MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
JUNE 1, 2026
7:00 P.M.

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
Sunshine Joiner, Vice-Mayor, Commissioner, Ward 2
Tamara Cornwell, Commissioner-at-Large 2
Harold Smith, Commissioner Ward 1
Scott Whitaker, Commissioner-at-Large 1 (Present via ZOOM at 7:02 pm)
Brian Williams, Commissioner Ward 3

STAFF PRESENT IN CHAMBERS:

Jim Freeman, City Clerk
Marisa Powers, City Attorney
Mohammed Rayan, Public Works Director
Scott Tyler, Chief of Police
Rowena Young, CRA Director
Cassi Bailey, Deputy City Clerk
Jake Bibler, CRA Assistant Director
Jeff Bowman, City Planner
Amanda Beaver, Administrative Assistant
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 Clayton Allen 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 Cornwell seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to approve the June 1, 2026 City Commission Agenda.**

3. PROCLAMATION: FAITH AND FAMILY

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

Mr. Freeman noted some phone calls received regarding item number 8 during the break in favor of the first motion listed in the agenda.

Sheldon Jones spoke in favor of the contract for the building next door. (Item number 8)

5. CONSENT AGENDA

a. Minutes: 03/23/2026, 04/06/2026 & 04/20/2026
b. City Legal Invoices
c. Planning & Zoning Board Appointment
d. 2026-2027 School Resource Officer's Program Agreement

MOTION: **Commissioner Joiner moved, Commissioner Williams seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to approve the Consent Agenda as presented by staff.**

6. PUBLIC HEARING CONDITIONAL USE 2025-06 WORLDWIDE GROUP HOME (J.BIBLER)

Mayor West opened the Public Hearing at 7:14 pm.

Mr. Bibler introduced the item and presented a PowerPoint, included in the minutes, regarding the property at 2008 4th Ave W. He explained the rationale for designating the site as a congregate living facility, noting its compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood and consistency with the comprehensive plan and future land use category. While some concerns were raised regarding parking adequacy, staff determined the proposal is consistent with the future land use designation and is permitted in the zoning district with approval of a conditional use permit. Staff also found it meets the standards for conditional use approval under Article XV of the Zoning Code. The Planning and Zoning Board previously recommended approval at their May 21st meeting.

Commissioner Williams asked about the required number of parking spaces, and Mr. Bibler responded that the requirement would remain at two spaces, noting that the property is not being redeveloped.

Commissioner Smith asked who regulates the facility, and staff responded that oversight is provided by the State of Florida's health care administration, with inspections occurring at least monthly.

Maggie Gibbs, the applicant, addressed the commission and explained that she has been in the caregiving business for over 24 years. She described the facility as housing disabled men whose needs are fully supported on-site, including regular visits from physicians and other medical care services provided in the home.

Commissioner Joiner asked about staffing levels, and the applicant responded that more than 15 staff members work at the facility, with a staffing ratio of approximately 1 to 3 residents. She also noted that vehicle presence is limited, stating that even with seven beds, there would be no more than three cars on-site at any given time.

Commissioner Smith asked whether residents receive family visits, and the applicant responded that most residents do not have family who visit, noting that staff are present 24/7 to provide care. Commissioner Smith also asked why the facility was located in that area. The applicant explained that it operates as a universal group home with monthly unannounced visits from an overseeing person and annual certification reviews. She added that residents do not drive and are transported by staff vans to appointments and community activities such as Special Olympics events and dances, stating that operations are running well. Commissioner Smith expressed interest in meeting with her further to discuss the matter.

Commissioner Williams asked how long the applicant has been in the congregate living business, and she responded that she has 24 years of experience. Commissioner Williams agreed that this type of facility is very much needed.

Mayor West asked how long the applicant has operated at the current site, and she responded that the facility has been located there since 2010.

Mayor West closed the Public Hearing at 7:34 pm.

MOTION: **Commissioner Williams moved, Commissioner Smith seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 based on the information and testimony provided, I find the requested conditional use permit for a congregate living facility at 2008 4th Avenue West to be consistent with the standards for conditional use under Article XV, Zoning Code. I hereby move to recommend approval of Conditional Use Permit 2025-06 without Stipulations to the City Commission.**

7. <u>PUBLIC HEARING CONDITIONAL USE 2026-01 TROPIC ISLES (J.BOWMAN)</u>

Mayor West opened the Public Hearing at 7:36 pm.

Mr. Bowman introduced the item concerning the property at 1507 28th Ave W, which involves a request for an electronic message sign. He noted that the Planning and Zoning Board recommended approval at its May 21st meeting. The proposed sign would measure 4 feet by 8 feet.

Commissioner Cornwell noted that, for electronic messaging signs within the City, applicants are asked to display emergency messaging, if needed, during an emergency.

Barbara McEvoy, speaking as the applicant, responded and reiterated that they would absolutely comply with the request regarding emergency messaging capability for the electronic sign.

Commissioner Williams asked Mr. Freeman whether the City has access to other electronic messaging signs. Mr. Freeman responded that the City does not have access to private electronic message signs and only has control over its own Gateway sign.

Mayor West closed the Public Hearing at 7:44 pm.

MOTION: **Commissioner Joiner moved, Commissioner Whitaker seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 based on the information and testimony provided, I find the request for a Conditional Use Permit for an electronic message center sign located at 1507 28th Ave W to be compliant with Section 3-70, Code of Ordinances, and consistent with the standards for a conditional use under Article XV, Zoning Code. I hereby move to approve the Conditional Use Permit (2026-01).**

8. PURCHASE CONTRACT FOR 710 5TH STREET WEST, 515 7TH STREET WEST (TOWER PROPERTY) AND 417 7TH AVENUE WEST (VACANT LOT) (MAYOR WEST/J.FREEMAN)

Mr. Freeman recapped that this is coming to the Commission tonight at the request of the Commissioners. The City entered into a purchase contract on February 19, 2026 for $5,650,000 to acquire properties at 710 5th Street West, 515 7th Street West (Tower Property), and 417 7th Ave West (vacant lot), following Commission direction. The City is currently in the due diligence period, which ends on June 19, 2026, during which staff has presented findings through workshops covering leases, building age, square footage, estimated renovation costs, and site comparisons, along with conducting site tours for staff and Commissioners. The City has also placed a $50,000 escrow deposit that becomes non-refundable after the due diligence deadline. With the due diligence period nearing its end, staff is seeking direction from the Commission on how to proceed with the purchase.

Commissioner Joiner asked about the annual income from tenants, and staff responded that if the building is fully occupied, it generates approximately $900,000 per year. If the City occupies about half of the building, the projected rental income would be reduced to roughly $400,000 to $450,000 annually.

Commissioner Smith asked about the number of tenants in the building, and Mr. Freeman responded that there are currently about six tenants, with one tenant occupying approximately 50% of the building under lease through 2033. Commissioner Smith expressed the view that the City should consider constructing a new building on 8th Avenue instead.

Commissioner Williams acknowledged the building’s age, noting that the lower portion was built in 1961 and the tower in the 1980s. He asked about potential renovation costs. Mr. Freeman estimated approximately $100–$300 per square foot to renovate the entire building. When asked whether a structural evaluation had been completed, Mr. Freeman responded that none had been conducted, following Commission direction.

Discussion also included operational concerns, including the potential need for a new position to manage tenants within City Hall and the implication that citizens may need to access higher floors due to an existing tenant occupying the lower floor through 2033. Mr. Freeman also noted that the tower represents a greater asset to the City's tax base.

Commissioner Whitaker expressed concerns about the building's age and stated that the City is not equipped to act as a landlord. He questioned the need for the amount of square footage being considered and raised concerns about potential environmental risks, such as mold, if issues are not properly identified. While acknowledging the location as favorable, he stated that the City does not necessarily need that much property and indicated that, in his view, the purchase is not worth pursuing.

Commissioner Cornwell asked whether the entire building would be removed from the tax base if the City became the owner. Mr. Freeman responded that certain leased portions may remain taxable, but at least about half of the property would likely come off the tax rolls, pending confirmation with the Property Appraiser. She also raised questions about signage and whether the current contract addresses removal or changes to existing building signage if the City takes ownership. Regarding parking, Mr. Freeman indicated that current lease arrangements appear to provide adequate parking, though this could change depending on future use of the property.

Commissioner Cornwell expressed agreement with the other commissioners and reiterated concerns about the building's age, as well as potential health impacts for employees. She also noted that, financially, the proposal appears to be nearly a wash.

Commissioner Williams asked whether any of the current tenants are nonprofit organizations, and staff confirmed that some of the tenants are nonprofits.

Commissioner Joiner asked whether the long-term cost of ownership would be justified compared to the cost of conducting the City's own inspections. Staff responded that those estimated costs have not yet been developed.

Commissioner Smith asked how much property tax is currently paid on the building, and staff responded that it is approximately $40,000 per year.

Commissioner Joiner asked about expansion potential on the CSX property. Mr. Freeman responded that at the eastern end of the police department site, additional space was intentionally left available for future expansion if needed. They also noted that the main site is approximately 3.4 acres and that there is ample room for a potential joint facility on the property.

Commissioner Smith asked whether the railroad owns the land in question. Mr. Freeman responded that the railroad claims ownership of the property and noted that they have begun the environmental study process.

Commissioner Whitaker asked about the square footage of the conceptual CSX building, and staff responded that it is approximately 18,000 square feet.

Matt Kezar, realtor for the building next door, spoke against the City constructing a new building.

Bill Britt spoke against the City constructing a new building.

Mayor West expressed concerns about the age of the adjacent building and highlighted the advantages of the CSX property, particularly its potential for multi-mobility opportunities.

Commissioner Williams emphasized the importance of planning for future growth by constructing a new building that can accommodate the City's evolving needs.

MOTION: **Commissioner Cornwell moved, Commissioner Williams seconded, the motion carried 4-1 to terminate the purchase contract between the City of Palmetto and Palmetto Tower TYJ LLC dated February 19, 2026 and notify the seller as appropriate. (Commissioner Joiner voted nay.)**

9. 14TH AVENUE PARK CONSTRUCTION RECOMMENDATION OF AWARD (J.FREEMAN)

Mr. Freeman gave a background to this item. The City of Palmetto issued an Invitation to Bid on February 4, 2026 for construction of the 14th Avenue Park, seeking a general contractor to provide all labor, materials, and equipment. The project was advertised and received six bids ranging from approximately $5.46 million to $7.19 million. After an appeal and subsequent review, the lowest bidder, Calusa Construction & Development LLC, was deemed non-responsive due to failure to meet licensing and corporate registration requirements. Following verification of the remaining bids, Stellar Development, Inc. was determined to be the lowest responsive and responsible bidder. Staff recommend awarding the contract to Stellar Development, Inc. for construction of the park.

Commissioner Cornwell asked why it was not identified earlier that the bidder had not been in business for five years. Mr. Freeman responded that this information was not known until the bids were submitted and evaluated through the standard review checklists and verification process.

Commissioner Williams asked who evaluated the bids, and staff explained that an evaluation committee reviewed the submissions, but because this was an ITB, the award is based on the lowest responsive bid. He also asked whether a contingency clause was included, no. Mr. Freeman responded that a stipulation for a 5% contingency could be added, if he wanted to include.

Commissioner Whitaker discussed the range, the timeline and the pace of the project. Mr. Freeman said there are deadlines they have to meet.

Commissioner Williams questioned Item 6(a), noting that the document contained two subsections labeled "(a)" and two labeled "(b)." After reading the relevant section of the document, he asked who would approve the item and who would serve as the project manager.

Mr. Rayan responded that he would serve as the project manager. It was stated that this information could be added to the document and would also be included in the Notice to Proceed. It was also noted that the duplicate subsection labels would be corrected.

MOTION: **Commissioner Cornwell moved, Commissioner Williams seconded and the motion carried 5-0 to approve the recommendation of award and authorize the Mayor to execute the contract with Stellar Development, Inc for the construction of 14th Ave West Park, subject to final attorney review with a 5% contingency, the scriveners' errors repaired and the Public Works Director identified as the Project Manager.**

10. WWTP PHASE 3- FILTRATION IMPROVEMENTS DESIGN (M.RAYAN)

Mr. Rayan recapped this item. This is the third phase of the plan. The facility plan recommends design and construction upgrades to the Filtration Systems to provide additional filtration capacity for the treated effluent. These upgrades will also provide the FDEP required Class 1 reliability for the filtration system as required in the City's wastewater treatment operation permit. It was discussed at the 4:30 pm Workshop.

Commissioner Cornwell asked where Veolia is in all of this. They would be present in the design. Veolia staff are not engineers. Wade Trim are our design engineers of record. Veolia are the operators.

MOTION: **Commissioner Williams moved to authorize the Mayor to sign the work assignment for work to be performed by Wade Trim to provide the design for the filtration improvements to satisfy the Florida – FDEP CWSRF/SAHM grant funding currently totaling $19,166,503, Commissioner Joiner seconded, and the motion carried 5-0.**

Note: The City is eligible to receive additional funding, up to $61,000,000 million, should additional funding become available.

Mayor West recessed the City Commission Meeting to open the June 1, 2026 CRA Board Meeting at 8:48 pm.

Mayor West reconvened the City Commission Meeting at 9:01 pm.

COMMENTS:

11. <u>DEPARTMENT HEADS' COMMENTS</u>

Mr. Rayan provided the following updates:

- He thanked the Commission for approving the newest work order.
- He provided an update on Veolia, stating that an addendum to the existing contract had been presented and that Veolia had agreed to the proposed changes. The addendum will be presented to the Commission during the June 15 workshop and Commission meeting.

Commissioner Cornwell asked whether Veolia had requested the contract extension. Mr. Rayan confirmed that they had and explained that this would be the third of five allowable extensions. He outlined the process he would present to the Commission and noted that, if the Commission chose to solicit new bids, there was still sufficient time, as the current contract does not expire until the end of December.

Mr. Rayan also provided an update on the Bulk Collection program. He noted that in April, staff presented a plan to implement bulk collection in two zones beginning this week. However, the approved motion stated that the addendum would be brought back to the Commission on May 4th. Because the addendum has not yet been completed, it will instead be presented on June 15th. Mr. Rayan stated that he is seeking the Commission's approval to move forward with the implementation as originally planned.

Commissioner Williams asked how piles of trash located within rights-of-way would be collected. Mr. Rayan responded that staff works with Code Enforcement to contact the property owners. If the issue is not resolved, it proceeds through the Code Enforcement process, apart from the annual free bulk collection program.

MOTION: **Commissioner Joiner moved, Commissioner Cornwell seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to provide Waste Management with a notice to proceed with bulk collection, effective today, with an addendum to be brought back at the June 15th meeting.**

Commissioner Cornwell stated that the new Police Department building is a hardened facility. She emphasized that the same level of consideration should be given to the design of the new City Hall so it can serve as a resource for residents during hurricanes and other emergencies.

Mr. Rayan continued providing project updates:

- Taylor Park installation is progressing, and staff hopes to complete the project by the end of the week.
- Staff is preparing to meet with CVS representatives and legal counsel within the next few days.
- The right-of-way permit from the Florida Department of Transportation's Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) division has been received for the Complete Streets Project. Survey work is expected to begin by mid-month, and design updates will be provided as they become available.

Mr. Freeman reported that he is closely monitoring the State's special legislative session regarding proposed changes to homestead exemptions and will continue to keep the Commission informed of any developments.

Mr. Freeman reported that Safe Harbor recently completed improvements to the dock on the west side of the marina and has now begun similar improvements on the east side. To accommodate the work, Safe Harbor requested permission to temporarily close four boat trailer parking spaces located east of the work area for approximately eight months.

Commissioner Williams asked whether Safe Harbor was experiencing issues related to the Gray property. Ms. Powers responded that Safe Harbor has not yet signed off on the judgment.

Commissioner Cornwell stated that an alternative option should be identified.

MOTION: **Commissioner Cornwell moved, Commissioner Joiner seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to direct them that they need to come up with another option and not block off the boat trailer parking spaces.**

Ms. Powers provided an update on the Epoch litigation, referencing the email Mr. Barnebey sent to the Commission the previous week. She reported that the Florida Municipal Insurance Trust (FMIT) has determined that insurance coverage has been exhausted and, as of today, will no longer cover the legal fees for Mr. Daignault. Ms. Powers stated that Mr. Barnebey will retain Mr. Daignault to continue serving as litigation counsel for the matter at this time.

Commissioner Williams asked for an update on the current status of the case. Ms. Powers responded that the matter is currently set for trial.

12. MAYOR’S REPORT

The Mayor provided an update regarding the upcoming Fourth of July celebration. A video will be prepared for social media to promote the event and encourage local businesses to participate by decorating their businesses in red, white, and blue.

The Mayor also noted that memos from Human Resources regarding Cybersecurity have been provided to each Commissioner for review.

Regarding the new park, the Mayor expressed interest in selecting a patriotic name and suggested holding a ribbon-cutting ceremony on the Fourth of July. Commissioners were asked for their input on potential names. Commissioner Whitaker suggested "Patriots Park," and Commissioner Cornwell expressed support for the same name.

MOTION: **Commissioner Cornwell moved, Commissioner Whitaker seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 for the 14th Avenue park to be named Patriot Park.**

13. COMMISSIONERS' COMMENTS

Commissioner Williams asked whether, during this year's budget process, each department would provide a wish list of requested items. The Mayor confirmed that departments would be submitting their requests.

Commissioner Cornwell complimented the City Hall decorations and expressed appreciation for the upcoming bulk pickup program. She also praised Public Works staff for being responsive, noting that issues are being identified and addressed quickly. She recognized the efforts made at the cemetery, stating that the cleanup work has resulted in significant improvements.

Commissioner Cornwell encouraged continued promotion of the City's decorations and stated that, if a flyer is available, she would distribute it to neighbors.

She also emphasized the importance of incorporating resiliency into the design of the new City Hall facility. While it may not serve as an evacuation site, she stated that it should be a hardened facility capable of functioning as an emergency hub during hurricanes and other emergencies.

Commissioner Cornwell further stated that the City should communicate with state representatives regarding concerns that, if the Governor issues a state of emergency, municipalities shouldn't still face penalties related to flooding issues.

Ms. Young provided an update regarding the resiliency plan and adaptation plan. She noted that Applied Sciences presented information to the CRAAB on Thursday and that there had been miscommunication regarding the presentation with residents.

Commissioner Whitaker recognized and thanked those involved for the patriotic decorations displayed throughout the City.

Mayor West adjourned the meeting at 9:36 pm.

MINUTES APPROVED: AUGUST 3, 2026

JAMES R. FREEMAN
JAMES R. FREEMAN
CITY CLERK