

MINUTES OF A SPECIAL 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 5:05 P.M. ON MONDAY, JULY 28, 2025.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hudson called the July 28, 2025 Special Meeting of the City Commission to order at 5:05 P.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. CITY COMMISSION

A. Discussion regarding Commissioner District 2, Seat 2 status.

Mayor Hudson affirmed that this City would continue to move forward, remain committed to serving our community, and will not let the actions of one individual define us.

City Manager, Richard Chess commented that Commissioner Taylor’s attorney has submitted his letter of resignation to City Attorney Ms. Hedges

City of Fort Pierce – Special Election Briefing Summary
Presented by City Attorney Sara Hedges and City Clerk Linda Cox
Following the formal resignation of Commissioner James Taylor (Seat 2), received earlier in the afternoon, the City Commission convened to outline the next steps for filling the vacancy.

Special Election Process Overview

Trigger for Election: Per the City Charter, a special election is required when more than six months remain until the next general election.

Declaration & Resolution: A resolution declaring the special election will be presented at the next regular Commission meeting on August 4.

Certification: Upon adoption, the resolution will be submitted to the Supervisor of Elections, then to the Secretary of State for certification under Florida Statute §100.141.

Election Timeline:

Petition Deadline: August 12

Qualifying Period: August 18 (Noon) – August 22 (Noon)

Special Primary Election: November 4, 2025

Runoff (if needed): January 20, 2026 (only if no candidate earns 50% + 1 vote)

Note: Write-in candidates are not permitted in this election.

Voter & Candidate Eligibility

Only residents of District 2 may vote in this election.

To qualify as a candidate, an individual must:

Be a registered elector

Have resided in District 2 for at least two years

Election Operations & Budget

Polling Locations: There are currently 9 locations within District 2. The Commission discussed maintaining this number to ensure consistency and voter

confidence.

Early Voting (optional for special elections): Proposed from October 25 – November 1

Vote-by-Mail Deadline: October 23

Estimated Election Cost: \$60,000

The Commission expressed strong support for preserving standard election operations, maintaining polling sites and early voting access, to avoid public confusion or the appearance of election manipulation.

Funding Considerations

The cost may be split between the current and upcoming fiscal years.

Alternatives such as using emergency reserve funds were suggested.

The final funding plan will be coordinated with the Finance Department before the budget is finalized.

Legal & Statutory Context

City Attorney Sara Hedges clarified:

The City Commission cannot remove one of its own members under the Charter.

If a commissioner is absent from four consecutive meetings without excuse, they are automatically removed by law.

Florida Statute §112.51 allows the Governor to suspend elected officials upon formal charging, not arrest alone. A resignation avoids this process.

Recall efforts by voters would not be eligible until the official had served one-fourth of their term, January 2026 for Seat 2.

Commissioner Comments & Consensus

The Commission unanimously agreed to follow the same procedures used in prior special elections (e.g., District 1), ensuring transparency and fairness.

They reaffirmed their commitment to continue City business without disruption.

The Commission emphasized clear communication to the public regarding eligibility, timelines, and processes.

Next Steps

A formal resolution to declare the special election will be voted on August 4.

City Clerk Linda Cox will:

Distribute election packets and timelines to the Commission

Coordinate with Communications for public outreach via text alerts and other channels.

5. 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.

Mario Wilcox

Herbert Jackson

Joyce Jackson

Charlie Wilson

Ronna Perry

Commissioner Gaines requested that staff explore cost-saving options for the special election, such as evaluating low-turnout precincts or early voting adjustments, emphasizing that no voter access should be compromised, and urged the Commission to rise above politics, calling for unity and for Fort Pierce to set a national example of leadership and cooperation. He reassured District 2 residents that they would be heard and represented, pledging to advocate for all constituents and work together to move the city forward.

Mayor Hudson emphasized that while commissioners are elected by district, they are responsible for serving the entire city. She noted that all commissioners take this duty seriously and make decisions with the best interest of all Fort Pierce

residents in mind. As the only citywide elected official, she expressed appreciation for the shared commitment to citywide service.

Commissioner Broderick supported the idea of establishing an early voting site within District 2, suggesting it would be more accessible than the current locations. He also recommended reviewing low-turnout polling stations, such as the one on Oleander, for potential cost-saving opportunities. Additionally, he committed to expanding his office hours at City Hall to ensure District 2 residents have direct access to him and feel fully represented during this transition.

Commissioner Johnson cautioned against using past voter turnout as the sole reason to eliminate polling sites, emphasizing the importance of equitable access and fiscal responsibility. He reaffirmed that all commissioners are committed to serving the entire city, regardless of district. Acknowledging the emotional impact of recent events, he urged the community to pray for those affected, particularly the young victim, local business owners, and residents. He also noted the added grief of mourning a firefighter this week, asking the community to keep Fort Pierce in their prayers during this difficult time.

Commissioner Gaines acknowledged the importance of prayer and emphasized the need for professional mental health support. He encouraged any city employees affected by recent events to utilize the services available through the City. He also urged collaboration with the County and School Board to ensure support resources are accessible to all employees who may be impacted, stressing the importance of being proactive in addressing potential emotional triggers across agencies.

City Attorney Sara Hedges confirmed that support services have been made available to staff. Risk Management, in coordination with the City Manager, has arranged on-site services and Employee Assistance Program (EAP) services, with multiple sessions already provided and additional support scheduled for the following day. The City remains committed to supporting its employees during this time.

6. 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.

Mayor Hudson adjourned the meeting at 6:56 P.M.

ATTEST:

CITY CLERK

MAYOR COMMISSIONER