

**Hillsborough Soil and Water Conservation District
Meeting of the Board of Supervisors**

February 16, 2026

Location: HSWCD Office / 4503 Coronet Road, Plant City, FL 33566

Board Supervisors in attendance: Terri Parke (Seat 1); Betty Jo Tompkins (Seat 2); Gretchen Hoke (Seat 3); Casey Runkles (Seat 4)

Staff Support: Dr Joe Walsh (Executive Director); Dawn Chancey (Office Manager); Emily Bruce (Land Conservation Specialist, *virtually, via teams*); Special Counsel Tom Gonzalez (*virtually, via teams*).

Item 1-4 Call to Order / Pledge of Allegiance/ Introductions: Chair Parke called the meeting to order at 10:05 am; Led the Pledge of Allegiance; Vice Chair Hoke led the prayer; Chair Parke welcomed attendees and asked for introductions

Partner Agency and Vendor Representation in Attendance: *In person* - Simon Bolin, (Hillsborough County Agribusiness Development/AEDC); Margie Martin, Martin Communications (*virtually, via teams*);

Public in Attendance: Lisa Brown Fox, Favorite Farms, Inc; Matt Shivers, JM Farms.

Item 5 Public Comment: None at this meeting.

Item 6 Public Correspondence: Emails and Letters from Lisa Brown Fox; Matt Shivers both under consideration for appointment to Supervisor, Seat 5.

Item 7 Review and Approval of Agenda: Chair Parke opened discussion for review and approval of the agenda. Supervisor Hoke moved to accept the agenda, Supervisor Runkles seconded the motion; motion carried, 4-0.

Item 8 Minutes of December 15th, 2025 Regular Board: Dawn Chancey presented the draft minutes for the December 15th, 2025 Board meeting; Chair Hoke made a Motion to accept the meeting minutes; Supervisor Runkles seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

Item 9 Minutes of December 22nd, 2025 Special Board Meeting: Dawn Chancey presented the draft minutes for December 22nd, 2025, Special meeting of the Board. Supervisor Tompkins made the Motion to accept the meeting minutes; Supervisor Hoke seconded the motion; Motion carried 4-0.

Item 10. Minutes of January 12th, 2026 Regular Board Meeting: Dawn Chancey presented the draft minutes for the January 12, 2026, Regular Board meeting. Supervisor Tompkins requested one grammatical change to her Supervisor report. Chair Parke made the motion to accept the meeting minutes; Supervisor Tompkins seconded the motion. Motion carried 4-0.

Item 11. Financial Report for January, 2026: Dawn Chancey presented the January 2026 Financial report; Vice-Chair Hoke stated that she had reviewed the draft report with Dawn in advance of the meeting (*via MS Teams*), commenting that that she understood that Dawn was moving monies between different cost codes under the County-budget system.

- Dr. Walsh clarified that surpluses in the County component of the budget, resulting from closure of both the windows and public relations contracts, were available and being moved back to the miscellaneous category.
- He added that County Fleet had informed us that the F-150 truck [package] requested to support the staff realignment exceeds the original capital asset amount authorized by the County. In conversation with Management/Budget, he has confirmed that while we are capped at \$45,000 from the capital asset fund for the vehicle purchase itself, we are free to add whatever aftermarket equipment we can afford from our general operating budget. The surplus available conveniently covers the aftermarket additions identified for the truck, such as a winch and brush guard, and other equipment needed to ensure the truck is fully field-ready. Given that, we would like to transfer the surplus funds from the two under-budget items back into the miscellaneous account.

Supervisor Tompkins motioned to accept the January 2026 bank statements and reconciliation and the changes proposed within our cost codes for audit; Supervisor Runkles seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.

Item 12 Board Supervisor Seat 5 Candidacy: Lisa Brown Fox of Favorite Farms, Inc. and Matt Shivers of JM Farms have both submitted their letters of interest and Dr. Walsh has verified their qualifications to run for Seat 5 on the Board of Supervisors. Chair Parke requested that both Lisa Brown Fox and Matt Shivers be

nominated for Seat 5; Supervisor Runkles nominated both; Supervisor Parke seconded the motion.

Supervisor Tompkins requested that the Board be allowed to go into “executive session” with each nominee individually or alternatively that each nominee step out of the room in turn to allow for more private interviews. Special Council Gonzalez counseled against both suggestions on the grounds that the Board’s meeting is open to all of the public by law, and that no one can be excluded from hearing the interviews.

Supervisor Tompkins then requested that each candidate answer the following questions:

- What sparks your interest in serving on this board;
- What would you like to see accomplished as a member of the board; and
- What previous activities you have had in the conservation field prior to this period.

Lisa Brown Fox established her interest in serving on the board by the following: *My parents have been growing strawberries since 1977, which we continue to do now; I joined the family business in 1989, which has always worked with SWFWMD, and other state, local, and federal partners – always trying to look ahead and plan for the future. We lost my Father in 2019, and our mother has continued on, although she has stepped back recently so she can enjoy these years. As mom stepped back, I took on a more active role in the operations and my own son is now farming as well; he is growing blueberries in North Florida. Our family here grows strawberries, cantaloupes, and blueberries. With the rapid growth occurring in Hillsborough County and throughout the state of Florida, I believe it’s more important than ever that we work together to find a balance between development and the preservation of our soil and water – our most precious natural resources. Other than my family’s work with SWFWMD and the collaboration that is common among farmers in our area, I haven’t had prior experience serving on a board. However, I am committed to contributing, learning and helping ensure a sustainable future for both agriculture and our communities.* Lisa went on to say that she currently resides in Dover, Florida.

There were no follow-up questions from Board members for Ms. Brown Fox.

Matt Shivers stated that he is in his family's horse business, which his dad started in the mid-1970s. *Like a lot of people from that era, I just wanted to be a cowboy - I wanted to work with horses, train them, and build a life around them. The JM brand actually started out in the cattle business; we had hay fields, and he grew up working in them—he drove a tractor before he could walk. We bailed hay, worked cattle, and lived the typical agricultural life. From there, we moved into horse boarding. When Plant City experienced a boom in Polo clubs, the Walden Lake area had a polo field and needed additional space. That's how we transitioned into horse boarding—our pastures quickly shifted from hay fields to horse pastures, and we even had our own polo field for many years. When polo eventually moved on, that field became what is now a ballpark and a dog park, but we remained in the horse business.*

Over time, my dad became a well-known horse trainer in the community, and I followed in his footsteps—not anywhere near the trainer he is—but I took on more of the day-to-day operations as dad retired. Today our business is mainly horse boarding, along with some training. We still keep a small number of cattle. We also host events where people bring their horses to work cattle, learn new skills, or participate in clinics. I teach lessons as well.

I am very concerned about the rapid growth in the area. Change can be good, but it needs to be the right kind of change. I want to see the community maintain its rural heritage and the opportunities it provided for me growing up. I have a 13-year-old son and want him to have the same choices that I did—to go into the family business or explore something else.

I didn't start out in agriculture as an adult. After college I went into the restaurant business, thinking I wanted to be a chef. I quickly realized it wasn't like what you see on TV, so after about ten years I returned to running the horse business—and have been there ever since.

Water issues are one of my biggest concerns. That's actually how I met Dr. Walsh—after the hurricanes. Our farm on Knights-Griffin Road sits near areas that flooded badly. Many of our neighbors were hit hard. Thankfully, the

two houses on our farm—my dad’s house and my brother’s—didn’t flood. I wasn’t so fortunate at my own home in Walden Lake; my house had two and a half feet of water inside, and several neighbors had even more. That experience made water management and resilience issues very real to me.

I am also interested in youth education. Other counties have strong 4-H equine clubs and FFA involvement in horsemanship, and I would love to see more of that in our area. I want to help however I can. I have a close friend who works for SWFWMD, so I try to stay informed, even if I don’t always fully understand everything they do.

Overall, I am an open book and a sponge—I want to learn what the board does, understand how we can protect our resources, and be of service in any way possible.

There were no follow-up questions from Board members for Mr. Shivers.

Chair Parke called for a vote on Lisa Brown Fox for Seat 5; vote failed 3-1 (Runkles voting “aye”).

Chair Parke called for a vote on Matt Shivers; vote carried (Supervisors Parke, Tompkins and Hoke voting “aye”).

Dr. Walsh welcomed Matt Shivers to the board and advised that for the remainder of the agenda he can stay and participate and that Dawn Chancey has some paperwork for him to complete after the meeting.

Item 13. Legal Item: Retain services of Donna V. Smith PLLC to conduct an investigation of a confidential matter with a rate of \$275 per hour / capped at

\$4500: Special counsel Gonzales requested approval to procure services for a confidential investigation of a sensitive nature with a maximum cost of \$4500. The motion was made by Chair Parke; seconded by Supervisor Runkles. After discussion with Special Counsel the motion failed unanimously. The Board directed Special Counsel to take it back to County Attorney’s office for investigation.

Item 14. 2026 Budget Adjustments: Executive Director Walsh advised the Board that with the surpluses from two previous acquisitions (Strategic Plan with Martin

Communications and FY2025 Audit with Mauldin & Jenkins) moving back into miscellaneous category, the balance is now \$16,025.00.

- Dawn is continuing to work through procurement toward obtaining painting quotes for the office. Currently, we are unsure of the total cost of painting the entire building, but that his plan is to prioritize work quotes as follows – interior only; interior plus garage; interior, garage and exterior.
- Ford F150 Field truck: the capital assets budget is capped at \$45,000 for the truck for FY26. The proposed field package was quoted at \$49,814.30; so we have elected to purchase the truck without outfitting the truck for the field and will be responsible for purchasing the extra items from the operating budget.

Item 15 Partner Agencies:

- *Hillsborough County Agribusiness Development/AECD/ Cooperative Extension Service – Simon Bolin:*
 - The AECD subcommittee meeting with the Fire Marshall is scheduled for Thursday at the Florida Strawberry Growers Association Building at 1pm; this is a public meeting, so anyone is able to attend. The purpose of this meeting is to get clarification from the Fire Department on the fire code as it relates to farm worker housing.
 - Friday, March 27th is the next Blue Star Family event with Woodstar families at MacDill. They look to provide resources for 400 families of enlisted E-4 and below for Easter dinner. Simon contacts local farmers and agribusinesses to see if they are interested in providing any donations.

Item 16. Requesting authorization to establish new bank account(s) for equipment donations and transaction funds:

Dr. Walsh is requesting authority to create capital asset account(s) via transfer of money from the Board’s Gold Business account, with the intention of receiving donations and performing transactions related to farm equipment including a cattle chute, no-till drill, and/or ultrasonic flow meter. Board discussion of the matter went as follows:

Each of these assets carries a substantial cost – typically between \$15,000 and \$20,000 each. The Board recognized that it might not secure enough donations to fully fund all three pieces of equipment simultaneously. The Board recommended

that Dr. Walsh begin with one capital asset fund, allowing it to start receiving donations and processing ACH transactions. At such time that the fund is large enough to split funds off for a second and third purchase, he can come back to the Board to authorize opening additional accounts.

Chair Parke made the motion to create one account named “HSWCD Capital Asset Fund” using \$1000 from the Board’s SouthState-Gold Account. Supervisor Hoke seconded the motion; motion carried 4-0.

Item 17. Requesting approval to charge and incur transactional and maintenance fees for ACH Features – item presented by Dr. Walsh for discussion and direction only, pursuant to item 16.

Item 18. Requesting authorization to pursue insurance policies at such time that capital assets are funded from SouthState Business Gold Account, and contingent on acquisition of farm equipment: item presented by Dr. Walsh for discussion and direction only, pursuant to item 16.

Item 19. Approval of FY2027 HCBOCC Budget: Dr. Walsh requested carry over the original budget request for FY2027, as approved by HCBOCC in September of 2025. Dr. Walsh advised he feels we did a good job in making our estimates for the budget and at this time we are not asking for any additional monies or changes for FY2027. Vice Chair Hoke made the motion to request continuance of our original FY2027 HCBOCC Budget amendment; Supervisor Runkles seconded the motion; motion carried, 4-0.

Item 20. Supervisor Announcements:

Chair Parke:

- Participated in Florida Strawberry Growers Tailgate with all of the members of the Board and office staff.
- Participated in Boots on the Hill lobbying trip to Tallahassee Legislature with Supervisor Hoke and Executive Director Joe Walsh. They were able to speak with Representative Danny Alvarez, Senator Truenow and the aides for Senator Burgess and Representative McClure.
- Attended the ACRE workshop put on by Homegrown Hillsborough.
- Attended the VENCE Virtual Fence demonstration at Blackbeard Ranch in Myakka.

- Participated in the Fresh from Florida Breakfast, the Governor’s Luncheon and Ag Hall of Fame Dinner at the Florida State Fair.
- Participated via Teams with Dr. Walsh in discussion with Kitty Williams of the Coalition of Community Gardens, RE opportunities for the District to collaborate with her entity (RE LemonGraft platform).

Supervisor Hoke:

- Attended Boots on the Hill in Tallahassee with Supervisor Parke and Executive Director Joe Walsh where we met with legislators and strengthened relationships with the Florida Cattlemen’s Association.
- Participated in the Fresh from Florida Breakfast, the Governor’s Luncheon and Ag Hall of Fame Dinner at the Florida State Fair.
- Additionally, she joined fellow board members for a virtual fencing demonstration at Blackbeard’s Ranch, highlighting innovative tools that support cattle operations while advancing conservation of working lands.
- Participated Florida Strawberry Growers Tailgate with all of the members of the Board and Office Staff.
- Throughout the month, she continued advocating for rural and working lands in Hillsborough County through storytelling at community events and on social media. She’s working in a storytelling capacity that helps translate agriculture, land stewardship, and conservation policy into narratives that connect people to the importance of protecting working lands in Florida (*see last bullet for more*).
- Also actively advocating for inclusion of a multi-species wildlife crossing as part of the FDOT’s planned Highway 60/Turkey Creek Road widening and infrastructure upgrades. This area is a documented panther travel corridor, with Turkey Creek serving as a watershed that flows into the Alafia River and into Tampa Bay, and its currently under BMAP designation. With approximately 3,000 acres in the EIP proposed for development. This presents an opportunity to proactively incorporate greenway connectivity into infrastructure. She has been coordinating with FDOT, developers, and Hillsborough County to explore cost estimates and potential creative funding options for a multi-species crossing that would also allow equestrian use and help reconnect Edward Medard Park with Sydney Dover Trails.
- In addition, she engaged in advocacy regarding Two Rivers Ranch, a working cattle property under rezoning consideration. The property contains a mosaic of habitats and spans both Hillsborough River and Blackwater Creek watersheds. While it falls outside the Florida Wildlife Corridor boundary, it

is identified within the Florida Ecological Greenways Network as a regional connectivity gap between Hillsborough River State Park and the Green Swamp corridor. She shared the mapping analysis with the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation conservation team, who then connected with Ross Dickerson with Hillsborough County to explore potential corridor protection strategies.

- From March through May, she will be serving in a contractual role with the Florida Wildlife Corridor Foundation in a convening and storytelling capacity. During that time, her availability might be limited but she will continue advocating for agriculture, rural communities and working lands across the State of Florida.

Supervisor Tompkins:

- Actively engaged in Hillsborough County Fair Board's plans for 2026 Fair and conservation exhibits.
- Participated in the Florida Strawberry Growers Tailgate with the rest of the Board members.
- Attended the NACO Conservation coffee meeting
- Attended the Timberly Trust/Mosely Homestead Board meeting
- Attended the Preserving Brandon Board meeting
- Attended Operation Pollination meeting
- Attended the Florida 4-H Foundation meeting and related Strawberry U-Pick event (*proceeds go to the 4H Foundation*).
- Participated in the Fresh from Florida Breakfast; the Governor's Luncheon; Ag Hall of Fame Dinner Woman of the Year Luncheon; ran the Conservation Coalition exhibit; and attended the Champion of Champions luncheon at the Florida State Fair.
- Attended the most recent Tampa Bay Beekeepers meeting
- She awarded two conservation mini-grants through Florida Conservation Coalition – one to Strawberry Crest FFA and another to Mintz Elementary school.

Supervisor Runkles:

- Attended the Florida Strawberry Growers Tailgate
- Participated in the Fresh from Florida Breakfast, the Governor's Luncheon; Ag Hall of Fame Dinner Woman of the Year Luncheon at the Florida State Fair.

- Florida Vegetable Ag Policy Government meeting

Item 21: Executive Directors Report:

- a) Audit/AFR Filings: we finalized our 2025 audit and annual financial reports and those have officially been filed with both the Auditor General and the State Dept of Commerce.
- b) JLAC Letter: We received another letter from JLAC asking to identify what measures we have taken and what progress we have made to clean up our audits, this time for the FY2024 audit. Dr. Walsh is in the process of drafting the response to this letter and will include copies of the last three years of audits showing that we have addressed all items outstanding.
- c) Land Conservation Specialist Performance Expectations: Dr. Walsh advised the Board that he has created, reviewed and executed the performance expectations with Emily so she has her job description and she has acknowledged her performance expectations tied to the job. Her performance expectations are available should any Supervisor wish to review. Dr. Walsh reminded the Board that he did the same thing with Dawn when she started in August. Supervisor Tompkins requested that all of the Supervisors receive a copy of the job descriptions and performance matrices for both Dawn Chancey and Emily Bruce; Dr. Walsh acknowledged he would do so.
- d) MOSAIC Grant Application: we have already touched on the grant application that Dr. Walsh and Emily submitted requesting \$20,000.00. He is hopeful that we will be awarded this grant for some seed money to purchase the farm equipment.
- e) Fresh from Florida Breakfast at the Florida State Fair: Sponsor Stephen Gran reported attendance of 423 people at the Breakfast. We had the chance to speak with a lot of different people during this event and Dr. Walsh felt it was a successful event.
- f) Planning for 2026 Local Working Group: He is now starting to focus on getting this set up and will have more information coming soon. Board members suggested planning the meeting for March/April timeframe, so we are after Strawberry season but before Spring crops; more specific recommendation being mid-late April.
- g) FSGA AgriTech Tradeshow: May 4th and 5th: we have registered for a table and purchased two additional gate passes.

Next Board Meeting and upcoming events:

- March 2nd, 2026: Florida Strawberry Festival Parade Day Luncheon
- March 9th, 2026: Next Regular Board Meeting
- April 20th, 2026: Next Regular Board Meeting

Meeting Adjourned at 12:10 pm

DRAFT