

Without power, man died in ice storm

Molly Davis
Nashville Tennessean | USA TODAY NETWORK

NASHVILLE – The morning light shone through the window, forming a triangle on the floor beside the twin bed where James Mitchell had been found dead following the devastating ice storm in January.

The street outside the Nashville apartment was quiet and warmed by a rare early February sun as Mitchell’s sisters, Janet Carter and Mildred East, cleaned out the apartment where he died alone, in the dark and cold, without power and trapped by ice in the aftermath of Winter Storm Fern.

Carter, his primary caretaker, couldn’t get to him or reach him by phone until Jan. 28, when she found him unresponsive.

Mitchell, 92, was one of five people in Nashville suspected to have died as a result of the ice storm that seized the region and knocked out power for hundreds of thousands of households. Beyond those in Davidson County, where Nashville is located, the Tennessee Department of Health reported 26 deaths statewide due to the storm.

Carter remembers Mitchell as an older brother she looked up to as an authority figure due to their 22-year age difference. He was someone who loved jigsaw and crossword puzzles and was stubbornly independent in his final years. Someone who she’ll miss checking up on.

Carter laments the lack of closure she feels regarding the dark, powerless days that preceded her brother’s death. She’s comforted to know she did everything within her power to protect Mitchell. But she wishes there had been more clarity from city leaders on how to keep loved ones safe during the storm.

“They knew this storm was coming,” she said. “They had a lot of time to make plans and tell people what to do.”

The Medical Examiner’s Office is still working to determine the cause of death for Mitchell and the four other potential storm victims. Those results could take several weeks to be finalized.

Mitchell had supplies and a space heater connected to a generator, but Carter, who is 70, was unable to drive through the ice to reach him and feared it was too dangerous to relocate him along ice-covered walkways and roads.

Now that Mitchell is gone, Carter is holding fast to her family and her faith, which surrounded her on the day of his funeral, Feb. 10. It would have been his 93rd birthday.

At the funeral, there was laughter; there were tears and children playing. There was singing. Mitchell was laid in a dark navy casket and dressed in a T-shirt that had been made for a family reunion picnic.

Carter’s daughter, Marissa McDowell, spent a long time gazing down at her great uncle before his casket was closed. She touched his arm. Her daughter tried to reach up and wipe her tears.



Mildred East, left, and Janet Carter, right, both sisters of James Mitchell, admire a memento while cleaning out his home.

ALAN POIZNER/NASHVILLE TENNESSEAN

Carter woke up on Jan. 25 to an ice-laden Nashville and no way to leave her apartment. She spoke briefly with her brother, who had a landline phone in his apartment.

At some point that day, Mitchell’s apartment lost power.

On Jan. 26, Carter called the maintenance employee she knew from Andrew Jackson Courts, a public housing complex owned by Nashville’s Metropolitan Development and Housing Agency. She asked him to check on Mitchell because she couldn’t reach him and suspected he lost power. Like many in Nashville, she had no idea how long power would be out and didn’t know what to expect.

On Jan. 27, Carter’s daughter was able to check on Mitchell. She brought him blankets and food, and made sure he had all the medicine he needed. She noticed someone had set up a generator outside his apartment and placed a small space heater inside, connected by an extension cord. The heater was putting out some warmth, she said, but it was still chilly inside the apartment, and the steps leading up to Mitchell’s second floor unit were covered in a thick layer of ice.

McDowell told Carter what she saw. “She said, ‘Mommy, things are so bad over here,’” Carter said.

Carter assumes the maintenance employee she called was the one who set up the generator and space heater, but she’s not sure.

The following day, Carter was able to safely drive over to Andrew Jackson Courts. She stepped gingerly over the icy grass and gripped the railing as she made her way up the slippery staircase. She noticed the generator was quiet.

She went inside the apartment. Mitchell was unresponsive.

“I just didn’t want it to be that way,” she said.

NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARINGS

The Martin County Local Planning Agency and the Board of County Commissioners will conduct public hearings on the following item:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA, AMENDING DIVISION 1. UNIFORM REDEVELOPMENT STANDARDS, SECTION 12.1.01, PURPOSE AND INTENT, TABLE 12.1.02, ARTICLE 3 STANDARDS APPLICABLE TO ARTICLE 12, REGARDING RECREATIONAL VEHICLE PARKS, ARTICLE 12, COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT CODE, LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, MARTIN COUNTY CODE; AMENDING DIVISION 5. HOBE SOUND, SECTION 12.5.04, DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS, BY ADDING SECTION 12.5.04.6, RECREATIONAL VEHICLE PARKS, ARTICLE 12, COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT CODE, LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, MARTIN COUNTY CODE; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTING PROVISIONS, SEVERABILITY, APPLICABILITY, FILING WITH THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, EFFECTIVE DATE, AND CODIFICATION.

Subject: This is a request by Floridays Mobile Park, LLC, for approval of an amendment to Division 1, Uniform Redevelopment Standards, and Division 5, Hobe Sound, Article 12, Community Redevelopment Code, Land Development Regulations, Martin County Code, regarding recreational vehicle parks in the Hobe Sound Community Redevelopment Area.

Public Hearing: Local Planning Agency
Date: Thursday, March 5, 2026
Time: 7 PM or as soon thereafter as the item may be heard.

Public Hearing: Board of County Commissioners
Date: Tuesday, March 10, 2026
Time: 9 AM or as soon thereafter as the item may be heard.

Place: Martin County Administrative Center, 2401 SE Monterey Road, Stuart, Florida 34996

All interested persons are invited to attend and be heard.

Persons with disabilities who need an accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding are entitled, at no cost, to the provision of certain assistance. This does not include transportation to and from the meeting. Please contact the Office of the ADA Coordinator at (772) 320-3131, or the Office of the County Administrator at (772) 288-5400, or in writing to 2401 SE Monterey Road, Stuart, FL, 34996, no later than three days before the hearing date. Persons using a TTY device, please call 711 Florida Relay Services.

If any person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at the meetings or hearings of any board, committee, agency, council, or advisory group, that person will need a record of the proceedings and, for such purpose, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record should include the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

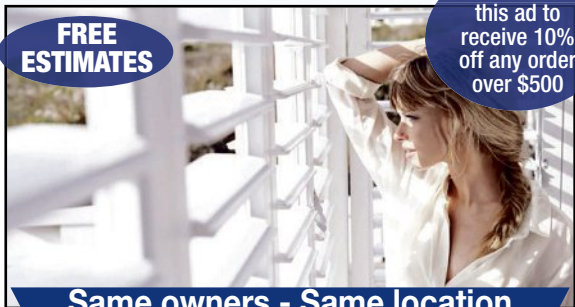
For further information, including copies of the original application documents or agenda item materials, please call the Growth Management Department at (772) 288-5495.

Prior to the public hearings, written comments should be sent to Paul Schilling, Growth Management Director, pschilli@martin.fl.us or 2401 S.E. Monterey Road, Stuart, Florida 34996.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING
SUPPLEMENTING FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026
MARTIN COUNTY BUDGETS

NOTICE IS HERBY GIVEN that the Board of County Commissioners of Martin County, Florida, will hold a public hearing on **February 24, 2026**, beginning at **9:00 a.m.**, or as soon thereafter as the item may be heard, in the Commission Chambers at the Martin County **Administrative Center, 2401 SE Monterey Road, Stuart, Florida**, for the purpose of hearing comments from the public regarding the changes to the County's FY 2025-2026 budget:

Taxing Authority	Increase Amount
General Countywide	\$67,533,910
District One MSTU	\$120,750
District Two MSTU	\$1,356,923
District Three MSTU	\$278,745
District Four MSTU	\$1,069,175
District Five MSTU	\$230,296
Fire Rescue MSTU	\$11,016,569
Special District A-61 (Hutchinson Island) MSTU	\$216,324
County Wide MSTU Unincorporated	\$8,332,219

Fund	
General Unincorporated	\$5,508,229
Building and Permitting	\$3,615,646
Sea Turtle Beach Cafe	\$4,775
Seaside Cafe	\$554,672
Jensen Beach and Manatee Pocket Mooring Fields	\$95,295
Community Broadband Network	\$1,051,264
Impact Fees	\$8,245,442
Special Revenue Funds	\$14,386,253
Utilities & Solid Waste	\$15,741,574
Airport	\$3,547,009
Golf Course	\$1,005,408
Debt Service	\$1,307,416
Other Capital Projects	\$16,784,919
County Trust	\$264,774
Internal Service	\$10,320,067
Community Redevelopment	\$1,304,025
Franchise Fees	\$8,771,750

If you are a person with a disability who needs an accommodation in order to participate in this proceeding, you are entitled, at no cost to you, to the provision of certain assistance. This does not include transportation to and from the meeting. Please contact the office of the County Administrator at (772) 288-5503 or in writing to 2401 SE Monterey Road, Stuart, FL 34996 no later than three days before the hearing date. If you are hearing or voice impaired, please call (772) 320-3131.

If any person decides to appeal any decision made with respect to any matter considered at the meeting or hearings of any board, committee, commission, agency, council or advisory group, that person will need a record of the proceedings and for such purpose, may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record should include the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

A detailed description of the budget can be found on the Martin County website at www.martin.fl.us.

BY ORDER OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MARTIN COUNTY, FLORIDA
Don Donaldson, County Administrator

TR-43479875

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