



MINUTES OF THE MEETING

PUBLIC HEARING FOR THE TENTATIVE FISCAL YEAR 2026 MILLAGE RATE AND ANNUAL SERVICE BUDGET

GOVERNING BOARD SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

TAMPA, FLORIDA

SEPTEMBER 9, 2025

The Governing Board of the Southwest Florida Water Management District (District) met at 5:01 p.m. on September 9, 2025, at the Tampa Office. The following persons were in attendance:

Board Members Present

Jack Bispham, Vice Chair (Acting Chair)
Kelly S. Rice, Member*
Ashley Bell Barnett, Secretary*
John Hall, Treasurer*
Robert Stern, Member*
James Holton, Member*
Nancy H. Watkins, Member*
Joshua Gamblin, Member*

*Attended via electronic media

Board Members Absent

John Mitten, Chair
Michelle Williamson, Member
Dustin Rowland, Member

Staff Members

Brian J. Armstrong, Executive Director
Amanda Rice, Assistant Executive Director
Chris Tumminia, General Counsel
Brian Werthmiller, Inspector General
Jennette Seachrist, Division Director
Michelle Hopkins, Division Director
Brian Starford, Division Director
Brandon Baldwin, Division Director
Michelle Weaver, Division Director
Melisa Lowe, Bureau Chief
Andrea Shamblin, Manager
Amber Smith, Regional Manager

Administrative Support

Virginia Singer, Manager

Approved minutes from previous meetings can be found on the District's website at Watermatters.org.

1. Call to Order and Roll Call

Vice Chair Jack Bispham called the meeting to order. He led the invocation and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice Chair Bispham provided information to members of the public wishing to address the Governing Board concerning any item listed on the agenda or any item that does not appear on the agenda. He stated that comments would be limited to three minutes per speaker, and, when appropriate, exceptions to the three-minute limit may be granted by the chair. Vice Chair Bispham also requested that several individuals wishing to speak on the same issue/topic designate a spokesperson.

Vice Chair Bispham introduced each member of the Governing Board and staff present at the dais (this served as roll call). A quorum was confirmed.

2. Opening Comments

Vice Chair Bispham stated the first Truth in Millage (TRIM) public hearing is for the purpose of adopting a tentative millage rate and budget for the Southwest Florida Water Management District, pursuant to Sections 373.536 and 200.065, Florida Statutes. He stated this hearing also provided an opportunity for the public to speak and ask questions prior to the Governing Board's adoption of a tentative millage rate and budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026.

Vice Chair Bispham stated this budget was developed under the guidelines established by the Executive Office of the Governor and Department of Environmental Protection, and in line with the Governor's priorities to restore springs, reduce pollution, and ensure there are adequate water supplies to meet growing demands. The District has accomplished this while achieving the Governing Board's fiscal goals with project expenditures at 61 percent of the total budget, salaries and benefits funded with ad valorem at 49 percent of ad valorem revenue, and operating expenditures, which includes salaries and benefits, at 76 percent of ad valorem.

Vice Chair Bispham stated the FY2026 tentative budget totals \$256.2 million compared to \$231.6 million for the adopted FY2025 budget; and continues a significant level of capital investment in our region to ensure the District's core mission is achieved. He stated these investments will continue to protect our water resources, stimulate the economy, and create jobs. Vice Chair Bispham stated the projects portion of the budget is \$155.1 million. He indicated that nearly \$103 million was for development of alternative water supplies for existing and future reasonable and beneficial uses, \$10 million of which is from state appropriations.

Vice Chair Bispham summarized components of the budget that included staffing and benefits, projects, and operational expenses. He stated this budget will also provide for improvement and management of critical flood control water and conservation structures, surface water restoration initiatives, water quality improvements, watershed management planning and implementation of projects to address potential and existing flooding issues.

Vice Chair Bispham stated the budget included \$133.3 million in ad valorem property tax revenue based on the proposed millage rate equal to the rolled-back rate of 0.1831 which is lower than FY2025 millage rate of 0.1909. The rolled-back rate is the rate that would give the District the same amount of revenue as the current year plus taxes on any new construction.

Vice Chair Bispham thanked Governor DeSantis, the Department of Environmental Protection, and the legislature for state appropriations approved during this year's legislative session. He stated the District has not received written comments from the chairs of legislative committees or subcommittees which were due by September 5.

3. Budget Overview

Mr. Brandon Baldwin, Business and IT Services Division Director, stated there were no changes to the FY2026 budget since it was approved at the July 22, 2025 Governing Board meeting.

4. Public Announcement of the Name of the Taxing Authority, Rolled-Back Rate, Percentage of Increase Over Rolled-Back Rate, and Millage Rate to be Levied for Fiscal Year 2026

Mr. Baldwin presented the required public announcement of the name of the taxing authority, the rolled-back rate, the percentage of increase over the rolled-back rate, and the millage rate to be levied for FY2026 and read into the record as required for the District. He stated, if adopted, this would be the fourteenth consecutive year the District has adopted a millage rate equal to or below the rolled-back rate for a cumulative reduction of 53 percent.

TAXING AUTHORITY	ROLLED-BACK RATE	PERCENTAGE OF INCREASE OVER ROLLED-BACK RATE	TENTATIVE MILLAGE RATE
Southwest Florida Water Management District	0.1831 mill	0.0%	0.1831 mill

5. Public Comments

a. Letters/Resolutions Received

Vice Chair Bispham noted that letters and resolutions received regarding the tentative millage rate and budget, if any, have been compiled into an Appendix "A" to Agenda Item 5a and are hereby incorporated, by reference, into the public record of this meeting.

b. Persons Wishing to Address the Board

No Request to Speak cards were presented.

6. Adopt Tentative Fiscal Year 2026 Millage Rate

**SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT RESOLUTION
NO. 25-09
ADOPTION OF TENTATIVE MILLAGE RATE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026**

This resolution is made a part of these minutes as if set forth in full, but for convenience, is filed in the permanent resolution files of the District.

A motion was made to adopt Resolution No. 25-09, Adoption of Tentative Millage Rate for Fiscal Year 2026, of 0.1831 mill, which was seconded. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:11:10)

7. Adopt Tentative Fiscal Year 2026 Budget

**SOUTHWEST FLORIDA WATER MANAGEMENT DISTRICT RESOLUTION
NO. 25-10
ADOPTION OF TENTATIVE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026**

This resolution is made a part of these minutes as if set forth in full but, for convenience, is filed in the permanent resolution files of the District.

A motion was made to adopt Resolution No. 25-10, Adoption of Tentative Budget for Fiscal Year 2026, in the amount of \$256,247,665, which was seconded. The motion carried unanimously. (Audio – 00:12:42)

8. Announcement of Second and Final Public Hearing

Vice Chair Bispham stated the second and final public hearing will be held at the Tampa Office on Tuesday, September 23, 2025, at 5:01 p.m. Final action on the FY2026 budget will be taken at that time.

9. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 5:14 p.m.