



**AGENDA
TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
February 4, 2026
4:00 PM
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 E MAIN STREET, TAVARES**

(Members of the public wishing to speak on an item that is on the agenda must fill out a Request to Speak form available from the City Clerk or at the Council Meeting prior to the meeting being called to order. In addition, the Mayor will ask for comment under the agenda item titled "Audience to be Heard" for matters not on the Agenda. For further information contact the City Clerk at (352) 742-6209 or snovack@tavares.org)

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. INVOCATION/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

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

VI. READING OF ALL ORDINANCES/RESOLUTIONS INTO RECORD

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

Tab 1 Approval of the January 21, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes
(City Clerk)

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

IX. ORDINANCES - PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

Tab 2 Ordinance 2026-02 - Extend Deferred Retirement Option from 60 months to 96 months for Tavares Firefighters' Pension Plan - Second Reading (Finance)

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 3 Board Appointment - Lake County Library Advisory Board (Mayor)

Tab 4 **Appointment of Code Enforcement Special Master (City Administrator)**

XI. **NEW BUSINESS**

XII. **OLD BUSINESS**

XIII. **AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD**

XIV. **REPORTS**

Tab 5 **City Administrator Report**

Tab 6 **City Council Member Reports**

XV. **ADJOURNMENT**

F.S. 286.0105 If a person decides to appeal any decision or recommendation made by Council with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, he will need record of the proceedings, and that for such purposes he may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

Individuals with disabilities needing assistance to participate in any of these proceedings should contact the City Clerk at least two (2) working days in advance of the meeting date and time at (352) 742-6209.

**AGENDA SUMMARY
TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
2/4/2026**

AGENDA TAB NO.: 1

SUBJECT TITLE: Approval of the January 21, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes (City Clerk)

OBJECTIVE:

For the Council to consider approval of the January 21, 2026, City Council meeting minutes.

SUMMARY:

Attached are the January 21, 2026, City Council meeting minutes as submitted by the City Clerk.

OPTIONS:

1. Move to approve the meeting minutes under the Consent Agenda.
2. Move to approve the meeting minutes with corrections.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

For the Council's consideration.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

Yes.

ATTACHMENTS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC UPON REQUEST:

1. 01-21-2026 CC Minutes

Attachments not provided are available to the public upon request to the City Clerk.



America's Seaplane City™

**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 21, 2026 – 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**

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
Sarah Coursey, Police Chief
James Dillon, Public Works Director
Mark O'Keefe, Support Services Director
Brian Dykes, 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. Deacon Jim Shelley, St. Mary of the Lakes Catholic Church

Deacon Jim Shelley, St. Mary of the Lakes Catholic 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. Mr. Drury said staff had no changes.

MOTION

Walter Price moved to approve the Agenda, seconded by Doug Keown. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IV. PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS

Tab 2. Tavares Chamber of Commerce Update

Mr. Drury noted that the Chamber President was unable to attend the meeting due to illness.

Tab 3. Proclamation – Tavares’ 9th Annual Arbor Day Celebration

Mayor Pfister read a Proclamation declaring January 17, 2026, as Arbor Day in the City of Tavares, in recognition of the City’s Tree City USA program requirements as established by the Arbor Day Foundation, the U.S. Forest Service, and the National Association of State Foresters.

MOTION

Doug Keown moved to accept the Proclamation, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Mr. Dillon stated that the recent Arbor Day event was a great success, noting that more than 1,060 trees were distributed to the community. He shared that Parks Operations Manager Tracy Anderson and her team, along with all partnering organizations, did an excellent job coordinating the event. Mr. Dillon remarked that the upcoming year would mark the City’s 10th annual Arbor Day celebration and encouraged the Council and the public to stay tuned for future activities. He added that the Tavares Cemetery and Arboretum was a primary focus for the year and noted that the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences created a video recognizing the Tavares Cemetery as the first cemetery and arboretum of its kind in the State of Florida.

Mayor Pfister shared that she recently visited the cemetery, where she observed significant new plantings and noted that the area continued to improve. Mayor Pfister thanked the staff for their efforts and expressed appreciation to the entire team.

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 2026-01

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE 2026 FISCAL YEAR ADOPTED BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF TAVARES, REPRESENTING THE FIRST AMENDMENT TO THE ADOPTED BUDGET, AND PROVIDING FOR A REPEALER, SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

RESOLUTION 2026-02

A RESOLUTION OF CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, RELATING TO THE STATE REVOLVING FUND LOAN PROGRAM; MAKING FINDINGS; AUTHORIZING THE LOAN APPLICATION; AUTHORIZING THE LOAN AGREEMENT; ESTABLISHING PLEDGED REVENUES; DESIGNATING AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES; PROVIDING ASSURANCES; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, AND EFFECTIVE DATE.

ORDINANCE 2026-02

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, AMENDING CHAPTER 15, PENSIONS AND RETIREMENT, ARTICLE V, FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION TRUST FUND, OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF TAVARES; AMENDING SECTION 15-128, DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PLAN; PROVIDING FOR AN EXTENSION OF DROP PARTICIPATION PERIOD; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HERewith AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

VII. CONSENT AGENDA

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

MOTION

Walter Price moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 4. Approval of the December 17, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes, and Tab 5. Approval of the 2026 City Council Meeting Dates], seconded by Doug Keown. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 4. Approval of the December 17, 2025, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

Tab 5. Approval to the 2026 City Council Meeting Dates

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Tab 6. Resolution 2026-01 – FY 2026 First Budget Amendment

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

Resolution 2026-01 represents increases and/or decreases to the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2026. Appropriation increases include capital projects and prior-year/project encumbrance rollovers. In addition, the Resolution also reflects transfers between individual accounts within adopted budgets for all departments. The resolution represents the First Amendment to the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

Ms. Houghton said staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to approve Resolution 2026-01, amending the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 City of Tavares Annual Operating Budget.

Mayor Pfister asked for questions from the Council. There were none.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Resolution 2026-01, seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 7. Resolution 2026-02 – Authorize SRF Loan for SAHM Drinking Water Project DW3509A with Loan Forgiveness

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

The City of Tavares operates a public water system (PWS ID # 3351333) with over 134 miles of distribution lines, serving residents within the city limits and surrounding areas. Potable water is sourced from the Upper Floridan Aquifer through six groundwater wells, treated at four facilities, and stored in three tanks with a combined capacity of 2.5 million gallons.

The Project will include the following system improvements:

- *Waterproofing and elevating electrical panels and control systems to prevent flood damage.*
- *Installing remote monitoring and control systems (SCADA) upgrades for real-time control and monitoring.*
- *Improving distribution system redundancy by looping key waterlines and adding pressure-boosting stations.*
- *Enhancing booster pump capacity for consistent water delivery.*
- *Increasing storage capacity or optimizing existing storage for better operational flexibility.*
- *Installing Drinking Water Wells to replace the 2 downtown wells.*

The project aims to increase system redundancy, reliability, and resiliency, addressing issues identified during hurricane Milton and other disasters. By proactively strengthening the system's configuration, it will protect public health and safety, preserve environmental resources, and ensure regulatory compliance.

The Project cost for planning, design, and construction is estimated at \$21,450,000. The DEP SAHM funded listed amount is \$21,450,000 with a principal forgiveness amount of \$21,450,000.

Florida FDEP has included the project (SAHM 3590A) on the Florida DEP Funding List. The City will enter into a loan with loan forgiveness as indicated on the State DEP Division of Water Restoration Assistance Funding List provided in Notice ID# FA-SORF-202511.

Ms. Houghton said staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to approve Resolution 2026-02, authorizing the Mayor to execute documents for application and acceptance for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection State Revolving Loan Program for SAHM Funding for the 3509A Drinking Water Project.

Council Member Gamble discussed long-standing concerns regarding water distribution and asked whether the proposed project would improve system pressure in the Royal Harbor area. Mr. Dykes stated that staff had previously reviewed potential improvements in that area and would continue to evaluate options. He explained that past efforts had been limited due to right-of-way and travel-path easement constraints.

Council Member Price asked when loan forgiveness would take effect and whether the City would be required to perform any debt service on the project, even temporarily. Ms. Houghton responded that while the project was large, the City would enter into a contract and begin disbursements immediately as contractor invoices were paid. She said reimbursement requests would be submitted with every payment request, ensuring the City was not advancing funds beyond its normal project cash-flow practices.

Scott Shannon, Consultant with Woodard & Curran, confirmed that once a contractor submitted an invoice, the City could pay it and then immediately request reimbursement. He stated that the only limitation was that reimbursement requests could be submitted approximately once every 30 days, which meant the City would not be out more than one to two months of cash flow at any given time. He noted that this was consistent with normal City operating constraints and did not require borrowing the full project amount.

Mr. Drury confirmed that the project would not add any additional debt to the City and stated that the City would cash-flow the project within its existing financial capacity.

MOTION

Doug Keown moved to approve Resolution 2026-02, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Tab 8. Ordinance 2026-02 – Extend Deferred Retirement Option from 60 months to 96 months for Tavares Firefighters’ Pension Plan

No discussion at First Reading.

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 9. Community Grant Awards

Ms. Novack made the following presentation:

The Council budgeted \$2,000 in the current Fiscal Year 2025 for community grants. The City advertised at the beginning of the fiscal year an invitation to submit community grant applications for area not-for-profit organizations with a 502C3 designation for up to \$500 in funding for community and social service projects.

The City received five (5) grant applications (attached) as follows:

Angel Flight Southeast

- Educational Foundation of Lake County*
- Lake Cares, Inc.*
- Tavares Theater, Inc.*
- Triangle Community Alliance, Inc.*

A ranking committee consisting of the City Clerk, Finance Director, and

Community Services Director met on January 14, 2026, and reviewed the applications to determine if they met the criteria for the Community Grant Program. It was determined that each request met the award criteria. The grant opportunity was advertised in the Daily Commercial and on the City website.

Ms. Novack said staff recommended Option 2, for the Council to award the grant requests in the amount of \$400 each to Angel Flight Southeast, Educational Foundation of Lake County, Lake Cares, Inc., Tavares Theater, Inc., and Triangle Community Alliance, Inc.

Mayor Pfister asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Gamble stated that he was comfortable with the recommendations as presented. He indicated that, after reviewing the applications, all of the organizations appeared worthy. He expressed support for remaining within the approved budget and distributing the funds evenly.

Council Member Keown commented that the applicant organizations were all worthy of consideration.

Council Member Price stated that all of the organizations were worthwhile recipients of City support. He expressed interest in considering an increased funding amount in future fiscal years to make the grants more meaningful. He indicated support for Option 2, which included funding for all five organizations.

Vice Mayor Grenier stated that he did not support funding all five organizations. He said that he had concerns about whether the Triangle Community Alliance program aligned with the City's existing library services and the original intent of the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program. He noted that the City and surrounding communities already provided extensive library services and children's programming. Based on his review, he supported Option 1, which funded the first four organizations listed, and stated that he would not support funding the Triangle Community Alliance.

Mayor Pfister asked clarifying questions regarding current City support provided to several of the applicant organizations, including Angel Flight, the Educational Foundation, Lake Cares, and the Tavares Theatre. Mr. Drury confirmed that some organizations received City support such as the Educational Foundation for the Renaissance Fair.

Mayor Pfister expressed concern about allocating all available funds at the beginning of the year and stated a preference for retaining flexibility to address needs that might arise later in the fiscal year. Mr. Drury noted that the grant process was budgeted beginning October 1 and brought forward in January following advertising and committee review.

Council Member Gamble clarified that the Educational Foundation request was intended solely to support a Tavares High School scholarship program administered through the Foundation, rather than activities related to the Renaissance Festival. He discussed the history of the scholarship and noted that without City participation, the scholarship for Tavares students would not occur. Mayor Pfister noted that the City provided significant support to students through existing programs, including the Mayor’s Youth Council scholarships.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve funding for the top four listed organizations [Angel Flight Southeast, Educational Foundation of Lake County, Lake Cares, Inc., and Tavares Theater, Inc.] at \$400 each, excluding the Triangle Community Alliance, and to reserve the remaining funds for potential future use. The motion died for a lack of a second.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Option 2, seconded by Doug Keown. The motion carried 3-2 as follows:

Lori Pfister:	No
Bob Grenier:	No
Sandy Gamble:	Yes
Doug Keown:	Yes
Walter Price:	Yes

Tab 10. Broad Budget Goals

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

It is recommended Council members develop their three (3) to five (5) broad budget priorities over the ensuing weeks for the upcoming FY 2027 (October 1, 2026 -September 30, 2027) Annual Budget development and deliver those budget priorities individually to the City Administrator by the end of the month - January 31, 2026, so he can assemble them for the Council's collaborative consideration at the next City Council meeting on February 4th, 2026.

Tab 11. Property Acquisition for Future Parking Garage Construction

Mr. Tweedie made the following presentation:

The City has developed a long-term plan to construct two additional future parking garage structures to adequately address the parking needs of the community for the benefit of businesses, residents and visitors. These two parking garages, in addition to the existing Lake County garage, will be located

strategically in the downtown corridor, one block North of Main Street, behind City Hall and at the site of the former public works complex, providing easy vehicular access to the downtown core without crossing the Main Street corridor to access events, businesses and the waterfront area.

All the necessary property has been assembled and is under city ownership except for one parcel, located at the corner of Maud and New Hampshire, at the northwest corner of the existing City Hall property (attached photo). This parcel has recently been put on the market for sale and the owner has asked their real estate broker to provide the city with the first opportunity to purchase the property for its future garage needs. The lot is listed at a market price of \$255,500.

As this parcel did not become available until after the development and adoption of the current fiscal year budget, there were no funds allocated in this budget for the acquisition cost. Staff working together with the finance team have identified 3 options for funding in the current fiscal year:

- 1. Building permit fee revenues.*
- 2. Current fiscal year reserves. The current reserves are sufficient to cover the cost of this expenditure while still exceeding GFOA recommended reserve funding levels.*
- 3. Reserves to be reimbursed with facilities impact fees to be collected in the future.*

Mr. Tweedie said staff recommended Option 2, for the Council to approve the expenditure of up to the full asking price of \$255,5000, subject to satisfactory appraisal of the property value, utilizing building permit fee revenues.

Mayor Pfister asked for comments from the Council.

Council Member Gamble asked whether sufficient funds were available within building permit fee revenues for the proposed project. Ms. Houghton noted that the funds were restricted and could not be transferred to the General Fund, requiring their use for capital projects that served the Building Department. She stated that staff had reviewed the percentage of use attributable to the Building Department and confirmed that the proposed parking garage met the required nexus and could be funded in a fair and equitable manner.

Mr. Drury explained that the proposed garage would replace the existing building permit parking lot and confirmed that the City had adequate funding available for building-permit-related capital projects.

Council Member Gamble stated that he believed the proposal was a good idea and noted that the location was better situated for downtown activities than the previously discussed site near the former Public Works facility. He added that the location was

positioned behind the event areas, allowing vehicles to enter and exit without being caught in event traffic.

Council Member Keown commented that neighboring cities often struggled with limited parking during large events and stated that providing a structured parking option within a short walking distance downtown would be valuable. He noted that such a facility would give residents and visitors confidence that parking was available when attending major events.

Council Member Price asked whether the project could be funded entirely through building permit fee revenues, and staff confirmed that it could. He stated that he preferred the proposed downtown location over the former Public Works site. He noted that he could not offer a formal opinion on property value and stated that the asking price appeared consistent with comparable downtown property sales.

Vice Mayor Grenier stated that prior discussions about a parking garage near the lake at the former Public Works site had been intended to support pavilion-related activities and that he viewed that parking as serving a different function. He indicated support for the proposed garage, provided that the design complemented downtown's historic character and was not visually disruptive. Mr. Drury stated that, if the project moved forward, staff would return to the Council with architectural renderings for review and approval.

Mayor Pfister stated that she believed the proposal was proactive and timely. She expressed concern about preserving trees and emphasized the importance of thoughtful design. Mayor Pfister stated that the project would support downtown economic development and help address parking challenges during events. She added that she did not want the City to become known for parking shortages and expressed hope that the facility would remain free to the public.

Council Member Price noted that future retail development at the Cagan development site would increase parking demand.

Mr. Drury stated that following the acquisition of the property, staff would coordinate design development and return to the Council with renderings for further discussion.

Vice Mayor Grenier requested that the design include a designated Purple Heart parking space. Mayor Pfister emphasized the importance of improved accessible parking and stated that accessibility should be carefully considered as part of the garage design.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Option 2, seconded by Walter Price. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

XII. OLD BUSINESS

Vice Mayor Grenier stated that he continued to support keeping the decorative lighting installed behind the Tavares gateway. He commented that the blue and silver lights on the palm trees provided an appealing backdrop for the sign and expressed interest in continuing that approach moving forward.

Council Member Gamble referenced the palm trees along Ruby Street near the Sheriff's Department and asked whether the colored lights installed in the tree limbs were City-installed or associated with another entity. Mr. Tweedie responded that the lights had been installed by the Sheriff's Department and stated that their removal was being coordinated. Council Member Gamble remarked that the lighting created a nice visual effect.

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Mayor Pfister stated that she had received a Request to Speak form from Robert Revira and noted that Mr. Revira was not present in the audience.

Bruce Peterman, a resident of Royal Harbor, addressed the Council and expressed appreciation for a recent two-hour presentation provided to the Royal Harbor community by Fire Division Chief Willis and Fire Inspector Cheney. He said that the presentation covered what to expect after calling 911, cardiac emergencies, proper use of a defibrillator, and the application of tourniquets. Mr. Peterman stated that the presentation was informative and beneficial and commended the City and its staff for the quality of the training and the services they provided to the community.

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 12. City Administrator Report

Mr. Drury reported that the City's Arbor Day event had been successful and well attended. He stated that staff provided educational seminars to the public and distributed 1,060 trees. He emphasized that the trees were substantial in size, contributing to the planting of thousands of new trees throughout the City.

Ms. Novack provided an update on the Mayor's Youth Council. She stated that updated information had been included in the Council dais folders, including the dates when students would be shadowing each Council member. She noted that the Mayor's Youth Council members were scheduled to shadow City departments on February 11 and that the Mayor's Youth Council Mock Meeting was scheduled for April 15.

Mayor Pfister stated that she wished to relinquish her Mayor's Youth Council report to Vice Mayor Grenier.

Chief Coursey congratulated Sergeant Melissa Robinson on completing the SPIES Command Officer Development Course. She said the program was a ten-week intensive course focused on professionalism and leadership and was highly regarded within the law enforcement community.

Mr. Tweedie reminded the Council and the public of the upcoming Rhythm on Ruby event scheduled to take place on Ruby Street and invited the community to attend.

Mr. O'Keefe reported that the garage sale permitting process had gone live on the City's website and stated that the process was functioning smoothly. He noted that the Code Enforcement and Community Development teams had reported positive results and that staff were available to answer any questions.

Mr. Dillon provided an update on the West Main Street gateway project. He stated that the project was ahead of schedule and anticipated that installation would be completed by spring.

Chief Keith announced that the Golden Triangle Rotary Club would be hosting a food drive on Saturday, January 31, and stated that the City's Public Safety Building would serve as one of the drop-off locations. He noted that donations would be accepted from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and that all collected food would be donated to Lake Cares. He clarified that the event was organized by the Rotary Club and not by City staff. He further noted that this was expected to be the final year the City would participate in the event.

Council Member Gamble asked whether the food drive would also take place at local schools. Chief Keith responded that the Rotary Club food drive involved only three fire stations in Eustis, Mount Dora, and Tavares. He stated that schools and Lake Technical College conducted their own food drives independently and on separate schedules.

Tab 13. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Gamble asked about the anticipated impact to nearby restaurants once construction began on the West Main Street gateway sign. Mr. Dillon responded that construction activities would occur either before business hours or in the evening, with the goal of avoiding disruption to local businesses. Mr. Drury added that the completed gateway was expected to benefit nearby businesses by drawing additional visitors to the area.

Council Member Keown announced that he would begin holding office hours the following day in the first-floor conference room at City Hall between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. He invited residents to attend and share concerns or topics for discussion. He also stated that he was looking forward to his upcoming Fire Department orientation and commended Mr. James and staff for their work.

Council Member Price stated that he attended the Arbor Day event and noted strong public participation. He suggested that in future years the City consider including blue plumbago, the City's official flower, as part of the giveaway.

Council Member Gamble stated that three Council Members would be traveling to Tallahassee to meet with legislative representatives regarding support for City-related projects and grant efforts.

Vice Mayor Grenier requested that the meeting record clearly reflect that although he voted against one community grant recipient, he supported the remaining grant recipients and the overall grant applications. He thanked City fire officials and staff for a recent presentation to members of the Masonic Lodge, noting that it had been well received. He also commented positively on improvements at the cemetery and noted that a new museum staff member had joined the team. Vice Mayor Grenier stated that a Historic Preservation meeting was scheduled for Friday and would include a discussion of a new cemetery tour to complement the downtown walking tour.

Vice Mayor Grenier further commended Mr. Dillon on the completion of the train station roof replacement, and Mr. Dillon confirmed that the roof was a lifetime installation. Council Member Grenier stated that the roof preserved the historic appearance of the structure. He also shared a personal observation regarding the growth cycle of a pecan tree received at a prior Arbor Day event and encouraged patience with newly planted trees.

Vice Mayor Grenier thanked Mayor Pfister for hosting a holiday gathering prior to Christmas and expressed appreciation for Council and staff support of local history initiatives. He noted that the City would be participating in numerous events during the upcoming year in recognition of the nation's 250th anniversary and highlighted planned activities, including historical presentations, nursery rhyme readings, and a Liberty Tree planting.

Mayor Pfister stated that she was pleased with the improvements at the cemetery and expressed appreciation for the ongoing work. She noted that she had gained a new perspective on the importance of cemetery enhancements and stated that the site was both beautiful and meaningful to the community.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Pfister adjourned the meeting at 5:02 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk

**AGENDA SUMMARY
TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
2/4/2026**

AGENDA TAB NO.: 2

SUBJECT TITLE: Ordinance 2026-02 - Extend Deferred Retirement Option from 60 months to 96 months for Tavares Firefighters' Pension Plan - Second Reading (Finance)

OBJECTIVE:

Approve Ordinance 2026-02 which amends Section 15-128 of the City of Tavares Code of Ordinances, City of Tavares Firefighters' Pension Plan to allow eligible members to extend the period for Deferred Retirement Option from 60 months to 96 months.

SUMMARY:

Ordinance 2026-02 provides changes to the Firefighters' Pension Plan to allow eligible plan members to extend the Deferred Retirement Option from 60 months to 96 months,

The Pension Plan Board Attorney Pedro Herrera of Sugarman, Susskind, Braswell & Herrera, has prepared Ordinance 2026-02 to provide changes to Section 15-128 of the Firefighters' Pension Plan that sets for the Deferred Retirement Option Plan for eligible Firefighters' Pension Plan participants.

- Amends: Section 15-128 (b) (3) and provides that any member shall be eligible to participate in DROP for a period not to exceed 96 months.
- Amends: Section 15-128 (b) (3) to add section (a) which provides that a member who entered DROP prior 2-4-2026 and has not reached their maximum DROP participation period of 60 months may elect to extend their maximum DROP participation to 96 months and sets forth conditions.
- Amends: Section 15-128(c)(2) to add language setting forth conditions should a DROP participant fail to terminate employment at the expiration of 96 months.

The Plan Actuaries, Foster and Foster, have provided a letter of "no-impact" to the Firefighters' Pension Plan stating that no formal Actuarial Impact Statement is required to support adoption. A copy of their letter detailing the Plan changes, and the actuary opinion is attached.

OPTIONS:

1. **Move to Adopt** Ordinance 2026-02 amending Chapter 15-128 of the Code of Ordinances for the City of Tavares Firefighters' Pension Plan to extend Maximum DROP Participation from 60 months to 96 months.

2. Do not Adopt Ordinance 2026-02.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

1. **Move to Adopt** Ordinance 2026-02 amending Chapter 15-128 of the Code of Ordinances for the City of Tavares Firefighters' Pension Plan to extend Maximum DROP Participation from 60 months to 96 months.

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

This Ordinance has been reviewed by the City Attorney.

ATTACHMENTS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC UPON REQUEST:

1. Ordinance 2026-02 Amendment Extending DROP to 8 years - Tavares FF_2 (1)
2. Actuary Letter of no Impact_Tavares Fire Pen Drop Extension from 60 months to 96 months
3. Legal Ad Proof of Publication - Ordinance 2026-02

Attachments not provided are available to the public upon request to the City Clerk.

ORDINANCE 2026-02

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, AMENDING CHAPTER 15, PENSIONS AND RETIREMENT, ARTICLE V, FIREFIGHTERS' PENSION TRUST FUND, OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF TAVARES; AMENDING SECTION 15-128, DEFERRED RETIREMENT OPTION PLAN; PROVIDING FOR AN EXTENSION OF DROP PARTICIPATION PERIOD; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HERewith AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the City of Tavares Firefighters' Pension Trust Fund (the "Plan") desires to extend the maximum allowable period and allow eligible Members to participate in the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP) for up to eight (8) years; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Trustees of Plan desires to expand the DROP period from five (5) years to eight (8) years for all currently active Members including those already participating in the DROP; and

WHEREAS, an amendment to the Plan is necessary to permit such new conditions; and

WHEREAS, the Trustees have requested and approved such an amendment; and

WHEREAS, the Trustees have considered such an amendment to be in the best interest of the participants and beneficiaries of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the City Council has received, reviewed, and considered an actuarial impact statement describing the actuarial impact of the amendment provided for herein; and

WHEREAS, the City Council finds the amendment provided in this Ordinance to be in the public's interest.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA:

SECTION 1. Chapter 15, Pensions and Retirement, Article V, Firefighters' Pension Trust Fund, of the Code of Ordinances of the City of Tavares is hereby amended by amending Sec. 15-128, Deferred retirement option plan, subparagraph (b), *Participation*, and (c), *Funding*, to read as follows:

15-128. - Deferred retirement option plan.

[...]

(b) *Participation.*

- (1) *Eligibility to participate.* In lieu of terminating his employment as a firefighter, any member who is eligible for normal retirement under the system may elect to defer receipt of such service retirement pension and to participate in the DROP.
- (2) *Election to participate.* A Member's election to participate in the DROP must be made in writing in a time and manner determined by the board and shall be effective on the first day of the first calendar month which is at least fifteen (15) business days after it is received by the board.
- (3) *Period of participation.* A member who elects to participate in the DROP under subsection (b)(2), shall participate in the DROP for a period not to exceed sixty (60) months beginning at the time his election to participate in the DROP first becomes effective. An election to participate in the DROP shall constitute an irrevocable election to resign from the service of the city not later than the date provided for in the previous sentence. A member may participate only once.

Notwithstanding, effective February 4, 2026, an eligible Member as described herein shall be eligible to participate in the DROP for a period not to exceed ninety-six (96) months beginning on the date which the Member first becomes eligible for normal retirement.

- a. An eligible Member who entered the DROP prior to the effective date herein and has not reached their maximum DROP participation period of 60 months as of February 4,

2026, may, in accordance with the conditions specified below, elect to extend their maximum DROP participation period from sixty (60) months to ninety-six (96) months. Upon approval by the Board, a Member's election to extend participation in the DROP shall extend the Member's DROP participation period as if the maximum participation period upon entry into the DROP was 96 months (e.g. adding 36 months to the initial 60 month maximum DROP participation period). For Members who elect to extend their maximum DROP participation, the following conditions shall apply to any such extension of DROP participation:

- i. The election shall be irrevocable; and
- ii. The Member must, in writing, (1) agree to terminate employment at the end of the extended DROP participation period; and (2) submit an irrevocable, unconditional letter of resignation prior to extending the DROP, which resignation shall be effective on the date the DROP participation period ends (which shall be the earlier of the termination of the member's employment, for any reason, or the last day of the extended maximum DROP participation period); and
- iii. The Member must elect to extend the DROP participation period and submit the written requirements noted above prior to the end of the member's initial 60-month DROP participation period. In the event a Member who is eligible to extend his/her maximum DROP participation period does not elect timely to do so, the Member's DROP participation period shall not be extended, and the maximum DROP participation period shall remain at sixty (60) months.

For a DROP participant who fails to terminate City employment at the expiration of the 96-month maximum DROP participation period, such Member shall be deemed not to be retired, the Member's DROP election shall be null and void, and the Member shall effectively have no accumulated DROP benefits. Plan membership shall be reestablished retroactively to the original date of the commencement of the DROP, and the Member shall be required to pay to the Plan the Member contributions as if they had continued service to the city, and the city contributions during the period such Member participated in the DROP, plus an interest rate equal to the annual assumed investment return during each year the Member participated in the DROP.

(c) Funding. [...]

[...]

(2) Transfers from retirement system

[...]

c. A member's DROP account shall only be credited with interest or a return and monthly benefits while the member is a participant in the DROP. A member's final DROP account value for distribution to the member upon termination of participation in the DROP shall be the value of the account at the end of the quarter immediately preceding termination of participation for participants electing the net plan return and at the end of the month immediately preceding termination of participation for participants electing the flat interest rate return, plus any monthly periodic additions made to the DROP account subsequent to the end of the previous quarter or month, as applicable, and prior to distribution. If a member fails to terminate employment after participating in the DROP for the permissible period of DROP participation, then beginning with the member's 1st month of employment following the last month of the permissible period of DROP participation, the member's DROP account will no longer be credited or debited with interest or returns, nor will monthly benefits be transferred to the DROP account. All such non-transferred amounts shall be forfeited and continue to be forfeited while the member is employed by the fire department. A member employed by the fire department after the permissible period of DROP participation will still not be eligible for pre-retirement death or disability benefits, nor will he accrue additional credited service except as provided for in section 15-129. Notwithstanding, effective February 4, 2026, for all members who elect to participate in the DROP for eight (8) years, then beginning with the next payment following cessation of participation or beginning with the member's 97th month of DROP participation, whichever occurs first, the member's DROP account will no longer be credited or debited

with earnings or interest, nor will monthly benefits be transferred to their DROP account. All such non-transferred amounts shall be forfeited and continue to be forfeited while the member remains employed by the City as a firefighter.

[...]

SECTION 2: Specific authority is hereby granted to codify and incorporate this Ordinance in the existing Code of Ordinances of the City of Tavares.

SECTION 3: If any section, subsection, sentence, clause, phrase of this ordinance, or the particular application thereof shall be held invalid by any court, administrative agency, or other body with appropriate jurisdiction, the remaining section, subsection, sentences, clauses, or phrases under application shall not be affected thereby.

SECTION 4: All Ordinances or parts of Ordinances in conflict herewith be and the same are hereby repealed.

SECTION 5: That this Ordinance shall become effective upon its adoption.

PASSED AND ORDAINED ON this 4th day of February, 2026, by the City Council of the City of Tavares, Florida.

Lori Pfister, Mayor
Tavares City Council

Passed First Reading: _____

Passed Second Reading: _____

ATTEST:

Susie Novack
CITY CLERK

Approved as to form:

Lindsay C. T. Holt
CITY ATTORNEY

**AGENDA SUMMARY
TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
2/4/2026**

AGENDA TAB NO.: 3

SUBJECT TITLE: Board Appointment - Lake County Library Advisory Board (Mayor)

OBJECTIVE:

For the Mayor to appoint one (1) City Representative and one (1) Alternate City Representative to the Lake County Library Advisory Board for four-year terms expiring February 2030, subject to approval by the Council.

SUMMARY:

Two terms on the Lake County Library Advisory Board representing the City of Tavares are set to expire in February 2026. The positions include one (1) City Representative seat and one (1) Alternate City Representative seat. Appointments to these seats are for four-year terms beginning in February 2026 and expiring in February 2030.

The expiring seats were advertised in the Daily Commercial. The City received one (1) new application and two (2) requests for reappointment from the following individuals (see attachments):

- Tamara Watkins-Small (new application)
- Lawrence Ross (request for reappointment - current City Representative)
- Debi Weinert (request for reappointment - current City Alternate)

OPTIONS:

1. For the Mayor to appoint one (1) City Representative and one (1) Alternate City Representative to the Lake County Library Advisory Board for four-year terms expiring February 2030, with City Council Approval.
2. Decline to make appointments and direct staff to re-advertise the positions.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends approval of Option 1, for the Mayor to appoint one (1) City Representative and one (1) Alternate City Representative to the Lake County Library Advisory Board for four-year terms expiring in February 2030, with City Council approval.

FISCAL IMPACT:

None.

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

Yes.

ATTACHMENTS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC UPON REQUEST:

1. City Rep to Lake Co Lib Bd - New Application - Tamera Watkins-Small
2. City Rep to Lake Co Lib Bd - Request for Reappointment - Weinert
3. City Rep to Lake Co Lib Bd - Request for Reappointment - Larry Ross
4. Legal Ad Proof of Publication - Citizen Committee

Attachments not provided are available to the public upon request to the City Clerk.

**AGENDA SUMMARY
TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
2/4/2026**

AGENDA TAB NO.: 4

SUBJECT TITLE: Appointment of Code Enforcement Special Master (City Administrator)

OBJECTIVE:

To appoint David M. Langley, Esquire, as the City of Tavares Code Enforcement Special Master and to authorize the City Administrator to negotiate a professional services agreement and bring it back for Council consideration.

SUMMARY:

The City of Tavares currently has a vacancy in the position of Code Enforcement Special Master. The Special Master is responsible for presiding over quasi-judicial code enforcement hearings, ensuring due process, and issuing findings, orders, and penalties in accordance with Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, and the City's Code of Ordinances and Land Development Regulations.

Pursuant to Section 2-62 of the City Code of Ordinances, the City Attorney has solicited interest in filling this vacancy and has recommended a qualified candidate to the City Administrator, Police Chief and Community Development Director for review and consideration to recommend to the City Council (See attached resume). The City Administrator, Police Chief, and Community Development Director have reviewed the applicant's credentials and recommend David M. Lagley to the City Council for consideration of this appointment.

David M. Langley, Esquire, is a Florida attorney with substantial experience in local government and code enforcement matters. His professional background includes prosecuting and advising on code enforcement cases, regulatory compliance, and participation in quasi-judicial proceedings for Florida local governments.

Mr. Langley currently serves as a Code Enforcement Magistrate for another Florida municipality and holds additional local government legal roles. His experience demonstrates familiarity with Florida's code enforcement processes, evidentiary standards, and procedural requirements applicable to Special Master hearings.

OPTIONS:

- Appoint David M. Langley, Esquire, as the City of Tavares Code Enforcement Special Master and authorize the City Administrator to negotiate a professional services agreement and bring it back for Council approval.

- Decline the appointment and direct staff to continue recruitment for the position.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends Option 1, that the City Council appoint David M. Langley, Esquire, as the City of Tavares Code Enforcement Special Master and authorize the City Administrator to negotiate a contract and bring it back for Council approval.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Compensation will be approved by Council at a subsequent Council meeting based on a forthcoming professional services agreement. Funding is budgeted annually within the existing Code Enforcement budget to cover this cost.

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

This agenda item is consistent with Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, and the City of Tavares Code of Ordinances. The professional services agreement will be reviewed for legal sufficiency prior to being brought back for Council consideration.

ATTACHMENTS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC UPON REQUEST:

1. Civilian Resume

Attachments not provided are available to the public upon request to the City Clerk.

**AGENDA SUMMARY
TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
2/4/2026**

AGENDA TAB NO.: 5

SUBJECT TITLE: City Administrator Report

OBJECTIVE:

The City Administrator will inform the City Council on city-related matters.

SUMMARY:

The City Administrator will provide a summary at the meeting.

UPCOMING MEETINGS:

City Council Meeting	February 18, 2025, 4:00 p.m., Tavares City Council Chambers
Planning and Zoning Board Meeting	February 20, 2026, 3:00 p.m., Tavares City Council Chambers
Library Board Meeting	February 11, 2026, 4:00 p.m., Tavares Library Expansion Room
Code Enforcement Special Magistrate Hearing	February 24, 2026, 4:00 p.m., Tavares City Council Chambers

OUTSIDE AGENCY MEETINGS:

Heartland League of Cities Meeting	February 13, 2026, 12:00 noon, Location to be Determined
Lake Sumter MPO Governing Board Meeting	February 25, 2026, 2:00 p.m., Suite 175, 1300 Citizens Boulevard, Leesburg
Tavares Chamber of Commerce Business Meeting	To Be Announced, 11:30 a.m., Tavares Civic Center

Attached is the current 2026 Event Calendar.

OPTIONS:

N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

N/A

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

N/A

ATTACHMENTS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC UPON REQUEST:

1. 2026_Tavares_EventCalendar_Rvsd 1.16.2026

Attachments not provided are available to the public upon request to the City Clerk.

**AGENDA SUMMARY
TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
2/4/2026**

AGENDA TAB NO.: 6

SUBJECT TITLE: City Council Member Reports

OBJECTIVE:

To inform the Council on city-related items.

SUMMARY:

The Council will be offered an opportunity to provide a report at the meeting.

OPTIONS:

N/A

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

N/A

FISCAL IMPACT:

N/A

LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

N/A

ATTACHMENTS AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC UPON REQUEST:

Attachments not provided are available to the public upon request to the City Clerk.