



**COLUMBIA COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
AGENDA ITEM REQUEST FORM**

The Board of County Commissioners meets the 1st and 3rd Thursday of each month in the Columbia County School Board Administrative Complex Auditorium, 372 West Duval Street, Lake City, Florida 32055. The first meeting of every month is at 9:30AM while the second meeting of every month takes place at 5:30PM. All agenda items are due in the Board's office one week prior to the meeting date.

Today's Date: 3/6/2026 Meeting Date: 3/19/2026

Department: BCC Administration

1. Nature and purpose of agenda item:

Minutes - Emergency Meeting - 02/24/2026

2. Recommended Motion/Action:

Approve

3. Fiscal impact on current budget.

This item has no effect on the current budget.

**THIS ITEM WAS APPROVED WITHOUT EXCEPTION BY THE BOARD OF
COUNTY COMMISSIONERS ON
3/19/2026**

**Columbia County
Board of County Commissioners**

Emergency Meeting

Minutes of
February 24, 2026
06:00 P.M.

The Columbia County Board of County Commissioners met in an emergency meeting at 971 West Duval Street, Suite 145 Lake City, Florida 32055. The meeting opened with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America followed.

Commissioners in Attendance: Chairman, Timothy Murphy
Commissioner, Rocky Ford
Commissioner, Kevin Parnell
Commissioner, Everett Phillips
Commissioner, Robby Hollingsworth

Others in Attendance: County Manager, David Kraus (“CM”)
Assistant County Manager Kevin Kirby (ACM”)
County, Attorney, Joel Foreman
County Fire Chief, Jeff Crawford
Assistant Fire Chief, Lance Hill
Deputy Clerk, Melissa Williams
City of Lake City Fire Chief, Josh Wehinger
Public Information Officer, Dennis Rivera
Landscape & Parks Director, Clint Pittman

Agenda:

1) Determination that Emergency Exists and Items on Agenda Pertain to Emergency per Rule 4.105

County Attorney, Joel Foreman authorized per Rule 4.105, this meeting is only the agenda item.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy approved the emergency meeting SECOND by Commissioner Ford. The motion carried unanimously.

2) Reinstate backup agreement for ambulance services between Columbia County, Florida and AmeriPro EMS of Florida LLC

County Attorney, Joel Foreman spoke about the backup contract with AmeriPro that was terminate back in October of 2025. AmeriPro is being reinstated, and the backup agreement is attached. In the back-up agreement, AmeriPro will always have five-24-hour ALS level ambulances.

Commissioner, Robby Hollingsworth made a motion to approve the reinstated and amended backup agreement with Ameripro EMS of Florida. SECOND by Commissioner Ford. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner, Rocky Ford made an amended comment about passing a certain point of South of the county where they can go to Gainesville.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman discussed this cannot be a patient request.

County Commissioner, Kevin Parnell asked how many ambulances will be on duty at one time. County Attorney answered five minimum ALS per 24 hrs. Commissioner Kevin Parnell stated do what is needed for the county

County Attorney, Joel Foreman stated that if Ameripro is not meeting the time requirement, then they will have to come back to the Board.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy asked a question about the bare minimum. County Attorney, Joel Foreman answered the question.

Commissioner, Everett Phillips asked the question who makes the decision whether to go to Lake City or Gainesville? County Attorney, Joel Foreman answered that the paramedic will make the decision and not the patient.

Commissioner, Rocky Ford spoke about getting a call today from a lady about her husband not being sent to Gainesville and died in Lake City.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy spoke about the medical director and the paramedic. County Attorney, Joel Foreman answered put the medical decision on the paramedic.

Commissioner, Rocky Ford asked about the 60 days. County Attorney, Joel Foreman answered after 60 days the contract will hold Ameripro accountable. Commissioners, when you receive complaints, please relay them.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy spoke about this not being Assistant Fire Chief, Lance Hill's fault. It was in the contract. County Manager, David Kraus and Staff were not doing a good job.

Open Public Comments to the Board:

Chris Miller made a comment.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman answered the comment that this is an agreement to reinstate the backup contactor AmeriPro as of right now.

Greg Thacker made a comment.

Ben Lofstrom made a comment.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy made a comment that Ameripro has never been the 911 back up.

Ricky Jernigan made a comment.

Bobby Garbett made a comment.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy offered a comment.

County, Joel Foreman spoke about it being a medical based decision.

Commissioner, Everett Phillips asked a question about our EMS having assistance? Is Ameripro coming on now?

3) Discussion and Possible Action concerning status of Agreement for Ambulance Services between Columbia County, Florida and Columbia Emergency Services, Inc., D/B/A Columbia EMS

Chairman, Timothy Murphy spoke about the complaint.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman spoke about the time you called for this Emergency Meeting yesterday. I have been actively investigating and negotiating with CMS Counsel. The contractor has agreed to separation from the County. The terms of the service agreement will end in 90 days with May 25, 2026, being the last day. For clarity, the County shall make 3 additional payments of \$35,227.27 for the months of March, April and May 2026. No additional funds will be paid to CMS. There is a duty to cooperate with the backup contractor and CMS.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman stated he did receive a covenant not to sue. Please see the attached copy of the agreement.

Commissioner, Hollingsworth approved immediately adopting the modification for ambulance services agreement. SECOND by Commissioner Phillips. The motion carried unanimously.

Commissioner, Kevin Parnell stated that after 90 days transition he feels like we need more ambulances.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman stated that Ameripro guaranteed that they will bring a minimal of five ALS ambulance online. They will also have time requirements that they will have to meet. Assistance Fire Chief, Lance Hill will tell them if they are not doing their job. They will have to meet the time requirement and ensure they meet the minimum number of ambulances. They will also need to make sure the North and south is covered.

Commissioner, Rocky Ford spoke about this contract being for 3 ½ years. We have 3 years to come up with a better plan. The County is growing every year, and we need to do some research to have a better plan for EMS.

Commissioner, Kevin Parnell agreed with Commissioner, Rocky Ford about making a better plan for areas like Deep Creek and Fort White and revisiting the whole County

County Attorney, Joel Foreman agreed with Commissioner, Rocky Ford.

Commissioner, Everett Phillips also agreed to make a better plan and maybe raise taxes to do better.

Commissioner, Robby Hollingsworth stated he is not for raising taxes but looking to cut something out. EMS is at the top of the list.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman when it comes to budget time remember this conversation. Staff are already researching and looking at our sister Counties and what they are doing. EMS is at the top of the list.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy discussed that this is a 1.5 million dollar matter with Ameripro, and that quality healthcare comes with a cost.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman spoke about the struggles with the animal control, and we took that in house. We are trying to improve things as much as we can. It will not be perfect, but we will move forward. I recommend that we move forward with this settlement agreement.

- a) Chairman, Timothy Murphy reading that this is a review of report of investigation of February 8, 2026, complaint against Columbia EMS.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman spoke about each Commissioner and himself received an email about the incident on the weekend of February 8, 2026 at the Columbia County Fairgrounds Rodeo Arena. A 15-year-old girl that got rolled

over by her horse and was laying in the center of the arena. There was a delayed response from CMS and they sent a BLS unit and not an ALS. There was a mechanic that was not authorized to be on the unit. They could not render appropriate aid. The people there were very vocal and upset about what happened. When the ALS unit did arrive, most of the ALS care was done by the firefighters and the Sherriff's department, and she was placed on the helicopter. During my report I did identify there were three incidents of major non-compliance and after the four incidents of major non-compliance there is a mandatory termination.

b) Review of On-Time performance of Columbia EMS – Assistant Fire Chief, Lance Hill

County Attorney, Joel Foreman discussed that about CMS never got to the 90% compliance and they were a problem with the contract. Assistant Fire Chief, Lance Hill and other staff worked with the Contractor, and they regressed in numbers. Chairman, Timothy Murphy constituted this an Emergency Meeting. If they are not meeting their numbers, then they need to go.

Commissioner, Kevin Parnell spoke about Ameripro doing what they stated about always having five-ALS units.

Commissioner, Robby Hollingsworth stated that if they do not meet the numbers then Ameripro will have to go.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman stated they told Ameripro they must meet the standard, and Assistant Fire Chief, Lance Hill will hold them to their contract. After three strikes you can terminate the contract and four strikes the Board can terminate. He further discussed the deductions, and if they do not meet the standards. It is a tight contract.

Commissioner, Rocky Ford spoke about holding them responsible.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy spoke about holding everyone responsible in the room. He agreed with Commissioner, Rocky Ford, and spoke about not holding Assistant Fire Chief, Lance Hill responsible for anything. Mismanagement is why we are here today. It will not happen again.

Public Comments:

Bobby Garbett made a comment.

Dr. Kirk Smith made a comment.

Steven Bailey made a comment.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy spoke the complaint he was the one that took that complaint and he personally forwarded to County Manager, David Kraus, Assistant Kevin Kirby and County Attorney, Joel Foreman on that Saturday afternoon. He spoke about what he had said about sending me complaints and he would take care of it. This was the first complaint that he had received, and it was taken care of in minutes. The families in Columbia County are very important to me, this was a very serious situation.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman suggested if we vote tonight, Ameripro will be activated tonight February 24,2026. There is a 30-day transition for CMS.

c) Board Action

Commissioner, Hollingsworth made the motion to adopt the Modification to Agreement for Ambulance Services Providing Early Termination and Settlement. SECOND by Commissioner Phillips. The motion carried with a three to two vote.

The two votes that were in opposition were:

- 1) Chairman, Timothy Murphy
- 2) Commissioner, Everett Phillips

Clerk confirmed the vote with Chairman, Timothy Murphy.

Commissioner, Everett Phillips opposed the money that is going to be paid to CMS for 90 days. He asked, "are we paying both?"

County Attorney, Joel Foreman stated this will allow CMS to transition. That is the proposal. We are settling any further ligation and allows the local people to work with CMS time.

Chairman, Timothy Murphy was opposed.

County Attorney, Joel Foreman stated due to a limit agenda this meeting needs to be adjourned.

Adjournment: There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:08 P.M.

ATTEST:

Timothy Murphy, Chairman
Board of County Commissioners

James M. Swisher, Jr.
Clerk of Circuit Court & County Comptroller