Emerald Coast Republican Liberty Caucus
President Sherry Chapman
Vice President Rene Johnmeyer
Treasurer David Farrow
4June2026

Diane Warner Called the Meeting to Order
Carried Over from RC Prayer
Carried Over from RC Pledge

✨ Summary

Across the meeting segments, the committee reviewed its Values for Liberty / RLC-based vetting process for local candidates, explained how independent scores were calculated, and agreed to publish questionnaires, interview answers, and scorecards online for public review. Members deferred any endorsement or recommendation vote until the next meeting so everyone could read the materials, and they also covered election-integrity proposals, candidate eligibility and background checks, audit concerns, finances, and a few local issue updates. The meeting focused on concerns about a proposed data center, including the plan to inject sewage underground, whether the site's low elevation posed a risk to nearby aquifers, and whether local infrastructure could support the project or affect East Milton. The discussion also covered election-law concerns about dual citizenship and voting eligibility, including outreach to Thomas Massie's office, before the group moved to adjourn.

📋 Outline

1. Vetting process and scorecard methodology •

- The committee explained that the scorecard measures how closely candidates align with Republican Liberty Caucus values, not whether they would generally be good commissioners or school board members.
- Tom helped create the scorecard after the organization did not provide one, and separate versions were prepared for school board and county races.
- The vetting effort required significant coordination, including scheduling interviews, securing venues, and having multiple volunteers participate in most interviews.

- Each vetter scored candidates independently on a 1-to-5 scale, and the final result was the average of all vetters' scores.
- The committee emphasized that no vetter discussed scores with others during the process.

2. Candidate participation and missed interviews •

- County candidates Kerry Smith, Renee, RC Pittman, Dean Light, Ray Eddington, and Aaron were vetted during the process.
- Jeff Ates canceled twice, including one cancellation only 12 minutes before his appointment, and Jeff Snow canceled without rescheduling.
- Jill Testin-Boston did not complete the vetting window and was not added after redistricting affected her race.
- The committee said candidates who did not participate would be identified on the website, which members viewed as important accountability.

3. Candidate questionnaires and planned website posting •

- Candidates were asked to complete a questionnaire covering personal background, campaign details, funding sources, and policy positions.
- The questionnaire included topics such as PAC money, out-of-state donations, industry donations, medical freedom, border security, CRT, DEI, term limits, property taxes, and non-citizen land ownership.
- The answers were not used in the scoring process, but were intended to help voters understand each candidate's views.
- The completed questionnaires, interview questions, answers, and scorecards were planned to be posted on the website in each candidate's own handwriting when available.
- Kerry Smith and Carol Boston were specifically mentioned as candidates who did not return the questionnaire materials.

4. County commissioner scoring results •

- Renee received the highest county commissioner score at 22 out of 25.
- Erin Neiswanger scored 21.75, RC Pittman scored 21, and Carrie Smith scored 17.7.
- Ray Eddington scored 21.25 and Dean Light scored 21.2, making them very close in their district results.
- The committee clarified that the scores reflect RLC values only and should not be interpreted as a general measure of who would be the best commissioner.

5. Endorsement timing and publication plan •

- Members debated whether to endorse candidates immediately, recommend them, or simply publish the information without a recommendation.
- One proposal was to post the material online first and then decide at the next meeting after everyone had time to review it.
- The group noted that ballots are expected to go out around July 14, so the next meeting would need to happen quickly.

- Members agreed that the public should be able to review the materials and make informed decisions before any endorsement vote.

6. Accountability for non-participating candidates •

- Members agreed that candidates who did not attend vetting should be noted on the website.
- Several participants felt that failing to show up reflected poorly on the candidates and should count against recommendation status.
- The group supported transparency so voters could see both the scores and whether a candidate engaged with the vetting process.
- The committee appeared aligned that non-attendance should be part of the public record when explaining endorsement decisions.

7. Whether endorsements should be made by the committee or the full group •

- The group discussed whether the vetting committee should make an endorsement decision or only present recommendations, because some members felt that decision should be made by the full group.
- One speaker said the committee was not comfortable making the endorsement decision alone and wanted a group vote instead.
- A member noted that if the score differences were very small, the result should likely be described as a recommendation rather than a strong endorsement.
- One participant said they would abstain from voting because they were not a county commissioner and believed they should not participate in that decision.

8. Public outreach plan for vetting results •

- Members expressed concern that previous vetting information had not reached the public and asked how voters would actually see the results.
- The group discussed posting the information on a website, Facebook, prominent websites, and possibly through flyers and QR codes.
- One member said the website would include the committee's results and the three discussion areas for each candidate, and others offered to help distribute flyers.
- The group acknowledged there was no fully coordinated publicity plan, but agreed the information should be shared as widely as possible.

9. Separating the posting vote from the endorsement vote •

- The chair explained that the group needed to separate the decision into two motions: first to accept the vetting committee's results for posting, and second to decide whether to endorse, recommend, or wait.
- The first motion to accept the vetting committee's results passed.
- Members debated whether the endorsement decision should happen immediately or be delayed until everyone had time to review the scores and notes.
- One member proposed waiting until the next meeting so the full group could read the results before deciding on endorsement.

10. Caution about endorsements when scores are close •

- The vetting committee clarified that it had not yet recommended anyone for endorsement and had only completed the scoring and information-gathering process.
- Members discussed whether very small score differences could look like favoritism if one candidate received a stronger label than another.
- One speaker said that because several candidates were scored very closely together, they should likely all be treated the same rather than singled out for endorsement.
- Another member asked whether an incumbent's voting history should influence endorsement decisions, especially when a challenger had no voting record.

11. Final vote to publish scores and delay endorsements •

- A motion was made to post the scores, detailed information, and related vetting material as quickly as possible so voters could use it.
- The group agreed that the website should clearly state that the posted information is a Values for Liberty score and not an endorsement.
- The motion passed to post the information first and vote on endorsement at the next meeting, giving members time to review the full results.
- One speaker emphasized that the vetting process captured only the committee's questions and answers, not broader personal impressions or outside behavior.

12. School board score review and interview note posting •

- The group reviewed school board and candidate scores after agreeing it was appropriate to keep David in the room for the discussion.
- David was identified as having the highest score in his district at 23.75, tied with Marie Loughlin at 23.75 in her race.
- Carol Boston received a score of 22.25, and members were invited to take pictures of the results or copies to share with neighbors.
- The chair said the detailed notes from candidate interviews would be posted, with the caveat that the write-up may contain minor spelling or transcription errors but would reflect what the candidates actually said.
- Members noted that some school board responses appeared problematic or not entirely accurate, particularly around voucher-related issues.

13. School funding shortfalls and board-member coordination concerns •

- The group discussed why election officials may be reporting large budget shortfalls, with one explanation being that voters moved out of the school system and later returned, but the money did not automatically follow them.
- It was noted that parents reportedly must file quarterly for the funding adjustment, which may explain why some money was not recovered.
- The speakers raised concern that some school board members may be relying on information passed to them by staff rather than independently reviewing the records.
- It was alleged that daisy chaining or polling of board members occurs when one person speaks to each member individually to line up votes before items ever reach the agenda.

- The group said this type of vote coordination may prevent open discussion at board meetings and may be illegal if information is passed from one member to the next.
- Speaker 0 said the meeting's information should be posted on the website by the weekend for wider sharing.

14. Distribution of pocket Constitutions and related materials •

- One member handed out pocket Constitutions and said Wayne Smiley bought 5,000 copies to promote Friends of Veterans Treatment Court.
- The materials were described as a special 250th-year edition and were offered for members to take and share with friends and neighbors.
- Speaker 0 also mentioned bringing two books by Seth Kessel, available for $20 each.

15. Proposed election-law recommendations for the next session •

- Speaker 0 said they met with Taffy, Michelle, Lindsey, and Tammy for about an hour to discuss recommendations for the next legislative session.
- One recommendation was to remove the process for sending provisional ballots to unverified voters, because the group believes taxpayer money should not be spent on ballots that may not be valid.
- The speakers expressed concern that larger counties might still count these ballots even if local officials would not, creating inconsistent handling across jurisdictions.
- Another recommendation was to require temporary workers used in election-related work to be U.S. citizens and, ideally, registered Florida voters.
- The group also recommended implementing two-factor authentication for vote-by-mail access to protect against identity theft and unauthorized ballot requests.
- Speaker 0 explained the risk that someone could request and submit a vote-by-mail ballot using stolen personal information, then cause confusion if the real voter later appears in person.
- Speaker 0 said these recommendations may also be forwarded to Patty Burke for inclusion in state committee discussions.

16. Candidate vetting, background checks, and residency requirements •

- Speaker 5 asked whether all vetted candidates had been checked for registration and where they would vote, and whether background information would be shared.
- Speaker 0 said Sherry was handling background checks for candidates, but the information had not yet been distributed to everyone involved in vetting.
- The group discussed the importance of seeing background information before vetting candidates, because it helps identify disqualifying issues and informs voter decisions.
- Speaker 0 said they had to contact Aaron Weissberger directly to locate a missing voter record in Hawaii, which highlighted gaps in the information flow.
- The speakers clarified that in Santa Rosa County there is no residency requirement to run for school board or county commissioner, but candidates must be registered to vote in order to qualify.
- They also noted that some state-level offices have residency requirements, and discussed a candidate who may not meet those requirements.

17. Clear Ballot audit and manual-count concerns •

- Speaker 0 said they discussed the Clear Ballot post-election audit system with Tappy and her staff and believed they had opened their eyes to several issues.
- The group said the scanners are approved as scanners but not certified as tabulators, even though they are used to tabulate votes.
- It was explained that ES&S takes pictures of ballots, and the audit process uses that artwork instead of a fully independent manual review.
- The speakers warned that importing and exporting data between machines can spread malware or compromise both systems if one machine is infected.
- Speaker 0 said the current process does not satisfy the idea of a truly independent post-election audit required by statute.
- The group proposed restoring some form of manual counting, such as comparing one precinct each from early voting, election day, and vote-by-mail.
- Taffy reportedly said such a manual count would take too long under the current certification schedule, and Speaker 0 suggested either changing the certification timeline or developing a better plan.

18. Financial update and outstanding dues •

- Speaker 11 reported that the organization had $1,210 in the bank at the time of the meeting.
- He said $90 was paid in during the past month.
- He stated that the organization owes the state chapter $360.
- After paying the $360, the remaining balance would be $950.
- Speaker 0 said there was a list of members who had paid and invited attendees to review it and check whether they still owed dues.

19. Local rumors about a data center and wastewater injection •

- Speaker 6 said he spoke with Zach Smith about a rumored data center in Santa Rosa County.
- He also checked with Ray Eddington and Bobby Burkett, who had not heard anything about the project.
- He mentioned recent news that several corporations, including Microsoft, reported mixed results from data center use and that human labor may be cheaper than AI in some cases.
- Speaker 6 raised a separate concern about a company wanting to inject wastewater below aquifers.
- The group noted that similar efforts were rejected in Escambia County and emphasized the importance of protecting local aquifers.

20. Data center proposal and sewage injection concerns •

- Participants raised concerns that sewage would be injected below ground using a method they believed had not been fully tested.
- They questioned whether the proposal had been adequately evaluated for environmental safety.

21. Aquifer, elevation, and local infrastructure impacts •

- Although the site was described as low elevation, no proof was discussed showing that nearby aquifers would not be contaminated.
- One speaker said they had previously asked Kerry Smith about the issue and was told that San Jose County’s infrastructure would not support a data center.
- The group discussed the possibility of locating the project within a large new industrial complex instead and emphasized that the situation needed close monitoring because East Milton could be affected.

22. Voting eligibility and dual citizenship concerns •

- A speaker said they contacted Thomas Massie’s office and sought Dr. Frank’s phone number to discuss election-related concerns.
- The discussion centered on claims that people with dual citizenship were participating in elections and influencing laws.
- One participant argued that dual citizens should be disqualified from holding office.
- The speakers also criticized voter-registration rules, including waiting periods and address requirements, saying these rules could be used to manipulate the system.
- An 'America first' position was expressed, followed by a brief aside referencing Somalia before the conversation moved on.

23. Motion to adjourn • 0:02:35

- A motion was made to adjourn the meeting Susan Graf and Donna Long second.
- The group acknowledged the motion, thanked everyone, and ended the session.

Next Meeting 2 July 2026

SC/cew