Master Facility Plan Implementation

Tracking the impact of the voter approved half-penny sales-surtax

February 18,2026, Sales-Surtax Oversight Committee Meeting

Committee Members Present
Cynthia Brown, David Kilcrease, Trey Perry, Connor Oswald, Wanda Ford, Hunter Sleiman, Amy Henderson, Mike Hightower, Tim Horvath, Darryl Edwards II, Ryan Murphy, Robert Stafford, Stephanie Schaap, Ramon Day, Marion Tischler, Anita Vining

Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Members Present
Dr. Christopher Bernier

Call Meeting to Order
Chairman, Mike Hightower, called the meeting to order at 10:00a.m.

He announced there is a Quorum and that the committee could move forward with voting and conducting the committee business on the agenda. He also welcomed new committee members: Mr. Connor Oswald representing Jacksonville Civic Council, and Mr. Tim Horvath representing the City of Neptune Beach. Mr. Hightower asked the committee to give a brief introduction to the new members.

Approval of Agenda

Chair Hightower welcomed the committee and made a motion to approve the meeting agenda.
Motion:

Chair Hightower made a motion to approve the February 18, 2026, agenda.

Motion:
That the Oversight Committee approve the February 18, 2026, Agenda as submitted to the committee.

Vote Results: 16-0

Motion: Raymon Day

Second: Trey Perry

Vote Results: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Approval of Minutes

Chair Hightower opened the floor for discussions regarding the minutes from September 17, 2025, and made a motion to the committee to approve the minutes from September 17, 2025, and November 19, 2025.

Motion:
That the Oversight Committee votes to approve the September 17, 2025, Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes.

Vote Results: 16-0

Motion: Trey Perry

Second: Anita Vining

Vote Results: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Motion:
That the Oversight Committee votes to approve the November 19, 2025, Oversight Committee Meeting Minutes.

Vote Results: 16-0

Motion: David Kilcrease

Second: Amy Henderson

Vote Results: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Public Comment
Susan Aertker provided a handout to the Committee and gave public comments regarding charter schools, charter school reporting, the referendum, and Florida Statutes.

Items to be Discussed

Chairman Feedback

Chair Hightower gave a review to the committee of the meeting he had on December 16, 2025, with Dr. Bernier and Chief Ramirez regarding the concerns of the committee that have been expressed. He announced that future meetings will be held at sites where work of the projects mentioned will take place.

The chairman reiterated his question that he wants the committee to consider and explained that he wants feedback from each member and the top 5-6 items captured and place those items on the agenda. He addressed the Superintendent's comment of a need versus a want and the committee's time at these two-hour meetings to ensure the topics discussed are beneficial to the group and the role of the committee.

Dr. Bernier addressed Oversight committee and gave reflections on his time with the committee over the last 18 months. He reiterated that he wants this committee to understand the inner workings of the construction planning and implementations because every dollar saved on construction goes back into the budget for something else on the project list. Without being cost-effective with project plans, the schools that are older will continue to age and we will need to have funding to address them at some point. He referenced not changing the classroom and learning space footprint but adjusting hallway sizes from 10 ft. to 7 ft. in elementary schools to add more space in classrooms.

The committee held discussions and asked the following questions:

- Is there an approach the district uses to balance beautification and economic viability? Dr. Bernier stated his goal is to build an institutional building that students and families can look at and be proud they go to school there.
- Do we receive guidance from the state? Dr. Bernier said there are no specific guidelines, but they set rules and expectations that the district must meet.
- How will enrollment tracking issues and future reporting be counted and reimbursed by the state in the previous year and in the future? How is enrollment captured in charter schools and vouchers? Dr. Bernier stated this is based on the impacts from competition for enrollment, funding being collected, and stated he would talk to the members one-on-one.
- Are there other counties you felt the district should take notes from to mirror square footage? Dr. Bernier mentioned Lee County and Lake City, a private and public partnership. There are a lot of ways to build but when costs get to $900+ per square foot, that to him is not a good use of taxpayers' dollars. He discussed the methods the district has implemented to remain competitive and drive down costs per square foot.
- When is the next valued engineering meeting? Jim said this would be a bring back for the next meeting. Typically, the post-construction of a building is when this meeting will take place.
- Can you provide the committee with any sample photos or criteria of sample architectural structures that you would like the district to pursue? Dr. Bernier would like this to be brought back for the next meeting.
- What is the target dollar amount per square footage? Dr. Bernier said every site is different and they will visit each site to identify the need.
- When will there be a scheduled walk-through of a site? Operations and the Chairman can work to identify dates and bring back to the committee once this meeting is identified.
- How many projects are being done on existing sites versus the need for a new site? There will be areas of town that are dependent on the situation. Areas with

growth will need a new site for a new building, and others may be relocated so a new building can be completed on-site.

- How has the district budgeted for rising material costs? Dr. Bernier stated that when a budget is set – that is the budgeted amount. It is different when negotiating with a contractor and that process has been changed internally through the Guaranteed Maximum Price. When the district negotiates the Guaranteed Maximum Price, a contractor cannot go higher than agreed upon amount.
- Is medical and culinary equipment included in the budget or does it come from another fund? If there is a CTE Program connected to that site, the equipment, and necessities to build it will be factored into the project plan and budget.

Dr. Bernier stated without narrative from the source of these meetings people will fill the gap and miss the priority information and goals of the sales-surtax dollars.

Chair Hightower introduced Chief of Staff, Michael Ramirez, to address the committee on how we collect this information and drive the conversations and actions going forward with future agenda items. Topics discussed: Committee Feedback Survey, Sunshine Law, IT Support, Staff Support.

If something new goes into the committee portal via SharePoint, is there a notification? The district will work with IT to establish a notification norm when new materials are added to the portal.

2025 Annual Report Review & Recommendations

Chair Hightower opened discussions to the committee regarding the Draft 2025 Annual Report. Items discussed included:

- Employee input on new builds.
- Getting the public to better understand Sales-Surtax and breaking information down more effectively for the community.
- Student data involving student achievement in the new buildings.
- The committee pointed out a few typos and the details that need to be corrected grammatically and held additional discussions between members and the Superintendent.
- The confusion the community has around sales-surtax funding and projects.
- The public see where there were mistakes in past projects and the improvements in the current and future projects.
- A summary sheet in the annual report versus the long-scripted items.
- The ability to showcase the sales-surtax is not just about money but the outcomes for student achievement.

The Superintendent complimented his staff and the work of the School Board members leadership and advocating for the work that’s been done and the work put into the improvements of the things that went wrong in prior projects and corrected in the new projects that are in progress.

The Chairman has asked the committee to review the draft report and provide feedback within 1-week. Chair Hightower made the following motion:

That committee takes 1 week and provides recommendations through the portal to the district to add to the report. A point of order was called by the liaison, Megan Mihalik, to outline the motion more specifically.

Chair Hightower made an amended motion and called for a vote.

Motion:
That the Oversight Committee votes to postpone approval of the draft 2025 Annual Report, the committee provides additional recommendations within 1-week to the district through the portal and presents the updated draft at the May 20th Regular Meeting for finalization and approval.

Vote Results: None

Motion: Tim Horvath

Second: None

Vote Results: NOT PASSED

Vice-Chair, Darryl Edward II, provided clarification and members held additional discussions regarding an interim meeting and the vote that is currently on the floor.

There was a substitute motion made by Marion Tischler:
Motion:
That the oversight committee approves an interim meeting in April to discuss the Annual Report, Legislative topics, charter schools, and other topics.

Vote Results: 1-15

Motion: Marion Tischler

Second: NONE

Vote Results: NOT PASSED

The committee revisited the amended motion by Chair Hightower for voting:

Motion:
That the oversight committee postpones approving the draft report so that the recommendations can be added to the draft report, that the Committee has 1 week to consider the draft report, and at the May 20th Regular Meeting to finalize the 2025 Annual Report.

Vote Results: 16-0

Motion: Tim Horvath

Second: Ramon Day

Vote Results: PASSED

Operations Update
Chair Hightower welcomed and introduced Chief Operating Officer, Jim Culbert, who gave a PowerPoint Presentation: Sales Surtax Oversight Committee Briefing. Topics included: Agenda, Current Landscape, Cost Stewardship, Design Efficiency, PromptPay+, and Alternative Procurement Strategies.

Key points that Mr. Culbert wanted to emphasize:

- The work and effort put into staff input and walking the spaces with former and current principals.
- The Union being a part of the walkthroughs and the community input taken into consideration.
- Maintaining cost effectiveness for all future projects, focusing on design efficiency, and not overspending on the buildings.
- The primary responsibilities that have been restructured in-house.
- Considering teacher input in classroom size design.

Questions included:

- Have you evaluated the cost of demolishing a building before putting it on the market?
  Jim said yes, that is considered first when determining if the property is valued more with or without the building.

- Is the deferred maintenance and in-house maintenance the same?
  Mr. Culbert answered this new team is called Major maintenance and they monitor deferred maintenance that comes out of the MFP Project and they also monitor project being funded out of Capital Funds.

Mr. Hightower made a motion to the committee to extend the meeting by 15 minutes.

Motion:
That the oversight committee approve extending the meeting by 15 minutes.

Vote Results: 16-0

Motion: Ramon Day

Second: Darryl Edwards II

Vote Results: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

Finance Update

Chair Hightower welcomed and introduced Chief Financial Officer, Ron Fagan, who gave a PowerPoint presentation: Sales Surtax Oversight Committee – Financial Services and Charter Schools.
Topics Included: Sales-Surtax as of December 2025 – Collections as of October 2025, Sales-Surtax Funding Overview School Year 2025/2026, 3rd Quarter 2025 – Review Observations, and Sales Surtax Revenue & Expenditures as of December 31, 2025.

Key points that Mr. Fagan wanted to emphasize:

- 4 Charter Schools were not eligible in Quarter 3 to receive capital outlay funds.
- The ending fund balance has increased from the prior year to this year, and Chair Hightower emphasized this ending balance is a direct result of the changes implemented by Mr. Culbert and his team.

The committee held discussions about the Quarterly Progress Reports published by the Operations team. Mr. Culbert explained this report will no longer be published because the District Dashboard – Duval Reimagine is being updated in real time.

Governance
Chair Hightower went around to each member to ask if they had any other new business that could be brought back to the next meeting.

Items included:

- When will the next valued engineering meeting be held?
- Breakdown of expenditures through a CSI division report – can this be provided to the committee?
- Can enrollment numbers for charter schools be provided at the next meeting?

Next Meeting Date:

Chair Hightower advised the next meeting date for the Sales Surtax Oversight Committee will be on Wednesday, May 20, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. There will be an update provided that the location of this meeting be at one of the new schools.

Adjournment

Chair Hightower announced the adjournment of the meeting and made a motion.

Motion:

Chair Hightower made a motion to adjourn the meeting:

Motion:
That the Oversight Committee vote to adjourn the February 18, 2025, Oversight Committee Meeting.

Vote Results: 16-0

Motion: Darryl Edwards II

Second: Ryan Murphy

Vote Results: PASSED UNANIMOUSLY

The meeting was adjourned at 12:09 p.m.

Minutes were taken by Megan Mihalik, Coordinator to the Chief of Staff.

These minutes were approved at the May 20, 2026, Sales-Surtax Oversight Committee Regular Meeting.

***** To comply with the Americans with Disability Act, some attachments are not viewable here. To receive any attachments or presentations, please email Megan Mihalik, Coordinator to the Chief of Staff, at mihalikm@duvalschools.org*****