



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
AUGUST 6, 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
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 Bob Coulter, Silver Lake Community Church

Pastor Bob Coulter, Silver Lake Community 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 had no changes.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

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 by title only:

ORDINANCE 2025-02

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA AMENDING THE CITY CODE OF ORDINANCES CHAPTER 3 ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES, SECTION 3-3 AND AMENDING CHAPTER 14 PARKS AND RECREATION, SECTIONS 14-1 – 14- 3 AND ADDING SECTIONS 14-4 – 14-5 & 14-56 – 14-62 INCLUDING ARTICLE IV, SECTIONS 14-63 – 14-65 ADOPT-A-PARK/ADOPT-A-TRAIL PROGRAM; SUBJECT TO THE RULES, REGULATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TAVARES COUNCIL; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY AND CONFLICTS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

ORDINANCE 2025-05

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA AMENDING THE CITY OF TAVARES LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS CHAPTER 8 ZONING REGULATIONS, TABLE 8-1 FUTURE LAND USE/ZONING MATRIX; AND TABLE 8-3 DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS; SUBJECT TO THE RULES, REGULATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TAVARES COUNCIL; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY AND CONFLICTS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

ORDINANCE 2025-06

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA AMENDING THE CITY OF TAVARES LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS CHAPTER 16 SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS, SECTION 16-24 FIRE PROTECTION; SUBJECT TO THE RULES, REGULATIONS AND OBLIGATIONS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TAVARES COUNCIL; PROVIDING SEVERABILITY AND CONFLICTS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

ORDINANCE 2025-07

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE III, SECTION 2-46 RELATING TO PAYMENTS TO THE LIBRARY BOARD AND THE PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD OF THE CITY OF TAVARES CODE OF ORDINANCES; 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

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

Tab 2. Approval of the July 16, 2025, City Council Meeting and Budget Workshop Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Tab 3. Ordinance 2025-02 – Amending Chapter 3 Alcoholic Beverages, Section 3-3, and Chapter 14 Parks and Recreation, Sections 14-1 to 14-3 and adding Sections 14-4 – 14-5 & 14-56 – 14.62, including Article IV, Sections 14-63 – 14-65 “Adopt-A-Park/Adopt-A-Trail Program” of the Code of Ordinances

No discussion at First Reading.

Tab 4. Ordinance 2025-05 – Amending Chapter 8, Table 8-1 “Future Land Use/Zoning Matrix” and Table 8-3 “Development Standards” of the Land Development Regulations

No discussion at First Reading.

Tab 5. Ordinance 2025-06 – Implementation of the “Click-2-Enter” System Requirements in Chapter 16, Section 16-24 Fire Protection of the Land Development Regulations

No discussion at First Reading.

Second Reading

Tab 6. Ordinance 2025-07 to Amend Section 2-46 fo the City Code – P&Z & Library Board Reimbursement of Expenses

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

On December 2, 1987, the Tavares City Council adopted Ordinance 87-61 which established compensation of twenty dollars (\$20.00) for each board member for each meeting attended with payment on a monthly basis for all City Boards.

- *Planning and Zoning Board (Board established by Ordinance 1986-13)*
- *Code Enforcement Board*
- *Recreation Board*
- *Library Board (Board established by Ordinance 1975-01 & restructured by Ordinance 1988-20)*

On February 15, 2012, the Tavares City Council adopted Ordinance 2012-03, which removed the Code Enforcement Board and the Recreation Board from Section 2-46 of Article III of the City Code of Ordinances. Code Enforcement was moved to a Special Master format. Ordinance 2012-03 listed the following boards, and left the compensation for board members at twenty dollars (\$20.00) for each board meeting attended.

- *Library Board*
- *Planning and Zoning Board*

Compensation for the two boards has remained unchanged since 1987. It is recommended that board compensation be increased to seventy-five dollars per meeting (\$75.00) to better reflect the cost associated with board duties in today's dollars. It should be noted that each board meets once per month, and each board consists of seven (7) members.

Staff have included the increase for board compensation in the Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget. Staff recommend implementing the increase in compensation

for board members upon adoption of Ordinance 2025-07. The cost for FY2025 is \$3,080, which will be funded from savings in various budget line items in the general fund.

Mr. Drury said the staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to adopt Ordinance 2025-07 to amend Article III, Section 2-46 of the City Code to increase City Board compensation from \$20 per meeting to \$75 per meeting.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve Option 1 [Adopt Ordinance 2025-07 to amend Article III, Section 2-46 of the City Code to increase City Board compensation from \$20 per meeting to \$75 per meeting.], seconded by Troy Singer.

Council Member's Singer and Gamble thanked the Board members for their service and for volunteering their time.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 7. Tavares 145th Anniversary

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

Tavares was established in 1880, making this year the 145th anniversary of this event. The City's resident Historian, Council member Bobby Grenier, is working on several recognition events for this fall, including:

- 1. Central Florida Museum Sharing Symposium at the Pavilion – Wednesday, September 17th at 10:00am. The Mayor and City Administrator to welcome the 50-plus attendees.*
- 2. United Congregational Church's 140 year anniversary – November 7th, 8th and 9th.*
- 3. Historical Marker placement at the Smith's Church that is under renovation on Alfred Street (Date to be determined)*
- 4. A weekend at the Tavares Historical Museum (Information displayed on the establishment of Tavares 1880). Date to be determined*

Mayor Walter Price has suggested a guided walking tour be added to the weekend History Museum event.

An opportunity is provided for Council members to weigh in on these and add any other recognition events. From a budgetary perspective, it is anticipated that the impact will be negligible (\$1,500) and include staff time, Port-O-Lets and welcoming coffee/doughnut-type expenses which will be provided for from the City Administrator's existing budget.

Mayor Price stated there was an existing map identifying the City's historical buildings and commented that it would be beneficial to have a guided tour to better understand their locations and historical significance.

Council Member Grenier spoke about the Central Florida Museum Sharing and History Symposium, which had been established several years ago and met quarterly, bringing together historical societies from across Central Florida to share ideas. He announced that the upcoming symposium would be held at the Tavares Pavilion on the Lake and expressed his desire for Tavares to present an outstanding event. He invited the Council and staff to attend and noted that Mayor Price would be offering remarks during the program. He added that the event would coincide with Constitution Day.

Council Member Grenier further reported that the United Congregational Church and the historical societies would be collaborating to celebrate the City's 145th anniversary. He stated that the President of the Apopka Historical Society, who owns a tram, would be bringing it to Tavares to provide three guided tours of the City.

Council Member Grenier stated a state historical marker was planned for placement at the Smith Church. He noted that the State of Florida had issued only eleven historical markers in Lake County, and this would be the first one in Tavares.

Council Member Gamble remarked on the value of having a knowledgeable tour guide to share the City's history, emphasizing the difference it makes in the experience.

Council Member Singer recalled the City's 100th anniversary, noting that he had been ten years old at the time. He expressed his support for celebrating Tavares and recognizing the accomplishments of the past 145 years. He also advised the Council to keep in mind that the City's 150th anniversary would be coming up in five years.

Council Member Grenier shared that the President of the Apopka Historical Society had been so impressed with Tavares that she expressed an interest in relocating to Downtown Tavares. Having lived in Apopka for forty years, she appreciated how Tavares was embracing its history while moving toward the future, citing the new Public Works Facility as an example.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve the 145th Anniversary Events, seconded by Troy Singer. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 8. Renaming "Tavares Nature Park" as "Tavares Nature Preserve"

Mr. Dillon made the following presentation:

In 1997, the City of Tavares achieved a significant milestone by securing a grant from the Florida Communities Trust as part of the Preservation 2000 Program

(P2000). This grant was instrumental in acquiring the Tavares Nature Park, a testament to the city's unwavering commitment to environmental preservation. The City agreed to the program's land management, conservation, and preservation conditions, ensuring the protection, restoration, and preservation of the park's natural resources, and the preservation of the existing hydrologic regime in its natural state.

Given the rigorous land management conditions and the City's commitment to conservation and preservation, it is the opinion of the City staff that renaming the "nature park" as a "nature preserve" would not only align with the land management conditions, but also enhance the public perception and clarity regarding the level of service provided to the park, in contrast to the multifaceted uses generally associated with nature and recreational parks. Transitioning the name from "nature park" to "nature preserve" would also allow for the implementation of comprehensive conservation strategies that minimize human impact and mitigate environmental degradation. This shift would facilitate vital ecosystem processes and uphold ecological balance, both of which are essential for the survival of threatened and endangered species. Importantly, this initiative would ensure long-term conservation benefits, promoting a resilient and flourishing natural environment for both current and future generations, instilling a sense of hope and optimism in our collective environmental efforts.

Salient points of renaming Tavares Nature Park to Nature Preserve:

Enhanced Conservation and Biodiversity Protection

Nature preserves focus primarily on conserving wildlife, native plants, and natural resources with limited human disturbance. This permits ecosystems to function more naturally, supporting threatened and endangered species and maintaining ecological balance better than the typical multipurpose nature park, which often balances recreation and conservation.

Reduced Human Impact and Sustainable Ecosystem Function

Nature preserves restrict certain recreational and development activities more rigorously than parks, such as large-scale events, intensive farming, or extensive trail construction, reducing habitat fragmentation and environmental degradation. This allows critical ecosystem processes—such as pollination, nutrient cycling, and natural succession—to proceed undisturbed, increasing resilience against climate change and natural disasters.

Public Perception and Clarity

Renaming the Nature Park to Nature Preserve can help clarify the park's intended use as a low-impact, ecologically sensitive area and aligns with the required grant land management prerequisites.

Funding and Grant Positioning

The new name may strengthen future grant applications by signaling a stronger conservation ethic. This could be advantageous in competitive grant programs like RAISE or Florida Forever, where environmental impact is a key prerequisite.

Mr. Dillon said the staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to rename “Tavares Nature Park” to “Tavares Nature Preserve” to better reflect the City’s environmental stewardship goals, align with regional conservation initiatives, and enhance public perception of the site’s ecological value.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Gamble asked what effect changing the name to “Preserve” would have on the maintenance of the park. Mr. Dillon responded that the City was, and would, adhere to the Land Development Regulations (LDRs) and the Florida Land Trust requirements.

Council Member Gamble inquired whether the Tavares Middle School cross country team would still be permitted to run in the preserve. Mr. Dillon confirmed that they would, provided that land management requirements were met, and stated that such use would be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Council Member Gamble asked if trails would be added in the future. Mr. Dillon advised that a Master Plan was in place for the development of additional trails.

Council Member Grenier asked whether the City would need to seek approval from the state or a geographical naming board to rename the preserve. Mr. Dillon replied that he had referred the question to the City Attorney’s office, who indicated there were no legal implications.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve Option 1 [For the Council to rename “Tavares Nature Park” to “Tavares Nature Preserve” to better reflect the City’s environmental stewardship goals, align with regional conservation initiatives, and enhance public perception of the site’s ecological value.]. The motion was seconded by Troy Singer.

Council Member Singer expressed support for the name change, noting that it provided greater clarity. He commented that Wooton Wonderland was intended for recreation, Aesop’s Park offered tennis and dog-walking opportunities, and Tavares Nature Park was more appropriately classified as a preserve. Mr. Dillon agreed, confirming that it was a preserve and conservation area, and explained that the purpose of acquiring the property had been to protect one of the last remaining natural sites on Lake Dora.

Council Member Singer said that Squibb Park was similar in nature and suggested that the Council consider renaming it to Squibb Preserve. Mr. Dillon stated that it was a great recommendation.

Mayor Price and Council Member Grenier noted their support in renaming Squibb Park to Squibb Preserve.

Mr. Drury stated that, should the motion pass, staff would conduct a legal review. If no legal concerns were identified, and the motion was amended to include Squibb Park, staff would proceed accordingly. Should any legal issues arise, the matter would be brought back to the Council for further consideration.

AMENDED MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to approve Option 1, and to also include Squibb Park to be renamed Squibb Preserve. The motion was seconded by Troy Singer.

Council Member Grenier asked if there were any other parks that might qualify as a preserve. Mr. Dillon stated that staff would conduct a thorough review of all parks and report back to the Council.

Council Member Gamble inquired whether the wetlands would remain in their natural state without backfill during flooding. Mr. Dillon responded that one of the land management conditions required closure of the park during such times in order to preserve its natural state.

Council Member Grenier noted that Lake County had many walking preserves that were enjoyed by nature enthusiasts, and he agreed that both Tavares Nature Park and Squibb Park functioned as preserves.

Vice Mayor Pfister commented that Tavares Nature Park was a natural area and that the name change would clearly define its status as a preserve, which would be helpful in future discussions.

Mayor Price expressed his support for the name change.

Council Member Singer added that the name change would be a positive feature to include in the City's newsletter.

The amended motion carried unanimously 5-0.

XI. BUDGET WORKSHOP

Tab 9. Budget Workshop – Present Enterprise and Special Revenue Fund Budgets, and Discuss the General Fund Budget

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

At the July 16th City Council meeting, the City Council was presented with the General Fund budget, and staff will now deliver the Proposed Budgets for the Utility Fund and Special Revenue Funds for FY 2026. Afterward, there will be an opportunity to discuss the previously presented General Fund budget as well as the Utilities and Special Fund budgets.

The Utility Funds include: Water, Wastewater, Stormwater, Solid Waste, and the Seaplane Base/Marina. Special Funds include Community Redevelopment (TIF), Infrastructure Sales Tax, Grants, Debt Service, and the Pavilion Fund.

The maximum tentative millage was discussed and set at the July 16th City Council meeting. The Five-Year Capital Plan will be delivered, presented, and discussed at the August 20, 2025, budget workshop, followed by two Public Hearings on the budget on September 3, 2025, and September 17, 2025.

Ms. Houghton provided a PowerPoint presentation on the Enterprise and Special Revenue Funds.

Mayor Price asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Gamble referred to the PowerPoint presentation and inquired about the maturation of debt service. Ms. Houghton responded that the debt service in question would mature in 2027. Ms. Houghton noted that five debt obligations would mature in 2027, adding that the loans were well below market rate and two of the obligations carried a zero percent interest rate.

Council Member Singer commended Ms. Houghton and her team for their work on the budget.

Council Member Gamble asked Mr. Clark how many lift stations the City maintained and the cost to replace one. Mr. Clark stated that the City had 100 lift stations, with rehabilitation costs ranging from \$5,000 to \$30,000 and total replacement costs of approximately \$500,000. Council Member Gamble emphasized the importance of maintaining and replacing lift stations as needed.

Council Member Singer observed that certain projects, such as lift station replacements, could require borrowing funds rather than relying solely on a pay-as-you-go approach to cover long-term obligations.

Vice Mayor Pfister expressed concern about parking in the downtown area, noting that Mr. Cagan was preparing to break ground on his downtown project, which would generate additional traffic. She stated that the downtown area was already at capacity on weeknights during events, and other development was underway at the corner of St. Clair Abrams Avenue and Main Street. She also noted that the Pavilion on the Lake

continued to be busy, resulting in the City running out of parking spaces on Main Street. Mr. Drury explained that the budget included funding for a study to evaluate the feasibility of constructing a two-story parking garage, including the number of spaces, estimated cost, and possible revenue sources. He added that, once approved, staff would budget for the project subject to Council's direction.

Vice Mayor Pfister inquired about a three-story parking garage in Winter Garden. Mr. Drury stated that Parking Phase III included plans for a parking garage behind City Hall.

Mayor Price asked if the parking area at the old Public Works building, which was being demolished, would be gravel. Mr. Dillon replied that portions would be paved, while other areas would remain gravel, to provide approximately fifty spaces.

Council Member Grenier stated that a parking garage had been discussed for the past seventeen years, dating back to the initiation of the Public Works Horizon Team. He voiced his support for moving forward with the parking garage projects, emphasizing that the designs would conform to historic architectural standards.

Council Member Gamble asked how many parking spaces were included in the Ruby Street project. Mr. Tweedie stated that the project, which was part of the current budget, would provide 90 parking spaces. Vice Mayor Pfister reiterated her concern about parking availability at the east end of Main Street.

XII. NEW BUSINESS

Vice Mayor Pfister stated that she would like the Council to consider a more robust funding of the America in Bloom program in the future and expressed her support for approving Mr. Drury's attendance at the upcoming America in Bloom Symposium in September 2025. Mr. Drury indicated that he could forgo attending another conference in order to attend in the symposium.

MOTION

Lori Pfister moved to send Mr. Drury to the 2025 America in Bloom Symposium. The motion was seconded by Troy Singer.

A discussion was held regarding the City's America in Bloom program. Mayor Price noted that he had previously suggested seeking sponsorships from local businesses to provide flowers for donation to residents. He stated that businesses contributing flowers could be recognized in the City newsletter, which might reduce the need for City funding.

Council Member Grenier discussed the cemetery and arboretum, noting that the arboretum had the potential to become a travel destination. He emphasized the importance of ensuring sufficient funding to move the program forward.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

XIII. OLD BUSINESS

XIV. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Representative Nan Cobb introduced her new District Aide, Faith Ramnanan, and noted that Ms. Ramnanan would be based at the district office year-round. She requested to be added to any City event notification lists so she could attend. Representative Cobb stated that information would soon be available from Senator Truenow's office regarding upcoming appropriations and encouraged those planning to submit applications to meet with her prior to the October deadline. She added that it was an honor to represent the City in District 26.

Mayor Price noted the upcoming Lake County Legislative Day, scheduled to be held in the Board of County Commissioners Chambers on August 27, 2025.

XV. REPORTS

Tab 10. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury recognized T.J. Fish in the audience, noting that he was the former Lake–Sumter MPO Director, a former YMCA Board Member, a former Chamber of Commerce Board Member, and currently served as the Groveland Director of Transportation and Public Works. He added that Mr. Fish's son was a recent graduate of the Mayor's Youth Council and expressed his appreciation for Mr. Fish's continued engagement in the community by attending the City Council meeting.

Mr. Dillon reported that demolition of the former Public Works building was underway and was expected to be completed in September.

Tab 11. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Grenier noted that the Wooton Park Splash Park had reopened and was being enjoyed by the community. His additional comments included:

- Improvements to the Woodlea House and Seaplane Base, noting the fresh paint and new roof enhanced the facility's appearance.
- The library's air conditioning had been repaired, to the satisfaction of the library staff, and the Story Walk installation was scheduled for the following day.
- Major St. Clair Abrams would have appreciated America's Seaplane City, noting that he had lived to age 86, passed away in 1931, and had experienced the dawn of aviation, including flying in a seaplane.

Council Member Singer reported that the former Public Works facility and Recreation Department building were being demolished to provide space for future parking. His additional comments included:

- His pleasure in seeing the Splash Park reopened and enjoyed by local children.
- A recent water main break near his home caused by a lightning strike, and commendation to Mr. Clark and his team for completing repairs within three hours.
- Recognition of Representative Nan Cobb in the audience and thanks for her attendance.

Council Member Gamble recognized Representative Nan Cobb in the audience and expressed appreciation for her attendance. His additional comments included:

- The Tavares Police Department, in coordination with the Lake County Sheriff's Office and local churches, hosted a backpack giveaway at the Tavares High School gym the previous Saturday.
- More than 300 backpacks filled with school supplies were distributed, with donations from the community, including food items provided by a local business.
- Thanked the community for their support in assisting children in need.

Mayor Price recognized Representative Nan Cobb in the audience. His additional comments included:

- Participation in loading and distributing backpacks at the event and noting the excitement of the children when receiving them.
- Thanked the Police Department and all involved in organizing the event and his interest in participating again the next year.

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Price adjourned the meeting at 5:32 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk