

MINUTES OF A DAY MEETING OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, HELD IN THE CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBERS, 100 NORTH U.S. #1, FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, AT 9 A.M. ON MONDAY, AUGUST 11, 2025.

1. **Call to Order**

Mayor Hudson called the August 11, 2025 Day Meeting to order at 9:00 a.m.

2. **Pledge of Allegiance**

3. **Roll Call**

Present: Commissioner Michael Broderick; Commissioner Arnold Gaines;  
Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr.; Mayor Linda Hudson

Staff Present: City Manager Richard Chess  
City Attorney Sara Hedges  
City Clerk Linda Cox

4. **Approval of Minutes**

A. Approval of the minutes of the July 14, 2025 Day Meeting.

Motion was made by Commissioner Michael Broderick, seconded by Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr. to approve the minutes of the July 14, 2025 Day Meeting.

AYE: Commissioner Michael Broderick, Commissioner Arnold Gaines,  
Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., Mayor Linda Hudson

Passed

5. **Proclamations**

6. **Additions or deletions to agenda and approval of the agenda.**

Staff requests that items 8B and 10A be pulled.

Motion was made by Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., seconded by Commissioner Arnold Gaines to approve the agenda as amended.

AYE: Commissioner Michael Broderick, Commissioner Arnold Gaines,  
Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., Mayor Linda Hudson

Passed

7. **COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Any person who wishes to comment on any subject may be heard at this time. Please limit your comments to three (3) minutes or less, as directed by the Mayor, as this section of the Agenda is limited to thirty minutes. The City Commission will not be able to take any official actions under Comments from the Public. Speakers will address the Mayor, Commissioners, and the Public with respect. Inappropriate language will not be tolerated.

No comments

## 8. **Miscellaneous Reports and Presentations**

### A. Presentation of the 2025 Legislative Session Final Report by Ryan Matthews, of GrayRobinson.

Ryan Matthews, GrayRobinson, presented the 2025 Legislative Session Final Report.

Commissioners and Mr. Matthews discussed potential legislative changes in Florida that could significantly impact municipal revenues, particularly from ad valorem property taxes. The proposed increases to homestead exemptions—or elimination of property taxes—could result in major funding shortfalls without alternative revenue sources.

#### Key Points:

##### Ad Valorem Revenue Risk

Local governments rely heavily (approx. 60%) on real estate taxes to fund essential services, including police and fire. Current proposals do not identify replacement funding, risking service reductions. Historical analysis shows replacing property tax revenue would require a substantial sales tax increase (e.g., 12%).

##### Additional Legislative Concerns

Utility Relocation Costs: State policy shifts have increased local costs for moving utilities during infrastructure projects.

CRA & Sovereign Immunity: Anticipated return of legislative efforts to restrict Community Redevelopment Agencies and limit municipal liability.

Municipal Utilities: Possible restrictions on transferring utility revenues to general funds.

Gas Tax Decline: Growth in electric vehicles threatens gas tax revenue; proposals to increase EV registration fees have failed.

##### Public Communication & Restrictions

Legal limits exist on how municipalities can educate residents about pending constitutional amendments.

Commissioners expressed the need for clearer public outreach to explain budget realities and legislative impacts.

##### State-Local Disconnect

Perceived gap between state legislators' understanding and cities' fiscal needs. Rising property values have increased tax revenues without millage rate hikes, but many residents misunderstand the causes.

Public frustration over property taxes fuels political pressure for cuts, despite funding needs for city services.

##### Action & Advocacy

Encourage constituent engagement through programs like the Florida League of Cities' "Local Voices United."

Commissioners stressed direct communication with legislative leaders and unified advocacy from municipalities.

Acknowledged the likelihood of multiple proposals in the upcoming legislative session, culminating in a ballot measure.

The City must prepare for potential significant revenue losses from state legislative changes, particularly in property taxation. Proactive public education, legislative engagement, and diversified revenue planning are essential to maintaining service levels.

- B. PULLED AT STAFF REQUEST. Presentation of the 2025 Juneteenth Sponsorship Report and event highlights by Gregory Jones, of Treasure Coast Barbers United.
  
- C. Main Street Fort Pierce, Inc. program update covering the third quarter of FY2025 (April 1, 2025 to June 30, 2025).

Doris Tillman, Executive Director, and Michelle Cavalcanti, presented the Main Street Fort Pierce, Inc. program update covering the third quarter of FY2025. The presentation highlighted partnerships, events, business development, volunteerism, and media outreach during the April–June period, noting that additional activities have occurred since the quarter ended.

#### Key Highlights

##### Partnerships & Collaborations

Continued cooperation with FPUA, Fort Pierce Yacht Club, Jazz Society, Downtown Business Alliance, and local businesses for events such as Coffee with the Mayor, Stars Over St. Lucie, and Sites & Sounds.

New project with University of Florida’s IFAS Extension and the Garden Club to beautify downtown with flowers and public planting activities.

Local businesses provided venues, in-kind support, and sponsorships for community events.

##### Events & Community Engagement

Friday Fest: Expanded food vendor options; hosted volunteer groups and community fundraisers; added family-friendly activities.

Stars Over St. Lucie: Partnered with FPUA for live-streaming (6,700 online viewers); successful execution despite weather concerns; praised city staff’s support.

Annual public meeting and ongoing planning for Sites & Sounds holiday event.

##### Volunteer Contributions

Significant volunteer hours from downtown business owners, employees, residents, and community groups.

Fundraising events (golf tournament, reverse raffle) continue to support operational expenses.

##### Media & Marketing

Focus Magazine: Over 9,400 copies printed this quarter; featured local events, business spotlights, historic coloring pages, and city updates.

Social media and web traffic exceeded previous year’s quarterly figures.

Promotion of city programs, grants, and beautification projects.

##### Business Development

Maintained and updated inventory of vacant/occupied commercial spaces.

Supported openings of new businesses, including The Harbor Cocktail Lounge; published articles to promote them.

Net change in downtown employment: +1 full-time position (5 gained, 4 lost).

Assisted with marketing and event planning for downtown merchants.

##### Recognition

Re-accredited by Main Street America, reflecting adherence to national standards and best practices.

Mayor Hudson encouraged Main Street to present the downtown beautification project at an upcoming Keep Fort Pierce Beautiful committee meeting. Multiple committee members, including Garden Club representatives, can assist in coordinating efforts.

- D. Kings Highway Corridor Update - Economic Development Council of St. Lucie County

Pete Tesch, EDC, Leslie Olson, District Planning Group, and Wes McCurry presented the Kings Highway Corridor Update.

#### Overview

The Economic Development Council (EDC) presented findings from Phase 1 of the Kings Highway Corridor initiative, focusing on leveraging the area between Okeechobee Road and Orange Avenue for high-quality job creation, tax base expansion, and economic growth. The corridor features three major interstate interchanges in proximity and significant undeveloped land.

#### Key Findings & Challenges

**Jurisdictional Complexity:** About two-thirds of the area remains under unincorporated St. Lucie County; city and county land use/zoning are inconsistent.

**Lack of Industrial Design Standards:** Neither city nor county require architectural/landscaping standards for industrial zoning, raising concerns about corridor aesthetics.

**Infrastructure Needs:** Limited electric capacity (especially in FPL service areas), constrained roadways (Kings Hwy projected to fail by 2050 north of study area; Orange Ave & Okeechobee already congested). Graham Road overpass improvements needed.

**Limited Industrial Zoning:** Few areas are currently zoned for industrial uses suitable for targeted job creators.

**Stakeholder Input:** Property owners, developers, and the Kings Highway Corridor Association support coordinated planning, streamlined approvals, and improved infrastructure.

#### Phase 2 Recommendations

**Economic Impact Analysis –** Quantify tax revenue potential and job creation benefits.

**Infrastructure Improvements –** Address electric capacity and roadway upgrades.

**Unified Overlay Zone –** Single set of zoning, permitted uses, and higher design standards for city and county; optional “opt-in” process for developers with 3-year sunset review.

**Specific Use Targets –** Define preferred industrial/commercial uses and exclude incompatible heavy industry.

**Economic Development Fund –** Dedicated matching funds for state grants and infrastructure.

#### Commission Discussion Highlights

Strong overall support for the project as a long-term, high-impact jobs initiative.

Agreement on avoiding heavy industrial in the corridor; focus on light manufacturing, commercial, and office uses.

Support for the overlay concept but with caution regarding expedited approvals without commission oversight.

Emphasis on early annexation strategy to ensure the city benefits from growth and tax revenue.

Importance of clear public communication distinguishing “industrial” from “heavy industrial” to prevent misconceptions.

Advocacy for Graham Road improvements as a traffic relief route given anticipated growth.

Recognition of Ashley Capital’s development as an immediate anchor project.

Anticipation of complex city-county coordination, with overlay potentially adopted separately by each jurisdiction.

#### Next Steps

Incorporate commission feedback into the final Phase 1 report.

Begin Phase 2: develop overlay framework, advance infrastructure planning, initiate economic impact analysis, and prepare annexation strategy.

Provide visual examples of preferred uses/designs in final presentation.

- E. Police Department's Response to Center for Public Safety Management's final report.

Chief Bob Ridle presented the Public Safety Management's final report.

#### Commission Concerns, Requests, and Remarks

Request for a detailed executive summary outlining:

Current critical staffing levels, open positions, and timelines to fill

Overlap across departments and impact on budget

Vacancies already reflected in FY26 budget

Interest in facility needs assessment; last space study was in 2006, with current facilities at capacity.

Acknowledgment that growth to the west and southwest will require capital planning for expanded police facilities.

Recognition that staffing shortages are a core issue requiring increased funding.

Appreciation for department's openness to external review and transparent responses to recommendations.

The Board took a five-minute recess.

### 9. **Consent Agenda**

- A. Approval of PRP Construction Group, LLC Change Order No. 1 in the amount of \$169,546.00 for the Frances Avenue improvement project additional drainage adjustments.
- B. Approval to enter into a Lighting, Maintenance, and Compensation Agreement with FDOT for a term of 7-years in the amount of \$412,538.24 annually for the maintenance of street lights along State roadways within city limits.
- C. Approval of Main Street Fort Pierce Inc.'s Third Quarter Disbursement in the amount of \$12,500 subject to acceptance of the Third Quarter Report.
- D. Approval for the Letter of Support for the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority Website Modernization Project.

Commissioner Johnson pulled item 9A.

Motion was made by Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., seconded by Commissioner Arnold Gaines to approve items 9B-9D of the Consent Agenda.

AYE: Commissioner Michael Broderick, Commissioner Arnold Gaines,  
Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., Mayor Linda Hudson

Passed

As to item 9A

Commissioner Johnson inquired on the increase in the purchase order.

#### Issue & Explanation

Significant change order issued for ongoing utility/stormwater project due to unforeseen conditions discovered during excavation.

Examples included deteriorated or improvised piping (e.g., reinforced concrete pipe with metal pipe inserted inside) and other conflicts not visible before digging.

Mark Zrallack, City Engineer, indicated such findings are common in aging infrastructure and cannot always be predicted; some repairs were completed through lower-cost methods (e.g., lining instead of full replacement).

#### Completion & Future Impact

Project is in final paving stage; no further major cost increases anticipated.

Change order totaled approximately \$160K, funded entirely through the Stormwater Fund (impact and stormwater fees), with no impact on the general budget.

#### Technology & Inspection Capabilities

Camera inspections can sometimes detect such issues but are costly for large areas; currently used selectively after blockages are found.

Public Works owns a dormant inspection camera trailer; Engineering is seeking quotes to retrofit and reactivate it.

Regular inspection of stormwater infrastructure is required annually by the state; commissioners suggested expanding frequency and using in-house equipment to improve drainage system maintenance and reduce outsourcing costs.

#### Commission Comments

Emphasis on public awareness of stormwater infrastructure importance.

Support for restoring in-house inspection capability to monitor problematic drainage areas and maximize equipment already owned by the city.

Motion was made by Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., seconded by Commissioner Michael Broderick to approve item 9A of the Consent Agenda.

AYE: Commissioner Michael Broderick, Commissioner Arnold Gaines,  
Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., Mayor Linda Hudson

Passed

### 10. **City Commission - Resolutions**

- A. PULLED AT THE REQUEST OF STAFF. Resolution 25-R51 Approving an Amendment to the Assigned and Assumed Agreement for the Development of King's Landing (Villas Plat) and Release of the City's Reverter to the Villas Plat Property, only.
- B. Resolution 25-R58 approving the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority FY2026 Annual Budget and FY2025 Amended Budget

City Clerk, Linda Cox, introduced the Resolution, read by title only, into the record.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 25-R58

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA; APPROVING THE FISCAL YEAR 2026 BUDGET FOR THE FORT PIERCE UTILITIES AUTHORITY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2025 AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2026; APPROVING THE FISCAL YEAR 2025 AMENDED BUDGET; WAIVING THE 30 DAY PERIOD FOR DISAPPROVAL; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Javier Cisneros, Director of Utilities, and Michelle Harris, Finance Director, presented the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority FY2026 Annual Budget and FY2025 Amended Budget.

#### Budget Goals & Approach

Focus on aging infrastructure replacement and managing city growth while preparing for future expansion.

Unique funding approach: combination of rates and debt while avoiding rate increases beyond the Public Service Commission (PSC) Index.

Developed through early-year department planning, capital/O&M review, workshops, and board approvals.

FY26 capital spending supported by grants, revenue bonds, and rate funding; ongoing monitoring throughout the year.

#### Financial Strategy & Stability Programs

DART Program and rate stabilization fund have kept Power Cost Adjustment (PCA) at zero for nearly 3 years.

Long-term goal: levelize operating, capital, and purchase power costs to avoid large customer bill spikes.

Issuance of utility revenue bonds planned for 2026 to fund large projects (spread over asset life, shared by future ratepayers).

Short-term line of credit (10–15M) to bridge funding gaps and manage grant reimbursement timing.

#### Priority Capital Projects (FY26 Bond)

Wastewater Conveyance System – \$27M, critical for redirecting flow from old to new plant.

Electric System Upgrades – New substation & transmission line upgrades to meet capacity and growth demands.

Storm Hardening of Energy Services Command Center – Upgrade to meet current hurricane standards.

#### Major Infrastructure Updates

New Wastewater Plant: \$139M total, 100% funded via bonds, grants, and capital; ribbon-cutting expected Dec 2025.

Conveyance System: Phased approach (1A & 1B) to calibrate operations and maximize flow efficiency.

Electric Grid: Substation load relief and capacity expansion; 3–5 years to build, needed to support growth.

#### Revenue & Expense Drivers

Conservative growth projections: 2% for systems, 3% for customers.

\$50M in FY26 capital budget funded through grants (approx. 50% of capital spend).

Major expense drivers: purchased resell power (38% of O&M), dual plant operations during wastewater transition, rising medical costs (15% increase), and contractual service escalations (3–5%).

Cost control through vendor tariff reviews, internal staffing efficiencies, and program savings (e.g., convenience fee offset \$400K in bank charges).

#### FY26 Budget Overview

Total: \$246M (Capital \$103M / O&M \$144M).

Funding Sources: 56% rates, 35% debt, 20% grants.

Capital Focus: Wastewater (68%), Electric (14%), Water/Gas (18%) with emphasis on storm hardening and system expansion.

Staffing: 291 full-time positions budgeted; 29 current vacancies under review before posting.

City Distribution: Projected \$8M in FY26 (up from \$7.9M in FY25).

Motion was made by Commissioner Michael Broderick, seconded by Commissioner Arnold Gaines to approve Resolution No. 25-R58

AYE: Commissioner Michael Broderick, Commissioner Arnold Gaines,  
Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., Mayor Linda Hudson

Passed

- C. Resolution 25-R59 appointing a member to the Fort Pierce Communitywide Council.

City Clerk, Linda Cox, introduced the Resolution, read by title only, into the record.

#### RESOLUTION NO. 25-R59

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, CERTIFYING THE APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO THE COMMUNITYWIDE COUNCIL; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor Hudson - Colleen Ryan

Commissioner Broderick – Colleen Ryan

Commissioner Johnson – Colleen Ryan

Commissioner Gaines – Colleen Ryan

Motion was made by Commissioner Arnold Gaines, seconded by Commissioner Michael Broderick approve Resolution No. 25-R59 appointing Colleen Ryan to the Communitywide Council.

AYE: Commissioner Michael Broderick, Commissioner Arnold Gaines,  
Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., Mayor Linda Hudson

Passed

- D. Resolution 25-R60 appointing a member to the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority Board.

City Clerk, Linda Cox, introduced the Resolution, read by title only, into the record.

**RESOLUTION NO. 25-R60**

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA, CERTIFYING THE APPOINTMENT OF A MEMBER OF THE FORT PIERCE UTILITIES AUTHORITY BOARD; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Commissioner Johnson - Pearl Davis

Commissioner Broderick - Pearl Davis

Commissioner Gaines - Pearl Davis

Mayor Hudson - Pearl Davis

Motion was made by Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., seconded by Commissioner Michael Broderick to approve Resolution No. 25-R60 reappointing Pearl Davis to the Fort Pierce Utilities Authority

AYE: Commissioner Michael Broderick, Commissioner Arnold Gaines,  
Commissioner Curtis Johnson, Jr., Mayor Linda Hudson

Passed

**11. New Business - City Commission Discussion Items**

- A. Budget Workshop Follow-up

Johnna Morris, Director of Finance, presented the budget update.

**Budget Status**

No changes to projected revenues; budget is balanced with no fund balance usage.

Personnel services: \$38.7M, +\$1.5M due to 5% COLA for non-bargaining and bargaining employees, police step increases (+6%), and addition of two new positions (City Engineer & Deputy City Manager). Five proposed positions removed, saving \$451K.

Overtime and incentive pay adjusted to maintain balance without tapping reserves.

Operating expenditures: \$19M, reduced by \$538K through 3% departmental cuts and targeted line-item reductions.

Capital outlay: \$1.14M after removing some projects; all CIP projects funded except one PD project due September.

Grants: \$22,500 increase for Economic Development Council; 100% funded.

Fund Balance: Maintained for emergencies and unforeseen costs. Staff will monitor budget quarterly and adjust as needed.

**City Clerk Salary Discussion:**

Original proposal increased from \$129K to \$160K.

Commission consensus to adjust to \$145K (includes 5% COLA + ~7% increase), effective Oct 1 with other COLA adjustments.

Will be brought back for formal vote at next meeting.

**Commission Remarks:**

Emphasis on fiscal caution due to potential future revenue impacts (e.g., ad valorem changes).

Acknowledgment of staff, department heads, and finance team for cooperative effort in producing a balanced, service-supportive budget without tax increases.

**Next Steps**

First budget hearing: Sept 8.

Minor salary adjustment to be incorporated before formal approval.

**Additional Notes**

Awaiting federal grant funds for Police Department capital projects; award notice received, funds pending.

**12. City Commission Boards and Committees Updates**

Mayor Hudson - The Fire District offers the St. Lucie County Community Connect program. Residents who complete the form provide first responders with important advanced information, enabling the Fire District to respond more effectively during emergencies.

Commissioner Johnson - The Fire District's St. Lucie County Community Connect program enables residents to share important information with first responders in advance. Commissioners encouraged community-wide participation, noting the form is easy to complete and can save lives. Marketing efforts will include placing program details in the city's outreach rotation. The TPO Board recently reviewed proposed roadway and infrastructure projects, including a suggestion for railroad expansion through central Fort Pierce. Commissioners expressed strong opposition due to potential traffic impacts and community disruption. A unified stance from city and county representatives was presented, and further discussions were requested. Commissioner Broderick was appointed to lead coordination with the Congressman and other stakeholders on this matter.

Commissioner Broderick-During the TPO Board meeting, commissioners and other elected officials unanimously expressed frustration with dealings involving Florida East Coast (FEC) Railway. Concerns centered on a proposed expansion project through Fort Pierce, with no clear public benefit and significant taxpayer cost without authorization. Commissioners opposed any expansion within Fort Pierce.

Commissioner Johnson proposed forming a working group to consolidate concerns and allow FEC an opportunity to respond. The group will include representatives from Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, and Port St. Lucie. Congressman Mast, noted for his ability to initiate congressional hearings, is supportive of local efforts and has offered assistance. Coordination will be handled through the City Clerk's office to identify designated participants from each jurisdiction.

Commissioner Gaines reported that the Affordable Housing Committee met last week. He noted the discussion was productive and recommended scheduling an appointment with Director Freeman upon his return. Commissioner Gaines emphasized that Director Freeman's expertise in affordable housing, statutory requirements, and Board priorities would provide valuable insight as the committee works to address the 11 items outlined in the statute. This meeting would help the committee clarify its focus and move forward more effectively.

**Retirement Board**

Commissioner Gaines further reported that the Retirement Board also met following the last commission meeting. He stated the meeting was straightforward and that the COLA issue was addressed.

13. **Adjournment**

Immediately following adjournment, please move toward the doors and exit the chambers. This allows for the safe and courteous exit of all persons, and those on the dais. Conversations after the meeting should be held outside of chambers, in the foyer or elsewhere, but not in the commission chambers where lights will be out as soon as the chambers are empty.

ATTEST:

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CITY CLERK

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MAYOR COMMISSIONER