



# Brevard County Citizens Academy

March 26, 2026

# Local Government in Florida



Counties



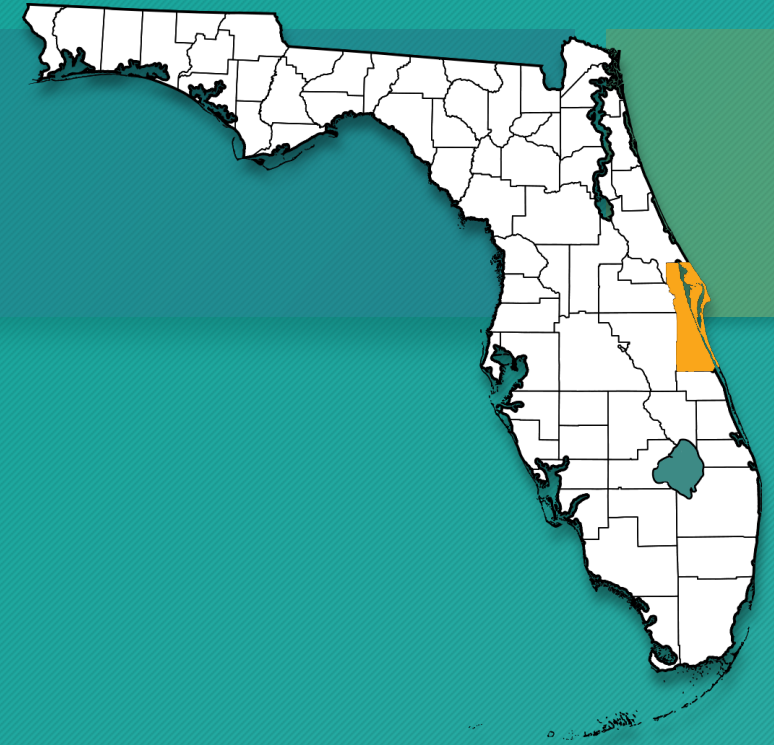
School Districts



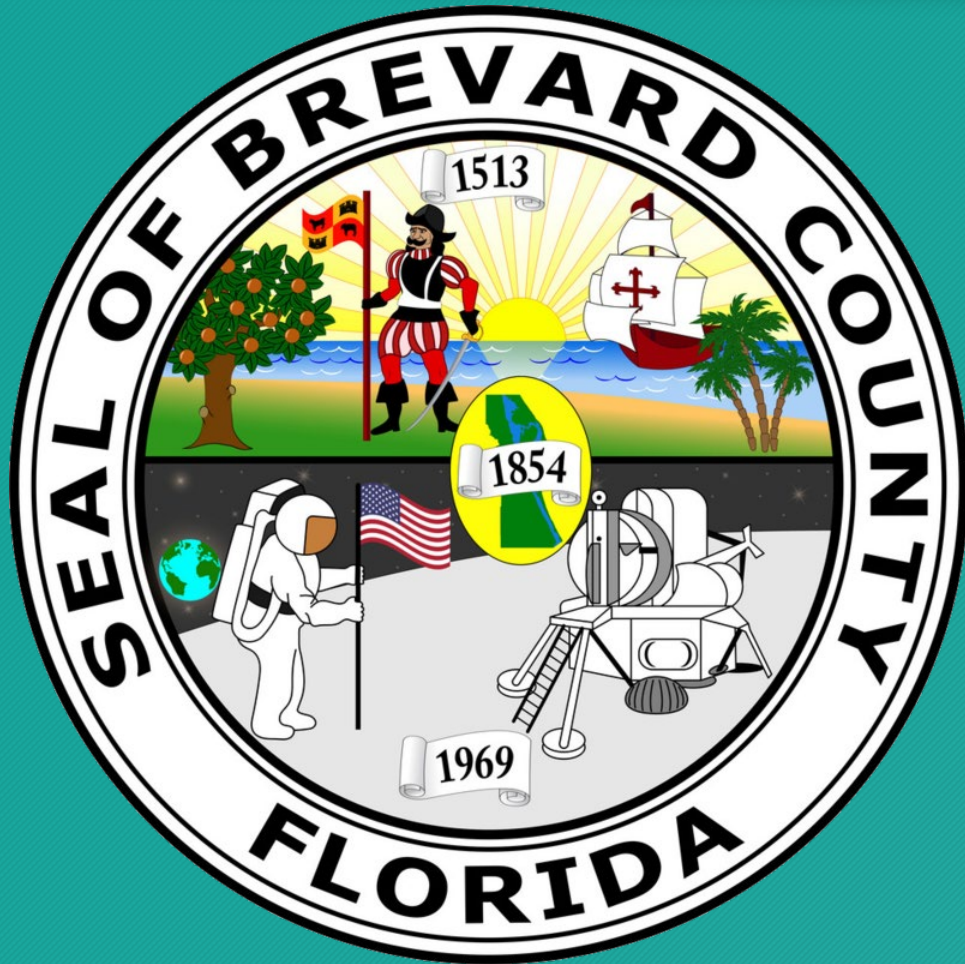
Municipalities



Special Districts



# What Is a County?



# Why Counties Matter



[Video - Florida: Why Counties Matter](#)

# County Government Structure

## Charter Status

- Charter
- Non-Charter

## Form of Government

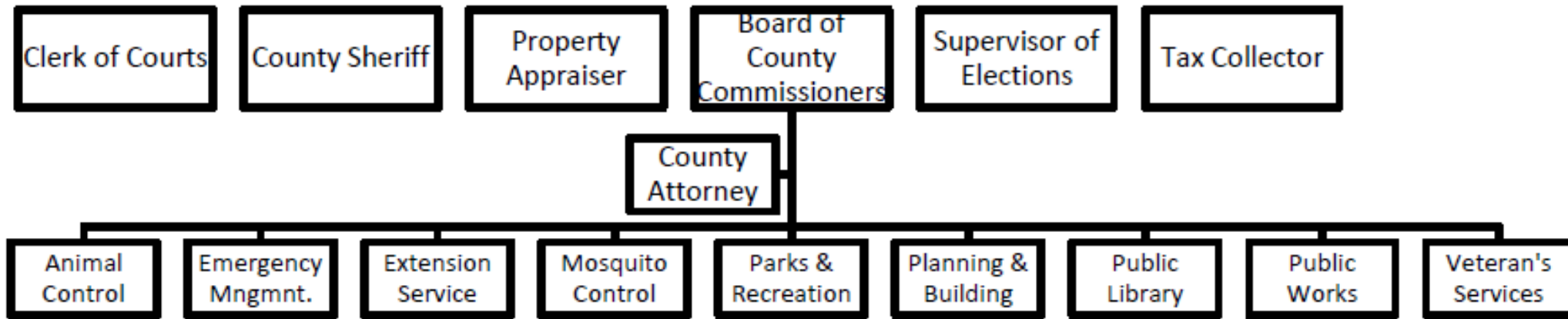
- County Commission
- Commission-Administrator
- Commission-Executive

## Districting Plan

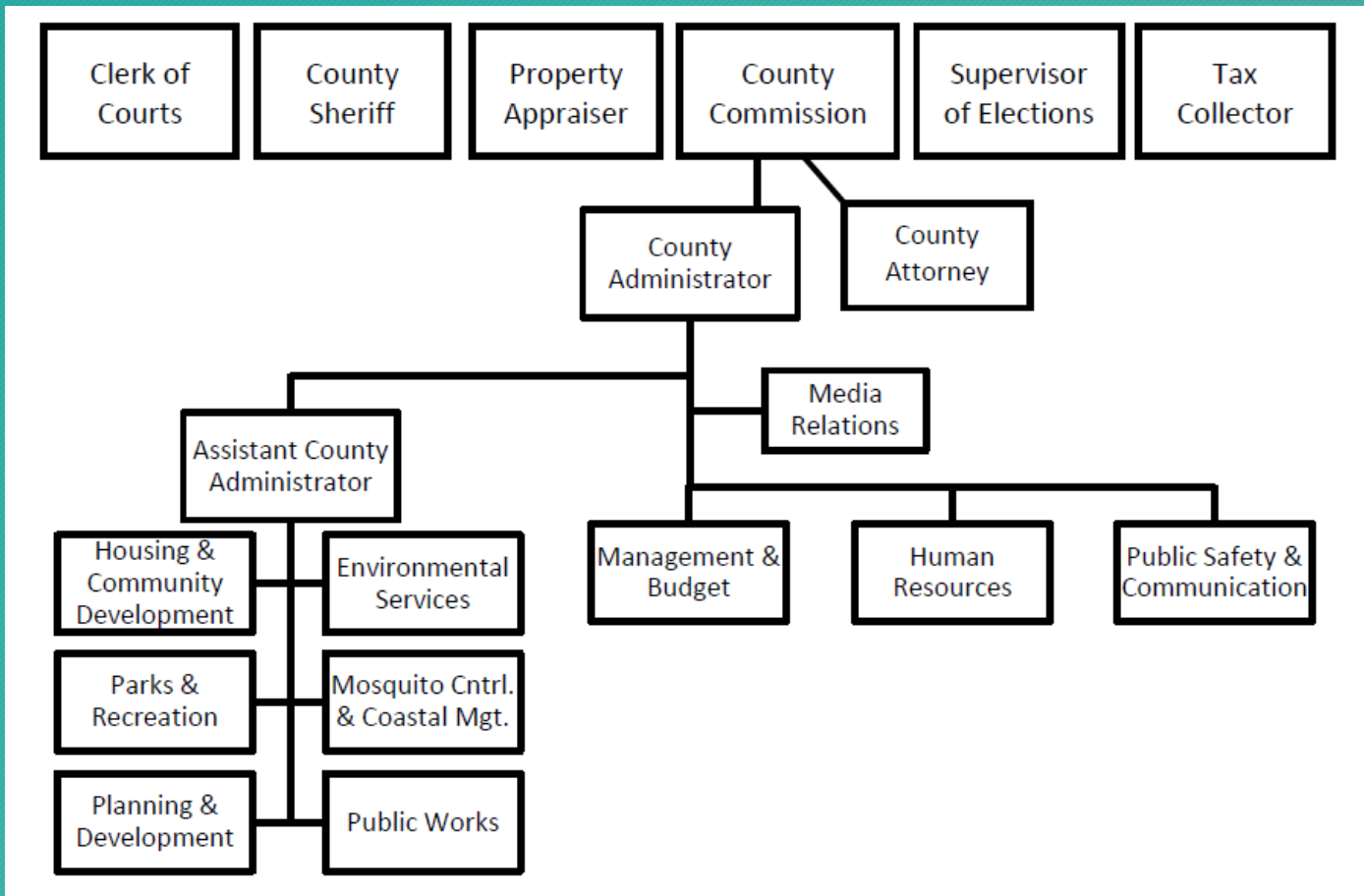
- Single Member
- At-Large
- Mixed



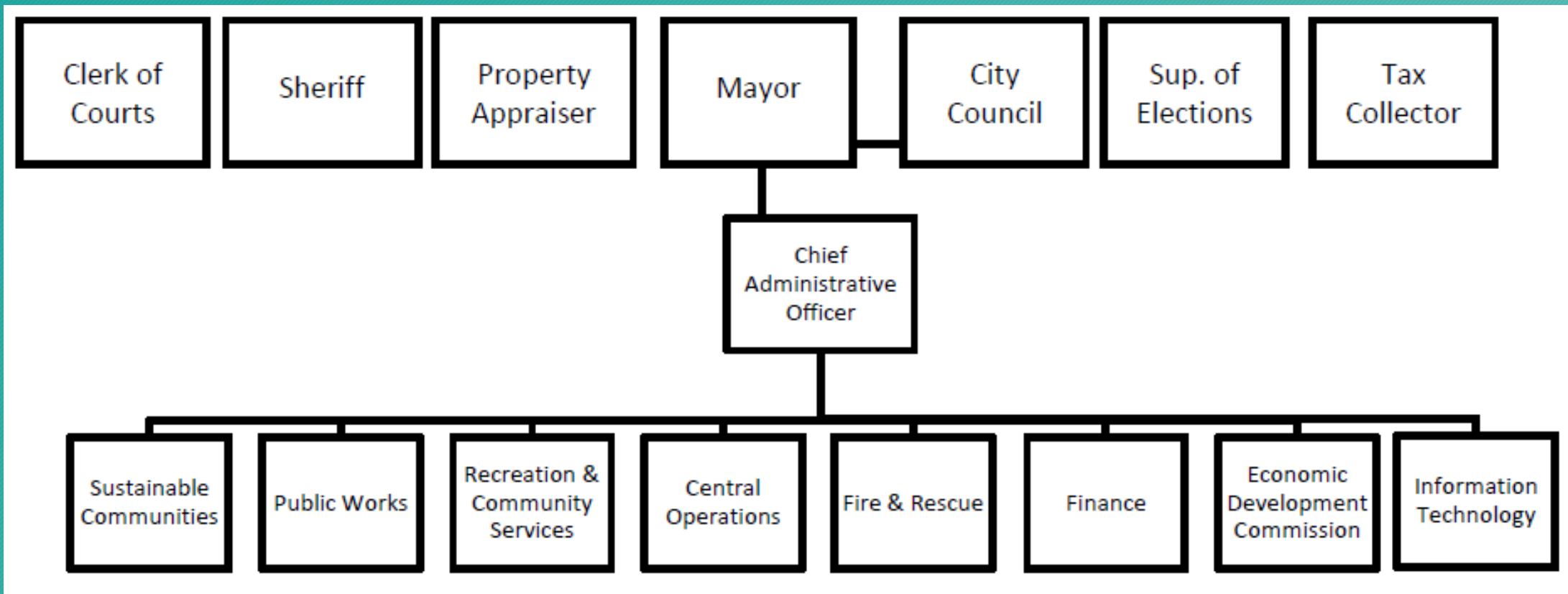
# Traditional Commission Form (Franklin)



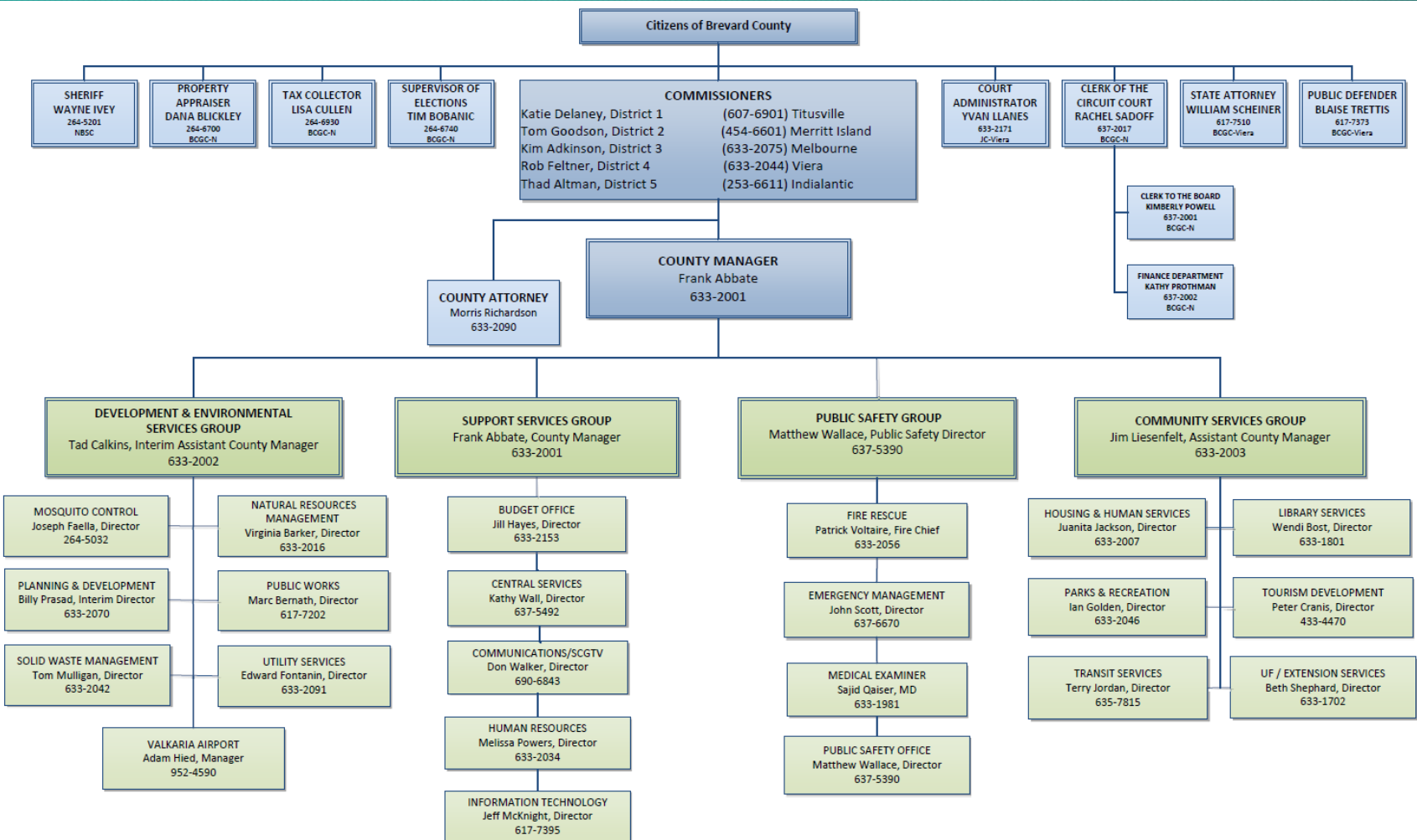
# Commission-Administrator Form (St. Lucie)



# Council-Executive Form (Jacksonville/Duval)



# Brevard County



# What Is a County Attorney?

**Sec. 4.4. - County attorney/department of legal services.**

There shall be a department of legal services directed by an attorney appointed by the Board of County Commissioners. The Board of County Commissioners shall have the power and authority to employ or contract for other necessary legal services when necessary to carry out the duties and responsibilities of County Government.



# County Attorney's Office

The Brevard County Attorney's Office provides a variety of services, including:

- Legal advice at board meetings
- Legal research
- Advisory opinions
- Drafting or reviewing contracts, ordinances, and other legal documents
- Litigating civil actions in state and federal courts
- Coordinating outside legal services
- Approving all contracts, bonds, and written instruments for legal sufficiency
- Public records coordinator / records management



# The Government-in-the-Sunshine Law



The policy behind Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law is to have all deliberations by a governmental board or commission conducted in public meetings, rather than behind closed doors.

# The Sunshine Law: Basic Requirements

Florida Statute § 286.011 has three basic requirements:



meetings of public boards or commissions must be open to the public;



reasonable notice of meetings must be given;  
and



minutes of the meetings must be promptly recorded.

# To Whom Does the Sunshine Law Apply?

J 1. Direction Re: County Property Located  
at 2605 Flake Road, Titusville and Termination  
of Lease Agreement with Forever Home  
Animal Rescue, Inc. - District 1

FRANK ABBATE  
County Manager

TOM GOODSON

KIM ADKINSON

ROB FELTNER

THAD ALTMAN

KATE DELANEY

MOBBES RICHARDSON  
Deputy Attorney

0:00

# To Whom Does the Sunshine Law Apply?

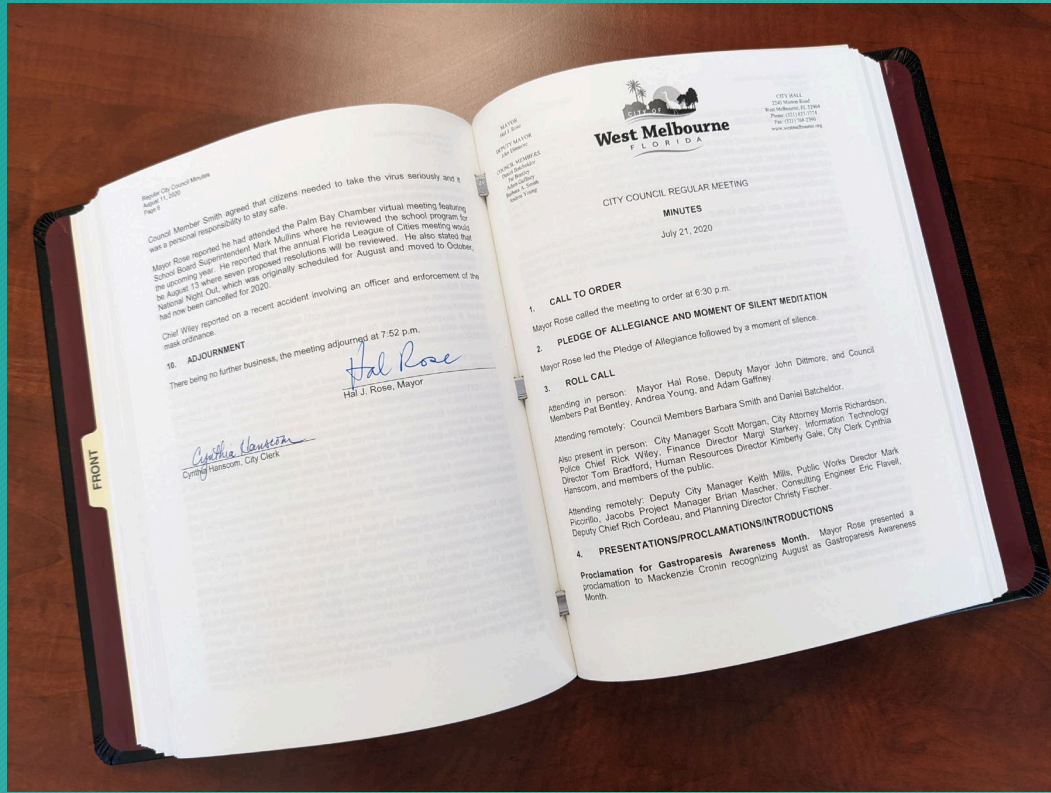
- “Any board or commission of any state agency or authority of any county, municipal corporation, or political subdivision.”
- Elected and appointed
  - Board of County Commissioners
  - Planning and Zoning Board
  - Save Our Lagoon Citizen Oversight Committee
  - Tourist Development Council
- Members-elect (yes), candidates (no)
- Members of different boards (usually no)

# What is a “Meeting” Under the Sunshine Law?

- Two or more members discuss issues before the board or committee or that could foreseeably come before them.
- This includes social gatherings, telephone calls, emails, text messages, social media, smoke signals, messenger ravens, etc.
- Cannot use non-members as liaisons to avoid law.
- Applies to formal and informal functions.



# Procedural & Technical Requirements



- Reasonable notice of the meeting.
- Public attendance and participation.
- Written minutes must be taken and promptly recorded.
- Recordings or verbatim transcripts may be made, but are not required and may not substitute for written minutes.

# Public Records

“It is the policy of this state that all state, county, and municipal records are open for personal inspection and copying by any person.”  
Florida Statute §119.01.



# Public Records Act Requirements



“Every person who has custody of a public record shall permit the record to be inspected and copied by any person desiring to do so, at any reasonable time, under reasonable conditions, and under supervision by the custodian of the public records.”

# What is a Public Record?

1. Documents, papers, letters, maps, books, tapes, photographs, films, sound recordings, software, or other material regardless of physical form, characteristics, or means of transmission;
2. Made or received pursuant to law or ordinance or in connection with the transaction of official business by any public agency.



# Exemptions

## CURRENT EXEMPTIONS

01159

Florida has 1,159 exemptions to our open government laws currently on the books.

Source: First Amendment Foundation

## Examples of exemptions:

- Active criminal investigative information
- Crime victim information
- Patient records
- Social Security numbers
- Bank account and credit card numbers
- Home addresses, phone numbers, and photographs of law enforcement personnel