



**CITY OF TAVARES
PLANNING AND ZONING BOARD MEETING
TAVARES CITY HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS
201 E. MAIN STREET, TAVARES, FLORIDA 32778
JANUARY 15, 2026**

BOARD MEMBERS PRESENT

**Gary Santoro, Chairman - Absent
Deborah Murphy, Vice-Chairperson
Bruce Peterman, Board Member
Jay Cunningham, Board Member
Brooke Matthews, Board Member
Dara Treadwell, Board Member - Absent
James Sweezea, Board Member**

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT

**Antonio Fabre, Director, Community Development
Lindsay Holt, City Attorney
Michelle Winegard, Deputy City Clerk**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Vice-Chairperson Murphy called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and asked those present to silence their cell phones.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Vice-Chairperson Murphy led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Tab 1. Approval of November 19, 2025, Planning and Zoning Board Meeting Minutes

Vice-Chairperson Murphy asked if there were any additions or corrections to the November 19, 2025, Planning & Zoning Board meeting minutes. There were none.

MOTION

Bruce Peterman moved to accept the November 19, 2025, Planning and Zoning Meeting Minutes. James Sweeza seconded the motion. With no objections, the minutes were approved.

IV. SWEARING IN BY CITY ATTORNEY AND DISCLOSURE OF EX PARTE COMMUNICATIONS

Attorney Lindsay Holt stated there were no quasi-judicial matters on the agenda.

V. PUBLIC HEARING

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

Tab 2. Election of the Planning and Zoning Board Officers

Vice-Chairperson Murphy opened the floor for nominations for Chairperson.

MOTION

James Sweeza nominated the current Chairman, Gary Santoro. Bruce Peterman seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Vice-Chairperson Murphy opened the floor for nominations for Vice-Chairperson.

Board Member Bruce Peterman asked Vice-Chairperson Murphy if she would consider staying on as Vice-Chairperson. She agreed to do so.

MOTION

Bruce Peterman nominated the current Vice-Chairperson, Deborah Murphy. Brooke Matthews seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 3. City Attorney Presentation

Attorney Holt provided an orientation and legal refresher for the Planning and Zoning Board, including the newly appointed member, Board Member Jay Cunningham. She explained that the presentation was intended as a general overview of the Board's duties and applicable legal requirements, rather than an exhaustive review.

Attorney Holt reviewed the Board's responsibilities under the City Charter, including attendance requirements and the types of matters the Board reviews, such as rezoning applications, variances, special use permits, amendments to the Land Development Regulations and the Comprehensive Plan, and historic preservation matters. She explained that the Board reviews these items and makes recommendations to the City Council.

Attorney Holt discussed conflicts of interest under Florida law, advising Board members to disclose any personal, financial, or familial interests in matters before the Board and to abstain from voting when required.

She reviewed the distinction between legislative and quasi-judicial matters, explaining that quasi-judicial items require sworn testimony and must be decided based on competent, substantial evidence contained in the record. Attorney Holt outlined the quasi-judicial hearing process, including the requirement that all testimony be sworn, that all parties be given a fair opportunity to be heard, and that decisions be based on the City's adopted codes and Comprehensive Plan rather than personal preference or public pressure.

Attorney Holt reviewed common legal errors, including reliance on information outside the public hearing, inconsistent application of standards, and private discussions related to City business. She also addressed ex parte communications and emphasized the importance of disclosing any communications outside the public hearing before deliberation.

Attorney Holt provided an overview of Florida's Sunshine Law and Public Records Law, reminding Board members that City business must be conducted in publicly noticed meetings and that communications related to City business may be subject to public records requirements. She advised that public records requests from citizens should be directed to the City Clerk's Office.

Attorney Holt concluded by reviewing general ethics requirements, including the prohibition on accepting gifts or favors from applicants or interested parties, and encouraged Board members to reach out to her when questions arise.

Vice-Chairperson Murphy asked whether Board members may contact City staff for clarification on items. Attorney Holt advised that such communication is permitted and recommended that any such contact be disclosed on the record.

There were no further questions.

Tab 4. Community Development Director Report

Community Development Director Antonio Fabre advised that the next Planning and Zoning Board meeting is anticipated to include additional items, including a Land

Development Regulations (LDR) amendment required by the State, and potentially a variance request and a right-of-way vacation, making it a more substantial agenda.

Mr. Fabre also provided the following updates:

- He stated that construction had begun on an approximately 11,000-square-foot office/warehouse building located on the west side of County Road 561, north of the State Road 448 intersection. He stated that site work has begun and that a pre-construction meeting was recently completed. This will be a custom closet business.
- Additionally, Mr. Fabre advised that the City's residential and commercial future land use maps have been updated and are available for public viewing on the City's website.

Vice-Chairperson Murphy inquired about the land-clearing activity occurring along State Route 19, across from Dollar General. Mr. Fabre advised that the property was being cleared of excess brush, which was permitted. Board Member Sweeza noted that crews appeared to have been working full-time to clear the site. Mr. Fabre stated that no pre-application or pre-construction meetings had been held for the property and advised that Code Enforcement could review the activity to ensure no unpermitted work was occurring.

Board Member Sweeza inquired whether Code Enforcement could provide an update regarding the property with multiple uninhabited trailers located on Mansfield. Mr. Fabre stated that Code Enforcement was aware of the issue.

Vice-Chairperson Murphy requested that the City's new Planner, Mr. James Frye, be introduced to the Board. Mr. Fabre invited Mr. Frye to the podium, where Mr. Frye introduced himself, stated that he had formerly been employed by Lake County, and expressed his enthusiasm for joining the City of Tavares.

Vice-Chairperson Murphy inquired whether there had been any further progress on the rush rezoning request for the former marina property on Dead River Road. Mr. Fabre confirmed that the property had received mixed-use zoning; however, no pre-application meetings had occurred to date.

There were no further questions.

VII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Vance Jochim, unincorporated Lake County, addressed the Board regarding Lake County's ongoing Comprehensive Plan update hearings, noting that he had attended multiple public meetings and observed significant public concern and frustration, particularly related to traffic impacts associated with continued development. He questioned the methodology and results of a public survey used in the County's presentation, stating that conservation ranked low compared to traffic concerns, which he believed did not accurately reflect public sentiment.

Mr. Jochim discussed limitations on local government authority to manage growth and referenced recent state legislation, including laws affecting development rights and housing, that he stated restrict cities' and counties' ability to slow or pause development. He referenced a guidance document prepared by Lake County staff outlining constraints on local government authority and suggested that similar research could be beneficial for municipalities.

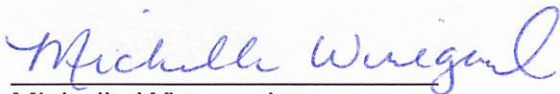
Mr. Jochim further expressed concerns regarding the impact of development on quality of life, including increased traffic, and questioned how development rights should be balanced against the broader public interest. He stated that citizen groups are actively researching these issues and engaging state representatives to seek legislative changes.

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION

Bruce Peterman moved to adjourn the meeting. Brooke Matthews seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle Winegard
Deputy City Clerk