

MEMORANDUM

To: Board Agenda, August 6, 2026

From: Joel F. Foreman

Re: Columbia County Utility Rate Setting

Date: August 4, 2026

On the Board's August 6, 2026 agenda under Item No. 10 the North Florida Water Utilities Authority makes the following request:

The NFWUA requests continued funding at current level of \$520,684. This budget is based upon a consolidated utility rate that would require County to increase the current rates charged. The Commission would provide direction for funding to be included in the FY 2026-27 Budget which will be adopted in September

The request is based on the County adjusting its utility rates according to the authority's study and recommendations.

Utility rates are governed by the County's Code of Ordinances at section 118-552(b). That section provides in relevant part:

Sec. 118-552. - Charges for service.

(b) Initiation of monthly service and other miscellaneous charges. Potable water and sewer base facility charges and volumetric charges and the miscellaneous service charges are set forth in section 118-554. **These charges may be amended by the board of county commissioners by resolution at a properly advertised public hearing.**

"Advertise" for purposes of noticing a public hearing means running a notice in a newspaper of general circulation. The current agenda does not include a public hearing for rate setting or a draft resolution for adoption. Without an advertised notice or accompanying agenda, no public hearing can be held on August 6. As such, the Board will not be in position to adjust its utility rates on that date.

This does not preclude the Board from honoring the request to include funding for the 2026-27 fiscal year in the upcoming budget, but the Board should be mindful that the ask is predicated on a rate adjustment that has not been subjected to hearing or a resolution providing for the same.

If the Board approves the request, it should also direct staff to prepare an appropriate resolution and advertise and notice a public hearing for the consideration of the requested adjustments.