



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
DECEMBER 3, 2025 – 4:00 PM
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 EAST MAIN STREET, TAVARES**

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT

**Lori Pfister, Mayor
Bob Grenier, Vice Mayor
Sandy Gamble, Council Member
Doug Keown, Council Member
Walter Price, Council Member – *Absent/City Business***

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
Mark O'Keefe, Support Services Director
Sarah Coursey, Police Chief
Brian Dykes, Interim Utilities Director**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pfister called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m. She 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 Jonathan Pearson, LifePoint Church

Pastor Jonathan Pearson, LifePoint Church, provided the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Pfister asked if there were any changes to the Agenda. There were none.

MOTION

Doug Keown moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 4-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Tab 2. Tavares Chamber of Commerce Update

Stephanie Hayes, President, Tavares Chamber of Commerce, provided an update on Tavares Chamber of Commerce 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 discussion.

VI. READING OF ALL ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS INTO THE RECORD

Ms. Novack read the following ordinances at First Reading by title only:

ORDINANCE 2025-10

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA AMENDING THE CITY CODE OF ORDINANCES BY AMENDING CHAPTER 10.5, LICENSES AND BUSINESS REGULATIONS, ARTICLE IV ENTITLED GARAGE SALE REGULATIONS, BY AMENDING SECTION 10-15-152, NO PERMIT REQUIRED; AND SECTION 10.5-156, PENALTY; 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 2025-11

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA AMENDING THE CITY OF TAVARES LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS, CHAPTER 21 SIGN REGULATIONS, SECTION 21-17 MISCELLANEOUS SIGNS; SUBJECT TO THE RULES, REGULATIONS AND

**OBLIGATIONS ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF TAVARES COUNCIL;
PROVIDING SEVERABILITY AND CONFLICTS; AND PROVIDING FOR
AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Mayor Pfister noted there was no discussion at the First Reading of ordinances.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

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

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 3. Approval of the November 19, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes], seconded by Doug Keown. The motion was approved unanimously 4-0.

Tab 3. Approval of the November 19, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Tab 4. Ordinance 2025-10 – Amending Code of Ordinances, Article IV – Garage Sale Regulations, Section 10-15-152 and Section 10.5-156

No discussion at First Reading.

Tab 5. Ordinance 2025-11 – Amending the Land Development Regulations, Chapter 21 Sign Regulations, Sections 21-17 Miscellaneous Signs

No discussion at First Reading.

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 6. Tavares Public Library Happy Healthy Holiday Series Update

Rebecca Campbell, Library Director, provided a PowerPoint presentation with the following highlights:

From festive learning opportunities and joyful literary experiences to fun family activities, the Tavares Public Library team has once again curated a slate of programs designed to keep library patrons at their happiest and healthiest during the holiday season.

Ms. Campbell provided an overview of the following programs:

- Seasonal Wildflower Arrangement Class
- Picture Time
- Gift Wrapping Station
- Lunch Time Concerts
- StoryWalk Literacy Initiative
- Book Giveaways

Ms. Campbell noted the City of Tavares Library was an Ambassador for the Florida Bureau of Braille and Talking Book Library.

Mayor Pfister thanked Ms. Campbell and commended her on the Library programs.

Tab 7. Tavares Recreation Re-Cap

Pete Sherrard provided an update and recap on the recent fall recreation programs in Tavares with the following highlights:

The City of Tavares Recreation Department added to the community fun this fall with the following highlighted programs:

- *Tavares Youth Soccer League*
- *Tavares Babe Ruth Baseball and Softball*
- *Start Smart Baseball*
- *Start Smart Soccer*
- *Senior Programs*
- *Homeschool Programs*
- *Pumpkin Scavenger Hunt*
- *Partnership Programs with the YMCA*
- *Full Steam Ahead*
- *BOO! Fest*

Tab 8. 2026 Projects and Initiatives Update

Mr. Drury provided a high level overview of the the 2026 Projects and Initiatives, and noted the following was provided to the City Council:

*Public Works - Phase One: West Main Street Gateway (Sign/Arch)
Surveying has recently been completed, and the location for the Gateway sign has been determined. The new Gateway Arch will be placed west of N. Lake Ave.*

Concept plans on design have been approved by Council. The second phase of the project will focus on hardscape and landscaping.

Public Works - St. Clair Abrams Gateway Improvements

A Horizon team has been formed to develop budgets and plans for this to mirror the West Main Street Gateway.

Public Works - Citywide Dark Sky Street Lighting Retrofit Program (Duke Energy & Tavares)

In January 2024, the city began its Dark Sky Initiative with the goal of becoming the second IDA-certified Dark Sky Community in Florida. Dark sky lighting helps to limit excessive lighting and light trespass, which results in light pollution. Light pollution has adverse environmental effects, including disrupting animal migration patterns and habitat degradation. This is a continuous program managed by the PW.

Public Works - AESOP Park Stormwater Enhancement

This project involved expanding and enhancing the pond located in Aesop's Park. The pond expansion improved stormwater quality and increased flood storage in this area. It also enlarged and improved the aquatic habitat for the recreational fishing program that the city and FWC have been cooperatively implementing at this site. The project is completed.

Public Works: Stormwater Enhancement

This project expanded and enhanced the pond located at the new Public Works off Captain Haynes Rd. The pond expansion improved stormwater quality and increased flood storage in the area. This project is completed.

Public Works - Wayfinding Signs along SR-19 For Woodlea Sports Complex, Public Works, Lake Tech

In 2013, the city implemented a wayfinding system designed to enhance its brand identity as America's Seaplane City. This system's primary goal is to provide guidance and navigation information for local cultural, historical, recreational, and tourist activities. Recently, the Public Works department and Lake Tech's Transportation Programs have relocated to a new site, and two additional wayfinding signs along Highway 19 are programmed.

Public Works - SR-19: Intersection Improvements with Main Street

The project will improve intersection capacity by reducing overall delay by adding dual westbound through lanes and one eastbound lane. The project is under design.

Public Works - SR-19: Intersection Improvements with Gateway Drive (AKA Alfred St)

The project will improve intersection capacity by reducing overall delay by adding dual northbound through lanes. The project is under design.

Public Works - David Walker Drive: Intersection with US-441

The project will improve intersection capacity by reducing overall delay by adding a northbound Lane on David Walker. The project is under design.

Public Works - Signal Installation at SR-19 and SR-561

The design is complete, with construction beginning in January 2026.

Improvements include:

- INSTALL A TRAFFIC SIGNAL*
- INSTALL SIGNALIZED PEDESTRIAN CROSSING*
- INSTALL PEDESTRIAN WARNING SIGNAGE*
- INSTALL SIGNING AND PAVEMENT MARKINGS*

Public Works - Resurfacing of U.S. 441 (West Burleigh Boulevard/State Road 500/SR-19): From Lakeshore Boulevard to Lake Eustis Drive in Tavares

This project will resurface West Burleigh Road (U.S. 441 / State Road (S.R.) 500 / S.R. 19) from Lakeshore Boulevard to Lake Eustis Drive. It will also upgrade pedestrian curb ramps to comply with current Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) standards. Construction is expected to commence in early 2026.

Public Works - State Road 19 widening:

State road 19 is undergoing the FDOT planning process to be widened from Woodlea Road to the Howey Bridge. The project concept plans are complete, and the project is now undergoing design. The Tavares MPO representative (Council Member Sandy Gamble) is working with the MPO to get this moved up on its priority list. In the meantime, the following improvements have/are being made:

- 1. Dead River Road intersection at SR 19 has been improved and is completed.*
- 2. A traffic light is being designed and will be installed at the intersection of 561 and SR 19.*
- 3. Turn lanes from Woodlea onto SR 19 are being added.*

Public Works - Tavares-Mount Dora Rails To Trails Project:

A partnership between Lake County, Mount Dora, Tavares, Trust For Public Lands, Florida Central Railroad and CSX has been formed to appraise the line and apply for a Federal Grant to purchase the property for a trail corridor. Grant application has been submitted to the U.S. Department of Transportation. Announcements on awards are forthcoming. .

Lake County Regional Park East Campus: *The County, City and YMCA have entered into a partnership to build the County's Golden Triangle Regional Park – East Campus (Current YMCA Location). A Master Planning firm has been*

selected to develop the Master Plan and associated Capital Improvement program. The Recreation Department has relocated to the Regional Park.

Lake County Regional Park West Campus: The County and City have entered into a partnership to build the County's Golden Triangle Regional Park – West Campus (Current Woodlea Sports Location). A Master Planning firm has been selected to develop the Master Plan and associated Capital Improvement program.

Booster Pumps: A permanent booster pump by the Hospital is designed, permitted, funded and under construction.

Wells: A Hydrogeological study has been performed to determine the location and suitability of groundwater for the replacement of two downtown wells.

Fire Department City ISO rating: The Fire Department has successfully maintained a low ISO rating for the city of 3 which contributes greatly to lower insurance premiums for residential and commercial buildings.

Economic Development: updated its Economic Development program which includes 12 specific areas of focus. This initiative nurtures each area with a focus on retention, redevelopment and expansion.

- 1. Advent Health Waterman: The hospital offers many high wage jobs and continues to expand. Hospital Campus growth and development include:
 - A) A 50,000 square foot medical office building at an estimated cost of \$30 million, located adjacent to the Waterman Campus at the Intersection of SR 441 and Huffstetter Drive (East of the Hospital). It will include radiology imaging, cardiac rehabilitation, and an outpatient lab. Under construction.*
 - B) A 7,000 square foot Urgent Care Center located in the Lakeview Center Medical office park, across S.R. 441 from the Main Waterman Campus (between the former Radnothy now UF Health medical office and the V.A. clinic) facing 441. This urgent care/walk in clinic is operated by Advent Health, completed and open.**
- 2. Medical Village Area: Is located across the street from the Hospital and continues to grow as a Tavares high wage employment center with hundreds of jobs.*
- 3. Downtown Professional Services: Located primarily around the Lake County Government campus on West Main Street consisting of Law Offices, Financial institutions, Bail bonds, Title companies and the like also acts as a high wage economic engine for Tavares.*
- 4. Downtown Entertainment & Business District: Located along the waterfront and Mainstreet and consisting of hotel accommodations, bars and restaurants with a variety of dining, music, Special Events and*

entertainment options this too acts as an economic engine for Tavares offering a very wide range of job opportunities. Tavares Square is under contract to build a mixed-use building of apartments and Commercial. Further supporting the continued growth of the downtown.

5. Commerce Park: Located at the “Lake Ridge Industrial Park” continues to grow and receive new businesses. From machine shops, performance car rebuilds and steel fabrication, this park offers some very good higher wage jobs and entrepreneurial success and is yet another economic engine for Tavares.
6. Ecotourism & Sports Tourism: These economic impact nodes include the Marina facilities, seaplane base, waterfront volleyball courts and Big House baseball, basketball and volleyball youth tournaments bringing in outside dollars that are deposited into the Tavares community throughout hotel stays and dining experiences.
7. Seaplane Base: Maintaining safe waterfront facilities inclusive of the Prop Shop/Seaplane Base terminal building, fueling depots, and Flight operations for all aircraft and their passengers provides a very unique economic impacting engine for Tavares.
8. Special Events: Hosting 20 plus annual events at the waterfront provides for an infusion of outside dollars into the local community just at the right time and in sufficient quantities to keep these businesses operational year round.
9. Arts, Culture & History: By building and maintaining the City’s history museum in the Train Station, renovating the History Research Center and welcoming the Arts Museum on Ruby, additional economic benefits are realized in the downtown.
10. Highway Commercial/Retail: Properly zoning, permitting, lighting and supporting of the City’s commercial “gateway” entrance roadways (SR19, SR441, Old 441, and CR561 & 448) provides many business opportunities all of which provide a variety of jobs and economic impact to the city. Another economic engine for the city.
11. Quick Service/Fast Casual Dining: Visitor’s and the business community expect quick service options in a thriving community in America. Tavares, once a desert in this area, now has landed several throughout the community further establishing itself as “the place to be”.
12. Light Industrial Manufacturing Center: Located at the City’s Eastern gateway along the old 441 corridors and Lake Ridge Industrial Park, this employment aspect diversifies further an already diversified economy for this city. Many jobs are created in these small factories and further provide an economic impact to Tavares.

CRA TIF funded Façade Grant Program: Acting in its management capacity for the Downtown CRA TIF District, the Economic Development Department administers this impactful curbside appeal program. Providing Façade Grants of 50% matching funds for eligible exterior improvement to enhance the exterior of business within the downtown business district.

Special Events & Community Events:

- *Arbor Day Celebration*
- *Central Florida Aquatic Cleanup Day*
- *African American Heritage Festival*
- *Rhythm on Ruby*
- *Sunnyland Antique & Classic Boat Show*
- *Planes, Tuners and BBQ*
- *Kayakathon*
- *Rocktoberfest*
- *Advent Health Waterman Pink Out 5K Run*
- *Monster Splash Seaplane Fly-In*
- *Lake Renaissance Faire*
- *Christmas Parade*
- *Fourth of July Parade*
- *BOO! Festival*

ISBA Utility Master Plan: *Master planning the ultimate buildout of the city water and sewer infrastructure within the Interlocal Service Boundary Agreement Area is underway.*

Consumptive Use Permit: *The application is being prepared for submittal to the regulatory agency.*

Record Retention: *Records retention laws continue to change, and the Clerk has implemented a program to keep up with the laws and retains records so that they are accessible to the public. One area of accessibility includes ADA compliance, and the Clerk has completed and will continue to maintain compliance with these ADA requirements.*

Records Management: *The City Clerk under her Records Management Liaison Officer role has launched an initiative to process document conversions from paper to digital format to improve upon records retention and retrieval processes now and into the future.*

Agenda Management: *The Clerk recently launched state-of-the-art software system for City Council and Planning and Zoning Board agenda processing including creation, review, and distribution.*

Emergency Management: *The city continues to be in a state of readiness for storms under its Emergency Management program. The Emergency Operations Center (EOC) continues to be an active, up to date and well outfitted facility in times of need under the management of the Emergency Operations Director.*

Public Communications: *The Communications Department is utilizing all media*

touch points to provide an open, transparent and communicative government. This includes the website, Social Media platforms, city newsletter, and all media outlets. As communication techniques change, the Communications Department adapts to those changes.

Finance/Customer Service/Purchasing/Budget

- The Budget and Finance Staff have implemented Gravity Budget Book Software. This software has made the preparation of the Budget Book document easier, more streamlined with ease of assembly while maintaining GFOA Budget Award Document criteria.*
- Delinquent Bills for closed utility accounts. The Finance Team has successfully implemented a delinquent notice for closed utility accounts that have been recently closed and still owing an unpaid balance. This new delinquent notice ability for closed accounts is anticipated to decrease the number of accounts identified for collection and for the lien process.*
- Utility Customers may now request last-minute notices via text message alerting the customer that their bill is due so that the customer may avoid a late fee, and thus pay their outstanding balance before it becomes delinquent.*
- The Finance staff is currently in the process of utilizing additional features on the City's Innovative Voice Response System (IVR) to provide automated calls for customers wishing to request an extension on their utility account. The implementation of this feature will assist staff in accomplishing the utility billing and accounting tasks as the number of new utility account connections increase daily.*
- Purchasing and Finance Staff have implemented Field Purchase Orders. These FPO's allow those items which are not shopped to be identified more easily and provide for electronic approvals through the purchasing system. Items include: training, travel, legal services, debt payments, monthly transfers, etc.*

America In Bloom: *Tavares continues to be recognized as a participant in this initiative. This program continues to grow each and every year with the City receiving awards.*

Cemetery Arboretum Program: *The Park Operations Management division has established Tavares Cemetery as an accredited Level 1 Arboretum.*

Sidewalk Management Program: *A conditional assessment of City sidewalks was completed by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. (VHB) to develop a management plan for ADA compliance, maintenance and repair. A sidewalk grinding program was established with Precision Sidewalk Safety Corp. to conduct annual inspections and complete sidewalk grinding in identified areas of concern.*

Technology

Text Messaging for Building Permit Inspection Scheduling:

Implementation of building permit inspection scheduling through “Text Messaging” utilizing the Innovative Voice Response System as the relay, and requests and actions will integrate into the CentralSquare Building Permit System.

RecDesk Online Software: Online Recreation software to allow for on- line sign-ups and credit card payments for various recreation activities such as Spring Ball, Father-daughter dance, Fall Ball, etc.

IVR Accounts Receivable: Innovative Voice Response System implementation to allow Accounts Receivable payments for billing not billed through Utility Billing to be paid by over the phone through the IVR system, and online through Click2Gov.

Public Works - Solid Waste Route Optimization Software: Daily Route optimization software platform designed by Verizon to determine cost- effective, optimal routes, and reduce miles on our trips daily. This software will raise the level of service to our residents and result in fuel savings thus saving the rate payer. This software has been integrated in all City of Tavares Solid Waste trucks.

Public Works – Solid Waste On-Board Truck Scales Initiative: Accurate weighing solutions play a key role in ALL waste management, refuse hauling, and recycling industries. Tracking the total weight of refuse collected, monitoring inputs and outputs during materials recovery, and disposing of waste is important for legislative compliance and overall operational efficiency, therefore an accurate, durable waste management scale and weighing solution is necessary. This new innovative system will be installed on all MSW vehicles to ensure the City trucks hauling capacity is maximize as well as reduce the number of trips to the incinerator/landfill, thus reducing O&M cost and improving the Operator’s efficiency. Project is ongoing.

Public Works Asset and Work Oder Management System: Public Works is transitioning from Novo Solutions, a software that provided real- time work order and asset management, to Cartegraph Systems which will provide a more detailed real-time work order system and extensive asset management program as well as provide a Public Portal for public requests. This system will integrate with the new SeeClickFix App to allow the generation of work orders from inquiries when needed.

Base Read System: Parts 7 and 8 underway bringing the system up to 80% Coverage.

Electronic Time Keeping Software: The Human Resource Department is automating time sheets to save time, money and provide data tracking at the push of a button. This should be completed this summer.

Community Services Department: The Department continues to manage many recreation programs, the History Museum, Regional Parks and Library.

Recreation

Senior programs

- *Bingo, Donuts & Coffee – a year-round monthly program for seniors that features the fun game of bingo, coffee, donuts and music*
- *Senior Social – a year-round monthly program for our senior population that has singing, dancing, games and food*
- *Senior Enrichment Series – a year-round monthly program for seniors that features informative health and nutrition related topics. Chair Yoga, Line Dancing, Arts & Crafts*
- *Take A Hike Program – a weekly program for seniors where they are led on a walk through downtown.*

Youth programs

- *Tavares Babe Ruth League – youth Baseball & Softball played for 10- weeks during both the spring and fall*
- *Start Smart Baseball program – designed for kids ages 3-5 years old as an introduction to the sport of baseball, held during the spring and fall*
- *Start Smart Soccer program – designed for kids ages 3-5 years old as an introduction to the sport of soccer, held during the spring*
- *Wacky World of Sports Program – a 12-week youth program that introduces kids to 6 different sports and activities*
- *Rec Rover Tour Stops – a “pop-up” mobile recreation initiative that brings fun, games, music, and activities to informal settings such as local parks, playgrounds and schools*
- *Adult Kickball League – teams play the schoolyard game of kickball in a friendly competitive format featuring regular season play and tournaments.*
- *Father-Daughter Dance – a dance for girls of all ages and their dads held annually at the Tavares Pavilion on the Lake*
- *Mother-Son Night Out Event – a fun event to help mothers and sons engage in games, activities, and different projects*
- *Homeschool Programs – multiple tours of city sites for educational sessions for homeschool students at places such as the Public Safety Complex, Wastewater Lab Offices, and Marina & Seaplane*

Base

- *NFL Youth Flag Football – youth flag football league for kids ages 5-14 held in the summer*
- *Tavares Youth Soccer League – youth soccer program for kids ages 3- 14 held at the Golden Triangle Regional Park – East Campus in the fall*
- *Start Smart Sports Development – designed for kids ages 3-5 years old as an introduction to a variety of sports*
- *Start Smart Flag Football– designed for kids ages 3-5 years old as an introduction to flag football*
- *Youth Basketball Camp at the Tavares High School*

Pavilion on the Lake

- *72 Simply Married ceremonies performed by city staff*
- *113 hosted events (paid and non-paid city events)*
- *12 Open Houses (Pavilion is open to the public)*

Arts & Culture

- *African American Heritage Festival /Cultural night – community night with concert and dinner*
- *5 live music concerts at the Library*
- *Participation in the Lake County Arts & Cultural Alliance Committee*
- *Lake County Museum of Art is now located on Ruby Street.*

Library (Ongoing Recurring Programming):

- *Monthly Library Concert Series*
- *Shine: Once a month, Health informational needs for seniors*
- *Frayed Knot: Knitting and Crochet: Meets first and third Tuesday of every month*
- *Page Turners Adult Book Club: Monthly book club centered on a specific book*
- *Story Time: Every Wednesday*
- *1000 Books Before Kindergarten, a National Early Literacy initiative*
- *Book a Librarian*
- *Story Time for Children’s Learning House*
- *Tax Aide Help, Friday and Saturdays 9:45 a.m – 2:00 p.m. Only site in Lake County to offer Tax Aide Help on Saturdays)*
- *PAWS Reading Therapy Dogs*
- *Movers and Shakers: Monthly movement and dance class for infants an preschoolers*
- *Self-Directed programs for Teens, such as Book Boxes and End of Semester Parties*
- *UF IFAS Gardening and Cooking Classes for teens and adults*
- *Make and Take Crafts*

- *New technology: Newline Display available for employees (and eventually the public) to use inside the library by reservation*

Special Programming or One Time Programming (currently offered and/or offered in the past)

- *Author Talks*
- *Guest Speakers*

Program and Reading Challenges commemorating cultural heritage months, such as:

- *Black History Month*
- *Women's History Month*
- *Poetry Month*
- *Hispanic Heritage Month*
- *Asian Pacific Heritage Month*

Programming commemorating National Library and/or Literacy initiatives:

- *Thematic reading challenges throughout the year for all ages*
- *Library Card Sign Up Month*

Holiday and Seasonal Themed programming:

- *Happy and Healthy Holiday Series*
- *Santa Story Time*
- *Annual Summer Reading Program for all ages*
- *Fourth of July themed concert*
- *Tavares Veterans exhibit*

Library Outreach:

- *Advent Health*
- *Nursing Homes*
- *Little Free Libraries*
- *Tavares Elementary School*
- *Sugars Supportive Services of Leesburg*
- *Certus Memory Care*
- *B.E.T.T.E.R. Committee Meetings*
- *Tavares African American Heritage Organization cultural concert*
- *Race Amity Day*

XI. NEW BUSINESS

Public Forum Concept

Council Member Keown stated that he had interacted with several residents and found that many wished to speak with Council members in a more conversational setting. He

stated that the formal meeting format limited residents to three minutes of comment time, which made meaningful dialogue difficult. He suggested that the City consider holding a public forum once every three months, possibly at the Civic Center, structured as a question-and-answer discussion that would allow residents to engage with Council members and share concerns more freely.

Mayor Pfister asked for clarification on Florida's Sunshine Law requirements.

Mr. Drury said if two or more Council members attended such a gathering, the meeting would need to be advertised and ADA accessible, with security present, and minutes would need to be taken and the meeting recorded.

Mayor Pfister stated that a public forum could be beneficial, although she felt that without time limits or structure the discussion might become difficult to manage. She shared that she regularly met one-on-one with residents and brought concerns back to the Council or staff. She noted that individual Council members could also host informal conversations such as coffee-and-donut gatherings at City Hall.

Council Member Keown agreed that clear guidelines would be needed for any forum. Mayor Pfister added that each Council member spent considerable time responding to residents directly and that meaningful conversations often occurred outside of formal meetings. She stated the concept had merit as long as it was approached safely and responsibly.

Vice Mayor Grenier recalled that the City had held workshops in the past, including visioning workshops and the recent Regional Park Master Plan workshop. He noted that workshops were usually focused on specific subjects. He requested that staff prepare an outline showing what would be required to organize a general public gathering so Council Member Keown could better understand the process.

Mr. Drury stated he would place the item on the next agenda and present several options, such as structured workshops, general informational meetings, and individual Council "coffee with constituents" sessions at local businesses.

Mayor Pfister stated she had also considered holding informational gatherings to educate residents about issues such as growth. She explained that residents often assumed the City controlled matters that were under County or State authority, such as certain roadways. She said additional educational opportunities could be helpful.

Council Member Keown noted that the 4:00 p.m. meeting time prevented some residents from attending and suggested that both morning and evening options be considered so working residents could participate. He stated that residents often misunderstood how City finances worked and that such meetings could help clarify those issues.

Vice Mayor Grenier added that many residents did not realize that the City operated multiple enterprise funds rather than a single citywide budget, which complicated public expectations.

Mayor Pfister stated that residents should be reminded that Council members welcomed calls and meetings at any time. She shared that numerous residents regularly contacted her regarding agenda items and that she met with them frequently to provide explanations. She stated that all Council members returned calls and were accessible.

Resident Concerns: Utility Line Cuts

Mayor Pfister stated that she had received calls regarding utilities being cut during underground fiber-optic installation work and asked staff to explain the process.

Mr. Drury said contractors hired by cable companies were installing high-speed fiber-optic infrastructure citywide as part of a federally funded CARES Act program. He stated that the effort would ultimately increase property values and benefit public safety. Contractors were required to obtain right-of-way permits from the Public Works Department, demonstrate licensure and insurance, and follow all utility-location requirements. He described the drilling process and the depth of installation.

Mr. Drury noted that the number of utility line cuts had been excessive in at least one neighborhood and that staff, in coordination with the City Attorney, was preparing to issue a permit revocation until the contractor met with the City to address performance concerns. He stated that the contractor needed more signage and door hangers and must demonstrate improved responsiveness. He explained that water line cuts were repaired by City crews, electrical providers handled their own repairs, and cable companies typically restored service within hours. He anticipated the revocation action would occur the following week.

Christmas Light Timing

Vice Mayor Grenier stated he had observed the Christmas lights at the park turned off during the evening and then on during morning hours, and asked whether the lights were controlled by timers.

Mayor Pfister noted she had seen similar inconsistencies. Mr. Drury stated that the installation had been contracted out and that staff would contact the contractor to correct the issue.

XII. OLD BUSINESS

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Gary Santoro, Royal Harbor, thanked Mayor Pfister and Vice Mayor Grenier for relocating the Tavares High School Choir from the City Hall lobby into the Council Chambers for the performance. He stated that the arrangement, along with the seasonal decorations created a warm and festive atmosphere for the meeting.

Mr. Santoro stated that in the past, one Council Member held office hours in City Hall every Thursday from 4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., with the responsibility rotating weekly among the elected officials. He noted that the approach was effective for a while, giving residents regular chances to meet Council Members one-on-one. Participation eventually declined once community issues diminished. He offered the concept as an option for Council consideration, suggesting that a single volunteering Council Member could hold similar office hours rather than organizing larger public gatherings.

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 9. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury echoed earlier comments and stated that the City Clerk team had done an outstanding job creating Christmas cheer and setting a festive spirit in the Council Chambers. He noted that the holiday atmosphere enhanced the meeting experience. He also recognized Mayor Pfister for having initiated the tradition of inviting the Tavares High School Choir to perform before the December City Council meetings, beginning in 2016, and stated that the performances continued to be a wonderful way to begin the holiday season.

Mr. Aldrich reminded everyone that the City's Christmas celebration would take place on Saturday. He stated that the parade would begin at 5:00 p.m. at Downtown Main Street and Ruby Street. He noted that each Council Member would be participating in some capacity, whether as parade participants or as judges, and he welcomed the community to attend.

Tab 10. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Gamble thanked Mr. Sherrard for his presentation and stated that he continued to be amazed by the information he brought forward. He reported that during a recent visit to the park he observed that squirrels had chewed through wiring on several Christmas light strands. Technicians onsite had shown him a junction of damaged wiring they had removed from a tree. He recalled earlier years when lights were occasionally left on during the daytime in an effort to deter squirrels, although he was uncertain whether that approach remained effective. He asked whether the repairs created additional cost for the City.

Mr. Drury responded that the City's lighting contractor installed displays throughout the State of Florida within a 90-day seasonal window. Repairs were guaranteed under the contract, so the City did not incur additional charges. He noted that delays sometimes occurred because crews might be working in other cities before returning to Tavares. He added that several palm trees on Main Street had recently been without lighting due to similar squirrel-related damage.

Vice Mayor Grenier stated that one aspect he appreciated most about the Tavares High School Choir's performance was that all selections were traditional, religious Christmas songs, which he felt were among the most beautiful Christmas carols. He also wished Mayor Pfister an early happy birthday.

Mayor Pfister stated that the choir had grown noticeably and credited the improvement to the current director. She described the performance as one of the finest she had ever heard. She encouraged the Council and the public to wear festive holiday attire at the next meeting, noting that seasonal clothing such as sweaters, ties, hats, or even Christmas pajamas would help create a cheerful and lighthearted atmosphere.

Mayor Pfister reminded everyone that the Tavares High School Band would perform at 3:30 p.m. prior to the next City Council meeting and encouraged the public to arrive early. She stated that the Council hoped to have the band perform in the Chambers, as the choir's performance there had worked very well.

Mayor Pfister closed her comments by saying she hoped everyone had a pleasant Thanksgiving holiday.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Pfister adjourned the meeting at 4:49.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk