

# Wakulla County

## 12th Annual Investment Report

For

Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2022

Prepared by the Wakulla County Clerk of Court, Finance Department



Board of County Commissioners,

As your Clerk of Court, it is my constitutional duty to keep you informed of Wakulla County's (the County) investments and to provide an independent check and balance on County finances to ensure your tax dollars are safe and being used in a sound financial manner.

The Clerk's Office is tasked with the responsibility of being the clerk and accountant to the Board of County Commissioners and custodian of County funds, among many other duties, as outlined in Florida Constitution Article VIII 1(d) and Florida Statute 125.17.

As part of being the custodian of County funds, we have the responsibility to invest the County's excess or surplus funds. Surplus funds are those funds that are on hand at any point in time that are above and beyond the funds needed to pay current obligations of the County. For example, the County collects most of its ad valorem taxes in the months of December – February, but most of these funds will not be needed until July – September. All things being equal, some years have less surplus funds than others due to the number of or size of the capital projects ongoing during the fiscal year. These surplus funds are invested until they are needed. Wakulla County uses Section 218.415, Florida Statutes, entitled "Investment of Local Government Surplus Funds" as its Investment Policy.

In accordance with transparency, proper governance, and fiscal accountability, I provide you and the citizens of Wakulla County with an annual investment activity report. This report is written in such a manner that non-financial readers may have a better understanding of the County's investment policy, activity and how its investments impact the overall health of the County's finances and vice versa. The report that follows is for the fiscal year ended September 30, 2022.

Our office is charged with three primary responsibilities related to the investment of the County's surplus funds – safety, liquidity and competitive returns with a minimum of risks. The optimization of investment income will always be last to safety and liquidity. As the accountant to the BOCC, I am glad to report that the County's surplus funds were safe and liquid even though investment income decreased this fiscal year. While investment income is not the top priority of our investment activity, it is an important component to the budget each year. Investment income is a "passive income" that allows the County to reduce the need for imposing additional taxes.

I am honored to serve as your Clerk of Court. I remain dedicated to promoting transparency and accountability in reporting the financial activities of our County in the investment of your taxpayer dollars. If you have any questions concerning the contents of this or any other report of our office, please contact me or my staff.

In your service,

Greg James  
Wakulla County Clerk of Courts



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## SUMMARY OF INVESTMENT POLICY

The County does not have a stand-alone investment policy. Instead, Section 218.415, Florida Statutes serves as the County's investment policy. The following summarizes the investment policy of Section 218.415, Florida Statutes.

### Scope

This policy applies to all cash in all funds, restricted or unrestricted, that are under the control of the Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) that are deemed "surplus" funds based on the current cash flow needs of the County. A list of the County's surplus funds as of September 30, 2022 will be provided later in this report.

The investment policy does not apply to any funds or accounts that may be in the County's possession which are required a) to meet the current obligations of the County and b) to be held in a separate account pursuant to a legally binding agreement such as debt sinking funds, grant funds, or other funds legally set aside. A list of the County's funds not available for investment as of September 30, 2022 will be provided later in this report.

### Investment Objectives

There are three (3) investment objectives of the County, listed in order of importance: safety, liquidity, and return on investment. The order of these objectives is intended to minimize the risks inherent to any investment of funds.

The risks to the safety of County funds are minimized by a) limiting the types of investment instruments to those approved by F.S. 218.415(17) and only using qualified public depositories (QPD's) as defined in Chapter 280, Florida Statutes and b) by diversifying the County's funds across a number of investment options. The risks to the liquidity of County funds are minimized by measuring the County's short-term cash needed to meet its obligations and monitoring the weighted average maturity of its investments. The risks to the return on investment of County funds are managed by monitoring market and economic conditions (i.e. fixed versus variable rates and length of maturity) on a routine basis.

There are five (5) components of investment risk: custodian credit risk, interest rate risk, credit risk, concentration risk and foreign currency risk. The Clerk's Office limits the County's exposure to these risks by following the sound investment policies established in F.S. 218.415. More information on these investment risks are discussed in the County's Annual Financial Report.

The safety and liquidity of principle is more important than interest income. With these objectives in this order, the County has met its objectives if 1) no principle is ever lost, 2) surplus funds are available when needed to meet current obligations, and 3) if the County's surplus funds earned a reasonable and prudent level of interest income.

The Clerk's Office monitors the cash balances of the County's funds on a daily basis. The County's liquidity requirements to meet current obligations are based on recent historical averages, current capital project activity and routine conversations with the County Administrator and Budget Officer. The Clerk's Office ensures that the County's investment portfolio does not have an average maturity level that exceeds these current liquidity needs. The maturity of investments can affect the liquidity of the funds invested. As of September 30, 2022, all of the County's funds were held in instruments that were 100% liquid with all balances available on a daily or next day basis. As such, there is no weighted average maturity of investments as of September 30, 2022. This is important to note when comparing the interest rates the County is getting with the interest rates of other optional investment instruments that would require the surplus funds to be unavailable for a period of time.

As of September 30, 2022, the County complied with the investment objectives outlined above. No principal was lost during the fiscal year, all current obligations were met on time in the face of a decline in investment income compared with the prior fiscal year.

### **Prudence, Ethical Standards & Continuing Education**

The Clerk's Office has adopted the "Prudent Person Rule" which states that "Investments should be made with judgment and care, under circumstances then prevailing, which persons of prudence, discretion and intelligence exercise in the management of their own affairs, not for speculation, but for investment, considering the probable safety of their capital as well as the probable income to be derived from the investment."

There are a number of ethical standards and codes of conduct which must be adhered to by the employees of the Clerk's Office. Those include but may not be limited to:

- Part III of Chapter 112, Florida Statutes – The Code of Ethics for Public Officers and Employees
- Article II, Section 8, Florida Constitution – The "Sunshine Amendment"
- Section 1.4 of Wakulla Ordinance 2015-2 – "Procurement Policy Ethics"

The Clerk's Office ensures that those employees responsible for making investment decisions complete annual continuing education in subjects or courses of study related to investment practices and products. As of September 30, 2022, the Clerk's Office complied with these standards.

### **List Of Authorized Deposits & Investments**

The County is authorized to deposit funds in any bank that meets the criteria of a "qualified public depository" (QPD) pursuant to Chapter 280, Florida Statutes. While not legally required, the Clerk's Office prefers to maintain deposits in QPD banks that have a local presence within the County for a number of reasons.

Since the County has not adopted an official investment policy, Section 218.415(17) requires the County to restrict its investments to the following:

- The Local Government Surplus Funds Trust Fund (commonly referred to as Florida Prime)
- Any intergovernmental investment pool authorized pursuant to the Florida Inter-local Cooperation Act of 1969 as provided in Section 163.01, Florida Statutes
- Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) registered money market funds with the highest credit quality rating from a nationally recognized rating agency
- Interest-bearing time deposits or savings accounts in qualified public depositories, as defined in Section 280.02, Florida Statutes
- Direct obligations of the U.S. Treasury
- Financial deposit instruments that are insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation (FDIC) in federally insured banks or savings and loan associations

As of September 30, 2022, the County's deposits and investments were limited to these types of authorized investments. The County's funds were invested in intergovernmental investment pools, money market funds and QPD's.

### **Portfolio Composition, Risk & Diversification**

The Clerk's Office routinely monitors the composition of the County's investment portfolio to ensure surplus funds are properly diversified in order to reduce "concentration risk". Since the County does not have a written investment policy and the risk to the safety and liquidity of County funds is minimized due to the investment restrictions listed above, there are no specific percentages or parameters that must be met in its portfolio composition.

While no exact portfolio composition was required as of September 30, 2022, the Clerk's Office ensured throughout the year that the County's investment portfolio was well diversified across several banking institutions and investment pools.

### **Safekeeping & Third-Party Custodial Agreements**

Every security purchased by the County shall be properly earmarked and:

- If registered with the issuer or its agents, must be immediately placed for safekeeping in a location that protects the County's interest in the security.
- If in book entry form, must be held for the credit of the County by a depository chartered by the Federal Government, the State of Florida or any other state or territory of the United States which has a branch or principal place of business in the State of Florida, or by a national association organized and existing under the

laws of the United States which is authorized to accept and execute trusts and which is doing business in the State of Florida and must be kept by the depository in an account separate and apart from the assets of the financial institution.

- If physically issued to the holder but not registered with the issuer or its agents, must be immediately placed for safekeeping in a secured vault. Securities should be held by a third-party and all securities purchased by the County and all collateral obtained by the County should be properly designated as an asset of the County.

As of September 30, 2022, the County's investments in intergovernmental investment pools were approved by the BOCC and an inter-local agreement or indenture of trust and an instrument of adoption was signed with each investment pool which outlines the safekeeping and custodial agreements with the County.

### **Acquisition & Bid Requirements**

The Clerk's Office routinely monitors the availability of new or additional authorized investment options for the County's surplus funds. The Clerk's Office shall, upon approval of the Board, open new or additional investment accounts as it deems prudent in fulfilling the investment objectives and goals of the County. Due to the limited investment options, formal competitive bids are not required for the investment of surplus funds.

Investments in any intergovernmental investment pool, money market fund, time deposit or savings account or U.S. Treasuries should be determined by its liquidity (maturity) and by the current interest rate being offered at the time of consideration – both of which are publicly advertised for all of these investment options so no bidding is required.

As of September 30, 2022, all deposit accounts had been opened in accordance with the County's procurement policy and the investment accounts that were open were compared to other investment options and remain the most favorable (safety, liquidity and interest rates) to meet the County's investment objectives.

### **Sale & Disposition**

Authorized personnel of the Clerk's Office may sell, in whole or in part, any portion of the County's investments if needed for operating purposes or for more optimal investments. All sale proceeds must be immediately placed into the proper account or fund of the County. For FY21/22, no investments were sold prematurely to meet any current financial obligations of the County. Numerous transfers between operating accounts and investment accounts were made throughout the fiscal year as needed and all transfers were recorded in accordance with procedures.

### **Internal Controls**

The Clerk's Office shall maintain written operational procedures as part of an overall system of internal controls which outlines how investment transactions are recorded, who must authorize and sign for these transactions, and who is authorized to deposit, withdraw and transfer investment funds. These internal controls should be designed to prevent losses of funds from fraud, employee error, misrepresentation by third-parties or imprudent actions by employees and create sufficient segregation of duties within the investment framework. These internal controls should be reviewed annually and audited by the independent audit firm of the County. As of September 30, 2022 the Clerk's Office had complied with all written operational procedures.

### **Reporting & Auditing**

The Clerk's Office shall prepare and submit to the BOCC an annual investment report which outlines and highlights the investment activities of the fiscal year by investment class or type, book value (and market value if different), and income earned. The Clerk's Office should provide periodic reports to County officials as needed. The County's independent audit firm who conducts the annual audit pursuant to Section 218.39, Florida Statutes, shall report, as part of the audit, whether or not the Clerk's Office has complied with Section 218.415, Florida Statutes.

This report is the annual investment report for September 30, 2022 for the County and the assurance that the Clerk's Office complied with Section 218.415, Florida Statutes is found in the County's Annual Financial Report.

# FY 2021/22 INVESTMENT REPORT

As of September 30, 2022 (Unaudited)

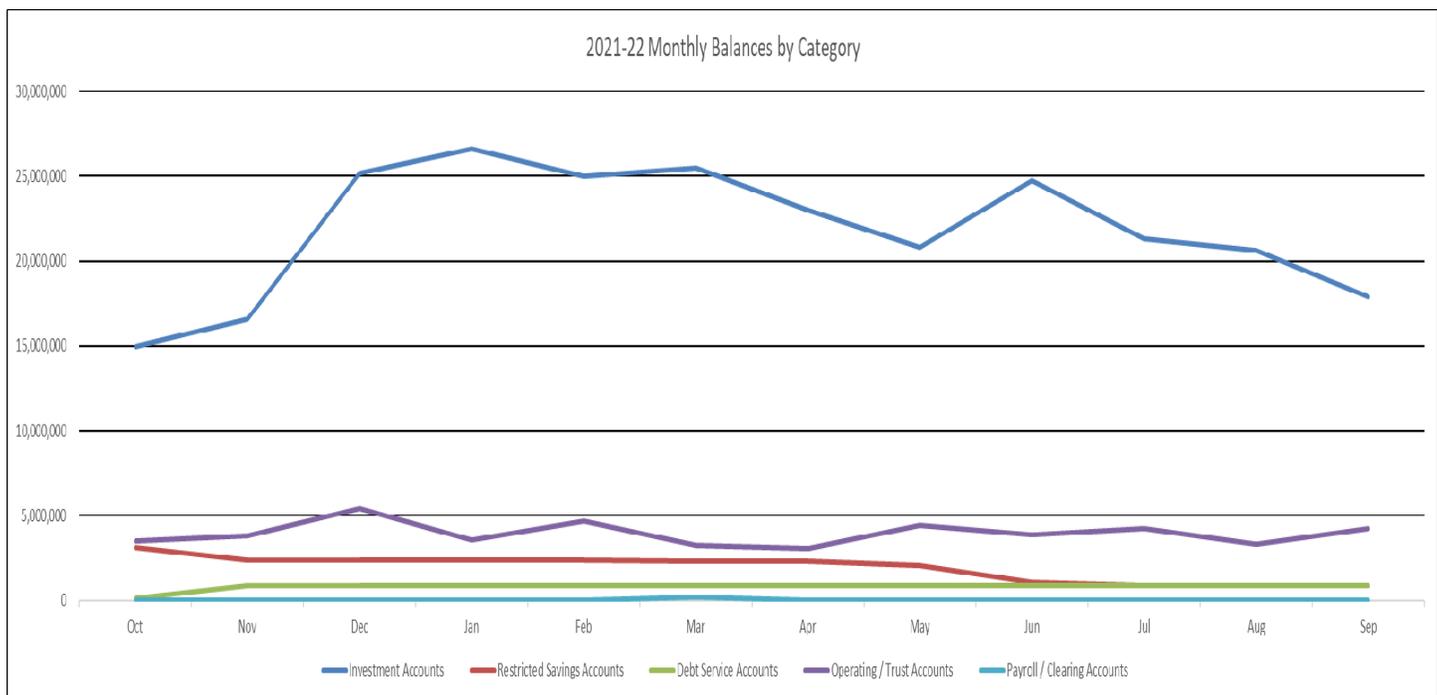
### Total Comparative Cash & Investment Balances

Cash deposits and investments held by the County as of September 30, 2022 consisted of twenty (20) bank and investment accounts. These included seven (7) investment accounts, four (4) restricted savings accounts, two (2) debt service accounts, five (5) operating/trust accounts and two (2) payroll/clearing accounts. At September 30, 2022, cash and investments amounted to \$23,893,961 compared to \$25,318,001 at September 30, 2021, a decrease of \$1,424,040. This decrease is primarily the result from the prior year funding from the Department of the Treasury and Coronavirus Relief funding.

<b>Comparative Cash &amp; Investment Balances as of September 30, 2022</b>			
	<u>9/30/2022</u>	<u>9/30/2021</u>	<u>Change</u>
<b>Portfolio Balance</b>	23,893,961	25,318,001	(1,424,040)
<b>Portfolio Blended Avg. Yield</b>	0.22%	0.16%	0.05%
<b>Fiscal Year Interest Income</b>	160,333	104,825	55,508

There is a distinction between the cash balances at fiscal year-end (shown in chart above) and average daily cash balances throughout the year. For example, the average daily cash balance available for all of FY21/22 was \$23,992,825 as compared to \$24,568,251 in FY20/21 but the year-end cash balances as of September 30 for FY21/22 totaled \$23,893,960 as compared to \$25,318,001 in FY20/21. So, the County averaged \$575,426 less in excess cash available for investment throughout the year and the County ended the year with \$1,424,040 less in cash than the previous fiscal year.

The County’s cash balances typically are at their highest in December and January of the fiscal year after most of the County’s ad valorem taxes are collected with the highest balance reaching \$33,921,083 in December of 2022 (last year the highest was \$28,180,343 in April 2021). The County’s cash balances are typically at their lowest in October and November of the fiscal year just before the collection of these taxes with the lowest balance reaching \$21,743,534 in October of 2021 (last year the lowest was \$14,242,505 in November 2020).



The composition of the County’s cash and investment portfolio changes over the course of the fiscal year. The composition of funds in FY21/22 as compared to the prior fiscal year is:

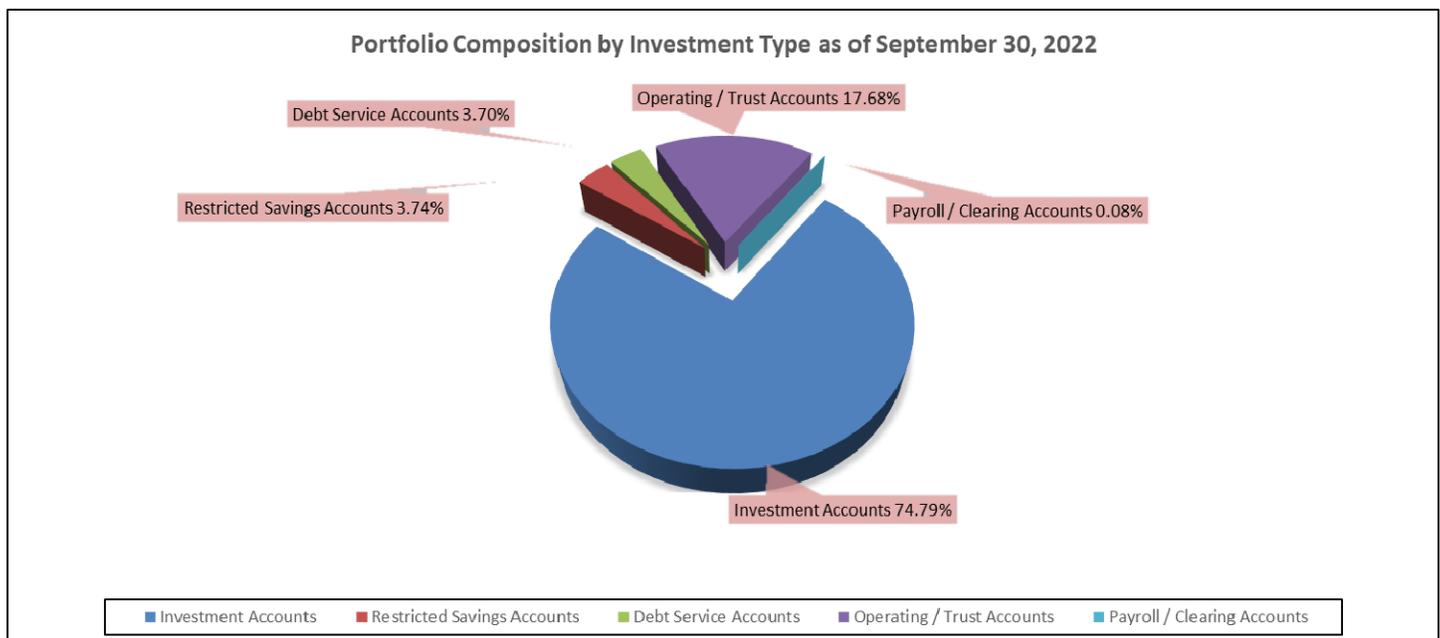
Comparative Distribution of Portfolio By Instrument Type						
Account / Investment Type	FY 21/22		FY 20/21		Increase / (Decrease) over Prior Year	
Investment Accounts	74.79%	17,870,323	70.02%	17,726,881	4.77%	143,442
Restricted Savings Accounts	3.74%	893,911	12.25%	3,101,138	-8.51%	(2,207,227)
Debt Service Accounts	3.70%	884,035	0.52%	132,277	3.18%	751,758
Operating / Trust Accounts	17.68%	4,225,621	16.48%	4,171,951	1.21%	53,670
Payroll / Clearing Accounts	0.08%	20,071	0.73%	185,754	-0.65%	(165,683)
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>23,893,961</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>25,318,001</b>	<b>0.00</b>	<b>(1,424,040)</b>

### Total Cash & Investment Balances by Instrument Type

Many of the accounts that the County has opened exist due to external requirements put upon the County by lenders and grant agencies or internal requirements established through resolution or ordinance of the BOCC. Many of these accounts either do not earn any interest (the trust accounts) or earn very minimal amounts of interest (operating, debt service and payroll/clearing accounts). As will be discussed later, this lowers the average or blended rate of return for the County. The Clerk’s Office focuses more on the interest rates for the County’s investment accounts as those surplus funds can be moved around to improve the overall interest income of the County. The following is a chart and graph of the County’s cash and investment balances by type of account and the annual blended rate of return for each account type as of September 30, 2022:

Portfolio Breakdown as of September 30, 2022				
Account / Investment Type	Number of Accounts	Book Value	Portfolio Composition	Blended Interest Rate
<b>Investment Accounts</b>	7	17,870,323	74.79%	0.55%
<b>Restricted Savings Accounts</b>	4	893,911	3.74%	0.06%
<b>Debt Service Accounts</b>	2	884,035	3.70%	0.03%
<b>Operating / Trust Accounts</b>	5	4,225,621	17.68%	0.03%
<b>Payroll / Clearing Accounts</b>	2	20,071	0.08%	0.02%
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>23,893,961</b>	<b>100.00%</b>	<b>0.22%</b>

\* The “Blended Interest Rate” is the average of all the interest rates of all the accounts held by the County over the course of the fiscal year.



### Total Comparative Portfolio Growth

The funds available for investment are directly related to a) the health of the County’s fund balances and b) the number and size of capital projects in the year. As fund balance improves, more funds are available for investment. At the same time, funds held and built up for the purpose of capital projects, for the purchase of vehicles and various equipment, or for infrastructure improvements will deplete funds available for investment when they are spent. The following is a multi-year comparison of the County’s cash and investment portfolio at the date indicated.

<b>Type of Account:</b>	<b>9/30/2022</b>	<b>9/30/2021</b>	<b>9/30/2020</b>	<b>9/30/2019</b>
Ameris Bank NOW Account	\$ 1,354,722	\$ 2,048,690	\$ 2,542,089	\$ 951,826
Ameris Restricted Savings Accounts	893,911	3,101,138	3,553,357	808,941
Ameris Bank Debt Service Accounts	884,035	132,277	255,880	254,965
Ameris Bank Operating Accounts	3,094,684	3,223,956	5,504,301	1,962,537
Ameris Payroll / Clearing Accounts	10,021	9,988	11,798	5,881
Prime Meridian Money Market	3,953,114	14,172,363	2,955,001	1,594,041
Prime Meridian Operating Account	1,130,937	947,995	586,175	1,539,983
Prime Meridian Payroll / Clearing	10,050	175,766	10,266	10,804
FL Local Govt Investment Pool	30,423	30,251	30,231	84,491
FL CLASS Investment Pool	5,535,878	504,363	503,730	3,197,668
FL FIT Investment Pool	1,767,735	760,666	759,519	5,275,661
FL SAFE Investment Pool	5,228,451	210,548	210,111	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 23,893,961</b>	<b>\$ 25,318,001</b>	<b>\$ 16,922,458</b>	<b>\$ 15,686,797</b>

A brief description of these accounts follows:

- The Ameris Bank NOW account, the Prime Meridian Bank Money Market account, the Florida Local Government Investment Trust account (FLGIT), the Florida Cooperative Liquid Assets Securities System (FLCLASS), the Florida Fixed Income Trust (FLFIT), and the Florida Surplus Asset Fund Trust (FL SAFE), which represent the actual “surplus funds” available for investment. Housing Prisoner monies held for the Sheriff’s Office are in the Florida Fixed Income Trust (FLFIT).
- The Ameris Restricted Savings accounts represent the Landfill Escrow Account, the SHIP grant funds, and the Sheriff’s Office Federal Forfeiture and Housing Prisoner funds. The Landfill Escrow, SHIP, and Sheriff Forfeiture funds must be maintained in a separate account and cannot be invested as surplus funds.
- The Ameris Debt Service accounts represent monies held to pay the annual payments of the Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) loan and the Fire/EMS loan. These funds must be maintained in these accounts and cannot be invested as surplus funds.
- The Ameris Bank and Prime Meridian Bank operating/trust accounts are the accounts used to pay the daily bills of the County, Supervisor of Elections and Clerk of Court as well as fiduciary funds held by the Clerk of Court. As operating funds and trust funds, these funds cannot be considered surplus funds.
- Prime Meridian Bank Payroll / Clearing account is the account used to process payroll and other similar clearing accounts for the Board of County Commissioners, the Clerk of Court and the Supervisor of Elections. As operating funds and trust funds, these funds cannot be considered surplus funds.

### Total Comparative Investment Income

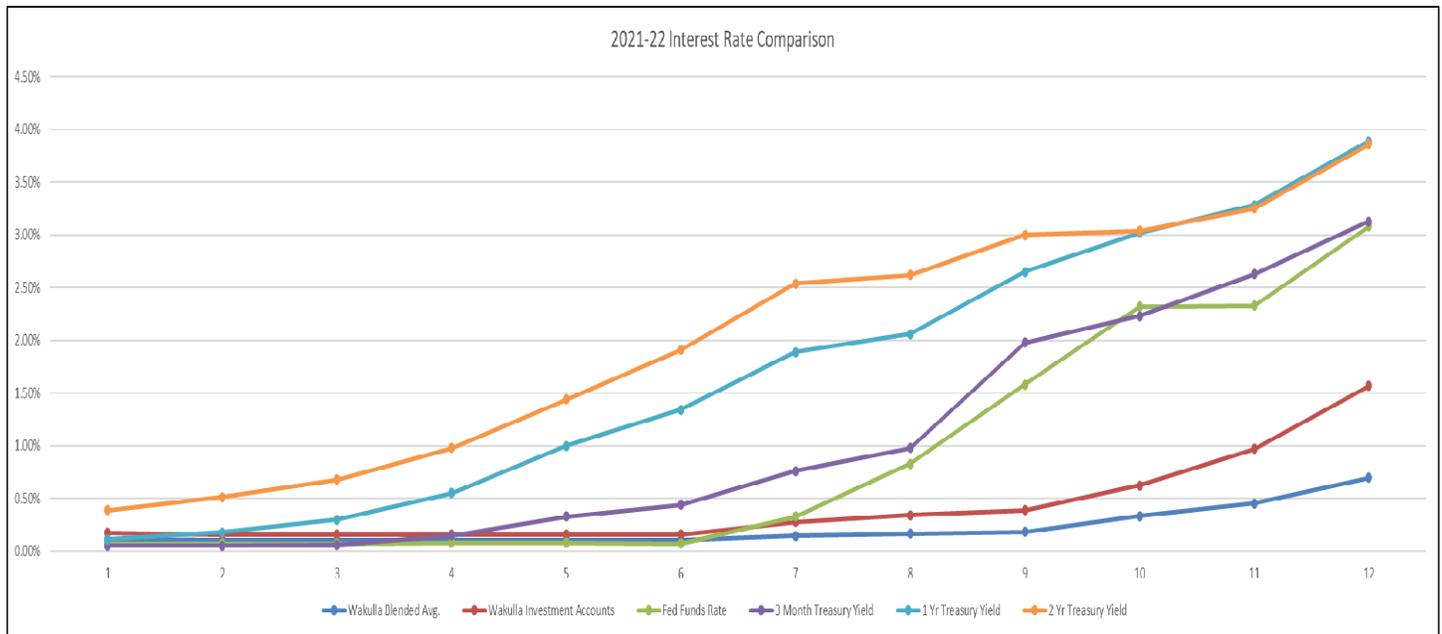
In the current fiscal year, FY21/22, investment income was \$160,333, an increase of \$55,508, or a 53% increase. The County’s total investment income increased due to a rise of short-term rates from historic low; albeit rates were less than 1% for a large portion of the year.

<b>Investment Income Comparison</b>				
<b>Fiscal Year:</b>	<b>9/30/2022</b>	<b>9/30/2021</b>	<b>9/30/2020</b>	<b>9/30/2019</b>
Investment Income:	\$ 160,333	\$ 104,825	\$ 190,680	\$ 305,217
Increase (Decrease) over (under) prior year	\$ 55,508	\$ (85,855)	\$ (114,537)	

Since Wakulla’s fund balances are the strongest they have been in recent history, if not ever, liquidity or cash-flowing daily operations is no longer a serious challenge (as discussed on the first page, liquidity is always a concern). As such, investing the County’s “surplus” funds in longer term maturities in order to achieve a higher interest rate is now a viable option. The Clerk’s office routinely examines the market rates of 3-month, 6-month, 1-year and 2-year maturities, bank certificates of deposit (CD’s) and other intergovernmental investment pool options offered by various entities in the State of Florida. The current sentiment among management is to not lock up these funds for any amount of time and, instead, to make use of the many investment options that offer competitive interest rates with daily liquidity. Due to the large number of capital projects slated for the near future, it would not be prudent to lock up funds longer than daily liquidity.

The chart below shows a comparison of the average monthly interest rates earned by the County as compared to some of the more secure rates on the open market. An analysis of the chart shows:

- Wakulla’s blended average interest rate (the dark blue line) was in-line some of the more secure rates on the open market until January 2022. This is due to the numerous increases in the Fed Funds Rate even while the County’s entire account portfolio contains numerous operating and payroll accounts that earn very little interest and, in the case of one account, earns nothing due to the restrictions placed on the funds.
- The County’s investment accounts (the red line), while maintaining daily liquidity, lagged behind most of the other rates including the 3 Mo. Treasury for the entire fiscal year. The investment accounts out-performed the Fed Funds Rate until April 2022.
- Both the 1-Year Treasuries and 2Year Treasuries out-performed when compared to the County’s investment accounts for a majority of the fiscal year. In summary, Wakulla County has been able to obtain strong interest rates, resulting in higher investment income despite the investments lagging behind the various Treasuries and Fed Funds Rate.



Investment fees should also be taken into consideration. The County’s deposit and investment accounts incur two types of fees or costs – bank fees on the primary operating account of the County and investment fees on the intergovernmental investment pools. The County’s primary operating account does not incur bank fees on a monthly basis based on the banking RFQ issued and approved by the County. The total cost in bank fees for the Ameris Bank operating account for FY21/22 was \$0 as compared to \$4,297 in FY20/21. These costs, in FY20/21 were offset by a 0.31% earning credit totaling \$7,853 resulting in net interest income of \$0 and \$5 for FY21/22 and FY20/21 respectively. The FLGIT, FLFIT, FLCLASS, and FL SAFE investment accounts all charge a fee that is expressed as a percentage which covers the pool’s management fee and portfolio expenses. The fees fluctuate, are calculated daily and netted against the daily gross interest earned. The investment income for these investments has already been reported net of these fees.

## Market, Economic & Investment Conditions

- Federal Funds Rate

The Federal Reserve's Open Market Committee (FOMC), the rate setting body of the Federal Reserve, meets eight (8) times per year. It executes monetary policy for the Federal Reserve System, the central bank of the United States. Each time it meets, the FOMC reviews the economic conditions of the US and decides whether or not to use "expansionary" or "contractionary" monetary policy. The FOMC issues forecasts at 4 of the 8 meetings.

The FOMC raised the rate eleven (15) times between 2008 and September 2022 with the closing rate at 3.15%. During the FY21/22, the FOMC maintained the Federal Funds Rate. The rate was maintained at 3.25%

What is the "Federal Funds Rate"? Essentially, it is the interest rate at which banks lend money to one another overnight to meet loan reserve requirements. The federal funds rate is a tool used by the Federal Reserve to control the supply of available money and hence, inflation and other interest rates. Raising the rate makes it more expensive to borrow. That lowers the supply of available money, which helps keep inflation in check. Lowering the rate has the opposite effect. If the Fed Funds Rate is increased, you can expect slower economic growth (Contractionary monetary policy to slow inflation) and if they lower the rate, you can expect an increase in economic growth (Expansionary monetary policy to spur inflation).  
<https://www.federalreserve.gov/monetarypolicy/fomc.htm>

- Future Rate Estimates

As of the publish date of this report (March 2023), the Federal Funds Rate currently rests between 3.00% - 3.25%. For the current FY21/22, the FOMC has maintained the rate of 3.25%.

Where will it be at the end of 2023, 2024, 2025? That depends on who you ask. The Federal Reserve indicated there would be four or five hikes in the rate in 2016 but in hindsight, there was only one (1). In 2017, the FOMC had indicated its goal was to hike the rate to 2.00% (their target rate for inflation) and the Fed Funds rate ended at 1.5% at the close of 2017. Their prediction for 2018, 2019 and 2020 was 2.1-2.4%, 2.8-3.4%, and 3.1-3.6%, respectively. At the close of 2018 the rate was at 2.5%, just over their predicted rate, while their prediction for 2019 was off track by 1.25-1.85% and for 2020, their projection was off by 3.09-3.51%. The FOMC projection for the rate in 2023, 2024 and 2025 is 5.1%, 4.1%, and 3.1%, respectively. During the first three (3) months of 2023 the Fed Funds rate was 5.00%, which is almost dead-on to their original prediction of 5.1%.

- Economic Conditions

The key to understanding the changes (actual or proposed) in the Fed Funds Rate is recognizing the relationships of the variables that make up our economy. Throughout 2022 the FOMC highlighted three (3) key variables they were focused on: inflation, employment and monetary policy. The FOMC reaffirmed its goal of 2% inflation, spoke of "maximum employment" and "price stability" in its "aggressive approach" to its monetary policy.

There are many variables in the U.S. economy and understanding their relationships and effect on each other can get complicated so this report only examines three (3): the inflation rate; the economic growth rate (GDP); and the unemployment rate. These economic variables, among others, are tracked by the Bureau of Economic Analysis <https://www.bea.gov/> and the Bureau of Labor Statistics <https://www.bls.gov/>.

- Inflation Rate

Congress has mandated that the Federal Reserve maintain the inflation rate at around 2%. Inflation is measured in several different rates or indexes. In 2022, inflation was slightly lower compared to 2021, but it was higher than any other year since 1981. The war between Russia and Ukraine contributed to increased prices for food and energy, which added to the already high inflation in the United States. The high inflation was driven by strong demand, supply constraints, and tight labor markets. The Federal Reserve uses the price index for personal consumption expenditures (PCE) as its preferred measure of inflation, which rose by 5.5 percent last year and 5.7 percent in 2021.

However, it is projected that inflation will gradually slowdown in 2023 as the factors causing demand to outpace supply in recent years start to ease. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that inflation, as measured by the PCE price index, will be 3.3 percent in 2023 and 2.4 percent in 2024. Beyond that, PCE inflation is expected to continue declining and approach the Federal Reserve's long-term target of 2 percent by 2026.

Among the different categories included in the PCE price index, food, energy, and shelter-related services are predicted to experience the largest decreases in price growth in the coming years.

- Economic Growth Rate

Economic growth is also measured in a variety of ways but the GDP, the gross domestic product, is a good, broad indicator of our economy's growth. There are many factors that affect GDP as well, such as domestic spending, net U.S. exports, the strength of the U.S. dollar, and the strength of foreign markets, just to name a few. The FOMC forecasted the GDP to decrease in 2023 to 0.5-1.5%, increase to 1.4-2.0% in 2024 and increase in 2025 to 1.6-2.0%. Note the increasing nature of this projection. The GDP increased 2.3% at the end of 2022 as compared to an increase of 4.0% at the end of 2021. By the end of the 2022 calendar year, the GDP rate was 6.5% and leading into the close of the first (1<sup>st</sup>) quarter in 2023 the rate decreased to 1.4%. The decrease is reflective of an inflationary impact on the price of goods and services.

- Unemployment Rate

As economic growth is anticipated to slow down, the unemployment rate is expected to increase from 3.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022 to 5.1 percent by the end of 2023, with an average of 4.7 percent for the entire year of 2023. However, starting in the second quarter of 2024, the unemployment rate is projected to gradually decline, reaching 4.5 percent by the end of 2027.

- Economic Forecast

The economic forecast depends on who you ask. The following is an economic forecast summary from an article titled *The Economic Outlook for 2023 to 2033 in 16 Charts* contributed by the Congressional Budget Office. It states in its overview, "U.S. GDP is expected to grow by only 0.1% in 2023. It further estimates an increase up to a 2.4% growth rate in 2024 to 2027".

Since the December 2022 FMOC meeting, the economic outlook remains much the same. The prediction in economic progress will be moderate over the coming months. The committee decided during the March 2023 meeting to raise the fed funds rate between 4.75%-5.00% and are expecting to increase throughout the year to combat inflation. At the time of publishing this report the Federal Reserve has indicated it will closely monitor the incoming information and determine the effects on monetary policy.

### **Disclaimer, Disclosures & Notes**

1. The Public Depositor Annual Report to the Chief Financial Officer was provided to the Department of Financial Services for the period ending September 30, 2022 as required by Chapter 280, Florida Statutes. All of the County's bank accounts were either in qualified public depositories or in statutorily approved investment pools. For more information on what this means or to obtain this report, please contact the Finance Department of the Clerk of Court.

2. The information provided in this report is believed to be accurate and correct but this report has not been audited. Future outcomes are not based on historical results and none of the information provided herein should be used to make personal financial or investment decisions. Although, pursuant to Chapter 119, Florida Statutes, this report is a public record and its distribution is not limited, this report is intended solely for the use of Wakulla County, Florida's management and is not intended to be and should not be used by any other party.

3. Some of the information and data provided within this report may be found at these sites:

- Section 218.415, Florida Statutes – [http://www.leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/index.cfm?App\\_mode=Display\\_Statute&Search\\_String=&URL=0200-0299/0218/0218PARTIVContentsIndex.html](http://www.leg.state.fl.us/STATUTES/index.cfm?App_mode=Display_Statute&Search_String=&URL=0200-0299/0218/0218PARTIVContentsIndex.html)
- Chapter 280, Florida Statutes - <https://www.flsenate.gov/Laws/Statutes/2012/Chapter280>

- Florida Fixed Income Trust - <https://fl-fit.com/>
- Florida Cooperative Liquid Assets Securities System - <https://www.flclass.com/>
- Florida Local Government Investment Trust - <http://www.floridatrustonline.com/>
- Florida Surplus Asset Fund Trust - <https://gps.pmanetwork.com/>
- Federal Reserve's Open Market Committee - <https://www.federalreserve.gov/monetarypolicy/fomc.htm>
- Federal Reserve Historical Interest Rates - <http://www.federalreserve.gov>
- Bureau of Economic Analysis <https://www.bea.gov/>
- Bureau of Labor Statistics <https://www.bls.gov/>.
- Congressional Budget Office [The Economic Outlook for 2023 to 2033 in 16 Charts \(cbo.gov\)](#)

END OF REPORT