

**MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
SEPTEMBER 8, 2025
7:00 P.M.**

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This Commission Meeting was conducted utilizing Communications Media Technology. Some Staff members were present in the Commission Chambers while others were present via the Zoom application.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Dan West, Mayor
Brian Williams, Vice-Mayor/ Commissioner Ward 3
Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 2
Sunshine Joiner, Commissioner, Ward 2
Harold Smith, Commissioner Ward 1
Scott Whitaker, Commissioner-at-Large 1

STAFF PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Jim Freeman, City Clerk
Marisa Powers, City Attorney
Mohammed Rayan, Public Works Director
Scott Tyler, Chief of Police
Rowena Young-Gopie, CRA Director
Cassi Bailey, Assistant City Clerk
Annie Jones, Executive Assistant
Cheryl Miller, Finance Director

STAFF PRESENT ELECTRONICALLY:

Todd Williams, Information Technology (IT) Consultant

1. Mayor West called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance, and Commissioner Joiner gave the prayer for tonight's meeting.

All persons intending to address the City Commission were duly sworn.

2. CITY COMMISSION AGENDA APPROVAL:

MOTION: Commissioner Joiner moved, Commissioner Whitaker seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to approve September 8, 2025, City Commission Agenda.

3. NATIONAL USHER AWARENESS DAY PROCLAMATION:

- Ms. Morgan, her daughter Zoe, and Ms. Susie were invited to the dais.
- Mayor West read the proclamation for Usher Syndrome Awareness Day, designating September 20, 2025, as Usher Syndrome Awareness Day in the city.

- Ms. Morgan spoke about Usher syndrome, raising awareness of the challenges faced by individuals and families affected by the condition. She emphasized the strength and resilience of those living with Usher syndrome.
- The commission took a picture with Ms. Morgan and Zoe.

4. POLICE OFFICER RECOGNITIONS (CHIEF TYLER):

This will be moved to a future meeting.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Sophie and Ed Bachtel spoke on the purchase of the masonic lodge.

Mr. Barnebey said he believes the Masonic Lodge is not under contract with them at this time. The code enforcement issue was that they would have 6 months to get the property in to compliance. If it is brought into compliance, there wouldn't be any fines. No one so far has brought it into compliance. Discussions continued regarding the process since it was voted on June 2nd.

Mr. Bachtel said they have been under contract with Masonic Lodge since early May.

Sophie Bachtel, the prospective buyer of the Masonic Lodge, expressed concerns about the proposed settlement agreement.

- Sophie Bachtel stated that the original agreement stipulated Masonic Lodge would pay \$7,000 to sell the property with all liens released.
- Mr. Bachtel was concerned about being included in the settlement agreement and potentially being penalized \$9,445, more than the Masonic Lodge itself.
- She expressed commitment to restoring the property and requested a discussion with city officials to find a fair solution.
- The agreement stated compliance within six months, otherwise fines would apply.
- He stated that if the property complies, there would be no additional fine.

Mayor West stated he hadn't been directly involved, but the purpose of code enforcement is to get the property into compliance.

Commissioner Williams clarified the commission voted to accept the settlement offer for \$7,000 and authorize the release of liens upon payment.

Jim Freeman noted the assessed fines were reduced from a couple hundred thousand to \$7,000, representing the hard costs.

There was discussion about whether Masonic Lodge had attempted to pay \$7,000 and if the city attorney's office had changed the agreement.

The prospective buyer stated that the contract had been delayed, partly because of the settlement agreement.

The prospective buyer stated that they were ready to close and start work on the property before receiving the agreement stating that the buyer, as well as Masonic Lodge, could be held responsible for \$200,000 if renovations weren't completed in 90 days.

6. CONSENT AGENDA:

- a. Ratification of Ordinance 2025-06
- b. Resolution 2025-15 Budget Amendment
- c. City Legal Invoices

MOTION: Joiner moved, Whitaker seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to approve the Consent Agenda as presented by staff for items 6a and 6b.

- Commissioner Smith pulled item 6c. to question a closing listed on the legal invoices. That is for the property that was just being discussed, Masonic Lodge.
- Item C, regarding foreclosure on 1607 Third Avenue West, was pulled for discussion.
- Mr. Barnaby clarified the \$10,000 fee related to the foreclosure on 1607 Third Avenue West. Mr. Barnabey stated the fines have gotten very high.
- Commissioner Williams questioned the high cost of foreclosure in relation to the building and wants to ensure the city makes a profit.
- There was discussion about the fees associated with the foreclosure action.

MOTION: Commissioner Smith moved, Commissioner Joiner seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to approve item 6c.

7. PUBLIC HEARING- TENTATIVE MILLAGE AND TENTATIVE FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET (J. FREEMAN):

Mayor West opened the Public Hearing at 7:37 pm to discuss the tentative millage rate and tentative FY 2026 budget.

Mayor West:

- Discussed the percentage increase/decrease in proposed tentative millage over rolled back rate.
- Discussed the specific purposes for which the ad valorem revenues are being increased/decreased.
- Discussed the proposed tentative budget.

Mayor West closed the Public Hearing at 7:40 pm.

- Mr. Freeman explained the process for the public hearing. There would be two separate resolutions. Both will be read in its entirety.
- The proposed millage rate for fiscal year 2026 is 5.9671 per \$1,000 of taxable value, which is 0.24% greater than the rollback rate of 5.9529.
- The citywide budget is \$50,838,663, which is 15.4% higher than last year.
- Ms. Cornwall noted that the budget was based on the current millage rate and that the commission had previously considered a slightly higher millage rate.
- The public hearing was closed.

a.) Resolution 2025-16: FY 2026 Tentative Millage (Resolution was read in its entirety.)

MOTION: Commissioner Joiner moved, Commissioner Whitaker seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to adopt Resolution 2025-16 at 7:41 pm.

b.) Resolution 2025-17: FY 2026 Tentative Budget (Resolution was read in its entirety.)

MOTION: Commissioner Joiner moved, Commissioner Whitaker seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to adopt Resolution 2025-17 at 7:42 pm.

Mayor West recessed the City Commission Meeting to open September 8, 2025, CRA Board Meeting at 7:49pm

Mayor West reconvened the City Commission Meeting at 7:50 pm

8. DEPARTMENT HEADS' COMMENTS:

Mr. Rayan provided the following updates:

- Lighting at Haben Blvd. has been completed. They will add additional signage to signal the roundabout.
- Will Add additional lighting along 7th Street extension
- Ward 1 Phase III ongoing- contractors on schedule- hoping to complete on time.

Mr. Freeman thanked them for their support for the budget process.

- Next meeting- final budget hearing Tuesday, September 23rd.
- Have been working on the holiday lights.
- 2 unsolicited proposals will be coming back to them on stormwater pond next to PD and old PD site
- At the next meeting during the workshop- Senator Robinson and Representative Boyd should be here to thank them for their efforts during past legislative session.

9. MAYORS REPORT:

- Thanked the Directors.
- Brownfield event starts tomorrow in Palmetto.
- 9/11 on Thursday he will be at park in Bradenton to hold the services in tribute, starting at 9am.

10. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS:

Commissioner Williams agreed with Commissioner Cornwell.

Commission Williams asked where we stand with the railroad right of way. Mr. Freeman answered that the city proposed an initial offer to CXS- they provided a response that was

much higher than expected. He's working with the Mayor to respond to their counteroffer.

He will provide an update when they have more information.

Commissioners Williams spoke on the banner from Georgia for the holidays. He said we need to put these things on a calendar, ex: Masonic Lodge. Mr. Barnebey said it had not been sitting idle at all.

Commissioner Smith said Mr. Rayan has done a great job in Ward 1. He asked when they will be finished. Mr. Rayan responded, first part of 2026.

Old fertilizer plant – where is that at? Mr. Barnebey responded.

He asked Mr. Freeman how much we paid for that land. We don't own that. It is owned by a private entity. CRA provided incentives to redevelop it and provided funds for a trail and parking lot.

Mayor West adjourned the meeting at 8:10 pm.

MINUTES APPROVED: OCTOBER 20, 2025

JAMES R. FREEMAN

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CITY CLERK