

# Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County

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## BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

Gayle Gardner, Chairperson  
Tim Burton, Vice Chair  
Anthony Timis, Secretary / Treasurer  
Johnny Counts, Commissioner  
Gina LeBlanc, Commissioner



## DISTRICT DIRECTOR

Dr. Rui-De Xue

Thursday, January 15, 2026 – 5:30 PM~ Regular Meeting

## MINUTES

The regular Board meeting for the Anastasia Mosquito Control District of St. Johns County was held on Thursday, January 15, 2026, at 5:30 P.M.

Board members in attendance:

Ms. Gayle Gardner, Chair  
Mr. Tim Burton, Vice Chair  
Mr. Anthony Timis, Secretary/Treasurer  
Mr. Johnny Counts, Commissioner  
Mrs. Gina LeBlanc, Commissioner

Also in attendance:

Dr. Rui-De Xue, Director  
Ms. Lawsikia Hodges

*Chairperson Gardner called the meeting to order.*

*Commissioner LeBlanc led the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.*

**ROLL CALL:** All Commissioners were present and constituted a quorum.

**CEREMONY:** District Attorney Ms. Hodges administered the oath of office to Mr. Johnny Counts, who affirmed his commitment to uphold the Constitution of the United States, the Constitution of the State of Florida, and to faithfully perform the duties of the office.

**NEW COMMISSIONER STATEMENT:** Commissioner Counts addressed the Board and introduced himself. He stated that he is from the southwest corner of St. Johns County and expressed his commitment to civic engagement and local government, emphasizing the importance of community participation at the local level. He conveyed his hope to be a valuable contributor to both the Board and the District.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA:**

- A. **A motion was made to approve the Agenda as presented.**
- Motioned by: Commissioner Timis
  - Seconded by: Commissioner Burton
  - VOTE: Accepted by all Commissioners
  - **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:** Chairperson Gardner called for approval of the Consent Agenda.

**A. A motion was made to approve the Consent Agenda**

- Motioned by: Commissioner Timis
- Seconded by: Commissioner Burton
- VOTE: Accepted by all Commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**Consent Items ~ APPROVAL OF:**

1. Board meeting minutes (December 11 at 5:00pm, 2025)
2. Resolution for seat election in 2026 (This is required by the Supervisor Election Office)
3. Surplus

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**1. Item 1: Disease Vector Education Center ... DVEC Coordinator, Genhsy Monzon**

Genhsy Monzon presented a Year Two operational update for the Disease Vector Education Center (DVEC)

- Visitation increased to approximately 12,422, with projections exceeding 13,000, compared to 10,000 in Year One. Educational programming served approximately 1,500 participants, with additional events planned. Peak summer visitation increased by 55 percent over the prior year, and 79 percent of visitors were first-time guests.
- Marketing and outreach efforts were expanded through public relations initiatives, printed materials, and new social media platforms, resulting in increased community engagement. Program enhancements included interactive learning tools, expanded scavenger hunts, and hands-on demonstrations. Facility and exhibit improvements were completed in-house in collaboration with academic and community partners.
- Future initiatives include autism-friendly programming, sensory kits, grant opportunities, and digital engagement tools. Ms. Monzon expressed appreciation to the Commissioners, AMCD team, and local partners for their continued support of the DVEC.
- Dr. Xue mentioned that a sheet attached to Monzon's PPT in the Board book showed the details cost about the DVEC (under the ceiling amount given by the Board) when the project was closed out last year. This item was requested by Commissioner Mr. Timis.

**A. No Motion was made.**

**2. Item 2: Discussion and inputs about AMCD's Strategy plan ... Director, Dr. Rui-De Xue**

Dr. Xue presented an update on AMCD's five-year (2026-2030) strategic plan, highlighting the company's progress and future initiatives. The plan includes five major goals:

1. **Integrated Mosquito Management:** Expansion of data-driven surveillance and precision control tools for ground and aerial applications, including helicopters and drones, with full implementation of standard operating procedures.
2. **Advanced Research and Innovation:** Continued leadership in arbovirus detection and insect resistance research, adoption of emerging technologies (AI, robotics), and investment in staff training and equipment to support future innovation.
3. **Public Education and Community Engagement:** Enhanced outreach through the Disease Vector Education Center, digital platforms, and citizen science initiatives. Mobile alerts inform the public of mosquito-borne disease

risks. The Education Center has exceeded visitation expectations and gained national and international recognition.

4. **Organizational Capacity and Workforce Development:** Completion of building improvements, upgraded vehicles and equipment, and ongoing investments in training and infrastructure to support operational excellence.
5. **Partnerships and Sustainable Funding:** Collaboration with CDC regional centers for research and outreach, pursuit of grant opportunities, and focus on transparent financial management to ensure sustainability and efficient use of resources.

Dr. Xue noted that the strategic plan is dynamic, with annual updates and adjustments based on budget, emerging technologies, and community needs. Transparency and accountability remain priorities, with public access to information and ongoing communication encouraged.

**A. No Motion was made.**

**Item 3: Discussion regarding RFP for Lobbyist Firm ... Director, Dr. Rui-De Xue**

Dr. Xue reported that the Board had previously directed staff to prepare a Request for Proposal (RFP) for lobbying services. Revisions were made to clarify the scope and authority, and the opportunity will be published to solicit applications in the future. Legal counsel noted that minor informational updates are needed prior to publication and will work with staff to ensure compliance. The item will be brought back to the Board for action at a future meeting, with sufficient time remaining before the conclusion of the legislative session in March.

**A. No Motion was made.**

**NEW BUSINESS:**

**1. Item 1: 2026 Office Election (Chair, Vice Chair and Secretary/Treasurer) ... Chairperson Ms. Gayle Gardner**

The Board conducted the annual election of officers. Chairperson Gardner advised that, pursuant to District policy, commissioners must serve at least one year before being eligible for Chair.

**A. A Motion was made to nominate Mr. Burton as Vice Chair**

- Motioned by: Commissioner Gardner
- Seconded by: Commissioner LeBlanc
- VOTE: Accepted by all Commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**B. A Motion was made to nominate Ms. Gardner as Chairperson**

- Motioned by: Commissioner Burton
- Seconded by: Commissioner LeBlanc
- VOTE: Accepted by all Commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**C. A Motion was made to nominate Mr. Timis as Secretary/Treasurer**

- Motioned by: Commissioner LeBlanc
- Seconded by: Commissioner Gardner
- VOTE: Accepted by all Commissioners
- **MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

**2. Item 2: Appreciation of the two Chairperson services (Mrs. Becker, January-June and Ms. Gayle Gardner, July-December) in 2025 ... New Elected Chair**

Chairperson Gayle Gardner thanked the Board for reelecting her as Chair.

- Newly elected Vice Chair, Mr. Burton presented a plaque to Chairperson Gardner in recognition of her hard work and dedication while serving as Chair in 2025.
- Chairperson Gardner also read a plaque presented to Trish Becker in recognition of her service as Chair in 2025. The plaque will be mailed to Mrs. Becker, as she was not present at the meeting.

**A. No Motion was made.**

**ITEMS NOT ON AGENDA**

- Commissioner Burton inquired whether the District offers public or college scholarships, including internship-related scholarships. Dr. Xue responded that the District does not offer public scholarships. He explained that the District provides paid internships and continuing education opportunities for full-time employees, funded through annual budgets, grants, and university partnerships.
- Commissioner Burton asked about a five-year plan for the Education Center to become self-sufficient. Chief Financial Officer Mr. Hanna stated that the Education Center is not intended to operate as a profit center, but rather as a community service and public education resource. He noted that limited revenue from admissions and merchandise is supplemental only and does not offset operational costs, and that the Education Center will continue to require public funding support.
- Dr. Xue emphasized the Education Center's role in preventing mosquito-borne diseases, which may result in significant healthcare cost savings and impact on tourist industries. He reported that the Center attracts more than 12,000 visitors annually, with approximately 50–60 percent coming from outside the county, contributing to local tourism. The estimated annual economic impact from visitors is approximately \$400,000. He also noted that the Center supports state, national, and international educational partnerships.
- Commissioner Timis noted that in September 2024, the Board approved a \$50,000 cap on periodic DVEC expenditures and confirmed that current expenditures remain within the approved limit. Board members emphasized the importance of maintaining ongoing fiscal responsibility.

**A. No motion was made.**

**Item 3: Review of Sunshine Law, commissioner responsibility, and State requirements for annual ethical training and financial disclosure deadline ... Attorney, Ms. Hodges**

District Attorney Ms. Hodges gave a presentation and provided the Board with an annual overview of the Florida Sunshine Law, public meeting requirements, and related legal obligations, with particular emphasis for newly seated commissioners. She reviewed her background and qualifications, including extensive experience and board certification in city, county, and local government law.

- Ms. Hodges explained the purpose and intent of the Florida Sunshine Law, noting that it was adopted in response to historical closed-door decision-making and is codified in Section 286.011, Florida Statutes, and Article I, Section 24 of the Florida Constitution. The Board was advised that elected officials must be knowledgeable in three primary legal areas—ethics, public records, and open meetings—with the Sunshine Law serving as the focus of the presentation.

- Ms. Hodges stated that any meeting involving two or more commissioners discussing matters that may foreseeably come before the Board must be open to the public, reasonably noticed, and documented with written minutes. The Sunshine Law applies broadly to formal Board meetings, committee and subcommittee meetings, casual gatherings, and chance encounters when District business is discussed. The law applies regardless of the method of communication, including email, text messages, telephone calls, social media, or the use of intermediaries, and also applies to commissioners-elect prior to taking office.
- The Board was reminded that meetings must be held in open and accessible locations and that what constitutes reasonable notice depends on the circumstances. It was noted that the district is subject to Chapter 189, Florida Statutes, as a special district. Public participation must be allowed prior to Board votes on agenda items, and District policy permits expanded public comment. One-way communications were identified as permissible; however, two-way dialogue between commissioners outside of a properly noticed meeting is prohibited. Staff were cautioned against serving as intermediaries in a manner that could facilitate indirect communication between commissioners.
- Ms. Hodges reviewed potential consequences of Sunshine Law violations, including criminal penalties, civil fines, civil litigation, personal liability for attorney's fees, and the possible invalidation of Board actions. High-profile matters, major contracts, and personnel issues were identified as areas more likely to draw scrutiny.
- Additional reminders were provided regarding the requirement for commissioners to complete four hours of annual training covering ethics, public records, and public meetings, and to file annual financial disclosure forms electronically by July 1, with penalties assessed for late filings.

**A. No Motion was made.**

**REPORTS:**

**Director:** Dr. Xue reported that all employees have returned following the holiday break and are preparing for upcoming surveillance activities, noting that staff morale remains positive.

- He reported that AMCD successfully passed its annual biomedical waste inspection. In addition, AMCD undergoes routine facility inspections by state and regulatory agencies, including the Department of Agriculture, Department of Health, and environmental agencies, with safety remaining a top operational priority.
- Dr. Xue provided updates on academic collaborations, including a recent visit from a Korea University professor to discuss potential partnerships involving artificial intelligence and surveillance technologies, as well as an upcoming visit from a University of Wisconsin professor to explore future collaboration in public education and employee training.
- Staffing updates included the hiring of a new full-time molecular entomologist from the University of Florida, the return of two part-time volunteers in the Education Center, and the hiring of one full-time intern from the University of North Florida to support Disease Vector Education Center operations.
- Dr. Xue presented the 2025 Annual Program Report and expressed appreciation to staff for their contributions. He noted that the report will be published on the district's website as required by law, with printed copies provided to legislative offices. Appreciation was also expressed for continued legislative support of the district and its budget.

**Attorney:** Mrs. Lawsikia Hodges extended New Year greetings to the Board, and a special welcome was extended to the newly seated commissioner.

**COMMISSIONER COMMENTS:**

**Commissioner Timis** ~ Suggested a deep dive review of the budget with the finance committee, particularly in light of the upcoming property tax reform. Noted that attendance by board members would require proper notice but emphasized it would be prudent to conduct this review now.

**Commissioner Burton** ~ looked forward to working with Commissioner Timis on the finance committee.

**Commissioner Gardner** ~ agreed with Commissioners Timis and Burton regarding the recommendation to conduct a thorough review of the budget through the Finance Committee.

**Commissioner Counts** ~ Commented on recently joining as commissioner and beginning to familiarize himself with the program. Noted the importance of public education on mosquito-borne diseases and the program's role in informing residents about historical and current impacts on Florida's lifestyle. Expressed appreciation for the welcome and enthusiasm for contributing to effective governance.

**Commissioner LeBlanc** ~ thanked the staff for all their hard work and welcomed new Commissioner Counts.

**ADJOURNMENT:** Chairperson Gardner adjourned the meeting at 6:44 PM

ATTEST

  
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Chairperson, Commissioner Gayle Gardner

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary/Treasurer, Commissioner Anthony Timis

*These minutes are not intended to be a verbatim transcript of this meeting and could easily be misinterpreted by a reader who was not present. To obtain a full and accurate record of the meeting, an individual should view/listen to the entire proceedings.*