



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL
MEETING MINUTES
FEBRUARY 18, 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. Pastor Shane Hargrave, Compass Life Church

Pastor Hargrave, 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. Proclamation – Irish American Heritage Month

Mayor Pfister read a proclamation declaring March 2026 as Irish American Heritage Month.

Mayor Pfister presented the Irish American Heritage Month Proclamation to Mr. Sean Brian Canning. Mr. Canning appeared on behalf of the Irish American community and the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the oldest and largest Irish organization in the world, tracing its roots to the 1500s, and expressed gratitude to the Mayor and City Council for designating March as Irish American Heritage Month. He stated that St. Patrick's Day on March 17 is widely celebrated worldwide and that festivities were already underway across Florida as Irish Americans gathered to honor their heritage. Mr. Canning remarked that Irish Floridians proudly reflected on the legacy of their forebearers and their significant contributions in education, business, science, medicine, law enforcement, and the arts, noting that these contributions, along with those of many other ethnic and racial groups, have helped shape the nation.

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 2026-05

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, AUTHORIZING THE ACCEPTANCE OF A FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW

ENFORCEMENT (FDLE) GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF UP TO \$25,000 FOR THE PURCHASE OF AN UNMANNED AERIAL SYSTEM (UAS/DRONE) FOR THE TAVARES POLICE DEPARTMENT.

RESOLUTION 2026-06

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF TAVARES, FLORIDA, RELATING TO THE STATE REVOLVING FUND LOAN PROGRAM; MAKING FINDINGS; AUTHORIZING AMENDMENT TWO TO THE SRF LOAN DW350981 FOR CONSTRUCTION ACTIVITIES FOR THE LAKE HERMOSA REGION BOOSTER PUMP STATION AND WATER TREATMENT PLANT EXPANSION PROJECT; AUTHORIZING THE MAYOR TO EXECUTE THE LOAN; DESIGNATING AUTHORIZED REPRESENTATIVES; PROVIDING ASSURANCE; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, AND EFFECTIVE DATE.

RESOLUTION 2026-07

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.

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 3. Approval of the February 4, 2026, City Council Meeting Minutes], seconded by Doug Keown. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 3. Approval of the February 4, 2026, City Council Meeting Minutes

Approved on the Consent Agenda.

VIII. RESOLUTIONS

Tab 4. Resolution 2026-05 – Authorizing Acceptance of a Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) Grant for Drone Purchase for Police Department

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

The Tavares Police Department has been awarded an FDLE grant of up to \$25,000 to purchase an unmanned aerial system (UAS), commonly referred to as a drone. This equipment will significantly enhance the department's operational capabilities and improve community safety.

Acceptance of this grant will allow the department to purchase a drone that meets all necessary specifications for police service operations. There is no matching fund requirement associated with this grant.

Staff recommended Option 1: Move to approve resolution 2026-05 authorizing the acceptance of a FDLE grant for up to \$25,000 to purchase a drone for the Police Department.

Police Chief Coursey stated she was happy to answer any questions from the City Council. She noted that after the Fire Department received its grant award, the Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) contacted the Tavares Police Department through an Axon representative to advise that the Police Department could also pursue a similar grant opportunity.

Mayor Pfister asked for the Council's comments. There were none.

MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Resolution 2026-05, seconded by Doug Keown. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 5. Resolution 2026-06 – Authorize Application for SRF Project DW350981 Amendment Two to Extend Project Timeline

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

Previously, the City Council authorized acceptance of a State Revolving Loan for the design of the Lake Hermosa Booster Pump Project, SRF Loan DW350980. The loan document was executed on July 15, 2021. The disbursable amount of the loan was \$247,416. Three amendments were approved. Amendment One (1) was executed on April 28, 2022, which provided additional time for design activities. Amendment Two (2) was executed on March 23, 2023, which also extended the time for design activities. Amendment Three (3) increased loan funding to \$327,059 and changed the first loan repayment date to February 15, 2025. On May 21, 2025, the City Council approved Amendment 4 which finalized and closed out the design loan.

On February 28, 2023, the Florida Department of Environmental Protection provided notice to the City of Tavares that the City had been included on the funding list with FDEP for an SRF Loan for the Lake Hermosa Booster Pump

Project.

On April 19, 2023, the City Council discussed the Construction Phase of the Project, and authorized application to the FDEP for an SRF Construction Loan for the Lake Hermosa Booster Pump project, and the Water Treatment Plan Expansion.

On June 21, 2023, the City Council adopted Resolution 2023-08, authorizing loan application to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection for a State Revolving Loan for construction activities for the Lake Hermosa Booster Pump project.

On October 4, 2023, the City Council adopted Resolution 2023-21 authorizing SRF Loan Agreement DW350981 which provided financing for Lake Hermosa Region Booster Pump Station construction activities in the amount of \$7,235,190 with \$5,788,152 designated for loan repayment and \$1,447,038 designated for principal loan forgiveness. The Loan was executed on October 6, 2023.

On June 18, 2024, State Revolving Loan Fund Program Fund Management approved the low bid from L7 Construction for the Lake Hermosa Booster Pump Project in the amount of \$10,357,000 and authorized the City of Tavares to award the contract.

On July 17, 2024, the City Council authorized awarding the Construction contract to L7 Construction in the amount of \$10,357,000 contingent upon receiving additional SRF financing for the project (loan amendment).

On November 20, 2024, the City Council approved Resolution 2024-25 authorizing Amendment One (1) to the City's State Revolving Fund loan agreement for the Project. The Amendment provided additional funding in the amount of \$4,030,835 for the project.

On February 4, 2026, the Florida Department of Environment Protection Services provided Amendment Two for the loan which extends the project timeline for the project to February 15, 2027. Details of the changes identified in Amendment Two (2) for the loan are provided below:

- Construction and Demolition - \$10,357,000*
- Contingencies - \$517,850*
- Technical Services After Bid Opening -\$391,175*
- Disbursable Amount: \$11,266,025*
- Principal Forgiveness \$1,447,038*
- Loan Amount: \$9,818,987*
- Capitalized Interest \$112,700*
- Projected Completion is scheduled for ~~April 15, 2026~~ February 15, 2027*

- *Monthly Loan Debt Service Account with Monthly Deposits to be established no later than ~~April 15, 2026~~ February 15, 2027*
- *First Semiannual Loan Payment in the amount of \$283,854 shall be due ~~October 15, 2026~~ April 15, 2027*
- *Loan Interest Rate 1.11 per Annum*
- *Loan Term is 20 years*
- *Section 10.08 Special Conditions: Certified Copy of the Adopted Resolution, Legal Opinion, and completed Federal Funding Accountability*

Staff have reviewed the loan document and recommend approval.

Staff recommended Option 1: Move to approve Resolution 2026-06 which authorizes the Mayor to execute State Revolving Loan 350981 Amendment Two (2) with FDEP to extend the timeline for construction activities for Lake Hermosa Booster Pump Project Construction Funding.

Mayor Pfister asked for the Council's comments. There were none.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve Resolution 2026-06, seconded by Doug Keown. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 6. Resolution 2026-07 – Authorizing Application for SRF Project DW3509A, Identifying 100% Principal Forgiveness Funding Provided Through SRF Supplemental Appropriation for Helene, Milton, and Hawaii Wildfires (SAHMW)

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

Previously, on January 21, 2026, the City Council Adopted Resolution 2026-02 authorizing a State Revolving Loan Application with Loan Forgiveness through SAHM Funding (Supplemental Appropriations for Hurricanes Helene and Milton) to fund the cost to plan, design, and construct enhancements for the resilience, reliability, and redundancy of the City's drinking water System – Project DWs3509A.

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

Florida FDEP included the project 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-SRF-202511.

The Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) has requested an

updated resolution to provide amended language regarding the 100% Principal Forgiveness for the SAHMW Loan Applications. Resolution 2026-07 provides the requested language.

Staff recommends approval of Option 1: Move to Approve Resolution 2026-07 authorizing the Mayor to execute loan documents for application and acceptance for SRF SAHMW project DW3509A provided through 100% Principal Forgiveness from the State Revolving Fund Supplemental Appropriations for Helene Milton and Hawaii Wildfires.

Mayor Pfister asked for the Council's comments. There were none.

MOTION

Doug Keown moved to approve Resolution 2026-07, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

First Reading

Second Reading

X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Tab 7. Broad Budget Priorities

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

Annually, the Council develops its top budget priorities for the ensuing year. Attached are the previously adopted Council budget priorities for the current FY 2026 fiscal year. An opportunity is provided for Council to adopt its FY 2027 budget priorities. Once adopted, they will be incorporated into the FY 2027 budget, as funding permits, for Council consideration during Council's budget deliberations this coming summer. The FY 2027 budget covers the period commencing October 1, 2026, through September 30, 2027.

Below are the Draft FY 27 Budget Goals from Council members for discussion and adoption consideration:

Council Member Gamble:

- 1. Continue to pay off debt and fund projects with grants and/or pay as we go.*
- 2. Maintain current service levels.*
- 3. Provide reasonable pay increases for employees.*
- 4. Budget for Woodlea Sports Park.*

5. Continue to invest in and upgrade West Main Street.
6. Budget for quality community events and celebrations.

Vice Mayor Grenier:

1. Plan the new Tavares frontier along SR19/561/448 corridor well with no sprawl and be mindful of infrastructure, type of businesses, type of residential development, and land conservation for recreational pathways, natural resources, and wildlife.
2. Continue to make sure the Parks and Recreation Department, Tavares Public Library and the Tavares History Museum and have the resources needed to maintain and exceed, a high level of service to patrons and guests. Do not forget the citizens' vision of "Building on a Historic Foundation."
3. Provide the Public Works, Water, Communications, and IT departments with the proper, updated, and safe tools and equipment to exceed their already high level of service.
4. Keep streets, alleyways, stormwater, solid waste, infrastructure improvements moving forward with the proper resources to provide a high level of service.
5. Provide the resources and modern equipment to the Police and Fire Departments to ensure they continue to exceed a high level of service.
6. Budget for signage to identify the five (5) themed areas of the Waterfront.
7. Budget for improvements to the St. Clair Abrams gateway and entrance roadway.

Council member Keown:

1. Keep mileage rate at current rate or lower it
2. Employee raises
3. Continue to pursue grants
4. Have the proper staffing in all departments
5. Golden Triangle West project
6. Continue to improve streets and sidewalks

Mayor Pfister:

1. Funding for Regional Park for complete build out of all designated inclusions.
2. Funding for Rails to Trails project.
3. Funding for a downtown parking garage
4. Funding for a complete streetscape project of St. Clair Abrams Road.
5. Compensate employees justly and fairly.
6. Pontoon Promenade signage at waterfront and gateways.
7. Provide more funding for America in Bloom including the Arboretum and related beautification efforts. (added after below discussion)

Council Member Price:

1. *Continue to lower millage rate, while keeping up at least the same level of services to residents that are currently provided.*
2. *Continue to attract new commercial development to Tavares, both in Downtown and along State Road 19, especially national chain retailers/restaurants.*
3. *Continue to pursue grants, especially for rails to trails project.*
4. *Continue to rejuvenate West Main Street area.*
5. *Continue to pay down city debt.*

Mr. Drury stated that the items presented were the submittals provided for the City Council's overall budget, goals, and priorities. He said that once the Council reviewed and voted on the items, he would incorporate them into the appropriate departmental budgets. Mr. Drury stated that each department would return to the Council with its proposed budget, and the Council would continue deliberations and discussions on all items within the budgetary setting during the summer months.

MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve the Council's Broad Budget Goals as presented, seconded by Doug Keown.

Council Member Price asked for clarification regarding the reference to a "complete buildout" for the Regional Park (#1, Mayor Pfister) and inquired whether the intent was to complete the project within a single fiscal year. Mayor Pfister stated she would like to pursue the full buildout as one comprehensive plan, even if constructed in phases, and said that projects not fully planned at the outset often remained incomplete and increased in cost over time. She said she wanted to determine the total cost, identify all potential funding sources, and pursue every available opportunity to secure funding so the project could ultimately be completed as originally designed. Council Member Price asked which property was being referenced, and Mayor Pfister stated she was referring to the East site associated with the YMCA.

Vice Mayor Grenier stated that all of the submitted priorities were important and that while maintaining the current level of service was significant, he preferred to look for opportunities to exceed that level whenever possible. He said that what was important to each Council Member was equally important to him, as those priorities reflected the interests of the constituents.

Mayor Pfister stated she would like to add additional consideration for increased funding for America in Bloom initiatives, including the Arboretum and related beautification efforts, noting that while the City had performed well, additional funding could further strengthen the City's competitiveness and overall presentation.

AMENDED MOTION

Bob Grenier moved to approve the presented Broad Budget Goals with the inclusion of providing additional funding for America in Bloom, seconded by Doug Keown.

Council Member Gamble expressed concern regarding the Regional Park West project, noting that only a few years remained for use of the Stover complex and that the City would need to provide adequate facilities within the next couple of years. He said the Council should consider what enhancements could be made in the near term to ensure local youth were not playing on inadequate fields.

Mayor Pfister stated that she agreed and said the Council should take a harder look at projects that were discussed annually without identifying funding solutions. She remarked that staff had consistently demonstrated an ability to identify funding opportunities when directed to do so and commended their resourcefulness in locating grant funds and other revenue sources. She stated that postponing projects only increased costs over time and emphasized the importance of moving forward on priorities already identified by the Council.

Council Member Gamble referenced the West End project as an example, stating that had it been completed approximately ten years ago when first presented to the Council, the cost would have been significantly less, even if the final design may have differed from current plans. He expressed concern regarding potential legislative changes related to property taxes that could impact the City's ability to utilize that revenue source in the future, stating that such uncertainty should be considered when planning major projects.

Mr. Drury noted that the Council had just approved a \$21 million, 100 percent grant-funded project to upgrade the City's water infrastructure. He said it represented a significant infrastructure improvement at no cost to the local taxpayer and reflected the type of funding opportunities staff worked diligently to secure for the benefit of the community.

Council Member Gamble further stated that grant funds could only be used for the specific purpose outlined in the application and could not be redirected after award. He said that Ms. Houghton and the Finance Department team ensured compliance with all grant requirements so that the City remained in good standing and eligible for future funding opportunities.

Vice Mayor Grenier stated that once grant funds were secured, staff promptly moved forward with implementation to ensure projects were completed efficiently and in accordance with grant guidelines.

Mayor Pfister added that the City continued to work with representatives in Washington, D.C., and expressed hope that those efforts would result in a strong return on investment through additional funding support for City initiatives.

The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

Tab 8. Approval of Negotiated Contract with David Michael Langley, Esq. to Serve as Code Enforcement Special Master

Mr. Drury made the following presentation:

The City utilizes a Code Enforcement Special Master to conduct code enforcement hearings and issue orders in accordance with Chapter 162, Florida Statutes, and the City's Code of Ordinances. The Special Master serves in a quasi-judicial capacity and is responsible for hearing testimony, reviewing evidence, and issuing findings of fact, conclusions of law, and compliance orders.

Previously Council authorized staff to negotiate a professional services contract (attached) with David Michael Langley, Esq. to serve in this role and replace Special Magistrate Ben Boylston, who has been appointed by the Governor to fill a judgeship. Mr. Langley is a licensed Florida attorney with experience in local government law and code enforcement matters. His background includes service as an Assistant County Attorney for Lake County handling code enforcement and related cases, Code Enforcement Magistrate for the Town of Montverde, and municipal attorney experience. The City Attorney, City Administrator, Police Chief and Community Development Director recommend this appointment.

Staff recommends Option 1, for the Council to approve the negotiated contract with David Michael Langley, Esq. to serve as Code Enforcement Special Master.

Mr. Drury invited Mr. Langley to provide remarks to the Council.

Mr. Langley discussed his professional, educational, and personal background and expressed appreciation for the opportunity to serve the City.

MOTION

Doug Keown moved to approve the negotiated contract, seconded by Sandy Gamble. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

XI. NEW BUSINESS

Vice Mayor Grenier inquired about activity observed earlier that day at Summerall Park, noting that he had seen equipment on site and asked what work was being performed.

Mr. Dykes stated that the work involved the rehabilitation of a lift station, including the replacement of aging internal components nearing the end of their lifespans.

Vice Mayor Grenier asked about the overall condition of the City's lift stations. Mr. Dykes stated that the system was performing well and that the lift stations were in good condition.

XII. OLD BUSINESS

Vice Mayor Grenier inquired about the status of the traffic signal at the intersection of SR 561/19. Mr. Dillon stated that survey markers had been installed and underground work was underway. He said that the staff was waiting to hear back from the contractor responsible for erecting the signal poles and related infrastructure. Mr. Dillon added that he would follow up to obtain an anticipated construction timeline so that information could be shared with the Council and the public.

Vice Mayor Grenier asked about the status of the West Main Street gateway sign. Mr. Dillon stated that he had recently received a report indicating the sign was expected to arrive in approximately four weeks. He said that once production was complete, the sign would be shipped directly to the City and installation would begin promptly upon arrival.

Vice Mayor Grenier asked whether all alleyways had been completed and inquired about their current condition. Mr. Dillon stated that several alleyways had not yet been refurbished. He said four alleyways remained on the master plan for refurbishment and that funding for those improvements was included in the budget annually for Council consideration.

Council Member Gamble asked what detour plan would be implemented during construction at the SR 19/561 intersection. Mr. Dillon stated that he had not yet reviewed the forthcoming Maintenance of Traffic (MOT) plan. He stated that once construction activities, including pole installation, were scheduled, the plan would be provided and shared. He added that the Police Chief, Fire Chief, and other first responders would be included in the review and coordination of the traffic management plan.

XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Ms. Debi Wienert, 724 Lake Dora Drive, Tavares, addressed the Council and thanked them for the \$400 Community Grant award. She stated the funding would support early childhood literacy and provided an update on the program.

XIV. REPORTS

Tab 9. City Administrator Report

Mr. Tweedy stated that the Economic Development Department had the opportunity to host Mayor's Youth Council member Brooke Donaldson . He said that the department appreciated the opportunity to provide her with a tour and to discuss economic development initiatives, noting that she asked thoughtful questions and demonstrated strong interest.

Brooke Donaldson, Mayor's Youth Council Member, addressed the Council and stated that she had the opportunity to shadow both the Economic Development Department and the Fire Department. She said that the experience allowed her to learn more than she would have in a traditional classroom setting and remarked that she was surprised to learn that the Lakefront Pavilion was owned by the City and serves as a source of revenue through hosting of approximately 150 events annually. She stated it was encouraging to see the variety of amenities and services the City offers to the public. Ms. Donaldson also shared that she learned about the City's history as a "City of Firsts," the origins of the seaplane base, the structure of fire department funding, and departmental budgeting practices, which she found especially interesting as a student.

Mr. Dillon reported that the City's BUILD grant application had been finalized the previous day, leaving six days until the submission deadline on the 24th. He stated that the application appeared strong and that the City had received support from local legislative representatives. He said the BUILD grant would be awarded in November.

Chief Keith thanked Ms. Donaldson and Olivia Ebert, Mayor's Youth Council members, for spending time at the Fire Station and stated that the department appreciated the opportunity to host them.

Mr. Aldrich reported that the Recreation Department recently hosted its annual Father-Daughter Dance at the Pavilion on the Lake, with more than 400 attendees. He stated that the department was preparing for the upcoming Babe Ruth baseball and softball season, as well as the soccer season. He noted that participation included approximately 150 youth in baseball and softball, 150 youth in soccer, 17 soccer teams, 14 Babe Ruth teams, and approximately 50 volunteers. He said the department anticipated a busy spring season.

Ms. Houghton reported that the Finance Department hosted Mary Louise Gabriel Sarno, also known as "Gab," as part of the Mayor's Youth Council program. She stated that Ms. Sarno spent time with each member of the accounting staff and attended an audit preparation meeting. Ms. Houghton noted that Ms. Sarno is an accounting major and that the department was pleased to provide her with insight into municipal finance operations in preparation for her college studies.

Tab 10. City Council Member Reports

Council Member Keown stated that he would be available in the first floor conference room at City Hall on Thursday, February 26, from 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. for residents who wished to meet with him to discuss any concerns or City-related matters. He stated

that he recently participated in a ride-along with the Tavares Police Department and commended the officers for their professionalism, courtesy, and knowledge while serving the community. He also stated that he had the opportunity to provide mental health and stress management training to members of the department, which was well attended.

Council Member Keown further stated that he attended the opening of The Legacy project in downtown Tavares and commended Gene Smith and his family for their investment in the community. He then requested Council consensus to place an item on a future agenda to discuss potential term limits for City Council, noting that any change would require a Charter amendment.

Mayor Pfister said she believed elections served as term limits and had no objection to placing the matter on a future agenda for discussion.

Vice Mayor Grenier stated that the matter was worthy of discussion and emphasized the importance of knowledgeable voters, particularly given the significant local impact of City Council decisions. He stated that change is not always beneficial when the current leadership is functioning effectively.

Council Member Price stated that if the Council were to consider Charter amendments, the discussion should also include the length of Council terms and the Mayor's term. He suggested evaluating four-year staggered terms for Council Members and a two-year term for the Mayor, noting that it takes time to learn the responsibilities of the office. He further stated that aligning elections with presidential or gubernatorial cycles could eliminate the cost of odd-year municipal elections.

Mayor Pfister expressed concern that longer terms could result in a Council composed entirely of newly elected members without experience. She stated that two-year terms provide voters with more frequent opportunities to evaluate their representatives.

Council Member Keown clarified that four-year terms could remain staggered to preserve continuity. Council Member Gamble referenced coordinating terms with gubernatorial and presidential election cycles.

There was general consensus to place the matter on a future agenda for discussion.

Council Member Gamble introduced Mayor's Youth Council member Brooke Donaldson and stated that he appreciated her participation in shadowing Council at the dais. He congratulated her on advancing to state competition for her solo ensemble performance on the French horn at Tavares High School.

Council Member Gamble stated that he attended The Legacy opening and commended Gene Smith and his family for their longstanding investment in the City. He shared remarks regarding Mr. Smith's resilience and determination in restoring his property

following fire damage and noted Mr. Smith's significant contributions to the community, including his role in the development of the current City Hall facility. He extended accolades to the Smith family.

Council Member Gamble further stated that he was proud of City employees and leadership. He referenced a recent sewer line repair completed by Utilities staff under the direction of Utilities Director Brian Dykes, noting that staff not only repaired the break but also restored the paving bricks. He stated that during prior flooding events, City employees were present and assisting residents, and he expressed appreciation for their service.

Council Member Price stated that he was honored to provide opening remarks at the 24th Annual African American Heritage Festival in Tavares and also attended the ribbon cutting for The Legacy project, noting the installation of a replica of the original 1923 stained-glass windows.

Vice Mayor Grenier stated that a new Tavares Police Department officer, Officer Brown, introduced himself while having coffee earlier that day. He stated that he appreciated the officer's initiative in introducing himself and described it as reflective of the professionalism of City staff.

Vice Mayor Grenier also spoke about Gene Smith's contributions and the restoration of the historic church property, noting that the first State-issued historical marker for Tavares would soon be installed at the site. He further stated that the Tavares History Museum and Research Center had become an active community hub following renovations. He announced that on March 10, at 10:00 a.m., a presentation would be held at the Museum recognizing the City's founders, Major Alexander St. Clair Abrams and Captain Haynes, as well as highlighting notable women in Tavares history in recognition of Women's History Month and the America 250 initiative. He encouraged the public to attend.

Council Member Gamble stated that he completed his required ethics training and noted that it may be completed online at one's convenience through the Florida League of Cities website.

Mayor Pfister noted that she had sent correspondence to Mr. and Mrs. Smith expressing appreciation for their investment in the City. Mayor Pfister inquired about the location of the STEAM program that evening, and Recreation Director Aldrich confirmed it was being held at the Ingraham Center.

Mayor Pfister concluded by stating that she looked forward to beginning work on the upcoming budget and reviewing proposed initiatives for the coming fiscal year.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There was no further business, and Mayor Pfister adjourned the meeting at 5:10 p.m.

Respectfully,

Susie Novack, MMC, FCRM
City Clerk