TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
MAY 21, 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 ***- 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
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 James Gardner, First Baptist Church of Umatilla

Council Member Gamble provided the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance, in Pastor Gardner's absence.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Price asked if there were any changes to the Agenda. Mr. Drury said staff would like to table Tabs 7 and 9 to the June 4, 2025, City Council meeting.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve the Agenda with Tabs 7 and 9 [Tab 7. Ordinance 2025-03 Amendment to Section 15-98 of the Police Pension Plan to Extend DROP; and, Tab 9. Request from Tavares Babe Ruth Booster Club to Take Over the Tavares Babe Ruth League] tabled to the June 4, 2025, City Council meeting. The motion was seconded by Lori Pfister. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Tab 2. National Public Works Week Proclamation – May 18-24, 2025

Mayor Price read a Proclamation declaring May 18-24, 2025, as National Public Works Week.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve the Proclamation, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 3. Public Works APWA Project of the Year Award

Mayor Price made the following presentation:

> *On Monday, February 25th, the Florida Chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA) recognized the City of Tavares for being awarded the Project of the Year. This honor highlights the achievements of the Public Works Operations Regional Workforce Training & Innovation Center project.*
>
> *The award was presented to the Department of Public Works Leadership Team, which includes Terry Hom (Fleet Operations Manager), Jeff Henderson (Solid Waste Operations Manager), Bryan Moore (Streets Operations Manager), Traci Anderson (Parks Operations Manager), Stacy Mewborne (Operations Assistant), Kellie Conway (Senior Administrative Assistant), and James Dillon (Director of Public Works). The presentation ceremony took place during the APWA Florida Chapter 2025 Public Works Expo on Wednesday, April 30th.*
>
> *The APWA Public Works Project of the Year Award was established to foster excellence in the management, administration, and execution of public works*

projects. It acknowledges the collaborative efforts of the managing agency, the consultant/architect/engineer, and the contractor to successfully complete these important initiatives.

The criteria used in the selection process included:

1. *Use of good construction management techniques and completion of the project on schedule*
2. *Safety performance and demonstrated awareness of the need for a good overall safety program for workers and the public during and after construction, where applicable*
3. *Community relations as evidenced by efforts to minimize public inconvenience due to construction, safety precautions to protect public lives and property, provision of observation areas, guided tours, or other means of improving relations between agency and the public*
4. *Demonstrated awareness for the need to protect the environment. This includes any special considerations given to particular environmental concerns raised during the course of the project, as well as climate change and/or resiliency components for long-term community benefit*
5. *Unusual accomplishments under adverse conditions including, but not limited to age or condition of the facility, adverse weather, soil or other site conditions over which there is no control*
6. *Additional conditions deemed of importance to the public works agency, such as exceptional efforts to maintain quality control and, if value engineering is used, construction innovations as evidenced by time and/or money saving techniques developed and/or successfully utilized*
7. *Use of alternative materials, practices, or funding that demonstrates a commitment to sustainability, climate change resiliency, and/or use of sustainable infrastructure rating system or the equivalent.*

Council Members Grenier and Gamble commended the Public Works staff and thanked Mr. Dillon and his team for their efforts.

Vice Mayor Pfister said she was not surprised when she heard the Public Works department won the award and thanked Mr. Dillon.

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 2025-08

A RESOLUTION OF CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, RELATING TO THE STATE REVOLVING FUND LOAN PROGRAM; AUTHORIZING A FOURTH AMENDMENT TO SRF LOAN AGREEMENT DW350980 FOR LAKE HERMOSA/AVALON PERMANENT BOOSTER STATION DESIGN ACTIVITIES; AUTHORIZING THE LOAN AGREEMENT; ESTABLISHING PLEDGED REVENUES; DESIGNATING AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES: PROVIDING FOR ASSURANCE; SETTING THE FINAL LOAN AMOUNT; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, AND EFFECTIVE DATE.

RESOLUTION 2025-09

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, DESIGNATING THE BLUE PLUMBAGO (*Plumbago auriculata*) AS THE OFFICIAL FLOWER OF THE CITY OF TAVARES

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

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

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve the Consent Agenda, [Tab 3. Approval of the May 7, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes], seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

Tab 4. Approval of the May 7, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Tab 5. Resolution 2025-08 – Amendment 3 Closeout for SRF Loan 350980, Lake Hermosa Design

Ms. Houghton provided the following presentation:

> *Previously, the City Council Adopted Resolution 2021-14 authorizing the application and acceptance of a State Revolving Loan for Project DW350980, for design activities for the Lake Hermosa Permanent Booster Pump Project. The original loan document was executed on July 15, 2021, with a disbursable loan amount of $240,000.*
>
> *On April 21, 2022, the City Council adopted Resolution 2022-07 authorizing Amendment One to the loan which provided a term extension for completion of*

the project and set the first repayment date as February 15, 2023.

On March 15, 2023, the City Council adopted Resolution 2023-03 authorizing Amendment Two (2) to the loan which provided additional time for the completion date for the project, and the Amendment extended the first semi-annual loan repayment date for the loan from February 15, 2023 to February 15, 2025. (Changes are shown in italics.)

On July 19, 2023, the City Council adopted Resolution 2023-10 for SRF Loan DW350980 Amendment Three which amended the loan disbursable amount for the Project to $327,059, set the estimated loan service fees at $6,541, and set the estimated semi-annual loan payments at $17,879.

Amendment four (4) finalizes the loan amount and provides the final loan repayment amount. Details for the final loan amendment are shown below:

- *Disbursable Loan Amount (design activities): $327,059*
- *Loan service fee: $6,541.00*
- *Capitalized interest: ~~$500~~ $0*
- *Loan Repayment Amount: $333,600*
- *Semi-annual loan payments: ~~$17,879~~ $17,641.88*
- *Interest Rate: 1.08%*
- *Term: 10 years*

Ms. Houghton said staff recommended the Council move to approve Option 1, approving Resolution 2025-08 which authorized the Mayor to execute SRF Loan DW350980 Amendment Four (4) which finalizes the loan terms with a total loan repayment amount of $333,600.

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

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve Resolution 2025-08, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 6. Resolution 2025-09 – Designating the Blue Plumbago as the Official Flower of the City

Mr. Dillon made the following presentation:

The City of Tavares has actively participated in the national America In Bloom (AIB) program since 2017. This initiative encourages communities to become more vibrant and welcoming, providing a competitive advantage in attracting tourists and stimulating economic development. It aims to create a thriving environment for residents to live, work, and play, all through the beauty of colorful *plants and trees.*

Each year, advisors from America In Bloom conduct an independent evaluation of our city, offering valuable recommendations to enhance opportunities in urban forestry, heritage preservation, environmental programs, and impressive landscape and floral displays. These initiatives contribute to the overall appeal and economic vitality of our community. One notable suggestion from last year's AIB evaluation was to adopt an official city flower.

The Department of Public Works, along with members of the Bloom Team, proposes that the Blue Plumbago (Plumbago auriculata), also known as the Sky Flower, be designated as Tavares' official flower. This remarkable plant, with its abundant blue blooms, beautifully represents our identity as America's Seaplane City. In addition to its vibrant colors, the proposed city flower is considered a Florida-Friendly plant. It is drought-tolerant, attracts pollinators, and blooms year-round, echoing the stunning blue skies and waterfront of Tavares.

Mr. Dillon said staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to adopt Resolution 2025-09 designating the Blue Plumbago as the official flower of the City of Tavares.

Mayor Price opened the floor for Council comments.

Vice Mayor Pfister questioned whether the Blue Plumbago flowers displayed in the Council Chambers appeared more purple than blue. Mr. Dillon explained that there are many varieties of Plumbago. While staff initially considered the Royal Plumbago, a darker blue, its blooms did not last long. In contrast, the Blue Plumbago blooms from spring through November, offering greater longevity.

Vice Mayor Pfister said she preferred a flower with a true-blue hue. Mr. Dillon noted that staff adhered to the Land Development Regulations (LDRs) in evaluating options for an official city flower, prioritizing drought tolerance, availability, and ease of maintenance. He added that the Blue Plumbago was widely planted in residential communities throughout the city.

Mayor Price voiced his support for the Blue Plumbago, citing its drought tolerance and suitability for Florida's climate. He appreciated the flower's nickname, "Sky Flower," which aligned with the City's branding theme. Mayor Price explained that the idea of adopting a City Flower was inspired by his attendance at an America in Bloom (AIB) conference. He envisioned a unified effort among residents and businesses to plant flowers throughout the city as a sign of community pride. He also suggested that businesses could donate flowers to residents for their yards.

Council Member Grenier asked whether staff had considered other flower options. Mr. Dillon confirmed that several were reviewed, but the Blue Plumbago stood out for its ease of maintenance and availability.

Council Member Gamble added that the Blue Plumbago could be trimmed at any time of year, enhancing its practicality.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve Resolution 2025-09, seconded by Sandy Gamble.

Council Member Grenier noted that the City cemetery would soon be the first in the state to be designated as an arboretum, and would also be registered as a historic cemetery by the State of Florida. He stated that adopting an official city flower was a meaningful step toward investing in both the cemetery and arboretum.

Mr. Dillon added that adopting an official flower would support the City's America in Bloom (AIB) evaluation, with judges scheduled to visit on June 2–3**.** He emphasized that the flower designation would positively impact the City's standing with AIB.

The motion carried 3-1 as follows:

Walter Price:	**Yes**
Lori Pfister:	**No**
Sandy Gamble:	**Yes**
Bob Grenier:	**Yes**

IX. <u>ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING</u>

<u>First Reading</u>

<u>Tab 7. Ordinance 2025-03 – Amendment to Section 15-89 of the Police Pension Plan to Extend DROP</u>

Tabled.

<u>Second Reading</u>

X. <u>GENERAL GOVERNMENT</u>

<u>Tab 8. Board Appointment – Police Pension Board</u>

Mayor Price made the following presentation:

> *There is a current vacancy on the Police Pension Board due to the retirement of a trustee. This position, appointed by the City Council, has a term set to expire in November 2025.*
>
> *To ensure compliance with Chapter 15.73 of the Tavares Code of Ordinances, which requires that Council-appointed trustees be legal residents of the City, the following action is proposed:*

- *Appoint Doug Roberts to the vacant Council-appointed seat. Mr. Roberts, currently serving in a Police-elected seat on the Board, is a legal resident of Tavares and has agreed to the appointment.*

Upon Mr. Roberts' transition to the Council-appointed seat, the Police-elected seat vacated by Mr. Roberts will be filled through the police membership election process. Jon Hall, a police officer who is not a City resident, has expressed interest in the position and meets the eligibility requirements for the elected seat.

This arrangement maintains compliance with residency and appointment guidelines. The vacant Council-appointed position was advertised in the Daily Commercial and the City's website; however, no new applications were received.

Mayor Price recommended the appointment of Doug Roberts to the Council-appointed seat on the Police Pension Board.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve the Mayor's recommendation to appoint Doug Roberts to the Council-Appointed seat on the Police Pension Board [for a term expiring November 2025], seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 9. Request from Tavares Babe Ruth Booster Club to Take Over the Tavares Babe Ruth League

Tabled.

Tab 10. Interlocal Agreement Between Tavares and Lake County Relating to the Development, Management, and Maintenance of the Golden Triangle Regional Park – East Campus

Mr. Aldrich made the following presentation:

As a way of background, on March 29, 2022, the City Council approved and entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Lake County and the Central Florida YMCA to explore a public/private partnership opportunity for the development of a central regional park for Lake County to be located 1465 David Walker Drive in Tavares. At the December 7, 2022 meeting, City Council voted unanimously to accept a grant of $4.8 million from Lake County to purchase the YMCA property, execute a purchase and sales agreement, and negotiate an operational agreement with the Central Florida YMCA for management of the property.

The City executed the operational agreement with the Central Florida YMCA on

May 17, 2023 and closed on the purchase of the property on May 19, 2023. At the June 7, 2023 meeting, City Council voted unanimously to accept another grant of $300,000 from Lake County to complete an initial redevelopment project, including the restriping of the parking lot and the resurfacing of the existing basketball courts on the property.

On April 25, 2024 the City, County, and YMCA held a joint groundbreaking ceremony to mark the beginning of construction on this transformative project. Over the ensuing months, the City Recreation Department moved their offices and relocated to the regional park, and an architect firm was selected to design and complete the project build-out based on the original MOU from 2022.

Before Council is another interlocal agreement with Lake County for the full development, management, and maintenance of the Golden Triangle Regional Park – East Campus to include funding in the amount of $13.5 million from Lake County to be paid out through FY 2032. City staff is seeking Council's approval to authorize the Mayor to enter into this agreement and accept the funding.

Mr. Aldrich said staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to approve and authorize the Mayor to enter into an interlocal agreement to accept the funds in the amount of $13.5 million dollars for the development, management, and maintenance of the Golden Triangle Regional Park – East Campus.

Mayor Price opened the floor for Council comments.

Council Member Gamble noted the urgency in developing fields at Woodlea due to the impending loss of access to Stover Field. He emphasized the importance of not neglecting the West Campus while focusing on the East Campus and questioned the availability of funding for the West Campus. In response, Mr. Aldrich stated that both the City and County aimed to finalize the East Campus agreement and immediately follow with plans for the West Campus.

Council Member Gamble asked how much the $13.5 million would fund the regional park projects. Mr. Drury stated that a master plan for both campuses would be completed within 9 to 10 months, outlining capital improvement needs, funding sources, and design specifics. The Council would make decisions regarding field types, locations, and budget.

Vice Mayor Pfister expressed confidence in Lake County's full support of both park campuses, noting that both were consistently included in discussions. Mr. Drury added that the City had secured over $20 million in funding without requiring a local match and emphasized the County's commitment. Vice Mayor Pfister further noted that, as the county seat, the City was among the last to receive a regional park.

MOTION

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

Mr. Drury acknowledged the presence of Golden Triangle YMCA Executive Director Andy Weighill**,** commending him for his leadership, increased YMCA membership, and improved facility conditions. He thanked Mr. Weighill for his contributions.

The motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

Mr. Drury concluded by stating that the agreement would be presented to the County in approximately two weeks, and he planned to attend the meeting in support of the initiative.

Tab 11. Conservation Easement to SJRWMD to have Ingress for Inspection of City Mitigated Wetlands

Mr. Clark made the following presentation:

> *The City previously applied for and was awarded three separate grants to support the development of a stormwater retention pond and small eco-park, known as Eagle Park, located on St. Clair Abrams Avenue. The funding sources and amounts were as follows:*
>
> - *Lake County Water Authority: $400,000*
> - *State of Florida (2 grants): $200,000 and $175,000*
> - *Total Funding: $775,000*
>
> *This project aligns with the Downtown Area Stormwater Master Plan, which aims to enhance stormwater management and environmental sustainability in the area.*
>
> *The Eagle Park pond site is situated on designated wetlands, requiring mitigation to proceed with development. Suitable mitigation wetlands were identified off Woodlea Road, and mitigation activities have been successfully completed.*
>
> *An easement is now required to grant the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) access to the site for ongoing wetland inspections as part of regulatory compliance and environmental monitoring.*

Mr. Clark said staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to award the easement to the Saint John's River Water Management District (SJRWMD).

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Gamble noted that the total amount of $775,000 was fully funded through grants, emphasizing that no City funds would be used for the project.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

Tab 12. Pavilion on the Lake, Selection of Catering Services Providers

Mr. Tweedie made the following presentation:

Every five (5) years, the City conducts a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) for catering services at the Pavilion. The RFQ allows for the selection of multiple caterers for an initial contract period of three (3) years, with an option to extend for an additional two (2) years.

Staff has evaluated the program and determined that expanding the catering partner list is warranted due to increased event volume and client demand for greater variety and capacity. Accordingly, the City purchasing department has conducted an RFQ , which allows for an increase in the number of approved catering partners from five (5) to seven (7), effective for the new contract cycle.

As the contract period has expired, a new RFQ (2025-0002 attached) was advertised responses received from nine (9) firms on the RFQ due date of March 27, 2025. A Selection Committee was established to review and rank the submitals comprised of the following staff members:

- *Assistant Pavilion Manager, Amy Pattee*
- *Pavilion Services Lead, Alex Liquori*
- *Special Events & Operations Manager, Cheri Moan*

The Selection Committee met on May 1, 2025, to review and rank the firms based on the RFQ criterion, which includes relevant experience. The committee ranked the firms as follows:

1. *Big City Catering, Inc.*
2. *Events by John Michael*
3. *River City Catering*
4. *Puff-N-Stuff Events Catering*
5. *Pisces Rising Catering*
6. *Arthurs Creative Events & Catering*
7. *C2 Catered Events*
8. *Cocktails Catering*
9. *Ironworks Steaks and Fine Cocktails*

Based on this, it is recommended that the Council move to approve the selection committees ranking and recommendation to select: Arthur's Creative Events and

Catering, Big City Catering, C2 Catered Events, John Michael Catering and Weddings, Pisces Rising Catering, Puff-n-Stuff Catering, and River City Catering as the exclusive caterers at the Tavares Pavilion on the Lake and for the City to enter into a contract with each for a three-year period with the option to renew for two additional years. (attached selection committee meeting minutes)

Mr. Tweedie said staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to approve the ranking and recommendation of the selection committee to select and authorize the City Administrator to execute contracts with the top seven (7) ranked catering service providers.

Vice Mayor Pfister asked how many of the selected caterers were based in Lake County. Mr. Tweedie responded that one (1) was a Lake County company: Pisces Rising.

Council Member Gamble inquired about how caterers would be chosen for events. Mr. Tweedie explained that clients would choose from the list of exclusive caterers.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Option 1, seconded by Bob Grenier.

Council Member Grenier inquired about the procedure should one of the contracted catering companies cease to provide services during the term of the agreement.

Mr. Tweedie responded that, in such an event, the next lowest-ranked firm from the original selection process would be contacted and offered the opportunity to assume the position and responsibilities of the departing caterer.

The motion carried unanimously, 4-0.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

XII. OLD BUSINESS

Council Member Grenier asked for an update on Aesop's Park. Mr. Dillon said the upgrades would be completed in two weeks.

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 13. City Administrator Report

Chief Coursey provided an update on the recent Citizens Police Academy, thanking Council Members Gamble and Grenier, Captain Hall, and all involved for their support.

She expressed appreciation for the City's involvement, noted the program's success, and said she looked forward to the next academy.

Mayor Price said he graduated from the Citizens Police Academy and praised Chief Coursey and Captain Hall for an excellent program. He said he learned a great deal and had an even greater respect for the Police department.

Mr. Tweedie thanked Chief Coursey for choosing the Pavilion on the Lake as the Police Academy graduation venue.

Mr. Dillon noted that the America in Bloom (AIB) judges would visit the City June 2-3.

Mr. Aldrich reported on Babe Ruth All-Star program and noted the district tournament would continue through the rest of the week.

Ms. Houghton wished everyone a happy Memorial Day.

Mr. Fabre reported on a recent Planning and Zoning Board meeting, noting Mr. Clark provided a presentation on water and sewer.

Tab 14. City Council Member Reports

Vice Mayor Pfister remarked on how the City's department directors and staff made it easy to serve as a City Council member. She shared that she frequently received positive feedback from residents regarding the quality of services provided by various departments.

Council Member Grenier commended Vice Mayor Pfister for her 20 years of dedicated service. He also encouraged everyone to take a moment on Memorial Day to reflect on the significance of the day and honor the lives of those who made the ultimate sacrifice in service to the country.

Council Member Gamble shared that he recently attended a service at the Tavares Cemetery and received positive feedback from funeral directors about how well-maintained the cemetery was and how helpful and professional the City staff were. He emphasized that City employees were deeply appreciated, and their hard work did not go unnoticed.

Council Member Gamble noted that his grandson attended the Police Citizens Academy with him. He expressed his gratitude for the Police Department's outstanding work.

Council Member Gamble also celebrated the success of the Eustis Girls Softball Team, who recently won their game and would play Somerset Academy for the state championship on Thursday at 6:30 p.m.

Council Member Gamble also noted the recent loss of two valued members of the Tavares community:

- Chet Lemon, who brought The Big House to the city.
- Dan Sperry, a longtime resident.

Vice Mayor Pfister inquired about the location of this year's America in Bloom (AIB) Conference. Mr. Dillon responded that the annual symposium would be held in Michigan.

Mayor Price acknowledged that it was Council Member Gamble's birthday, and the Council extended birthday wishes to him.

Mayor Price closed the meeting by urging everyone to remember and honor the nation's veterans on Memorial Day, especially those who gave their lives in service. He invited those in attendance to a Memorial Day Ceremony at Peterson's Gun Shop on Monday, May 26, 2025, at 6:30 a.m.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 4:58 p.m.

Respectfully,

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Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk