

St. Johns County School District

Half-Cent Sales Surtax Citizen Advisory Committee

Regular Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Date: Monday, March 9, 2026

Time: 4:09 PM

Location:

Fullerwood Training Center
10 Hildreth Drive
St. Augustine, Florida

1. Call to Order

The meeting of the Half-Cent Sales Surtax Citizen Advisory Committee was called to order at 4:09 PM by Chairman Jason Lewis.

2. Attendance

Committee Members/Alternatives Present:

Damian Cook, Richa Jeetah, John Lasswell, Jason Lewis, Barbara Little, Kim McManus, Edward Albanesi, Elena Laguardia

Members/Alternatives Absent:

Alice Flores, Kate Dowdie, Amy Lasswell, Terence Mahoney, Norvie Veracruz, Jen Stevenson, Javelyn Arvay, Heather Barnes, Jeralyn Forcier, Dr. William McCormick, Virginia Morgan

School District Staff Present:

Nicole Cubbedge, Steven Cade, Cathy Weber, Elizabeth Moore, Tammy Stewart

Public Attendees:

Charlena Retkowski

3. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the December 15, 2025 Regular Quarterly Meeting were approved.

- Motion: Damian Cook

- Second: Elena Laguardia
- Result: Approved

4. Election of Officers

Chairman:

Damian Cook nominated Jason Lewis to continue serving as Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Barbara Little and approved unanimously.

Vice Chairman:

Jason Lewis nominated Damian Cook to continue serving as Vice Chairman. The nomination was seconded by Barbara Little and Richa Jeetah and approved unanimously.

Secretary:

District staff will continue the role of Secretary.

5. Financial Reporting

Cathy Weber presented the financial report.

Data reviewed covered July 2025 through February 2026, with discussion based on receipts through December 2025.

Sales Tax Collections:

\$20,286,198.62 (July–February), an increase of \$638,078.58 over the same period last year.

A \$50 million loan issued in 2015/2016 for initial school construction was fully paid off in October 2025 using sales tax revenues.

The FY 2025–2026 budget was projected at \$32 million; current trends estimate approximately \$36 million, exceeding projections by about \$4 million.

Annual debt service is approximately \$5 million; following loan payoff, recurring cash is freed up.

Charter Schools

- Funding distribution will begin after January 2026 receipts are received.
- Charter schools must submit spending reports and undergo annual audits.
- The St. Johns County School District will monitor compliance.
- The committee requested quarterly spending reports from charter schools.
- No funds have been distributed to date.
- Funding allocation has not yet been finalized.

The committee requested a cumulative reporting column reflecting totals from the start of the new 10-year cycle.

10-Year Financial Summary

Total collections: \$300 million, exceeding the original \$150 million projection by over double.

Status as of June 30, 2026

- Total Sources: \$365.4 million
- Total Uses: \$362 million
- Ending Fund Balance: \$3.36 million

Construction Funding

\$75 million available for new construction:

- \$30 million – Elementary School “O”
- \$45 million – Elementary School “N”

Construction is currently on hold due to declining enrollment and is under reassessment.

An additional \$43.2 million is reserved for future construction/expansion, pending completion of current project lists.

6. Project Reporting

Steven Cade presented the project report.

Shade Structures

- Installation at 18 elementary schools
- 3–4 sites remaining
- Costs: Cunningham Creek: \$331,000; Julington Creek: \$295,000; New sites with concrete: up to \$500,000

Turf and Track Program

- Expanded following Ponte Vedra High School pilot
- St. Augustine High School and Nease High School selected as highest priorities out of 5 high schools
- Design/demolition begins: April 2026
- Completion target: August 1, 2026
- New high schools are not included at this time

Estimated Costs

- Field turf: \$1.8 million

- Track replacement: \$0.8 million
- Combined scheduling expected to reduce overall costs

Turf Considerations

- Natural grass offers best playing conditions
- Turf provides approximately four times greater usage
- Natural-fill turf reduces heat retention
- Safety and playability testing has been completed

Track Replacement

- Existing rubber-over-asphalt tracks are deteriorating due to water exposure and high water tables
- Full track replacement
- Walk-off mats
- Protective cheer/dance surfaces

7. Committee Comments

Jason Lewis and Damian Cook presented the committee's annual report to the School Board, which was well received. The Board commended the committee for its hard work and dedication. Members invited to attend next year's presentation.

The June meeting date was changed from June 15 to June 8, 2026. Members requested prompt email notification.

The December meeting date was corrected from December 15 to December 14, 2026.

8. Public Comment

Charlena Retkowski (Support Staff Union President and Nease High School Food Service Employee) raised concerns regarding the Tax Collector's 2% administrative fee on sales tax collections.

Cathy Weber clarified that the fee is included in the referendum budget, not the sales tax budget, and is being monitored.

9. Next Meeting

Date: Monday, June 8, 2026

Time: 4:00 PM

Location:

Fullerwood Training Center
10 Hildreth Drive
St. Augustine, Florida

10. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 5:08 PM.

- Motion: Damian Cook
- Second: Richa Jeetah