



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
MARCH 19, 2025 – 4:00 PM
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 EAST MAIN STREET, TAVARES**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

**Walter Price, Mayor
Lori Pfister, Vice Mayor
Sandy Gamble, Council Member
Bob Grenier, Council Member
Troy Singer, Council Member**

STAFF PRESENT

**John Drury, City Administrator
Lindsay Holt, City Attorney
Susie Novack, City Clerk
Antonio Fabre, Community Development Director
Scott Aldrich, Community Services Director
Bob Tweedie, Economic Development Director
Lori Houghton, Finance Director
Richard Keith, Fire Chief
Crissy Bublitz, Human Resources Director
James Dillon, Public Works Director
Mark O'Keefe, Support Services Director
Sarah Coursey, Police Chief
Phil Clark, Utilities Director**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Price called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. He asked those who wished to speak on an agenda item to complete and submit a Request to Speak form.

II. INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Tab 1. Pastor Shane Hargrave, Compass Life Church

Council Member Gamble provided the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance in the absence of Pastor Shane Hargrave.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Price asked if there were any changes to the Agenda. Mr. Drury said the staff had no changes.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IV. IMPACT FEE WORKSHOP

Tab 2. Council Workshop to discuss Draft City of Tavares 2025 Municipal Impact Fee Study for Police, Fire, Parks, and General Government

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

By way of background, the following information is provided to assist the City Council as they review the City of Tavares 2025 Municipal Impact Fee Study Draft Report for Police, Fire, Parks and General Government Facilities Impact Fees. The Draft Study Report is dated February 13, 2025.

- *The prior study for City of Tavares Police, Fire and Park Impact Fees was dated September 12, 2006.*
- *The City Council adopted Ordinance 2007-02 on February 21, 2007, which implemented the 2006 study recommendations.*
- *On June 4, 2021, CS/CS/CS/HB337, known as the Florida Impact Fee Act, was signed into law which brought several changes to Impact Fee requirements.*

Some changes for Impact Fees provided in the Florida Impact Fee Act (F.S. § 163.31801) include the following:

- *The law provides an introduction of definitions for the term infrastructure and public facilities.*
- *The law also creates a cap on the amount local governments can increase impact fees. This cap limits the increase to no more than 12.5% in a given year and no more than 50% over a four-year period.*
- *An increase greater than 50% requires a two-thirds vote of the City Council and provides at least two publicly noticed workshops.*
- *Local Governments will be required to credit developers or builders on a dollar-for-dollar basis when they contribute toward public facilities or infrastructure.*

- *The law requires that impact fees be split out into their own accounting fund.*
- *Local governments must limit administrative charges for the collection of impact fees to actual costs.*
- *Changes to the Financial Statement Audit Affidavit requirements by the CFO.*

The draft Impact Fee report has been prepared by the City's Rate Consultant, Joe Williams of Raftelis, and discusses the following for each impact fee: Police, Fire, Parks, and General Government Facilities. The Draft Report has been prepared within the constraints of the Florida Impact Fee Act.

- *An Introduction*
- *Existing Impact Fees*
- *Incremental Costs*
- *Impact Fee Development*
- *Impact Fee Comparisons*

Discussions at the workshop are required to have dedicated discussions related to the extraordinary circumstances necessitating the need to exceed the phase-in limitations set forth in FS 163.31801.

The Draft Report identifies the following extraordinary circumstances:

- *Recent large inflationary cost increases*
- *Additional capital improvements based on a significant increase in population growth.*

This workshop represents one of two required workshops to be held by the City Council for the Study as required by FS 163.3801. This report is delivered to the City Council for their review for workshop discussions.

Mayor Price noted the item before the Council was a Public Workshop to discuss the draft City of Tavares 2025 Municipal Impact Fee Report dated February 13, 2025. The dedicated discussions pertain to the extraordinary circumstances that necessitate the proposed impact fees for Police, Fire, Parks and Recreation, and General Government.

Michelle Galvin, Raftelis Consultant, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the draft impact fee report outlining the extraordinary items that support the fees in the draft report and the following highlights:

- Existing and proposed impact fees for single family
- Local comparison of the single family impact fees
- Proposed impact fees and cost factors
 - Updated Police impact fees
 - Updated Fire impact fees

- Updated Parks and Recreation impact fees
- New General Government impact fees.
- Revenue forecast, inflationary costs, and capital items.
- Next steps

Ms. Galvin stated that the second workshop would be held on April 2, followed by two public hearings to adopt an ordinance and a 90-day hold.

Vice Mayor Pfister commended Ms. Galvin on her presentation.

Council Member Singer emphasized that if the impact fees were not adopted, the City would need to find \$7 million dollars by 2034, burdening current residents. He emphasized that growth needed to be funded by growth. He said concerns had been raised by the Homebuilders Association regarding cost increases and noted that the City was also experiencing rising costs. Council Member Singer said the City of Clermont had not seen a slowdown in growth despite having the highest impact fees among identified cities. Ms. Galvin confirmed this, noting that Raftelis had assisted Clermont with water and sewer rates.

Vice Mayor Pfister said that while raising impact fees was necessary, the City could retain the ability to discount or waive fees if needed, as had been done before. Mr. Drury confirmed.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the audience.

Gary Santoro, Royal Harbor, expressed his support and emphasized that central services, such as Police, Fire, and City government, needed to keep up with what was happening in the City. He said that for a long time, the City had relied on neighboring cities for assistance, and as the growth in the area continued, that help may not be readily available. He said Tavares needed to ensure self-sufficiency and noted insurance rates were based on the City providing services.

There was no further public comment.

Council Member Singer asked Attorney Holt to elaborate on the extraordinary circumstances the City had to follow to increase the impact fees.

Attorney Holt said the consultants helped guide the City through the process. She said the presentation provided the increase, and by Florida statutes, the City was required to hold two workshops to discuss the draft impact fee report. Attorney Holt said two hearings would be held to adopt an increase by ordinance. She said the City complied with all requirements and had worked with Raftelis on the draft report for the past twelve months. The report demonstrated the increased need and extraordinary circumstances. Mr. Drury noted a requirement for approval from the majority of the Council. Attorney Holt said a 2/3 vote majority was required with over 50% increases.

Council Member Singer said the Council had been working to accomplish more professional housing over the past several years. He asked how much inventory the City currently had available for single-family residents. Mr. Drury said the City was approaching 9,000 homes, with an average occupancy rate of 2.4 souls per household for 21,400 citizens. He said the City was fortunate to recently include market-rate apartments to assist with the hospital, medical park, and employees working there. Mr. Drury said more apartments were being built downtown, consistent with the Master Plan, and residents were being brought into the downtown area to work, live, play, and patronize the parks, restaurants, and local businesses. He said a market-rate apartment complex was under construction on Caroline Street, and a complex was coming to the town square and was currently being permitted.

Council Member Singer acknowledged the challenge of balancing the needs of current and future residents. He said the proposed increase would significantly raise impact fees on single-family homes. Council Member Singer suggested a phased implementation over several years. Mr. Drury said it would be the Board's decision to phase in the impact fees. He noted the proposed rates for basic fire and police service were below Clermont and Mount Dora. If those cities added parks, recreation, and general government, Tavares would be far below its rates. He said the City was going toward market rate quickly.

Vice Mayor Pfister noted that it had been 19 years since the last adjustment and stated that infrastructure needs must be addressed. She observed that higher impact fees had not slowed Clermont's growth and believed that Tavares's quality of life justified the increase. Vice Mayor Pfister added that the City could revisit the fees if the economy entered a recession to ensure continued growth.

Council Member Singer asked about the timeline for implementing Impact Fees. Mr. Drury said a second workshop would be held on April 2, followed by two ordinance hearings. He said the final vote for the ordinance would occur in May, with the law taking effect 90 days later, around August.

Council Member Grenier asked what type of buildings were considered institutional. Ms. Houghton said a parking garage, new City Hall, and any ancillary building that served General Government operations would qualify.

Mayor Price said he was surprised the City had not raised impact fees in 19 years. Mr. Drury said the City eliminated impact fees for some time due to economic conditions. Mayor Price said that while the increase is a big percentage, the cost difference is approximately \$2,500 on a \$300,000 to \$500,000 home, which does not impact the overall price. He said the City would incur a deficit if not implemented. Mr. Drury confirmed the deficit would be \$10.5 million dollars.

Council Member Gamble stated that the executive summary indicated a total percentage difference of 160%.

Vice Mayor Pfister recognized Lake County Commissioner Kirby Smith in the audience. Mr. Drury thanked Commissioner Smith for attending the meeting. Commissioner Smith emphasized the importance of transparency and stated that the workshops provided opportunities for public input before final decisions were made.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to proceed to the next workshop, seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

V. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

VI. SWEARING IN BY CITY ATTORNEY AND DISCLOSURE OF EXPARTE COMMUNICATIONS

Attorney Holt stated there were no quasi-judicial matters before the Council for consideration.

VII. READING OF ALL ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS INTO THE RECORD

Ms. Novack read the following ordinances and resolutions by title only:

ORDINANCE 2025-01

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA AMENDING THE CITY CODE OF ORDINANCES CHAPTER 6 FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION, ARTICLE IV FIRE PREVENTION STANDARDS, SECTION 6-96 NATIONAL FIRE PROTECTION ASSOCIATION CODES ADOPTED; AND AMENDING CHAPTER 6 FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION, ARTICLE IV FIRE PREVENTION STANDARDS, SECTION 6-97 STANDARD FIRE PROTECTION CODE ADOPTED; SUBJECT TO THE RULES, REGULATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TAVARES COUNCIL; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY AND CONFLICTS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

VIII. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Price asked if anyone wished to pull an item from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 3. Approval of the March 19, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes], seconded by Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 3. Approval of the March 5, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

IX. RESOLUTIONS

X. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

Tab 4. Ordinance 2025-01 – Language Amendment to Chapter 6 of the City of Tavares City Ordinance, “Fire Protection and Prevention”

Chief Willis made the following presentation:

Currently, Chapter 6 of City Ordinance cites and enables specifically the 1997 edition of 3 fire prevention and life safety documents that impact the City of Tavares through the State of Florida. Those documents are: National Fire Code (NFPA) Pamphlet 1; Life Safety Code (NFPA) 101; and Standard Fire Protection Code. The current authorized editions of these documents are dated 2024. This ordinance change will bring those edition dates to the current standards enacted by the State of Florida. Additionally, language is being added to automatically enable the current edition of these documents as these edition dates change in the future. In the attached change documentation, changes are indicated by strikethrough for current language being deleted, and underline for new language being added.

Staff recommends Option 1, for the Council to adopt Ordinance 2025-01 as presented, authorizing the Mayor to sign the document upon ratification at second reading.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council. There were none.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve [Option 1], seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

XI. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 5. City of Tavares Civic Group Entrance Sign Recognition

Mr. Aldrich made the following presentation:

At the request of Mayor Price, staff researched and identified ten (10) civic service clubs in the Golden Triangle area to see if they had an interest in being recognized on a city gateway entrance sign. The clubs received a letter from the City asking if their club would like to be recognized on a gateway entrance sign along the roadway to welcome drivers to the City of Tavares. Upon the Council's approval and direction, two (2) signs will be placed at the entrance to the City, one along David Walker Drive between HWY 441 and Dora Avenue, and the other along Old HWY 441 coming from Mount Dora into Tavares just before the David Walker Drive intersection.

Two (2) clubs have responded, indicating their interest in being included in the signage: Rotary Club of Lake County Golden Triangle, and the Peninsular Masonic Lodge No. 85.

Working with Sign Crafters of Florida, staff have identified three options for local roadway signs, each with room to include up to five (5) civic club logos.

- 1. The first option is \$25,060.00*
- 2. The second option is \$23,060.00*
- 3. The third option is \$21,660.00*

Inside your agenda packet are detailed descriptions of each option, showing the differences in the signage.

Staff recommends the Council discuss and provide direction to the staff. Staff recommends taking the funds out of reserves. He said the reserve account reflects an excess of \$695,937 above the GFOA recommendation.

Vice Mayor Pfister supported moving forward with the civic group recognition signs.

Council Member Grenier inquired about the number of civic organization plaques each sign could accommodate. Mr. Drury confirmed that each sign could hold five (5) plaques.

Council Member Gamble highlighted the need for a gateway sign on the City's west side, noting that funding for this was included in the current year's budget.

Vice Mayor Pfister emphasized the City's goal of maintaining a village-like feel despite growth. She stated that the signs provided valuable information at a minimal cost.

Mr. Drury noted that the design for the west-side sign would be included when that project moved forward.

Council Member Singer asked about the criteria for selecting participating clubs. Mr. Aldrich explained that clubs were identified based on being service-oriented, non-profit organizations. Council Member Singer voiced concern about ensuring fairness, noting

potential negative consequences if some organizations were excluded. He opposed using reserve funds for the signs, suggesting that the project be included in the budget process. While he supported the signs, he preferred their inclusion in planned budget discussions.

Council Member Gamble pointed out that both proposed sign locations were on the City's east side, with none along SR 19. He stated that one sign would be placed on US Hwy 441 at Dora Avenue and the other on Old 441, entering Tavares from Mount Dora. He supported adding a third sign and, given the City's reserve levels, had no issue moving forward with the request.

Council Member Grenier supported adding personalized signage to smaller gateways into the City.

Mayor Price said he was amenable to placing one sign on the east side and one on the west side provided a suitable west-side location was found. He also mentioned that the state Masonic Lodge organization had offered to help offset some costs.

Council Member Gamble asked if organizations would be charged a fee to display their logos. Mr. Drury confirmed that no fee was currently associated with the signage but noted that a fee could be implemented.

Vice Mayor Pfister supported allowing staff to negotiate a reasonable fee.

Council Member Singer asked for the criteria on which organizations would be invited to participate. Mr. Drury proposed that staff could solicit submissions and present them to the Council for consideration.

Mayor Price preferred the first sign design option and stated that clubs should provide their logos. Mr. Drury explained that the City would place the logos since the signs must adhere to specific materials and state standards. He noted that obtaining approval for state highway signage could take a year. A discussion followed regarding potential fee structures.

Council Member Grenier asked if two signs for the Option 1 design could be approved while criteria were being determined. Mr. Drury confirmed that if approved, the staff would process a purchase order and hire a company to manufacture the signs. The selection of five civic logos would be returned to the Council for review, including the selection process and potential costs. If more than five organizations applied, the Council would decide which ones to include.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to purchase two Option 1 signs, with criteria for location, fees, and civic group selection to be determined later. The motion was seconded by Lori Pfister.

Council Member Gamble suggested implementing a five-year fee structure.

Council Member Singer reiterated his preference for including the project in the budget process and did not support moving forward at this time.

The motion carried 4-1 as follows:

Walter Price:	Yes
Lori Pfister:	Yes
Sandy Gamble:	Yes
Bob Grenier:	Yes
Troy Singer:	No

Tab 6. Tavares Skate Park Demolition

Mr. Clark made the following presentation:

The city will need to expand the Waste Water Plant in the future, which will call for some additional land currently occupied by the defunct skate park. The skate park is currently inoperable and is both a liability and an eyesore. For these reasons, it is recommended that the Council demolish the skate park using Utility Enterprise Fund reserves and reclaim this property for future plant capacity expansion needs.

There is currently \$7,849,909 in Utility Enterprise Reserves. The \$93,000 estimated cost is made up of \$73,000 low bid from Brooks Company to do the work and \$20,000 contingency.

Reducing current reserves as proposed will still maintain the Governmental Finance Officers' Association's recommendation of no less than two months of operating expenditures in reserve funds.

Staff recommends Option 1, for the Council to approve utilizing \$93,000 of the Utility Enterprise Fund Reserves for the demolition of the skate park.

Mayor Price asked whether the new concept plan for Woodlea Park included a skate park. Mr. Drury responded that it did not and that any new skate park would be located at the YMCA. He noted that it was uncertain how popular skateboarding was in current recreational activities.

Council Member Singer inquired about the urgency of moving forward. Mr. Clark explained that liability was a concern due to frequent trespassing and stated the structure had been compromised.

Council Member Singer asked if the funding would come from the utility enterprise reserves rather than the general fund, given that it was a utility-related matter. Mr. Clark

confirmed. Council Member Singer noted the skate park had outlived its useful life and asked for a repair cost estimate. Mr. Clark stated that in 2023, the repair cost was estimated at \$650,000 but had since increased to \$800,000 in the current market.

Council Member Gamble recalled being on the Council when the skate park was initially installed and considered a downtown Tavares location. He said that allowing visitors to use the facility independently had led to vandalism and other issues over the years, making it a significant liability for the City.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the demolition [Option 1]. Seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 7. RFQ 2025-0003, Government Relations Firm

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

At the January 15, 2025 City Council meeting, the City Council approved Resolution 2025-01 authorizing a partnership with Lake County Florida and the City of Mount Dora to submit a grant application to the Department of Transportation (DOT) in the amount of \$25 million for the 2025 Rebuilding American Infrastructure with Sustainability and Equity (RAISE) grant for the planned Wekiva Trail Extension Project (Segments 1 and 5).

On January 24, 2025, the US Department of Transportation (DOT) issued Amendment 1 which in essence changed the name of the grant from RAISE to the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) Grant amongst other changes.

At the February 19, 2025, City Council Meeting, the City Council approved Resolution 2025-4 which reflected Council's approval for the grant application based on the DOT amendment to the Grant Program name from "RAISE" to "BUILD" as well as other changes to the grant program.

Previously, the Council requested Staff to look at contracting with a consultant to assist in securing Federal and State Funding for large City Projects.

The State of Florida currently has 412 cities and 57 counties all of which are competing for additional funding sources to meet capital needs. This RFQ is intended to provide several firms that may be qualified in Governmental Relations that the City may contract with for assistance in securing grant funding for Capital Projects in the areas of Water, Wastewater, Transportation, Trails, Recreation Facilities, Parks, and other capital needs. Responding firms will be ranked for selection.

Staff estimates the cost for a consultant to be approximately \$75,000. The cost would be shared equally between the Utilities Fund and the General Fund.

The initial RFQ is attached for your reference and is anticipated to be advertised in the March 23, 2025, Sunday edition of the Orlando Sentinel should the City Council recommend that staff begin the RFQ process.

Staff recommends Option 1, for the Council to request the City Administrator to issue and publish RFQ 2025-0003, Governmental Relations Firm, and approve a budget amendment in the amount of \$75,000 from the General Fund and the Water/Wastewater Operating Fund reserves. (\$37,500 each)

Ms. Houghton noted that while the City could wait until the budget cycle, grant opportunities had deadlines, making it important to act now if a consultant's assistance was needed.

Mr. Drury emphasized the benefits of engaging a government relations firm, citing past successes in securing permits and funding. He highlighted ongoing challenges, including securing a consumptive use permit due to increased water demand and the need for deeper wells. He also mentioned upcoming projects, including wastewater and water plant expansions and pursuing a \$25 million federal grant for a trail between downtown Tavares and Mount Dora. Mr. Drury emphasized that such firms offered direct access to key decision-makers at the state and federal levels, thereby increasing the City's chances of success in grant applications. Neighboring municipalities already utilize similar resources, and securing representation would help Tavares stay competitive.

Mayor Price inquired whether the consultant would be used for just one or two initiatives. Mr. Drury confirmed they would assist with all city initiatives.

The Mayor asked for comments from the Council; there were none.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve [Option 1], seconded by Bob Grenier.

Council Member Singer noted his preference for including in the budget process rather than taking funds out of reserves.

The motion carried 4-1 as follows:

Walter Price:	Yes
Lori Pfister:	Yes
Sandy Gamble:	Yes
Bob Grenier:	Yes
Troy Singer:	No

XII. NEW BUSINESS

XIII. OLD BUSINESS

Council Member Grenier asked if there had been further discussion with Lake County regarding roads, particularly Dead River Road. Mr. Drury stated a significant meeting was scheduled with the county on April 19 to discuss district impact fee funding for roads, including the distribution of county road impact fees. All projects would be outlined during the meeting, and further updates would be provided. He said Council Member Gamble, who served as MPO Chairman, strongly advocated for the area.

Vice Mayor Pfister acknowledged efforts on the wayfinding sign project. She mentioned that a sign on SR 19, by the Dora Canal bridge, was obscured by overgrown limbs and bushes. Mr. Drury said he would arrange to have the area cleared.

XIV. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

XV. REPORTS

Tab 8. City Administrator Report

Chief Coursey said the Citizen Academy began and included a waiting list. She said more information would be forthcoming.

Mr. Tweedie stated the 16th Annual Sunnyland Antique and Classic Boat Show in the City of Tavares would be held March 21 through 23, 2025. He provided an update on the upcoming event activities.

Tab 9. City Council Member Reports

Vice Mayor Pfister said the baseball teams had improved and recently played against Mount Dora. She stated that one of her grandsons enjoyed participating in the STEAM program. Recreation Manager Pete Sherard said there were 15-16 participants in the STEAM program the previous year and 25 in the current year, with a waiting list. Vice Mayor Pfister thanked Mr. Sherard and the Community Services team for their children's programs.

Council Member Grenier said he hoped everyone enjoyed St. Patrick's Day. He noted March 19 was St. Joseph's Day.

Council Member Singer thanked Mr. Tweedie for providing an update on the upcoming Sunnyland Antique and Classic Boat Show event. He said it is always a good event and noted the good weather predicted for the weekend.

Council Member Gamble noted his grandson was in the audience. He said he was a member of the Citizens Police Academy. He said it was a great program.

Council Member Gamble said the baseball program was going well and wanted to see it continue to move forward.

Mayor Price said he was attending the Citizens Police Academy and looked forward to the entire program.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 5:17 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk