



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

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

**Walter Price, Mayor
Lori Pfister, Vice Mayor - *Absent*
Sandy Gamble, Council Member
Bob Grenier, Council Member - *Absent*
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. Youth Pastor Kevin Honeycutt, First Baptist Church of Tavares

Mayor Price extended his condolences to Vice Mayor Pfister as her husband recently passed away. He asked Pastor Honeycutt to add Jeff Pfister in his prayers.

Youth Pastor Kevin Honeycutt, First Baptist Church of Tavares, 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 continue Tab 10 and Tab 11 to the June 18, 2025, City Council meeting.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the Agenda with Tab 10 and Tab 11 [Tab 10. Alfred Street/Old 441 Horizon Team Update Presentation; and, Tab 11. SR19 Horizon Team Update Presentation] continued to the June 18, 2025, City Council meeting. The motion was seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Tab 2. Tavares Chamber of Commerce Update

Tavares Chamber President Stephanie Hayes provided an update on Chamber activities.

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:

RESOLUTION 2025 -10

A RESOLUTION BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, AUTHORIZING AND ESTABLISHING A SPECIAL REVENUE FUND TITLED "GOLDEN TRIANGLE REGIONAL PARK EAST – COUNTY ASSISTANCE FUND".

ORDINANCE 2025-03

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES AMENDING CHAPTER 15, PENSIONS AND RETIREMENT, ARTICLE IV, POLICE OFFICERS' PENSION TRUST FUND, OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF TAVARES; AMENDING SECTION 15-98, DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PLAN, TO PROVIDE FOR EIGHT (8) YEARS OF DROP PARTICIPATION; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HERewith AND PROVIDING 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

Sandy Gamble moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 3. Approval of the May 21, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes], seconded by Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

Tab 3. Approval of the May 21, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Tab 4. Resolution 2025-10 – Establishes Special Revenue Fund for Lake County Contributions for Regional Park East

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

On September 2011, as required by the Governmental Accounting Board the City Council formally adopted GASB Statement number 54 to meet “highest level decision criteria” for governmental fund reporting. This standard sets forth the requirements needed to establish and account for Special Revenue Funds.

On May 21, 2025, the City of Tavares City Council approved an Interlocal Agreement with Lake County whereas Lake County would assist in funding the development of the Golden Triangle Regional Park East (GTRP).

The agreement provides funding from Lake County Infrastructure Sales Tax revenue in the amount of \$1.5 million dollars for fiscal years 2024 through 2032 or for an amount not to exceed \$13.5 million dollars.

In order to meet GASB Statement No. 54 requirements for the establishment of a Special Revenue Fund for Financial Reporting and disclosure (highest level

decision criteria), Resolution No. 2025-10 has been prepared to meet accounting requirements for reporting and disclosure.

Ms. Houghton said staff recommended Option 1, for the Council move to adopt Resolution 2025-10, authorizing the establishment of a Special Revenue Fund titled “Golden Triangle Regional Park East – County Assistant Fund.”

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Singer asked whether the resolution was primarily a housekeeping item. Ms. Houghton confirmed that it was and added that it also supported the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) reporting requirements.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve Resolution 2025-10, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Tab 5. Ordinance 2025-03 – Amendment to Section 15-98 of the Police Pension Plan to Extend DROP

No discussion at First Reading.

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 6. Request from Tavares Babe Ruth Booster Club to Take Over Tavares Babe Ruth League

Mr. Aldrich made the following presentation:

By way of background, the City has chartered and managed the Tavares Babe Ruth League since 1987. The charter is held through Babe Ruth International, an organization that serves over 1 million baseball and softball players from ages 4-18 in more than 6 countries and all 50 states.

Currently, the City of Tavares has professional staff within the Recreation Department to oversee and manage the league as a city program both in the spring and the fall. Staff have worked diligently to focus on the Tavares Babe Ruth League, and with over 25 years of combined service at the City within the Recreation Department, the staff's commitment to growing the league is unmatched within the area. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic,

participation within the league has increased by 51%, steadily growing each of the past 5 years. Additionally, the City Council has supported the program financially through each fiscal year's adopted budget and with a nationally recognized, award-winning professional Finance Department.

The Tavares Babe Ruth Booster Club is made up of volunteer parents within the league and has helped raise supplemental funds for the league and assisted with tournament entry fees, equipment, and small improvements to the fields over the years. Due to a lack of volunteer support, the Tavares Babe Ruth Booster Club disbanded July 31, 2012. A new group of volunteer parents from the league rebranded the defunct Tavares Babe Ruth Booster Club almost 10 years later in the spring of 2022. Since that time, leadership within the booster club has changed again, and the current board of directors recently submitted a proposal to the City for the booster club to take over the Tavares Babe Ruth League charter and operate the league with volunteers.

Mr. Aldrich stated that the staff recommended Option 2, which was not to approve the proposal. He gave a PowerPoint presentation providing an overview of the Community Services Department. Mr. Aldrich highlighted the backgrounds of Recreation staff member Deputy Director of Recreation Pete Sherard and Recreation Coordinator Kayla Gaines and provided department budget information. Mr. Aldrich reported that participation in programs was increasing. He also mentioned that the president of the booster club was present and available to speak.

Council Member Gamble expressed concern that only three of the five Council members were present and suggested postponing the discussion until the full Council could be present.

Mayor Price concurred with Council Member Gamble and supported a motion to continue the item.

Council Member Singer also supported a continuance of the item and noted Vice Mayor Pfister had a grandchild who played in the league.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to continue the discussion to the July 2, 2025, City Council meeting. The motion was seconded by Council Member Troy Singer.

Council Member Gamble recommended that the Booster Club meet with the Lake County School Board to identify which fields could be used, as well as any fees and field maintenance requirements.

The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

Tab 7. Board Appointments – Library and Planning and Zoning Advisory Boards

Mayor Price made the following presentation:

Library Board

There are four (4) expiring seats on the Tavares Library Board. The City received the following request for reappointment and one new application for the term June 2025 through June 2027 (2-year terms):

- *Kathy Czyrnik - Request for Reappointment*
- *George Cook - Request for Reappointment*
- *Ravae Hughley - Request for Reappointment*
- *Lawrence Ross - New Application*

If the four (re)appointments are approved, there will be no vacant seats remaining on the Tavares Library Advisory Board.

Mayor Price asked if any of the applicants were present in the audience and wished to speak.

Kathy Czyrnik stated that she had enjoyed serving on the Library Board and expressed her desire to be reappointed.

Council Member Singer expressed appreciation for those who volunteer to serve on City boards and thanked all the applicants. He noted that Mr. Ross had moved into his neighborhood about a year ago and said he was pleased to see him apply, adding that Mr. Ross was actively engaged in the community.

Mayor Price recommended the reappointments of Kathy Czyrnik, George Cook, and Ravae Hughly to the Library Board, and the appointment of Lawrence Ross, for the term June 2025 through June 2027.

MOTION

Council Member Troy Singer moved to approve the Mayor's recommendations for appointments to the Library Board. The motion was seconded by Council Member Sandy Gamble.

Council Member Gamble also thanked the applicants for volunteering their time to serve the community.

The motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

Mayor Price made the following presentation:

Planning and Zoning Board

There are four (4) expiring seats and one (1) vacant seat on the Tavares Planning and Zoning Board. The City received the following requests for reappointment and no new applications for the term June 2025 through June 2028 (3-year terms):

- *Brooke Matthews - Request for Reappointment*
- *Bruce Peterman - Request for Reappointment*
- *Jim Sweezy - Request for Reappointment*
- *Dara Treadwell - Request for Reappointment*

If the above reappointments are approved, one vacant seat will remain on the Tavares Planning and Zoning Advisory Board.

The City advertised all open and expiring positions in the Daily Commercial and on the City website. Applications and reappointment requests are attached. The City will continue to advertise for all remaining vacant seats.

Mayor Price stated that he recommended the reappointment requests as presented and asked if any of the applicants were present in the audience and wished to speak.

Bruce Peterman, a resident of Royal Harbor, said he appreciated the opportunity to serve the community and expressed his desire to continue contributing to making the City better.

Council Member Singer thanked those who serve on City boards and recognized their efforts to improve Tavares. He commended the Planning and Zoning Board, noting that it was doing an excellent job under the leadership of Gary Santoro. He also pointed out that, if all current board members were reappointed, one vacancy would remain.

Council Member Singer asked Mr. Drury to comment on the recent departure of a Board member. Mr. Drury explained that one individual had been unable to attend meetings on a regular basis, and the Board had taken appropriate action. Council Member Singer asked whether the vacancy had been advertised. Mr. Drury confirmed that it had, and added that applications could be submitted on the City's website at www.tavaresfl.gov.

MOTION

Council Member Sandy Gamble moved to approve the Mayor's recommendations for appointments to the Planning and Zoning Board for the term June 2025 through June 2028. The motion was seconded by Council Member Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously, 3-0.

Tab 8. Council Member Appointments to the 2025 Election Canvassing Board

Mayor Price made the following presentation:

The 2025 City Council election will be held on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, and requires the City's Board of Canvassers to participate in the municipal election cycle. According to the Code of Ordinances, 2-167, Administration, "the Board of Canvassers shall consist of the City Clerk, City Attorney, and one (1) Council Member who is not a candidate for election during the particular election, to be appointed by the mayor." The Council members eligible to serve on the 2025 Board of Canvassers are Mayor Price, Vice Mayor Pfister, and Council Member Grenier.

Canvassing Board meeting dates will be forthcoming. All Canvassing Board meetings are open to the public per Sunshine Laws and will be noticed per state statutes.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Gamble expressed concern about appointing a Council member to the Canvassing Board, or as an alternate, when that member was not present to express their wishes.

Mayor Price stated that he had previously served on the Canvassing Board and was willing to do so again.

Council Member Gamble asked whether an alternate Canvassing Board member would be needed. Mr. Drury stated he would follow up with the Lake County Supervisor of Elections.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to appoint Mayor Price as the Council's 2025 Canvassing Board member, seconded by Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

Tab 9. Approval to Allocate Funding for the Powell Architecture Service Order #01 for the Golden Triangle Regional Park – East and West Campuses

Mr. Aldrich made the following presentation:

By way of background, on August 7, 2024, City Council approved Powell Studio Architecture out of Clermont, FL as the top-rated firm in response to RFQ 2024-0006 for architecture and engineering services for the Golden Triangle Regional Park (GTRP) – East Campus. Similarly, on March 5, 2025, City Council approved Powell Studio Architecture as the top-rated firm in response to RFQ 2025-0001 for the GTRP – West Campus. On May 13, 2025, staff executed a standard form of master agreement between the City and Powell Studio Architecture for services at both campuses to be provided under multiple service orders.

Service Order #01 represents the initial phase of work, focusing on the research and community engagement for both campuses to create a conceptual master plan for each. This first service order will encompass tasks involved with both the east and west campuses combined, as well as tasks involved specifically with each separately. Funding for Service Order #01 will be divided as follows:

- *GTRP – East Campus \$145,000.00*
- *GTRP – West Campus \$145,000.00*

In an Interlocal Agreement approved by City Council on May 21, 2025, funding has been allocated through the Lake County Board of County Commissioners specifically for the GTRP – East Campus. In the Fred Stover Sports Complex Purchase and Sale Agreement executed by City Council at the regular meeting on April 3, 2024, Council allocated funds from the sale in the amount of \$600,000 (minus closing costs) towards the future improvements at the Woodlea Sports Park (now referred to as the GTRP – West Campus). Staff proposes to allocate a portion of those proceeds towards the Service Order #01 specific to the GTRP – West Campus.

Mr. Aldrich stated that staff had recommended Option 1, for the Council to approve the funding and issue a Notice to Proceed to Powell Studio Architecture to complete Service Order #01 for the Golden Triangle Regional Park – East and West Campuses.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Singer asked what services the City would be receiving. Mr. Aldrich explained that the firm would conduct community meetings, perform research and needs assessments, hold public and regional meetings, and ultimately design and develop a concept plan. He also noted that a dedicated website would be part of the deliverables.

Council Member Singer commented that it sounded more like a master plan, which Mr. Aldrich confirmed. Council Member Singer asked whether ad valorem taxes would be used or if proceeds from the sale of Fred Stover Field would fund the project. Mr. Aldrich confirmed that no ad valorem taxes would be used and that the project would be funded using proceeds from the sale of Fred Stover Field.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to approve the funding for Powell Studio Architecture [Option 1], seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 3-0.

Tab 10. Alfred Street/Old 441 Horizon Team Update Presentation

Continued to the June 18, 2025, City Council meeting during Approval of the Agenda.

Tab 11. SR19 Horizon Team Update Presentation

Continued to the June 18, 2025, City Council meeting during Approval of the Agenda.

Tab 12. Governmental Relations Firm Selection

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The city is requesting many Federal and State grants to shift the cost of initiatives and projects from the General Fund to grants. In order to compete for these grants and have them awarded to the City it is very helpfully to have and engage the services of a Governmental Relations Firm that can advocate for and represent the City of Tavares at the State and Federal grant agency levels.

The city developed a request for qualifications for Governmental Relations Services at State and Federal levels and received three responses (see attached). A ranking team made up of the Utilities Director, Public Works Director and City Administrator reviewed and ranked the firms as follow (also see minutes attached):

- #1 The Ferguson Group 269 points*
- #2 Sunrise Consulting Group 260 points*
- #3 Pittman Law Group 241 points*

Staff is recommending that Council authorize staff to negotiate a contract with the number one-ranked firm (The Ferguson Group) and bring that contract back to Council for approval.

Mr. Drury stated that staff recommended Option 1, authorizing staff to negotiate a Government Relations Services Agreement with The Ferguson Group and bring it back for Council consideration when a full board was present. He noted that a representative from The Ferguson Group was available in the audience.

Mayor Price remarked that both of the top-ranked firms appeared to be strong candidates. He expressed a preference for Sunrise Consulting Group, citing their local roots and experience with both state and federal grant opportunities.

Council Member Singer inquired about the cost of services. Mr. Drury responded that The Ferguson Group proposal included a cost of \$75,000. Council Member Singer stated that he did not support using reserve funds for this expense and preferred to address the hiring of a government relations firm through the regular budget process, allowing it to compete with other priorities.

MOTION

Troy Singer moved to not accept any offers at this time and instead consider

hiring a government relations firm through the budget cycle. The motion died for lack of a second.

Council Member Singer then asked again about cost estimates for the firms. Council Member Gamble responded that Sunrise Consulting Group proposed a rate of \$7,000 per month, or \$84,000 annually. Mr. Drury noted that it appeared at least one board member was in favor of inviting the two top-ranked firms to present to the Council at the next meeting.

Mayor Price asked if the ranking committee could provide a summary of their evaluation process. Mr. Drury explained that the committee had reviewed each proposal in detail, held a public meeting, and conducted discussions under the guidance of the City's purchasing manager. He stated that the top two firms were close in score, with only a nine-point difference. Mr. Drury added that the rankings reflected the collective research and views of the committee members. He then invited comments from the Public Works and Utility Directors.

Mr. Dillon said his ranking focused on federal funding opportunities, and he felt most confident in the top-ranked firm, The Ferguson Group.

Mr. Clark said his ranking was primarily based on cost considerations.

Mayor Price voiced support for allowing the top two ranked firms to make presentations to Council.

Council Member Singer asked if there was urgency in hiring a firm. Mr. Drury replied that the current year's federal grant allocations would close in October, and delays could result in missed opportunities.

Council Member Singer asked whether the City had previously hired a governmental relations firm and whether it had any impact. Mr. Drury confirmed that the City had, and noted positive results, including support for the Pavilion on the Lake project, which had been advocated for by a government relations firm.

A discussion followed regarding the funding requirements for the remainder of the current fiscal year, including July through August. Mr. Drury estimated the cost at approximately \$12,000, with the balance to be included in the next fiscal year's budget. Mr. Dillon mentioned that the City was currently contracted with the Trust for Public Land (TPL) for Wekiva Trail Segments 1 and 5. He expressed concern that delays could jeopardize a \$25 million grant the City was seeking for the project, along with other potential funding opportunities.

Council Member Gamble asked whether contracts could be negotiated with each of the top two firms prior to the next meeting, allowing the City to execute a contract immediately upon firm selection. Mr. Drury confirmed this was possible.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to continue the item to the June 18, 2025, City Council meeting, to allow the top two ranked firms to make presentations, and to have contracts prepared for the awarded firm.

Mayor Price passed the gavel to Council Member Singer.

Walter Price seconded the motion. The motion carried 2-1, as follows:

Walter Price: Yes
Sandy Gamble: Yes
Troy Singer: No

Council Member Singer then returned the gavel to Mayor Price.

Mayor Price noted that he had received a Request to Speak form for Tab 9 after the item had already been discussed. Mr. Drury stated that speaker request forms should be submitted prior to the start of discussion on an item.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

XII. OLD BUSINESS

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Tricia Nicholson, 1606 Lindale Avenue #6, Eustis, Vice President of Lake County Pride, expressed her support for the LGBTQ+ community and requested the Council issue a proclamation declaring June as Pride Month.

Erin Lariviere, 1016 Kellogg Drive, Tavares, encouraged the Council to issue a proclamation recognizing June as Pride Month. She shared that she had moved to Tavares 30 years ago and had a daughter who graduated from Tavares High School. While the school was supportive of her daughter, she said the broader community was not. Ms. Lariviere said a proclamation sends a message of welcome and acceptance and stressed that issuing a proclamation would be an important step in creating an inclusive City.

Danielle Olivani, 3688 Lake Eleanor Drive, Mount Dora, offered condolences on the passing of Jeff Pfister. She requested the City issue a proclamation and said it was not a political request, but rather an effort to uplift the community. Mr. Olivani said the local youth had limited support organizations and urged the Council to consider adding the proclamation to the agenda for the next meeting.

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 13. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury reported that the America in Bloom judges were recently in Tavares and participated in a final gathering the previous evening. He noted that the judges were particularly impressed by the City Council's initiative in selecting an official city flower. Mr. Drury thanked Mr. Dillon, his team, and the Council for their efforts in hosting the judges and supporting the program.

Tab 14. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Gamble shared that he attended an America in Bloom event at Gene Smith's property, highlighting the renovation of a historic church building. He expressed admiration for Mr. Smith, now 95 years old, for his dedication and investment in the community. The building, over 100 years old, stands as a testament to his commitment.

Council Member Gamble also took a moment to recognize the efforts of City departments and staff for their work across various community projects.

- Noted that many people may not realize the full extent of work done by City departments.
- Announced that Aesop's Park is now complete and open to the public.
- Reported that Tavares Nature Park recently received a makeover, and thanked both staff and police for their cleanup efforts.
- Emphasized the importance of security, urging everyone to remain cautious and aware of their surroundings.
- Praised City departments for their continued excellent work.
- Wished everyone a Happy Father's Day.

Mayor Price also remarked that he enjoyed hosting the America in Bloom judges and appreciated the insights they provided. He joined Council Member Gamble in wishing all those present a Happy Father's Day.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 5:03 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk