

# OCOEE UTILITY DISTRICT

## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS MEETING

April 27, 2026

OCOEE UTILITY DISTRICT OFFICE 1:00pm

**Date:** Monday, April 27, 2026 · **Called to order:** 1:00 p.m. · **Location:** Ocoee Utility District Board Room.

### Members & Others Present

**Board of Commissioners — per roll call, all present (quorum established):**

- **Shawn Willis** — President (*presiding*)
- **Hank Wilson** — Vice President
- **Ryan Ulrich** — Secretary

**Staff / others present:**

- **Ben Witt** — General Manager
- **Nikki McDaniel** — Office Manager
- **Jason English** — District Engineer, IDG
- **Daniel Peterson** — CPA
- **Member of the public:** Michael Stenger (229 Eastview Cove Drive SE, Cleveland, TN 37323), plus one additional, unscheduled commenter Melanie Lawson

### A. Call to Order

Meeting called to order at 1:00 p.m. by President Shawn Willis.

### B. Pledge of Allegiance

Pledge of Allegiance recited (led by President Willis).

### C. Roll Call

President Willis, Vice President Wilson, and Secretary Ulrich present. Quorum established.

### D. Approval of Minutes — March 23, 2026

Motion made and seconded to approve the March 23, 2026 Board Meeting minutes. Roll-call vote: **all in favor (unanimous). Minutes adopted.**

## E. Public Comment Section

1. **Michael Stenger**, 229 Eastview Cove Drive SE, Cleveland, addressed the Board requesting an explanation of the increase to his sewer bill ( $\approx 64\%$  on his bill; a  $\approx 150\%$  sewer rate increase). A veteran on a fixed income, he questioned the fairness, the billing methodology (a minimum monthly charge **plus** a usage charge, with sewer billed on metered water consumption), and the District's regulatory oversight.

Management explained the sewer rate increase was **required by the Tennessee Comptroller's office / Tennessee Board of Utility Regulation ("TBOUR")** to end sewer service being subsidized by water-only customers; the minimum 150% adjustment was implemented rather than the 200% initially indicated. Options discussed included an irrigation meter (to avoid sewer charges on outdoor use); management offered to provide the regulator's contact information and the rate-study documentation.

2. **Second (unscheduled) commenter** (Melanie Lawson) asked who sets the District's rates. Management explained an independent qualified firm performs the rate study (the **Peterson** rate study) and the District adopts those recommendations as required by the TBOUR / Comptroller.

## F. Financials

1. **March 2026 Financial Report (including Standard Adjustments)**. Motion made and seconded to approve. Discussion noted the decrease in days-cash-on-hand, attributed to bond/interest payments and to funding a segregated bond-payment account (in place since November); cash position is growing  $\approx 8.5$ – $9$  days per month toward a one-year-reserve target ( $\approx 180$ -day operating minimum). Roll-call vote: **all in favor (unanimous)**. **Financials approved**.

2. **Bank Reconciliation Report**. Provided to the Secretary for review and approval.

## G. Old Business

1. **Bond Counsel Invoice**. Invoice from bond counsel **Patrick L. Alexander, Bradley Arant Boult Cummings LLP** (Nashville) under review with District attorney **Benjamin (Ben) Gastel** (counsel letter dated April 17, 2026). Management is preparing a counter, seeking further verification of the invoice, and consulting the Comptroller / TBOUR on how to proceed.
2. **Leak adjustment request — Mr. & Mrs. Wolfe**. The Board previously determined it could not grant an adjustment. A letter was sent so the customer can begin payments before falling behind; the Chair's outreach received no response.
3. **Meeting reminder**. Next regular Board meeting: **Tuesday, May 26, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.** (rescheduled off Memorial Day).
4. **Other**. No additional old business recorded.

## H. New Business

1. **Meadowcrest Subdivision — water service application**. Development at **3784 Benton Pike** (near Flagstone / the golf course); **447 single-family homes**; domestic demand **111,750 gpd**;

developer to provide its own decentralized (drip-field) wastewater system and is applying for **water service**. Applicant: **Barry Payne Development** (application signed by Jeff Carnes, Ooltewah, TN). A line betterment (4-inch to 8-inch upgrade) is required and will be paid by the developer; off-site design by IDG (Jason English) with costs passed through to the developer. Motion to accept the application for service. Roll-call vote: **all in favor (unanimous). Adopted.**

**2. Impact Fund — 2026 Cycle 1 Committee recommendations.** Administered via the **Community Foundation of the Ocoee Region** (OUD Impact Fund, acct. 61988). Of 11 applications, 3 were ineligible (outside the district — two from Prospect Elementary School, one Boys & Girls Club). The Committee recommended funding the remaining 8 within the **\$25,000 per-cycle budget** (7 fully, 1 partially):

- Charleston Elementary — *Observation/Sensory Garden* (partial)
- Polk County HS "**Wildcat**" **Gridiron Club**
- West Polk Public Library — *Summer Reading Program 2026* (partial)
- Oak Grove Elementary — *Designing My Future with STEM*
- Junior Achievement of the Ocoee Region — *JA YES! program*
- American Veterans Post 911 (Polk Co.) — *flag replacement / financial-literacy program*
- Lake Forest Middle School — *Hands-On Activities for Learning (HALO)*
- Feed God's Lambs — *summer camp / home meal delivery*

Motion to approve the Committee's recommendations. Roll-call vote: **all in favor (unanimous). Adopted.** (Exact per-recipient award amounts: see the Impact Fund grant sheet in the Board Packet — total recommended \$25,000.)

## I. Management Reports

- **Distribution / water loss:** 46% (vs. 45% prior month); ≈3.55M gallons less leaked than the prior month; ratio skewed by lower consumption. Major **Old Parksville Road** leak (>350 gpm) repaired — valve and hydrant replaced, ≈150–160 gpm recovered, ≈10–11 wrap patches (~\$1,000 each) reclaimed to inventory; work nearing York Road.
- **Wastewater:** Exploring **purchase of the Johnston Estates WWTP from Central States Water Resources (CSWR)** — initial meeting held (Clay Underdown, Jason English, GM); follow-up information requested (Sandy Neal). Ongoing drip-field work at the Brighton Ridge and Johnston Estates treatment plants. **Old Parksville Road WWTP:** Haren Construction's deductive change order (revised amount **\$3,447,000**) was declined by the Board and a contract-termination notice sent; **ARP funds remaining ≈ \$2,923,840.**
- **Water Plant Updates:** Purifix pilot back in service >1,200 hours; turbidity <0.02 for 50 days with no backwash/flush. Awaiting sample bottles to evaluate PFAS (PFBS) mitigation; equipment ≈\$2M for ≈1 MGD, O&M and ultimate PFAS-waste disposal unresolved (federal/EPA). NPDES corrective action at Carpenter Springs (vegetation removal from the 3 lagoons) underway/complete; TDEC notified. Hardness-treatment mandate shelved for the year (CAUD/TAUD advocating).

- **Operations / Administration:** USDA/RD options for the re-tooled water plant / water-line project being worked with **Kirk Morris (USDA/RD)**, pursuing force-account labor to reduce cost; USDA Rural Development on hold but retained as an option. **November 2026 Board meeting date change** discussed — not changed at this time. Budget planning underway; **budget workshop May 18, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.** (training/workshop, ≈2 hrs, CE-credit eligible). FY27 capital plan ≈\$1.7M pipeline + <\$200K vehicle replacement; current water rate structure assessed adequate through FY27 — **no water rate increase anticipated ≈14 months** (to be confirmed as April results are incorporated). United Systems "G5"/UPM scorecard alignment 94%; electronic work orders launched; customer portal pending a meter-count threshold; inventory module deferred. HR job descriptions and annual employee evaluations being implemented before fiscal year-end. Pressure-metering project: 200 cellular pressure-sensing meters for critical locations to improve leak detection; Itron meter transition continues. Old Parksville Ridge subdivision performance/utility bond accepted (letter by District attorney **Eric Brooks**). OHM unresponsive (since April 7) on releasing District-owned hydraulic model / GIS to IDG; met **Jason Griffin (OHM Engineering)** April 14 re: transition; IDG Task Order #5 progressing.
- **General / Outreach:** Presented facts on the sewer rate increase to the **Bradley County Commission** (prompted by a 4th-District County Commissioner's statement; April 13; attended by President Shawn Willis, Office Manager Amber (Niki) McDaniel, and GM Ben Witt). Attended the Polk County Chamber of Commerce banquet (April 14, Copper Hill). Preliminary developer discussions re: Spring Place Road and Ball property (developers considering their own decentralized wastewater). Bond letter to **David May** (developer) sent.

#### J. Consultants / Engineers — Update on Current Projects (Jason English, IDG)

- **Parksville Road wastewater:** Met the Benton Mayor & Commissioners (April 7); proposed paying Benton for discharge and allocating ARP funds to Benton WWTP improvements, plus the District assuming the "64 East Corridor" force main (411/64 to the Mountain Club / Ranger Station). Benton's engineer (John King, CTI Engineers, Knoxville) reported the response "not favorable" — Benton's concerns center on the ARP spend-by-September timeline and required plant work. Benton plant permitted for 400,000 gpd but reportedly treats only ≈25,000–45,000 gpd.
- **Fallback:** Redesign/reconstruct the old Parksville Road WWTP — believed buildable for roughly half of prior bids; equipment and drip-field bids firm; target ≈\$3M (vs. ≈\$5M) to enable ≈\$12,000 capacity fees to self-fund (~333 homes).
- **Permitting / other:** TDEC water and wastewater submittals targeted for May (water submittal constrained pending the hydraulic model — build authorized; District billing data needed). Railroad force main (OHM to submit to TDEC); USDA Water Main Replacement Program PER to be amended (smaller or no USDA loan may be needed given improving water loss/revenue); Washboard water-main extension draft plans pending the hydraulic model; Asset Management Plans completed (OHM), grants submitted via Southeast

Tennessee Development District / state GMS; EPA Risk & Resiliency Plan update (due end of June 2026) prepared by OHM — submission recommended.

- **Direction / discussion:** Considerable discussion on not remaining dependent on Benton and on pursuing regionalization/consolidation through the Comptroller / TBOUR.

### Office / Billing Update — Niki McDaniel

Continued in-house bad-debt collection effort (≈\$3,800 recovered in March), reducing pressure for future rate increases and saving collection fees; working with an outside collector ("FRO Collections").

### Executive Session

Following the reports, motion made to enter **executive session with Daniel Peterson** (Financial Advisor); all non-board members excused. *(Not a printed agenda item — recorded as it occurred on the audio.)*

### K. Adjournment

The Board reconvened after the executive session. With all agenda items addressed and no further business, a motion to adjourn was made. **Meeting adjourned.**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ryan", is written in a cursive style.