leon County Schools found multiple policy violations related to student safety, communication with parents and employee conduct. Leon County Schools announced that Julie Lawson was not reappointed as principal and that Nikki Bradley would lead the Midtown elementary school beginning with the 2026-27 school year. The district did not publicly detail the findings at the time of the personnel change, but confirmed the decision followed an internal investigation.

According to reporting by the Tallahassee Democrat, the investigation centered on the school's handling of an incident involving a student and examined whether administrators followed district policies for reporting, documenting and communicating with parents. The investigation also reviewed allegations involving Lawson's treatment of employees who raised concerns about school operations. The investigation concluded Lawson failed to comply with several district policies, including timely parental notification and appropriate administrative procedures following the incident. The report also detailed allegations of retaliation against employees who reported concerns. Leon County Schools has not

publicly released the complete investigative report, citing personnel confidentiality requirements under Florida law. The district has also not announced whether Lawson resigned or whether additional disciplinary action was taken beyond her removal as principal. Lawson became principal of Kate Sullivan Elementary in 2021 after serving as an assistant principal in Leon County Schools. During her tenure, she was recognized by the district and community organizations for her leadership and school improvement efforts. Kate Sullivan Elementary, one of Tallahassee's oldest neighborhood



schools, serves approximately 725 students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Nikki Bradley assumed leadership of the school following the district's decision not to reappoint Lawson.

LCS Maps Out \$183.5M in Capital Improvements for Four Schools

By Robert Stewart

The Leon County School District is planning 10 major capital projects totaling \$183.5 million over the next five years, with the largest investments concentrated at Augusta Raa Middle School, Elizabeth Cobb Middle School, John G. Riley Elementary School and Griffin Middle School. The projects are outlined in the district's 2025-26 Five-Year Work Plan. Augusta Raa Middle School accounts for the largest share of the district's construction program. The school is slated for four major projects totaling \$76.6 million, including two new classroom wings, a new gymnasium and performing arts center, and renovation of the administration and media wing along with site improvements.

Elizabeth Cobb Middle School is scheduled for three projects with a combined estimated cost of \$49.5 million. Those include an 18-classroom wing, a second 18-classroom wing and a new cafeteria and performing arts center. Two of the three projects are identified as unfunded in the work plan. John G. Riley Elementary School is planned to receive two projects totaling \$41.5 million. The projects include construction of a new classroom wing and a new cafeteria and performing arts center. The classroom wing is currently listed as unfunded. Griffin Middle School is scheduled for two projects totaling \$15.5 million. Plans include construction of a new six-classroom wing, demolition of the existing gymnasium and remodeling of Building 12.

Planned Capital Projects by School			
School	Number of Projects	Total Cost	Major Projects
Augusta Raa Middle	4	\$76.6 million	Classroom Wing #1, Classroom Wing #2, Gym/Performing Arts Center, Administration/Media Wing renovation
Elizabeth Cobb Middle	3	\$49.5 million	Classroom Wing, 2nd Classroom Wing, Cafeteria/Performing Arts Center
John G. Riley Elementary	2	\$41.5 million	New Classroom Wing, Cafeteria/Performing Arts Center
Griffin Middle	2	\$15.5 million	New 6-Classroom Wing/Old Gym Demo, Remodel Building 12
District Total	11 projects	\$183.5 million	

The district's spending is heavily concentrated in the first three years of the plan. Capital expenditures are projected at \$2.5 million in 2025-26, \$32 million in 2026-27, \$29.5 million

in 2027-28, \$16.5 million in 2028-29, and \$103 million in 2029-30, bringing the five-year total to \$183.5 million.

Leon County Celebrates 25 Years of Service at the Dr. B.L. Perry, Jr. Branch Library

By Steve Stewart

On Saturday, July 25, Leon County Government celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Dr. B.L. Perry, Jr. Branch Library, recognizing a quarter century of service at its South Adams Street location and more than 50 years of branch library service to the Southside community. The free community event, themed "Our Story, Our Library," featured a commemorative ceremony, family activities, community organizations, refreshments, music, a historical exhibit, and a special story time. The event honored the library's history and its profound impact on generations of residents. "For 25 years, the Dr. B.L. Perry, Jr. Branch Library has opened doors of opportunity and discovery for residents of all ages," said Leon County Commission Chairman Christian Caban. "As we celebrate 'Our Story, Our Library,' we look forward to empowering the next generation of dreamers, thinkers, and innovators." The library is named in honor of Dr. Benjamin L. Perry, Jr., a community leader who served as the sixth president of Florida A&M University from 1968 to 1977. During his tenure, he was a champion for the university and is credited with saving FAMU from the threat of merger with Florida State University during the late 1960s. After many years of service to the community, Perry passed away on March 21, 1997. "For decades, the Southside has been shaped by a powerful legacy of community resilience and visionary leadership, personified by the extraordinary life of Dr. Benjamin Perry, Jr.," said Leon County District 1 Commissioner Bill Proctor. "This celebration honors that deep history, ensuring that Perry's lifelong dedication to empowering others continues to light the path forward for generations to come." Originally opened as Page One in 1975, the branch later became the Bond Community Branch Library before opening at its current South Adams Street location as the Dr. B.L. Perry, Jr. Branch Library on July 21, 2001. Since then, it has provided internet access, early literacy program-



ming and a welcoming gathering place for the Southside community. "A library is only as strong as the people who serve in it, and for 25 years, our dedicated staff at the Dr. B.L. Perry, Jr. Branch have put our community at the heart of everything they do," said Leon County Administrator Vincent S. Long. "This silver anniversary honors their tireless efforts to connect, inspire, and support generations of Leon County residents." Today, the Dr. B.L. Perry, Jr. Branch Library continues to serve as a vital resource for residents of all ages. As part of the Leon County Public Library System, the branch offers books, technology, educational programs, and meeting spaces that foster lifelong learning and community connection. "Over the last 25 years, the Dr. B.L. Perry, Jr. Branch Library has served as a launchpad for discovery, offering everything from digital tools and educational workshops to community gathering spaces," said Leon County Public Library Director Pamela Monroe. "As we look ahead, we are excited to build on this foundation by continuing to offer innovative services and engaging programming that inspires and connects our community." "Papa firmly believed in education, but even more than that, he believed in lifelong learning and growth," said Joi Randle, granddaughter of Dr. B.L. Perry, Jr. "He believed in leaving people better than you found them. That lifting someone else up, will never hold you down." To learn more about the programs and services offered at the library and to sign up for a library card, visit LeonCountyLibrary.org.

Two Republicans Vie for Chance to Challenge Tant in Florida House District 9



By Steve Stewart

Voters in Florida House District 9's Republican primary will choose between first-time candidates Jibri Knight and Tracy Robinson on Aug. 18, with the winner advancing to face Democratic incumbent Allison Tant in the November general election. District 9 includes all of Madison County and portions of Leon and Jefferson counties. Knight, a Tallahassee native and insurance professional from Monticello, is campaigning on a traditional conservative platform centered on limited government, fiscal responsibility, support for law enforcement and the military, and eliminating property taxes. A graduate of Lincoln High School, Knight says his experience in the insurance industry and state government has prepared him to address issues affecting North Florida. His campaign also emphasizes environmental stewardship, support for small businesses, and strengthening protections for children and families. Robinson, of Madison, brings a different background to the race. A graduate of Florida A&M University, she has worked in emergency management, law enforcement, and

technology, including as an artificial intelligence engineer. Robinson describes herself as a "community first" Republican and has built her campaign around what she calls the "RE-VIVE" agenda, focusing on restoring communities, expanding economic opportunity, investing in infrastructure, supporting veterans and public safety, strengthening education, and promoting faith and families. While both candidates identify as Republicans, they offer distinct approaches. Knight has emphasized conservative governance and reducing the size and cost of government, while Robinson has highlighted community revitalization, economic development, and bringing technology and innovation to state government. Both candidates also stress their commitment to North Florida values and improving the quality of life in District 9. The Republican nominee will face a difficult challenge in November against Tant, who has represented the district since 2020. Although the district has become somewhat more competitive following redistricting, it has consistently elected Democrats to the Florida House over the past decade.

President/Publisher: Kathy Stewart

Editor: Steve Stewart

Writers: Steve Stewart, Robert Stewart, News Service of Florida

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Local News

Parks Condemns Matlow's "Deceptive" Campaign Tactics

PARKS, *From Front Page*

Club of Tallahassee, a local politically active group founded in 2009, issued a press release about the controversy. “The Capital Conservative Club of Tallahassee is expressing concern about a fake Facebook page that used the name ‘Tallahassee Conservatives’ and appeared to suggest that local conservatives were encouraging the Tallahassee Police Benevolent Association to withdraw its endorsement of a candidate for the Tallahassee City Commission. We want to reassure Tallahassee residents

that the Capital Conservative Club has no connection and has never had any connection to this Facebook page, which has since been taken down, or to any group using the name ‘Tallahassee Conservatives.’...Introducing misleading information into our community is not helpful to voters or to the election process. We believe campaigns should be conducted with transparency and respect for the people of Tallahassee. This type of activity contributes to the frustration many residents feel

toward politics. We encourage anyone involved in creating or promoting misleading content to take responsibility for their actions.” **Parks Questions Matlow’s Tactics** Parks took the opportunity to questions Matlow’s political tactics. “Tallahassee needs leadership that unites us, not leadership that hides behind misleading pages and divisive tactics,” Parks said. He further asserted that this behavior is

not an isolated incident, claiming that for the last eight years, Matlow has consistently used tactics that “divide, mislead and inflame”. Matlow’s city commission aide, Ryan Ray, runs a political blog that has published unflattering stories about fellow Democrats that do not walk the progressive line. Parks called on community leaders, organizations, and Democrats who have endorsed Matlow to denounce these actions. Emphasizing that the mayoral race is a non-partisan

“people election,” Parks argued that the contest should be defined by character, integrity, and accountability rather than the weaponization of identities for political points. “We can debate ideas, we can disagree on policy, but we should never manipulate voters and mislead the public,” Parks concluded, pledging that his own commitment to the city would be rooted in truth and transparency.

Leon County Schools Celebrates Decade-High Performance, Near-Miss of “A” Grade

* * *

“I have never been more proud of our school district,” said Superintendent Rocky Hanna

By Steve Stewart

The Leon County School Board gathered on July 14, 2026, to celebrate what officials described as a historic academic milestone. According to data released by the Florida Department of Education, the district has reached its highest performance level in ten years and is currently just 0.25 points away from an overall “A” grade. During a comprehensive presentation, David Solz, Director of School Improvement and Accountability, reported that Leon County saw proficiency increases across every core subject area. English Language Arts (ELA) proficiency rose by 4% district-wide, while math scores saw a significant 5-point gain in grades 3-5. Science scores were particularly strong, increasing by 5 points across all levels and placing the district 7 points above the state average in Biology. “I have never been more proud of our school district,” said Superintendent Rocky Hanna, noting the achievements of staff and students alike. “We’re point twenty-five. Point 25 away from an A”. The individual school results were equally striking, with 85% of schools (33 out of 39) either maintaining or improving their letter grade. The district now boasts 28 schools rated “A” or “B,” the highest number since 2012. Notable highlights included:

- Bond Elementary earned the first “A” in the school’s history, with historic growth for its bottom 25% of students (88% in reading and 90% in math).

- Fairview Middle School jumped from a “C” to an “A”.
- Cobb Middle School and Sealy Elementary both secured “A” ratings.
- Griffin and Oak Ridge successfully exited “Differentiated Accountability” status.

- Board members attributed the success to “intentional investments,” particularly in early learning and the introduction of the UFLI reading program. Board Member Jones remarked, “The proof has been in the pudding,” while highlighting the “full evolution” of the district’s budget investments in student preparation.

Comparing Leon County to similarly sized districts, Board Member Wood highlighted that Leon’s 72% performance metric significantly outpaced Alachua (59%), Bay (68%), and Escambia (63%). “That’s the kind of comparison we need to be making right there,” Wood said. Board Member Smith added that the data serves as a powerful marketing tool for public education. “No matter what area of town you live in... you’re going to be successful in Leon County Schools,” Smith noted. Superintendent Hannah concluded that the district would “scream it from the mountain tops” to ensure the community recognizes these historic gains .



Leon County School Board Approves \$615 Million Budget Amid Ongoing Financial Challenges

LCS, *From Front Page*

tion while also claiming that vouchers have had little impact on student enrollment. Both cannot be true to the degree they are being presented. Our analysis of the District’s financial data from the 2017–18 through the 2024–25 school years shows that instructional spending increased by approximately 9%, while administrative site spending increased by approximately 42%. We have repeatedly asked Leon County

Schools to explain the reasons for this disparity, but to date no rationale has been provided. Before discussing the consolidation of schools, this is one area that deserves careful examination as a potential source of savings.” The board is scheduled to formally adopt the final budget at its Sept. 8 meeting.

City Commission Seat 5 Candidates Clash Over Airport, Governance

NEBA, *From Front Page*

rural healthcare. However, Hill raised concerns regarding transparency, noting that “17 documents” were reportedly incomplete when the decision to transfer assets was made. Inman-Johnson stressed that the center is years from reality and must prioritize maintaining indigent healthcare for those without insurance. Addressing the perceived “3-2 split” on the current commission, Williams-Cox dismissed the narrative as “clickbait,” stating that the commission votes together 93% of the time. Hill countered that the perception exists because residents feel decisions often favor “big business”. Inman-Johnson

pointed to broader dysfunction, citing the fire services fee dispute between the city and Leon County as a failure of intergovernmental cooperation. In their closing statements regarding their first 100 days in office, Hill pledged to “build trust” through community workshops. Inman-Johnson vowed to “mend and heal divisions” between the city and county. Williams-Cox promised to “continue to follow our strategic plan,” maintaining public safety and housing as her top priorities.

Local News Briefs

Longtime Tallahassee Utility Leader James Barnes Dies Following Brief Illness

James Barnes, the City of Tallahassee’s General Manager of Customer Account Services and Director of Customer Operations, died Monday morning following a brief illness, according to a statement released by the city. He served the city for nearly two decades and was widely recognized for transforming its utility customer service operations. “I am deeply saddened to share that this morning, our friend and colleague James Barnes, General Manager of Customer Account Services and Director of Customer Operations for the City of Tallahassee, passed away following a brief illness. This profound loss will be greatly felt within our organization and the wider community,” said Tallahassee City Manager Reese Goad. “James was a force. He brought exuberant energy, innovation and an unwavering commitment to excellence to everything he did, along with style and a million-watt smile. He proudly led a remarkable team and was a profound believer in principle-centered, service leadership.”

Barnes joined the City of Tallahassee in January 2007 and oversaw a team responsible for approximately 500,000 customer transactions each year. City officials credited his leadership with advancing customer service through major initiatives, including the implementation of a new Customer Information System, Meter Data Management System, FlexPay utility service and the expansion of the city’s Customer Self-Service portal, which achieved one of the highest adoption rates among utilities nationwide. Known for his commitment to employee development and customer-focused service, Barnes also introduced training and wellness programs while mentoring future leaders within the organization. His work earned numerous honors, including the 2022 Customer Executive Icon Award and the Florida Municipal Electric Association’s 2020 Member of the Year award. He also helped the city receive multiple industry recognitions and played a key role in securing upcoming statewide and national utility conferences for Tallahassee. Before joining the city, Barnes worked for USAgencies, Cox Communications and Comcast. He was also

a U.S. Army veteran and an active member of the National Urban League, 100 Black Men and the NAACP. Barnes is survived by his wife, Jan, along with his children and grandchildren. **TSC Proposes New Fees** Tallahassee State College is proposing a new \$30 application fee for prospective students and a new \$10 administrative fee for official transcript requests. Both proposals will be considered by the TSC District Board of Trustees at its meeting on Monday, August 17, 2026, at 2:30 p.m. in the Hinson Administration Building on TSC’s Main Campus. TSC currently does not charge an application fee. Under the proposal, dual enrollment students and applicants with demonstrated financial need would be exempt from the \$30 fee. The proposed application fee would help offset a portion of the administrative costs associated with processing applications while also deterring fraudulent submissions that require College resources to identify and remove. The College is also proposing a \$10 administrative fee for official transcript requests. Students and former stu-

dents currently pay \$6.33 for an official transcript, a fee that is collected and retained entirely by the College’s third-party transcript provider. TSC does not currently receive any portion of that fee. Under the proposal, the College would add a \$10 administrative fee. The additional fee would help TSC cover a portion of the costs associated with maintaining student records and preparing official transcripts. The proposed fee applies only to official transcripts. Unofficial transcripts would continue to be available at no cost. **TPD Welcomes New Generation of Leadership** The Tallahassee Police Department (TPD) celebrated the promotion of eight members to key command staff positions during a ceremony held Monday, July 20. The promotions included two Deputy Chiefs, one Major and five Captains. The newly promoted Command Staff represents the next generation of leaders who will help shape the department’s vision, guide daily operations and mentor others while continuing TPD’s commitment to serving the Tallahassee community. Deputy Chiefs, Majors and Captains play a vital role in

leading the department’s operations, supporting employees and ensuring TPD continues providing professional, effective and community-focused policing. Their leadership will help guide the organization through the challenges of today while preparing it for the opportunities of tomorrow. “One of the most important responsibilities of today’s leaders is preparing future leaders,” Chief Lawrence Revell said. “These promotions reflect the depth of talent within our department and our commitment to developing leaders who are ready to guide this organization into the future. I hope every officer sees that there is a path to leadership through hard work, integrity and service.” Those promoted include Deputy Chief Calvin Bedenbaugh, Deputy Chief Jeff Mahoney, Major Sonya Bush, Captain Charzetta Felton, Captain Anitra Highland Simmonds, Captain Zachary Lyne, Captain Damon Miller, Jr., Captain Laura Varble. TPD congratulates each of the newly promoted leaders and looks forward to the experience, vision and guidance they will bring to their new roles.

Opinion/Analysis

Matlow's Campaign Caught Promoting Racial Division

Fake Facebook Page Pitted Conservatives Against Black Candidate

By Steve Stewart - July 23, 2026

Tallahassee Reports has learned that mayoral candidate Jeremy Matlow and his campaign manager are tied to a fake Facebook page designed to impact local elections.

Multiple sources have told TR that Kristellys Estanga, the campaign manager for the Matlow campaign, is the administrator of a Facebook page that was created and named “Pause the TMH Deal – Vote No on Dec 10”. Facebook records show that on July 23, 2026 the name of the page was changed to “Tallahassee Conservatives”.

In addition, documents indicate that the Jeremy Matlow campaign for City Commission ran political advertisements on posts tied to the Facebook account.

It appears that the purpose of the name change was to fool viewers into believing that conservatives were promoting the publication of damning information against a city commission seat 3 candidate, Talietha Edwards. Edwards is in a race with five other candidates, included PJ Perez, the progressive choice for the seat.

Officials with Tallahassee Alert Deny Involvement

The political shenanigans began to unfold this morning when the name of the Facebook page was changed from “Pause the TMH Deal – Vote No on Dec 10” to “Tallahassee Conservatives”

...the purpose of the name change was to fool viewers into believing that conservatives were promoting the publication of damning information....

on July 23., 2026. See image below.

After the name change, several administrators on the account received a message that their access to the Facebook account had been removed. This included multiple Tallahassee ALERT officials.

Tallahassee ALERT – a Black-led civic network committed to educating, organizing, and mobilizing our community to hold local leaders accountable – had been part of a coalition challenging the TMH deal, hence the

original Facebook page name “Pause the TMH Deal on Dec 10”.

However, when the ALERT officials saw the current name of the Facebook page, “Tallahassee Conservatives”, they were confused.

Tallahassee ALERT officials became concerned when they realized there was information left visible on the page that tied the “Tallahassee Conservatives”

page to Tallahassee ALERT. Tallahassee ALERT officials told TR they have nothing to do with what is being posted on the Facebook page today.

The Matlow Connection

At least three sources have told TR that Estanga is an administrator on the current “Tallahassee Conservatives” Facebook account. A review of documents show that Estanga is connected to Corsair Campaigns which has been paid \$9,500 by the Matlow campaign.



Financial reports also list Estanga as Matlow’s campaign manager.

A further Matlow connection to the Facebook account was discovered when it was revealed that the Matlow campaign ran Facebook ads under this account – when it was named “Pause the TMH Deal on Dec 10”. The Facebook process related to running political advertisements is detailed and transparent. The process requires authorization as an advertiser or admin in Facebook Business Manager for that page, indicating Matlow was close to the Facebook account administrators.

Jeremy Matlow’s Campaign Manager Resigns Amid Controversy

By Steve Stewart - July 24, 2026

Following an exclusive story by Tallahassee Reports, the campaign manager for Tallahassee mayoral candidate Jeremy Matlow, Kristellys Estanga, has resigned.

Estanga is also the campaign manager for PJ Perez, a candidate for city commission seat 3.

TR published a story on Thursday implicating the Matlow campaign in a political operation that used a fake Facebook page to make it look like a Tallahassee conservative group was attacking Talietha Edwards, a black candidate running for city commission seat 3. Matlow is backing PJ Perez for the seat and viewed Edwards as competition.

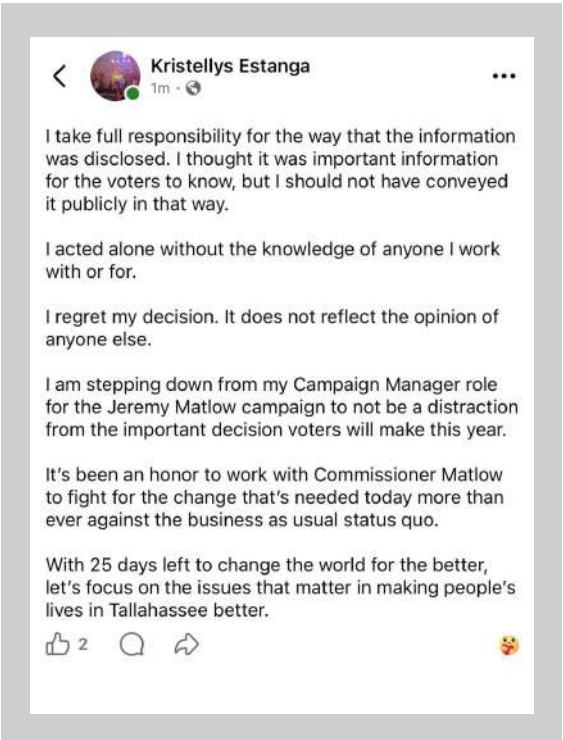
In a statement by Estanga, provided below, she admitted she was behind the fake Facebook page and said she acted alone.

However, sources tell TR the operation was a “team effort” and more people than Estanga were involved.

TR is working on confirming Matlow’s role in the controversy.

Matlow Campaign Manager: “We are Confused...”

Private text messages that were recently posted on social media reveals a behind the scenes look at the reaction of the Jeremy Matlow campaign



when they realized their efforts to conceal the use of a fake Facebook page was about to be exposed.

Matlow campaign manager Kristellys Estanga, who resigned on Friday amid the controversy, said she acted alone. However, the text messages tell a different story.

Thursday afternoon, hours after the “Tallahassee Conservatives” Facebook page had been activated, a social media post revealed the name of the Facebook page had been changed from “Pause the TMH Deal – Vote No on Dec 10” to “Tallahassee Conservatives”.

Following this revelation, Darryl Alfred, a candidate for Tallahassee City Commission Seat 3 texted Matlow campaign manager Estanga with a screen shot documenting the sudden name change of the Facebook page asking about the change.

Alfred texted, “Before I comment, wtf?”

Estanga replied: I have no idea. Idk how she got that supposed screen shot or how Jeremy’s name got on it. We looked everywhere from all angles and couldn’t find what she posted. And how it is linked to me is even more perplexing. Thanks for checking in before u comment. We are as confused as anyone. (Emphasis added)

Interestingly, Estanga’s response used



“I” when referring to herself and “we” when referring to the campaign.

Estanga used “we” twice in describing the campaign’s efforts to figure out what was going on as more people on social media were discovering the Facebook page was fake.

These text messages are inconsistent with the Matlow campaign statement that Estanga acted alone. In addition, sources have told TR that the Matlow campaign had been discussing the political operation for weeks leading up to the Facebook page name change.

TR is gathering documents that show the seeds for the political operation began over a year ago, before Estanga was a part of the Matlow team.

Matlow Calls for “Calm” While Launching Sharp Attacks Against Opponent

By Steve Stewart - July 29, 2026

With only three weeks remaining until Election Day, mayoral candidate Jeremy Matlow held a press conference in front of City Hall to address the political fallout related to the resignation of his campaign manager due to her connection to a controversial political attack on a city commission candidate.

The press conference was marked by a striking contrast between his plea for political civility and a series of pointed personal attacks against his opponent.

Matlow began his remarks by decrying the “negative mail, negative TV ads,” and “negative text” currently flooding the race, calling them “tactics that scare good people away”. He issued an explicit “call for calm,” urging all sides to “stop the smears, stop the lies... and stick to the issues”.

However, the majority of Matlow’s subsequent comments focused on the character and professional conduct of his opponent, Daryl Parks. Despite his plea to end “smears,” Matlow accused

Parks of “grandstanding,” “villainizing” him, and acting as part of an “old guard” that rules with an “iron fist”.

Parks responded to Matlow’s press conference attack stating, “Jeremy Matlow’s desperate, mid-press-conference attack reveals exactly what he is: a divider, a bully, and a practitioner of the worst kind of deceptive politics.”

While Matlow insisted that candidates should “stick to the issues,” a significant portion of his address was dedicated to a controversial video related Talethia Edwards, a candidate for city commission seat 3. Matlow detailed allegations involving the Orlando Police Department, including claims of an “illegally” towed car, a “planted bomb,” and a candidate who “failed to appear again and again” in court.

Edwards responded to Matlow’s desire to move forward by stating, “I think that first starts with a formal apology from his campaign, as well as my opponent, P.J. Perez, who they employed this campaign manager on both campaigns, not just one, and a formal apology to the citizens of Tallahassee

and the conservative residents in our community that was also misrepresented.”

During the press conference, Matlow argued that it was Parks who was failing to mention issues important to the public, yet Matlow himself spent considerable time discussing these third-party legal matters before pivoting to his own policy platform late in the conference.

Matlow framed the election as a choice between “the chaos of the last eight years” and a move toward a “more transparent and open government”. Paradoxically, he used the platform to criticize Parks for holding a press conference—the first of his campaign—labeling the move as “grandstanding” and a “personal attack” rather than an exercise in the transparency Matlow claims to champion.

In another rhetorical shift, Matlow characterized the current City Hall leadership as a “tiny faction of power players” and a “stubborn 3-2 majority” that “frustrate[s] the will of the voters”. Yet, when discussing regional issues



like AI data centers, he noted that the combined city and county perspective often results in a “9 to 3 vote,” placing himself and Commissioner Porter in the minority against a broad consensus he otherwise dismissed as a “tiny faction”.

As the race enters its final stretch, Matlow continues to position himself as the only candidate with “real policy proposals,” even as his own rhetoric fluctuates between a demand for a higher road and the very “negative” tactics he publicly condemns.



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State

Mack Named Florida Education Commissioner

By Ana Goñi-Lessan
The News Service of Florida

The Florida Board of Education unanimously approved Henry Mack as the state’s new education commissioner on Wednesday.

Mack, a former senior chancellor at the Department of Education and most recently the U.S. Assistant Secretary of Labor, was recommended for the position by Gov. Ron DeSantis on Friday.

“It is an honor beyond words to be entrusted with stewarding Florida schools at this pivotal moment,” Mack told the Board.

Mack replaces Anastasios Kamoutsas, who recently became president of Polk State College, and interim commissioner Paul Burns, a senior chancellor at DOE. The position pays approximately \$330,000 a year.

Burns said it was an honor to be the interim president for the three weeks

he served and looked forward to working with Mack.

“As a parent himself, I know that he believes in parental rights and in school choice, and so board members I just wanted to share that today, you will be making an excellent choice for Florida’s students, for all of Florida’s educators and for Florida families by choosing Dr. Mack to be our next commissioner of education,” Burns said.

Mack worked for DOE from 2019-2023, led the state’s career and technical education initiatives and heavily supported DeSantis’ parental rights policies.

“I am confident Dr. Mack will build on Florida’s record of success in education,” DeSantis said in a statement. “He shares our commitment to parental rights, school choice, eliminating radical ideologies from the classroom, and preparing every student for success in the workforce and in life.”

Florida College System presidents, including those from Miami-Dade College, St. Petersburg College and Pasco-Hernando State College, spoke in favor of Mack as the new commissioner, as well as the head of the Florida Chamber of Commerce and career and technical education professionals throughout the state.

“Dr. Mack is a leader, I also believe he’s anointed. You’ve heard several people talk about his skill set, but I’ll close with he is also chosen for such a time as this,” said Mel Ponder, president of Northwest Florida State College.

During his time with DOE, Mack was critical of diversity, equity and inclusion programs and a proponent of “classical” education, a teaching approach backed by conservatives.

“Florida is restoring the classical aims of public education — starting by confining woke ideology to ‘the dust-



bin of history;” he posted on social media in 2023.

Mack has a bachelor’s and a master’s degree from the Catholic University of America and a doctorate in education from the University of Miami.

He has taught courses in religion and philosophy at the University of Miami and Florida International University.

“Dr. Mack is a respected academic. He is very forward thinking, and I believe he will support our students and our parents,” said Vice Chairwoman MaryLynn Magar.

Florida Sold \$9.7 Billion in Lottery Tickets Last Year

By Jim Turner
The News Service of Florida

Sales have been brisk for state lottery games after a brief period where inflation apparently caused consumers to dial back purchases of scratch-off tickets.

The Florida Lottery reported \$9.7 billion in sales for all games in the fiscal year that ended June 30, a 6.35 percent increase from the prior year.

“Scratch-Off games continued to be a strong contributor to the Lottery’s success, generating \$7.14 billion in sales, an increase of more than \$308 million compared to Fiscal Year 2025,” Lottery Director of Communications & Strategic Partnerships Alecia Collins wrote in an email. “Draw game sales also experienced significant growth, reaching \$2.56 billion, an increase of more than \$271 million.”

The draw game sales figure doesn’t include state revenue from the recent

rollover jackpots in the multi-state games of Powerball and Mega Millions, where the winning ticket on Tuesday was sold at a Wawa in Bradenton.

But the overall total indicates a potential reversal of an expected two-year slowdown in play, with sales down to around \$9.1 billion in fiscal year 2024-2025 and \$9.4 billion in fiscal year 2023-2024 after reaching \$9.8 billion in fiscal year 2022-2023.

In September 2024, state economists attributed the drop in play to a decline in scratch-off sales as consumers faced inflationary pressures coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic period, which saw a spike in Lottery purchases.

At the time, the economic forecast for the games projected Lottery sales to decline to \$8.8 billion in the 2024-2025 fiscal year and slowly return to the \$9 billion mark by the 2027-2028 fiscal year.

By January of this year, however, the Revenue Estimating Conference noted

the increase in people playing scratch-off games as it revised its economic outlook for the state.

“The gain to the (Lottery) forecast in the current year was largely attributable to higher-than-expected Scratch-Off sales,” the conference wrote on Jan. 15.

“The new sales data suggests that there will be stronger year-over-year growth than originally anticipated.”

“In its new forecast, the Conference projects 5.2 percent growth in the current year, before a return in the outer years to growth rates that mirror population growth as expected in August 2025,” the conference report continued.

State economists will again look at



the Lottery numbers on Aug. 7, ahead of an overall update of the state’s general revenue on Aug. 14.

Collins noted that sales in the past fiscal year, along with earnings on investments and unclaimed prizes, generated about \$2.36 billion from the Lottery to the Educational Enhancement Trust Fund.

Uthmeier Warns Catholic Church to Accept Vaccine Exemptions

VACCINE, From Front Page

schools to comply with Florida law and grant religious exemptions to school vaccine policies. Failure to comply could jeopardize eligibility for state educational scholarship programs,” Uthmeier wrote in a letter addressed to FCCB executive director Michael Sheedy.

The letter comes 10 days before most school districts in the state open their doors for the 2026-2027 school year.

Many Catholic schools in Florida accept students who pay tuition with help from the state’s private school vouchers. Currently, more than 500,000 students across the state participate in the

program. As of March 2026, about a quarter of the state’s education budget goes to voucher programs, up from 12 percent in 2021.

In response to Uthmeier’s letter, the conference issued a statement saying they are reviewing the letter and will respond to the attorney general.

“Be assured, Florida’s Catholic schools are operating in accord with the law and Church teaching,” wrote Michele Taylor, a spokesperson for the conference.

In his letter, Uthmeier did not single out one of the state’s seven dioceses, but did refer to the immunization policies of the Diocese of

Pensacola-Tallahassee.

Uthmeier and several of Florida’s top Republican leaders and their staff are Catholics, including Gov. Ron DeSantis and incoming Education Commissioner Henry Mack.

DeSantis has pushed to repeal all vaccine mandates and expand the state’s vaccine exemption requirements. All legislative attempts have failed, including a bill earlier this year which would have created a new “conscience” category for parents to opt out of immunizations for their children and require health care workers to provide alternative vaccine schedules.

The conference has lobbied against these bills, urging lawmakers to keep vaccine requirements.

Citing church-affiliated statements, Uthmeier’s letter argues vaccines aren’t a “moral obligation,” and should not be compelled if they are derived from fetal tissue.

The Catholic Church is strongly against abortion, but its stance on vaccines derived from fetal tissue is more nuanced. The Vatican has said it is “morally acceptable” to use cell lines from aborted fetuses if there are no other alternatives available.

Under Florida law, the following vaccines are required for K-12 schools: Polio,

measles (rubeola), rubella, pertussis (whooping cough), mumps, diphtheria and tetanus.

The rubella vaccine, a part of the MMR vaccine, was created using the cell lines of an aborted fetus but is permissible because there are no other alternatives to prevent the contagious and deadly disease.

In his letter, Uthmeier quotes a statement from the Vatican on the morality of using COVID-19 vaccines, which states “practical reason makes evident that vaccination is not, as a rule, a moral obligation and that, therefore, it must be voluntary.”

Renner Takes Aim at Fauci, Donalds in Final Weeks of Primary

By Gray Rohrer
The News Service of Florida

Former House Speaker Paul Renner is attempting to climb up the polls and drag down U.S. Rep. Byron Donalds in the Republican gubernatorial primary, but he’s also trained his sights at Dr. Anthony Fauci.

Fauci, who was a top medical advisor to President Donald Trump and President Joe Biden during the COVID-19 pandemic, garnered headlines this week for invoking his Fifth Amendment right not to testify before a Congressional hearing.

“Was he involved in helping a foreign adversary to produce a deadly weapon basically that was unleashed on the rest of us?” Renner asked in an interview with the News Service of Florida.

Renner was referring to the allegation the National Institute of Health helped fund gain of function research, which tests how altered viruses act in the real world, at a lab in Wuhan,

the Chinese city that saw the first outbreak of COVID-19. Fauci was a leader at NIH for decades and has previously denied the agency funded such research.

“If he did something that would be an act of treason, fundamentally, because tens of millions of people died from COVID – so he killed a lot more than serial killers and we know what we do to serial killers in Florida,” Renner said. “He needs to be held accountable.”

Other Republican gubernatorial hopefuls have slammed Fauci in a similar way.

Lt. Gov. Jay Collins called Fauci “one of the greatest mass murderers in American history.” Donalds has criticized Fauci as well, but noted former U.S. Rep. David Jolly, the frontrunner for the Democratic gubernatorial nomination, has praised his efforts during the pandemic.

“In David Jolly’s Florida, frauds like Anthony Fauci are put in charge. Not in my Florida,” Donalds posted on X

on Thursday.

The Aug. 18 primary is less than three weeks away.

Renner said Donalds is ignoring base Republican voters in his campaign, especially by refusing to debate him, Collins and conservative activist and investor James Fishback.

But he also acknowledged Gov. Ron DeSantis, who is term-limited, hasn’t helped consolidate a coalition to defeat Donalds, who is the GOP front-runner who has been endorsed by Trump. DeSantis, while being critical of Donalds, hasn’t endorsed anyone else in the race.

“Well, the governor obviously could help in consolidating,” Renner said. “Nonetheless, we see momentum and that people want the adult in the room.”

On the campaign trail, Renner touts his record as House Speaker from 2022-2024, when he helped shepherd much of DeSantis’ agenda into law. He listed off several major bills – legalizing the permitless carry of firearms;



banning diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives; banning abortions after six weeks of pregnancy; universal vouchers – passed under his watch.

And Renner noted Donalds, a former state House member who won a U.S. House seat in 2020, was in Congress during that time.

“Byron Donalds was up getting on cable news networks, self-promoting to become governor, and that’s what he’ll do as governor for the next higher office,” Renner said. “We need somebody who’s actually going to be here to govern.”

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To Elect Someone who will Listen, Lead and Act
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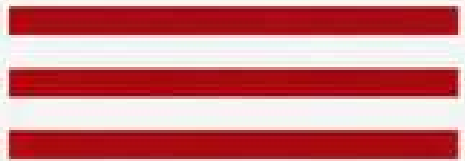
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Airport Passenger Traffic Down 5.4% in June

The latest information from the Tallahassee International Airport shows the June 2026 passenger traffic decreased 5.4% when compared to traffic one year ago. The number of passengers was down 4,080 from the 75,389 reported during June 2025 to 71,309 in June 2026.

Relative to 2025, the Passenger Traffic Report shows year-over-year passenger counts in June were

June Passenger Traffic Report			
	Jun-25	Jun-26	%Chg
Delta Group	37,209	37,720	1.4%
American	36,311	33,589	-7.5%
Silver Airways	1,869	-	
Totals	75,389	71,309	-5.4%

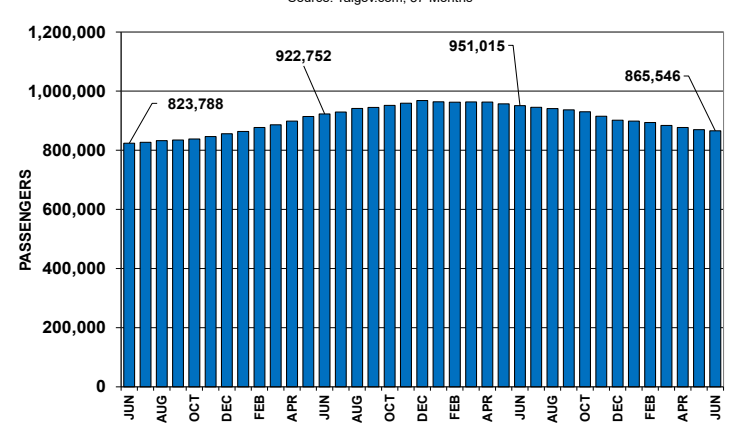
down 7.5% for American Airlines and up 1.4% for the Delta Group. Impacting the numbers was the fact that Silver Airways ended service in June 2025.

The graph to the right shows the annualized number of passengers for the last 37-months. The highlighted numbers on the graph indicate the annual traffic during the month of June over the last four years. The annual rate of passengers at TIA in June 2026 – 865,546 – is down 8.99% when compared to one year ago (951,015). The annualized number of passengers is calculated by summing the previous 12 months of traffic.

June 2026 is the 15th consecutive month that annual passenger traffic has declined.

Annual Rate of TIA Passengers

Source: Talgov.com, 37-Months



Tallahassee Home Prices Outpace State as Sales Slow in June

While prices continued to rise, home sales moved in the opposite direction

The Tallahassee metropolitan housing market continued to post stronger home price growth than the statewide average in June, even as the number of homes sold declined, according to the latest report from Florida Realtors.

The median sales price for an existing

Tallahassee MSA SFR Sales				
	Jun-25	Jun-26	Chg	%Chg
Median Price	\$ 345.0	\$ 364.9	\$ 19.9	5.8%
Transactions	388	364	-24	-6.2%
YTD	\$ 335.0	\$ 340.0	\$ 5.0	1.5%
Transactions	1,761	1,830	69	3.9%

single-family home in the Tallahassee MSA reached \$364,950 in June, a 5.8% increase from June 2025. That outpaced the statewide median sales price of \$432,000, which rose 4.9% over the same period. Year-to-date, the Tallahassee median sales price stands at \$340,000, up 1.5%, compared with Florida's statewide median of \$421,419, which increased

1.6%.

While prices continued to rise, home sales moved in opposite directions.

The Tallahassee MSA recorded 364 closed sales in June, a 6.2% decline from a year earlier. By contrast, Florida recorded 26,036 closed sales statewide, an increase of 9.3% over June 2025.

%Chg	Despite the slower June, Tallahassee remained ahead of last year's pace on a year-to-date basis. The region reported 1,830 closed sales through the first six months of 2026, a 3.9% increase from the same period in 2025.
5.8%	
-6.2%	
1.5%	
3.9%	

Statewide, closed sales totaled 134,254, representing a 4.6% increase year over year.

The data suggest the Tallahassee housing market continues to experience resilient home values despite softer monthly sales activity. The region's stronger June price appreciation compared with the state indicates demand has remained sufficient to support higher prices, even

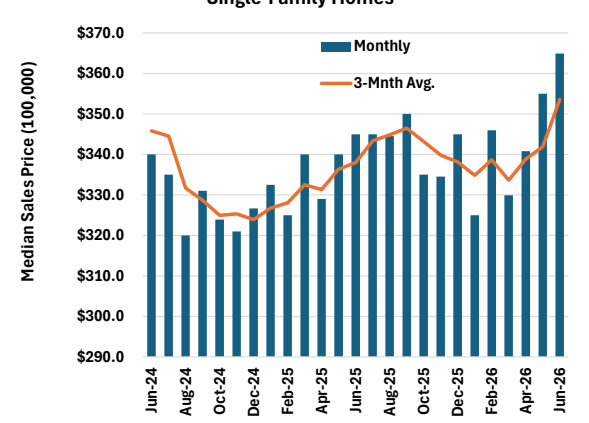
as fewer homes changed hands during the month.

Two-Year Trend

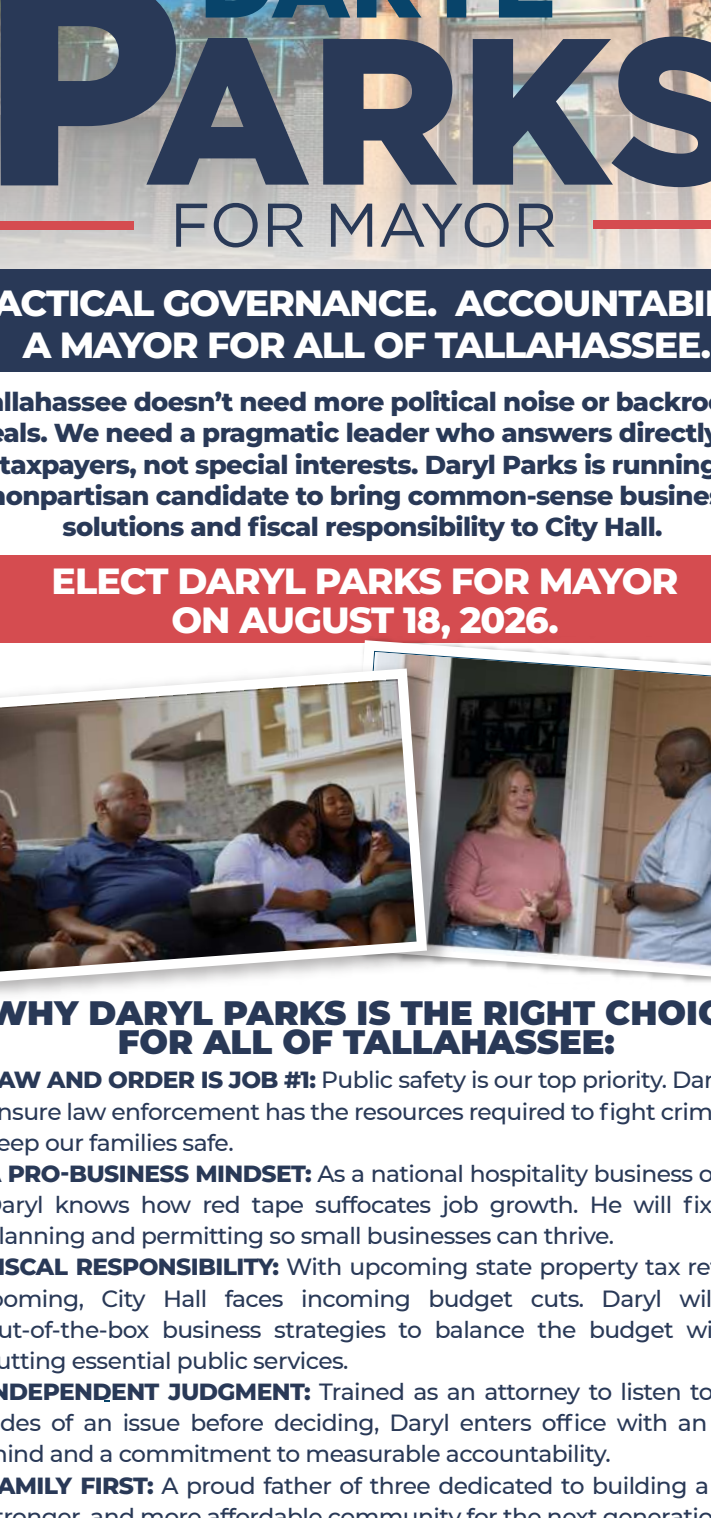
The chart below shows that the Tallahassee MSA single-family home median sales price has generally trended upward over the past two years, despite some month-to-month fluctuations. After beginning near \$320,000 in mid-2024, prices climbed steadily through late 2024 and early 2025 before leveling off for several months. The three-month moving average indicates the market has remained relatively stable while continuing its overall upward trajectory. By June 2026, the median sales price had risen to approximately \$365,000, reflecting continued appreciation in home values.

Florida Realtors compiled the statistics from local multiple listing services, with

Tallahassee MSA Median Sales Price Single-Family Homes



June 2026 data released on July 17, 2026.
The Tallahassee MSA includes Gadsden,
Jefferson, Leon and Wakulla counties,
while statewide figures encompass all
Florida metropolitan statistical areas.



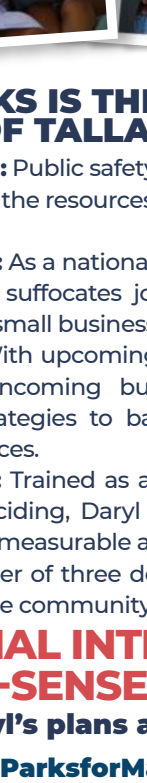
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- INDEPENDENT JUDGMENT:** Trained as an attorney to listen to both sides of an issue before deciding, Daryl enters office with an open mind and a commitment to measurable accountability.
- FAMILY FIRST:** A proud father of three dedicated to building a safer, stronger, and more affordable community for the next generation.

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 [DarylParksforMayor](https://DarylParksforMayor.com) 

Paid for and approved by Daryl Parks, nonpartisan candidate for Tallahassee Mayor

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The City of Tallahassee has more than \$100 million in strategic investments that will come alive over the next year, including an International Processing Facility at Tallahassee International Airport to support the Foreign Trade Zone that will serve up to 11 counties and create \$300 million in annual economic impact. By investing in infrastructure and quality of life amenities, Tallahassee is attracting new businesses and over the last five years has created more than 15,000 jobs, while growing the local economy nearly 25 percent.



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Sirens, Sailors, and Sea Monsters

Saturday, August 22
10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.
Leon County Main Library
200 West Park Avenue

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LeonCountyLibrary.org/CosmicCon

Fertilizer Rain Delay Continues in August

The Fertilizer Rain Delay campaign reminds homeowners and professional fertilizer applicators not to apply fertilizer for at least one day ahead of forecasted heavy rain (1 inch or more in 24 hours). Check Leon County social media pages for a reminder to refrain from fertilizing whenever there is heavy rain in the forecast.

Learn more about fertilizer application and best practices at LeonCountyFL.gov/Fertilizer.





LEON COUNTY NEWS & EVENTS

Go Green this Election Cycle

In 2026, Leon County Government, Leon County Supervisor of Elections, Marpan Recycling, City of Tallahassee, and the League of Women Voters of Tallahassee are partnering to keep corrugated plastic campaign and business yard signs out of the landfill by offering recycling drop-off at a variety of locations during the fall election season. Drop-off collection will run from Wednesday, August 19, until Friday, September 18, and again on Wednesday, November 4, until Friday, December 4. Drop your campaign and business yard signs along with their wire frames into the yellow bins at one of the following locations:

- **The Leon County Elections Center**, 2990-1 Apalachee Parkway
- **Leon County Hazardous Waste Drop-Off Site**, 1800 N. Blair Stone Road
- **City of Tallahassee Beautification & Waste Management Facility**, 2727 Major James Morgan Jr. Way
- **Marpan Recycling**, 323 Marpan Way

Learn more at LeonVotes.gov/Candidates/Campaign-Signs.



BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS SCHEDULE AUGUST 2026

MONDAY 17	6:00 p.m.	Board of County Commissioners Public Hearing on Charter Amendments County Courthouse, 5th Floor Commission Chambers – 301 S. Monroe Street
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Live television broadcasts of Board of County Commissioners meetings are available on Comcast channel 16, the Leon County Florida channel on Roku, the County's Facebook page, YouTube channel, and X, and LeonCountyFL.gov.

For meeting and location updates, visit LeonCountyFL.gov.



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Topics That Engage and Inspire

King of the Monsters

How
Godzilla
conquered
the **WORLD**

Saturday,
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11 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Leon County Main Library
200 West Park Avenue

Celebrate seven decades of cinematic history with a look at the enduring legacy of Godzilla as Dr. Laura Lee from the College of Motion Picture Arts at Florida State University traces Godzilla's massive impact on the world of entertainment and his unique role in bridging the cinematic traditions of Japan and the United States.

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Learn more at LeonCountyFL.gov/GetEngaged

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Cultura Tallahassee

Together, We Are More

Submissions accepted online through Sunday, August 30, at 11:59 p.m.

Artists of all ages and experience levels are invited to submit original artwork celebrating Hispanic culture, heritage, and history for "Cultura Tallahassee: Together, We Are More." Selected artwork will be displayed at the Leon County Main Library from September 15 through October 15, 2026, in celebration of National Hispanic Heritage Month.

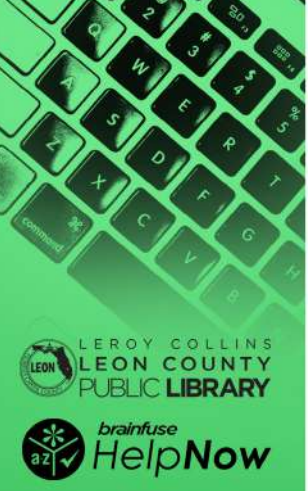
Learn more and apply at LeonCountyFL.gov/HispanicHeritageMonth



Celebrate America250 at the Leon County Public Library!

Explore America's rich history of innovation and perseverance at the library in celebration of the U.S. Semiquincentennial! Discover America's past by attending a Library Lunch Break program or Library Lecture, visiting a special exhibit, or picking up a commemorative limited-edition America250 library card.

More at LeonCountyLibrary.org/America250.



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Leon County Government and the Leon County Sheriff's Office encourage everyone to do their part to keep our community clean and beautiful. Properly dispose of trash and recyclables, and don't vandalize public or private property with graffiti. If you see excessive littering or graffiti, please report it to the Leon County Sheriff's Office at 850-606-3300.



Love Leon County

*...don't
trash it!*

Local Sports

Teams to Watch During Upcoming HS Volleyball Season

By Robert Stewart

With the high school volleyball season just around the corner, Tallahassee Reports has picked five teams that we think could have a successful season based on their returning players and the success they had during the 2025-2026 season. This article does not factor in any incoming freshmen. Player selections are based on returning athletes, with statistics and roster information sourced from MaxPreps.

Chiles

After a successful state title run during the 2025-2026 season, the Timberwolves hope to replicate that success with a new squad in 2026. With a lot of the Timberwolves star power from last year graduating, they are multiple players that have the chance to step up and help Chiles stay at the top spot in Leon County.

Senior Loganne Abernathy returns as the most efficient hitter among the team's returning offensive players. During the 2025 season, she recorded 153 kills while posting a team-best .370 hitting percentage on 330 attempts. Her ability to consistently produce points while limiting errors makes her a key returning piece heading into the 2026 season.

Junior Sterling Carlile enters the 2026 season as one of the top returning offensive weapons after ranking second among returning hitters in kill %. As a freshman, Carlile recorded 209 kills across 97 sets, averaging 2.2 kills per set while taking 601 attempts. With another year of experience, Carlile will be expected to take on a larger role in the offensive attack.

Chiles setter Riley Boykin is expected to fill in the void of star setters Natalie Gibson and Eva Goodson this year as the Timberwolves look to continue their domination in Leon County. In 2025, Boykin recorded 46 assists while averaging 0.5 assists per set across 92 sets. With the graduation of both setters Boykin will have an opportunity to take on an expanded role and help lead the team's offensive attack.

Florida High

Florida High enters the 2026 season

looking to continue the success of a strong 2025 campaign that saw the Seminoles advance to the regional semifinals of the 3A FHSAA State Championship. Florida High finished the season with a 20-6 record, including a district championship after defeating Marianna in straight sets. With several key contributors returning, the Seminoles will look to build on last season's postseason run and compete for another district title.

With the graduation of senior Hunter Cook, who led Florida High with 369 kills during the 2025 season, Addison Mayernick returns as the Seminoles' top returning offensive contributor. Mayernick finished second on the team in kills last season, recording 250 kills across 86 sets while averaging 2.9 kills per set on 713 attack attempts. With Cook no longer leading the attack, Mayernick will be expected to take on an expanded role as one of Florida High's primary offensive options during the 2026 season.

Riley Maynard returns for her Senior season after contributing 82 kills during Florida High's 2025 campaign. She appeared in 78 sets and recorded 1.1 kills per set while providing additional depth to the Seminoles' front-row attack. With the departure of several key offensive contributors, Maynard will have an opportunity to take on a larger role as Florida High looks to replace production from last season.

Olivia Woods returns as Florida High's primary setter after leading the Seminoles' offense during the 2025 season. She recorded 732 assists across 86 sets, averaging 8.5 assists per set while helping facilitate a balanced offensive attack. Entering her Senior season, Woods will be expected to continue leading the Seminoles' offense and play a key role in Florida High's pursuit of another successful postseason run.

Leon

Leon enters the 2026 season after finishing 13-13 overall and placing second in District 3A-2 with a 2-2 district record. While the Lions finished with an even record last season, they return several experienced players who will look to help the program take the next step and contend for a district champi-

onship in 2026.

Bentley Barnard returns as Leon's top defensive player after leading all returning Lions with 160 digs during the 2025 season. She averaged 2.4 digs per set across 67 sets, providing a steady presence in the back row. With the graduation of the team's top two defenders, Barnard will be expected to take on an even larger role in anchoring Leon's defense during the 2026 season.

Riley Perezluha enters her senior season after contributing 90 kills during the 2025 campaign. She averaged 1.4 kills per set while posting a .175 hitting percentage across 66 sets. With another year of varsity experience, Perezluha is expected to be one of Leon's primary offensive options as the Lions look to improve on last season's 13-13 record.

Lincoln

Lincoln enters the 2026 season after finishing 13-10 overall and placing third in District 3A-2 with a 2-4 district record. The Trojans put together a winning season in 2025 and will look to build on that foundation with returning experience as they aim to climb the district standings and make a deeper postseason push in 2026.

With the graduation of senior Mackenzie Poppell, who led Lincoln with 177 kills during the 2025 season, Saja Gilliam returns as the Trojans' top returning offensive contributor. Gilliam recorded 140 kills across 80 sets, averaging 1.8 kills per set while taking 408 attempts. Entering her senior season, Gilliam will be expected to take on a larger role in Lincoln's offensive attack as the team looks to replace production from last year's leading hitter.

Kinsley Platt returns for her Senior season after contributing 96 kills during Lincoln's 2025 campaign. She appeared in 82 sets and averaged 1.2 kills

per set while gaining valuable varsity experience. With several offensive roles opening up, Platt will have an opportunity to increase her impact and provide another option for the Trojans' attack during the 2026 season.

Maclay

Maclay enters the 2026 season after finishing 13-12 during the 2025 campaign and earning a No. 249 ranking among teams in the state of Florida. The Marauders will look to build on last season's experience as returning players take on larger roles and help push the program forward during the upcoming season.

Esther Izuegbu enters her sophomore season after making an impact during her freshman campaign. She finished second among all Maclay players with 139 kills across 76 sets, averaging 1.8 kills per set while recording a .191 hitting percentage. With another year of varsity experience, Izuegbu will look to continue developing as one of the Marauders' key offensive pieces.

Kate Hartmann returns as one of Maclay's top offensive contributors after finishing third on the team in kills during the 2025 season. She recorded 134 kills across 65 sets, averaging 2.1 kills per set on 407 attack attempts. Entering her senior season, Hartmann will be expected to take on an increased role in the Marauders' offensive attack and provide a consistent scoring option.

Sarah Izuegbu returns for her junior season after contributing 111 kills during Maclay's 2025 campaign. She appeared in 75 sets, averaging 1.5 kills per set while gaining valuable varsity experience as a freshman. With another year of development, Izuegbu will look to expand her role in the Marauders' offensive attack and provide additional depth at the net.



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