



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
APRIL 16, 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 - *Absent*  
Troy Singer, Council Member - *Absent***

**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 Michael Watkins, Friendship C.M.E. Church**

Pastor Michael Watkins, Friendship C.M.E. Church, provided the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

### **III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Mayor Price asked if there were any changes to the Agenda. Mr. Drury said staff would like to add Tab 1A [Present Certificates of Graduation to the 5 Mayor's Youth Council Students] under IV. Proclamations/Presentations.

#### **MOTION**

**Lori Pfister moved to approve the Agenda with said changes, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.**

### **IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS**

#### **Tab 1A. Present Certificates to Mayor's Youth Council**

Mayor Price presented the following Mayor's Youth Council members with their program completion certificates and college scholarships: Kane Rogers Buigas, Mitchell Garcia, Anderson Fish, Alyssa Liddy, and Kelly Lopez.

#### **Tab 2. Community Grant Award Update from Triangle Community Alliance, Inc.**

Debbi Weinert, Executive Director of Triangle Community Alliance, Inc., provided an update on the \$500 Community Grant awarded for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library Program.

Council Member Gamble said the program was a great opportunity for the children in the community.

Vice Mayor Pfister inquired about the sign-up process for children. Ms. Weinert said program sign-up is available at local events and through the online Dolly Parton Imagination Library website. She noted that three million books are mailed by the Dolly Parton Imagination Library each month.

#### **Tab 3. Proclamation – Water Conservation Month**

Mayor Price read a Proclamation to the Utilities Department declaring April 2025 as Water Conservation Month in the City of Tavares.

#### **MOTION**

**Sandy Gamble moved to approve the Proclamation, seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.**

#### **Tab 4. GFOA Distinguished Budget Award**

Mayor Price made the following presentation:

*The “Distinguished Budget Presentation Award” has been awarded to the City of Tavares by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States for the Fiscal Year 2025 Adopted Budget.*

*The award reflects the commitment of the governing body and staff to meeting the highest principles of governmental budgeting. To receive the budget award, the budget document had to satisfy nationally recognized guidelines for an effective budget presentation. This award is the highest form of recognition in governmental budgeting. Its attainment represents a significant achievement by our city.*

Mayor Price presented the GFOA Distinguished Budget Award to Ms. Houghton and the Finance Staff, including Brett Jones and Alex Patton.

Ms. Houghton thanked the Council and Mr. Drury for their support. She noted that the City received no comments from the auditors, which indicates a terrific job. She said the Finance staff played a significant role in completing the budgeting.

Mayor Price said the Finance team did a great job on the budget, and he could personally attest as it included 650 pages of detailed information.

#### **V. SWEARING IN BY CITY ATTORNEY AND DISCLOSURE OF EXPARTE COMMUNICATIONS**

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

#### **VI. READING OF ALL ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS INTO THE RECORD**

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

##### **ORDINANCE NO. 2025 - 04**

**AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, AMENDING ORDINANCE 95-43, AND ORDINANCE 2007-02 CHAPTER 6 OF THE CITY CODE OF ORDINANCES; UPDATING IMPACT FEES, RELATED TO FIRE, POLICE, PARKS IMPACT FEES; AND PROVIDING FOR GENERAL GOVERNMENT PUBLIC FACILITIES IMPACT FEES; PROVIDING FOR SHORT TITLE, FINDINGS, AUTHORITY, DEFINITIONS, APPLICABILITY, PAYMENT, DEDICATIONS, A FEE SCHEDULE, IMPACT FEE TRUST FUNDS, LIMITATIONS ON THE USE OF IMPACT FEE FUNDS, REFUNDS, EXEMPTIONS, CREDITS, PENALTIES, SEVERABILITY, AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

## **VII. CONSENT AGENDA**

Mayor Price asked if anyone wished to pull an item from the Consent Agenda for discussion. There were no requests.

### **MOTION**

**Lori Pfister moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 5. Approval of the April 2, 2025, City Council Impact Fee Workshop and Regular Meeting Minutes], seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.**

### **Tab 5. Approval of the April 2, 2025, City Council Impact Fee Workshop and Regular Meeting Minutes**

*Approved on the Consent Agenda.*

## **VIII. RESOLUTIONS**

## **IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING**

### **First Reading**

### **Tab 6. Ordinance 2025-04 – City of Tavares 2025 Municipal Impact Fees for Police, Fire, Parks, and General Government**

*No discussion at First Reading.*

### **Second Reading**

## **X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT**

### **Tab 7. Traffic Light – David Walker and Old 441 Warrant Study**

Mr. Dillon made the following presentation:

*During the last Council meeting, Council discussed the possibility of installing a traffic light at the intersection of David Walker and Old 441 and requested staff to research when the previous warrant study was conducted for the aforementioned intersection. For context, the city has previously submitted requests to the County, which oversees traffic light installations in this area, on two occasions: in 2013 and 2020 (please see the attached studies). Both studies concluded that a traffic light was not warranted at that time, as detailed on page 22 of the 2013 study and page 21 of the 2020 study.*

*The County has expressed a willingness to conduct and fund these studies approximately every seven years. However, if the City wishes to pursue it sooner, it can commission a study earlier at an estimated cost of \$7,500.*

*Alternatively, the City may elect to wait until 2027 to make another request to the County.*

*Staff recommended Option 2, for the Council to decline to allocate \$7,500 for a traffic signal warrant analysis at the intersection of David Walker and Old 441 for the fiscal year 2026 and decide to wait until 2027 to submit another request to the County.*

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Gamble said he would like to move forward and include funding in the upcoming budget rather than wait for the County, as the intersection was a safety hazard.

Vice Mayor Pfister noted her preference to use the City's resources on the section of roads from Main Street to Lane Park Road. Mr. Drury stated that a traffic light at SR 561 should be installed and completed by January 2026 at the intersection of SR 19 and SR 561. He said that light and the long-term plan for the 4-lane SR 19 to the Howey bridge should help alleviate issues along that stretch of road.

Mayor Price asked how long it would take to install a traffic light at SR 19 and 561. Mr. Drury said if the Council funds the project in next year's budget, the light installation could be completed in two years. Mayor Price noted his preference for the County to fund the analysis.

## **MOTION**

**Lori Pfister moved to approve Option 2, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.**

## **Tab 8. Award Invitation to Bid Number (ITB) 2025-0006 for the N. St. Clair Abrams Treatment Pond (Eagle Park) to the Lowest Responsive Bidder ? contract?**

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

*Salient information related to the St. Clair Abrams Project:*

- *On July 19, 2023, the City Council approved Resolution 2023-11 authorizing the acceptance of a grant from Lake County Water Authority in the amount of \$376,955.*
- *On December 6, 2023, the City Council approved Resolution 2023-23 authorizing the acceptance of a State of Florida Direct Appropriation grant in the amount of \$200,000.*
- *On March 20, 2024, the City Council approved Resolution 2024-05 authorizing the acceptance of a grant from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) in the amount of \$176,955.*

- *On January 15, 2025, the City Council approved naming the pond for St. Clair Abrams Treatment Pond Project as Eagle Park.*
- *Total Grant Funding for the project is \$753,910.*

*On March 16, 2025, the City of Tavares advertised an Invitation to Bid (ITB) 2025-0006 for the St. Clair Abrams Treatment Pond Project. Eight (8) companies responded to ITB 2025-0006 with Valencia Construction Group being the lowest responsive bidder at \$784,790.66 (All bids were adjusted for wetland planting - see Engineer's Recommendation Letter).*

*Don Griffey of Griffey Engineering, engineer for the project, has reviewed all bid respondent proposals for ITB 2025-0006, and recommends awarding a contract to Valencia Construction Group for the project. The recommendation letter from Griffey Engineering is attached. Valencia Construction Group was the lowest responsive bidder. Staff reviewed all proposals and concurred with the Engineer's findings.*

*Total grant funding for the project is \$753,910. A budget amendment in the amount of \$30,880.66 from Stormwater Reserves is requested to award the project.*

*The proposal from Valencia Engineering is attached for your review.*

*Staff recommends Option 1, for the Council to award Invitation to Bid (ITB) 2025-0006 to Valencia Construction Group and authorize a budget amendment from Stormwater Reserves in the amount of \$30,880.66.*

Mayor Price asked if the City had previously worked with Valencia Construction Group. Mr. Clark said no and that the engineer had reviewed and recommended the company.

Ms. Houghton said the City would require proof of licensure and a project history from Valencia Construction Group.

## **MOTION**

**Sandy Gamble moved to award ITB 2025-0006 to Valencia Construction Group, and to take \$30,880.66 from Stormwater Reserves, seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.**

Council Member Gamble said he was glad to see the project come to fruition.

Mr. Clark thanked Ms. Houghton and Brett Jones for their assistance.

**XI. NEW BUSINESS**

**XII. OLD BUSINESS**

**XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD**

Vanessa Mahai, 1421 S. Center Street, Eustis, president of the Babe Ruth Booster Club, said the Club would like to become a parent-led organization and release the Tavares Recreation Department from the program. She noted a concern regarding losing participants to other leagues.

Council Member Gamble asked Ms. Mahai if she had spoken with Babe Ruth International regarding her request. Ms. Mahai confirmed and said two Babe Ruth programs could not be represented in the same City, and as long as the City of Tavares relinquished the program, then the parents could lead their program.

TJ Fish, of 1110 Juniper Court, Tavares, commended the City for securing substantial grant funding for stormwater improvements. He noted that he represented the City on the Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Advisory Committee and appreciated Council Member Gamble's leadership. Mr. Fish emphasized the importance of the MPO, describing it as a vital yet often misunderstood regional agency that played a key role in collaborating with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT).

Mr. Fish shared his long-term involvement with the SR 19 project, which began with project development and environmental studies conducted fifteen years ago. Those studies led to a 4-lane design, including an additional bridge structure. Mr. Fish highlighted the bridge as a critical bottleneck and suggested considering segmentation of the project design for financial feasibility. He noted that the 4-lane expansion would likely reach SR 448 first, with the bridge portion addressed later due to cost and complexity.

He also mentioned that the Town of Howey-in-the-Hills requested a roundabout at the intersection of SR 19 and SR 48, which had already been designed. Mr. Fish explained that the bridge served dual regional functions: supporting north-south traffic to Groveland and east-west traffic from Orange County to The Villages. He said the existing 4-lane section from CR 561 to downtown has never been studied for expansion. Mr. Fish cautioned against expecting FDOT to 6-lane the road without a study and design phase, noting that such expansion could require additional right-of-way and impact nearby businesses.

Jerome Henin, the Henin Group, 1065 West Morse Boulevard, Winter Park, said he would like to discuss the impact fee ordinance. Mayor Price said there would be no discussion at first reading. Mr. Drury said the Audience to be Heard portion of the agenda was for items not on the agenda. He noted that the Ordinance 2025-04 discussion would be held May 7, 2025.

#### **XIV. REPORTS**

##### **Tab 9. City Administrator Report**

Mr. Drury said the Mayor's Youth Council began many years ago and was stalled due to COVID-19. He said getting Tavares High School reengaged took work and noted the program went well. Mr. Drury said he looked forward to next year's program.

##### **Tab 10. City Council Member Reports**

Vice Mayor Pfister wished those present a Happy Good Friday off with their families.

Council Member Gamble wished those present a Happy Good Friday and Easter.

Mayor Price congratulated the Mayor's Youth Council for a successful program and said he looks forward to next year. He wished those present a Happy Easter.

#### **XV. ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business, and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 5:01 p.m.

Respectfully,

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Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM  
City Clerk