

# FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

## BILL ANALYSIS

*This bill analysis was prepared by nonpartisan committee staff and does not constitute an official statement of legislative intent.*

**BILL #:** [CS/HB 4057](#)

**TITLE:** City of DeFuniak Springs, Walton County

**SPONSOR(S):** Abbott

### Committee References

[Intergovernmental Affairs](#)

15 Y, 0 N, As CS

[Natural Resources & Disasters](#)

15 Y, 0 N

[State Affairs](#)

## SUMMARY

### Effect of the Bill:

The bill directs the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund to convey approximately 7.1 acres from the state to the City of DeFuniak Springs in Walton County. The bill requires the city to use the land for recreational, governmental, public safety, and community means and purposes.

### Fiscal or Economic Impact:

None.

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## ANALYSIS

### EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill directs the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Board) to convey, in fee simple, approximately 7.1 acres of [state lands](#) in Walton County, known as [Harbeson Field](#), to the City Council of the [City of DeFuniak Springs](#) (City). (Section [1](#))

The bill requires the City to continuously manage the property for recreational, governmental, public safety, and community means and purposes. Any sale of the property will result in the property's ownership reverting back to the State of Florida. (Section [2](#))

The bill requires that the Board convey the property to the City within 90 days of the bill taking effect. (Section [3](#))

The bill provides an effective date of upon becoming a law. (Section [4](#))

### FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

#### LOCAL GOVERNMENT:

The Economic Impact Statement for the bill states the bill will have no fiscal impact as the City already funds all maintenance and operations of the facilities within the property.

**STORAGE NAME:** h4057c.SAC

**DATE:** 2/6/2026

## RELEVANT INFORMATION

### SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

#### State Lands

The State of Florida owns lands for many purposes including preservation, conservation, recreation, water management, historic preservation, and administration of government. These lands include all:

- Swamp and overflowed lands held by the state or that may inure to the state;
- Lands owned by the state by right of its sovereignty;<sup>1</sup>
- Internal improvement lands proper;
- Tidal lands;
- Lands covered by shallow waters of the ocean or gulf, or bays or lagoons thereof, and all lands owned by the state covered by fresh water;
- Parks, reservations, or lands or bottoms set aside in the name of the state, excluding lands held for transportation facilities and transportation corridors and canal rights-of-way; and
- Lands that have accrued or may accrue to the state.<sup>2</sup>

State lands are held in trust for the use and benefit of the people of Florida by the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund (Board).<sup>3</sup> The Board consists of the Governor, Attorney General, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Agriculture.<sup>4</sup> The Board may sell, transfer, and administer state lands in the manner consistent with state law.<sup>5</sup>

The Division of State Lands within the Department of Environmental Protection generally performs all staff duties and functions related to the acquisition, administration, and disposition of state lands, although certain staff duties may be performed by water management districts, the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, and the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.<sup>6</sup>

#### City of DeFuniak Springs

Established in 1901,<sup>7</sup> the City of DeFuniak Springs (City) is located in Walton County in the Florida Panhandle, approximately 30 miles north of the Gulf of America and 120 miles west of Tallahassee.<sup>8</sup> The City's historic downtown district features Victorian-era architecture and the perfectly round Lake DeFuniak. The City's estimated population in 2024 was 7,048.<sup>9</sup>

#### Harbeson Field

The parcel of land known as Harbeson Field is currently state land that is leased by the City.<sup>10</sup> The property contains a fire station, community center, and skate park.<sup>11</sup> The City is ineligible for federal and state grants for improvements to any of the existing structures on the property due to not having legal title to the land. The

<sup>1</sup> These are “sovereignty submerged lands,” which include, but are not limited to, tidal lands, islands, sand bars, shallow banks, and lands waterward of the ordinary or mean high water line, beneath navigable fresh water or beneath tidally-influenced waters, to which the State of Florida acquired title on March 3, 1845, by virtue of statehood, and which have not been heretofore conveyed or alienated. R. 18-21.003(67), F.A.C.

<sup>2</sup> [S. 253.03\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>3</sup> [S. 253.001, F.S.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [S. 253.02\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>5</sup> *Id.*

<sup>6</sup> [S. 253.002\(1\), F.S.](#)

<sup>7</sup> DeFuniak Springs, [City Charter](#) (last visited Feb. 4, 2026).

<sup>8</sup> Visit Florida, [DeFuniak Springs](#) (last visited Feb. 4, 2026).

<sup>9</sup> United States Census Bureau, [DeFuniak Springs](#) (last visited Feb. 4, 2026).

<sup>10</sup> City of DeFuniak Springs, [Notice of Intent to Seek Legislation](#) (last visited Feb. 4, 2026).

<sup>11</sup> Ruby Kearce, [DeFuniak Springs City Council discusses future of DeFuniak Springs Fire Department](#), The DeFuniak Springs Herald, Vol. 135, No. 35 (Aug. 27, 2025) (last visited Feb. 4, 2026).

Economic Impact Statement for the bill states that the City has a long-term lease for the property with the State. By owning the property, the City would be able to pursue grants to enhance public safety and recreation facilities.

In November 2000, the City signed a 50-year lease agreement with the Board for Harbeson Field.<sup>12</sup> Under the lease terms, the City manages the property for public outdoor recreational purposes, along with other related uses.

### Local Bill Forms

The Florida Constitution prohibits the passage of any special act unless a notice of intention to seek enactment of the bill has been published as provided by general law or the act is conditioned to take effect only upon approval by referendum vote of the electors in the area affected.<sup>13</sup> A legal advertisement of the proposed bill must be placed in a newspaper of general circulation or published on a publicly accessible website<sup>14</sup> at least 30 days prior to the introduction of the local bill in the House or Senate.<sup>15</sup> The bill was noticed in the [DeFuniak Springs Herald on Dec. 3, 2025](#).

The House local bill policy requires a completed and signed Local Bill Certification Form and Economic Impact Statement Form be filed with the Clerk of the House at the time the local bill is filed or as soon thereafter as possible.<sup>16</sup> Under the policy, a committee or subcommittee may not consider a local bill unless these forms have been filed. The following forms have been submitted for the bill:

- [Local Bill Certification Form](#)
- [Economic Impact Statement Form](#)

## BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
<a href="#">Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee</a>	15 Y, 0 N, As CS	1/20/2026	Darden	Hilliard
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed references from the “Town of DeFuniak Springs” to the “City of DeFuniak Springs.”</li> </ul>			
<a href="#">Natural Resources &amp; Disasters Subcommittee</a>	15 Y, 0 N	2/4/2026	Skinner	Jones
<a href="#">State Affairs Committee</a>			Williamson	Hilliard

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**THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.**  
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<sup>12</sup> Lease Agreement between the Board of Trustees of the Internal Improvement Trust Fund and the City of DeFuniak Springs (Nov. 20, 2000), available at Fla. Dept. of Environmental Protection, [Board of Trustees Land Document System](#), Document #4311 (last visited Feb. 4, 2026).

<sup>13</sup> [Art. III, s. 10, Fla. Const.](#)

<sup>14</sup> [S. 50.0311\(2\), F.S.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [S. 11.02, F.S.](#) If there is no newspaper circulated throughout or published in the county and no publicly accessible website has been designated, notice must be posted for at least 30 days in at least three public places in the county, one of which must be at the courthouse.

<sup>16</sup> Intergovernmental Affairs Subcommittee, [Local Bill Policies and Procedures Manual](#), p. 11 (last visited Feb. 4, 2026).