



**TAVARES CITY COUNCIL  
MEETING MINUTES  
MAY 20, 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**

Lori Houghton, Acting City Administrator  
Lindsay Holt, City Attorney  
Michelle Winegard, Deputy City Clerk  
Antonio Fabre, Community Development Director  
Scott Aldrich, Community Services Director  
Richard Keith, Fire Chief  
Crissy Bublitz, Human Resources Director  
Sarah Coursey, Police Chief  
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 Josh Lane, Astatula Baptist Church**

Chief Keith provided the invocation and led those present in the Pledge of Allegiance in the absence of Pastor Josh Lane.

### III. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor Pfister called for consideration of the Approval of the Agenda item.

#### 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

No representative appeared on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce.

#### Tab 3. Back the Blue and Red March (Police)

Chief Coursey made the following presentation:

*A "Back the Blue & Red" event is a community gathering organized by a citizen, Shannon Cook, to show appreciation and support for first responders, specifically law enforcement ("blue") and firefighters ("red") and often EMS personnel. These events typically bring the public together with police officers, firefighters, and paramedics through activities such as meet-and-greets, equipment displays, luncheons, and brief recognition ceremonies. The goal is to strengthen relationships between the community and public safety agencies, highlight the service and sacrifices of first responders, and, in some cases, raise funds for related charities or support programs. Overall, it is a positive, community-focused event centered on recognition, connection, and public safety awareness.*

*This year, the organizer, Ms. Cook was able to bring in a special guest, Mr. Devarjaye "DJ" Daniel. DJ's dream is to be a police officer.*

- DJ is a 14-year-old Houston boy fighting terminal brain and spinal cancer who has become a national symbol of courage by being sworn in as an honorary officer by over 4500 law enforcement agencies across the nation. Diagnosed in 2018 and initially given months to live, he pursues a mission to support law enforcement and defy his prognosis.*
- DJ was the guest of POTUS at the 2025 State of the Union Address*
- Medical Journey: He has undergone at least 13 brain surgeries to fight brain and spinal cancer. He is widely regarded as a "real-life superhero" for his resiliency.*

- *Every Police department in Lake County and the Sheriff's Office held a joint ceremony to "Swear-in" Honorary Officer DJ Daniel on Saturday, March 9th. Not to be outdone, our Lake County Fire Departments also "swore-in" DJ as an honorary firefighter, bringing his honorary firefighter status to well over several hundred.*

*A special thanks to Captain Jon Hall, who worked hand in hand with Ms. Cook and Major Mysinger (LCSO) to ensure the safety of all who attended this event. Tavares PD was also honored to provide transportation to and from the Orlando International Airport, where Captain Hall coordinated with the Orlando Police Department to provide a hero's welcome upon arrival. Captain Hall brought Dj straight to the Public Safety Complex and he was able to visit with TPD nightshift officers.*

*It was an honor meeting such a well-spoken, courageous young man, and being able to be a small part of making his dream come true.*

Mayor Pfister commended Chief Coursey and her team on the event.

Council Member Gamble shared remarks about his interaction with Devarjaye "DJ" Daniel during the event. He described DJ Daniel as an outstanding, phenomenal young man and mentioned that he toured the seaplane area and viewed some aircraft.

Council Member Gamble also highlighted DJ Daniel's appreciation for his father, stating that DJ Daniel asked Council Member Gamble to recognize and thank his father for his support. He further commented on DJ Daniel's sense of humor, character, and the positive impression he made throughout the event.

#### **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. Winegard read the following resolution by title only:

#### **RESOLUTION 2026-09**

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

## VII. CONSENT AGENDA

### MOTION

Walter Price moved to approve the Consent Agenda [Tab 4. Approval of the May 6, 2026, City Council Meeting Minutes], seconded by Bob Grenier. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

#### Tab 4. Approval of the May 6, 2026, City Council Meeting Minutes

*Approved on the Consent Agenda.*

## VIII. RESOLUTIONS

#### Tab 5. Resolution No. 2026-09 – Second Budget Amendment for FY2026/2027 (Finance)

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

*The attached resolution represents increases and/or decreases to the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2026. Appropriation increases represent capital projects, and prior year/project encumbrance rollovers. In addition, the Resolution also reflects transfers between individual accounts within adopted budgets for all departments. This resolution represents the SECOND AMENDMENT to the Adopted Budget for Fiscal Year 2026-2027.*

Ms. Houghton said staff recommended Option 1, for the Council to approve Resolution 2026-09, amending the Fiscal Year 2026-2027 City of Tavares Annual Operating Budget.

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

### MOTION

Sandy Gamble moved to approve Resolution No. 2026-09 – Second Budget Amendment for FY 2026, seconded by Doug Keown. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.

## IX. ORDINANCES – PUBLIC HEARING

### First Reading

### Second Reading

## X. GENERAL GOVERNMENT

#### Tab 6. Update on Lake County's Rural Protection Zones JPA/TDR Program

Ms. Houghton made the following presentation:

*Previously, Council Member Doug Keown requested an update on Lake County's Rural Protection Zones and their proposed Joint Planning Area Agreements (JPA's).*

*Lake County Commissioner Sean Parks introduced the idea of identifying Transitional Areas and Wild Life Corridor "Protection Zones" in Lake County about three years ago and has subsequently hosted quarterly public meetings in Leesburg with his fellow County Commissioners and the 14 cities in Lake County to discuss this. As a result, Lake County hired a consultant to identify the protection zones. The consultant is in the process of accomplishing this work.*

*The County is also exploring the crafting of Joint Planning Area Agreements between Cities and the County, where the County and Cities would agree to protect the identified lands from development through several mechanisms including no annexation agreements without County Commission approval and Transfer of Development Rights (TDR's) from protected rural areas to urban areas.*

*A quarterly County/City meeting was recently conducted on Monday May 18th in Leesburg to provide updates at which Council Member Doug Keown and City staff attended. An opportunity is provided for Council member Keown to update Council on that meeting, the JPA process and TDRs.*

Council Member Keown stated that during the meeting, they were given a map of the City of Tavares and asked to collaborate with the Council to identify which areas should be protected.

Council Member Gamble asked Attorney Holt whether the City had any authority or input regarding the development of privately owned property. Attorney Holt responded that, in her initial understanding, the City did not, but stated she would research the matter further to confirm.

Mr. Fabre stated that it was a very high-level meeting and that Lake County wanted to work with the City of Tavares to protect natural areas. A future meeting for the first week of June was scheduled to begin map markups.

All Council Members expressed a preference for determining their own land preservation designations rather than having them imposed.

**XI. NEW BUSINESS**

**XII. OLD BUSINESS**

Mayor Pfister stated that during the goals presentation at the previous City Council meeting, the City Administrator's salary increase for the upcoming year was not discussed. She noted that the budgeted increase amount for employees was 4%.

Council Member Gamble inquired about the current cost-of-living increase. Ms. Houghton advised that it had been increased to 3.8% in May and was on an upward trajectory.

The City Council discussed a minimum 4% pay increase for Mr. Drury. They spoke in support of Mr. Drury and commended his leadership skills.

Mayor Pfister expressed support in discussing a 7% salary increase for Mr. Drury, stating that she believed he earned additional compensation through his continued dedication and service to the City. She noted that Mr. Drury performs many responsibilities without support positions commonly found in other municipalities, such as an administrative assistant or deputy city manager, which she stated saves the City money.

Mayor Pfister further commented on Mr. Drury's consistent availability and commitment to City business, noting that he remained accessible and continued working even while away from the office or on personal time. She stated that, rather than granting additional time off, she preferred to focus on increased compensation.

Council Member Gamble stated that he knew Mr. Drury had not utilized all of his available vacation time and asked whether unused vacation leave was paid out. Ms. Houghton stated she believed that was the case.

Vice Mayor Grenier encouraged the Council to consider Mr. Drury's overall compensation and benefits package as part of the discussion. Council Member Gamble agreed and stated that he supported providing an increase of greater than 4%.

Mayor Pfister stated that, since this topic was not on the agenda, she wanted to hear other opinions and invited Gary Santoro to speak.

Garry Santoro, a resident of Royal Harbor, Tavares, expressed support for granting the City Administrator a 5% or 6% salary increase. He stated that he understood Vice Mayor Grenier's suggestion regarding additional vacation time; however, he noted that Mr. Drury does not typically utilize his vacation time and is consistently available to handle City business. He stated that Mr. Drury was worth every dollar that the City gave him.

Mayor Pfister asked whether anyone else wanted to speak on this item. There were no further comments from the public at this time.

Mayor Pfister stated that if she were not concerned with the property tax issue, she would suggest a 10% increase.

Council Member Keown suggested splitting the difference to make it a 7% increase. Council Member Gamble stated he was comfortable with that, and Vice Mayor Grenier agreed.

## **MOTION**

**Bob Grenier made a motion to approve a 7% salary increase for the City Administrator. Doug Keown seconded the motion.**

Council Member Gamble asked Attorney Holt whether the item needed to be declared an emergency since it had not been included on the agenda. Attorney Holt stated that it did not, since the City was not subject to F.S. Chapter 120. The City Council controlled the agenda and could add an item.

Council Member Price stated he was not opposed to the motion and could be comfortable with 7% if the rest of the Council supported it.

Mayor Pfister then advised that she preferred the increase to be 7.5%.

Vice Mayor Grenier asked whether the compensation could be changed at a later date, such as during budget discussions. Ms. Houghton stated that yes, it could change during the budget process.

Mayor Pfister reiterated that she preferred a 7.5% increase rather than a 7% increase.

Attorney Holt advised that, according to Robert's Rules, the Council must vote on the first motion.

**The motion failed by a vote of 1-4, as follows:**

<b>Sandy Gamble:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Doug Keown:</b>	<b>Yes</b>
<b>Walter Price:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Bob Grenier:</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Lori Pfister:</b>	<b>No</b>

## **MOTION**

**Bob Grenier made a second motion to approve a 7.5% salary increase for the City Administrator. Sandy Gamble seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously 5-0.**

## **XIII. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD**

Gary Santoro, a resident of Royal Harbor in Tavares, complimented the City on the wraparound flowerpots at the public safety complex, stating they make a very nice impression. He also thanked the Council for voting in favor of a salary increase for the City Administrator.

Carlene Nichols, 1207 Texas Ave., Tavares, stated she had been a registered nurse for 40 years and had never received a raise of more than 3%.

#### **XIV. REPORTS**

##### **Tab 7. City Administrator Report**

Ms. Houghton noted that upcoming meetings and events were included in the Council's agenda packets.

Mr. Fabre wished everyone a Happy Memorial Day weekend.

##### **Tab 8. City Council Member Reports**

Council Member Gamble reported that he had spoken with Mr. Dillion and noted that a bicycle rack was scheduled to be installed at the Tavares Nature Preserve on Friday, weather permitting. He added that park signage would also be installed the following week, weather permitting.

Council Member Gamble inquired about the start dates for the All-Star program. Mr. Aldrich advised that the dates would be posted on the City's recreation Facebook page and stated that he could also send the information to him.

Council Member Gamble wished everyone a safe Memorial Day weekend.

Council Member Keown mentioned that the Chamber of Tavares was hosting a hurricane preparedness expo for residents and noted that the event date was available on the Chamber's website. He complimented Chief Coursey and staff for keeping the City safe. He also stated that his office hours would be held on Monday, June 1, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the library's conference room. Lastly, he wished everyone a happy Memorial Day weekend and explained the difference between Memorial Day, Veterans Day, and Armed Forces Day.

Council Member Price invited everyone to attend the Memorial Day sunrise service at Peterson's Gun Shop beginning at 6:30 a.m. on Monday. He stated that the Back the Blue and Red event was phenomenal and noted that it had the largest turnout he had seen. He also stated that he attended the employee luncheon on Friday and expressed his appreciation for the professionalism and hard work of the City employees.

Vice Mayor Grenier spoke about witnessing a juvenile operating a golf cart on Captain Haynes Road and asked whether a City of Tavares police officer could conduct a traffic stop under those circumstances. Chief Coursey confirmed that an officer could stop the individual to verify that the driver is at least 16 years old and possesses a valid driver's license.

Vice Mayor Grenier spoke about the loss of Army Specialist Mariyah Collington, noting that she was from the City of Tavares. He also encouraged the Council and residents to visit the library and sign up for the summer reading program. Vice Mayor Grenier mentioned that May 27 marked the 139th anniversary of Lake County and stated that he

looked forward to celebrating the County's 140th anniversary next year. He wished everyone a safe Memorial Day holiday.

Mayor Pfister commented on the strong working relationship among the City Council Members and praised each member for their involvement and dedication to the City. She noted that Council Member Price consistently represented the City at community events, Council Member Keown brought new ideas and became highly involved, Council Member Gamble remained active in recreation-related initiatives, and Vice Mayor Grenier contributed extensive historical knowledge and insight.

Mayor Pfister also recognized City staff for their hard work and dedication, specifically highlighting the progress of the YMCA project and improvements at the cemetery and arboretum. She stated that the City operates efficiently because employees and leadership work together and consistently go above and beyond in serving the community. She expressed appreciation to the Police Department, Fire Department, City staff, and City Administrator John Drury for their continued efforts and commitment to maintaining the City's quality of life.

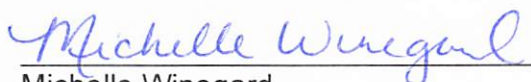
Mayor Pfister stated that although she would have liked to provide larger salary increases, she remained mindful of potential future impacts related to property taxes and the upcoming budget process. She emphasized the importance of balancing fiscal responsibility with maintaining residents' quality of life.

Mayor Pfister wished everyone a safe Memorial Day weekend and encouraged residents to remember and honor those who made the ultimate sacrifice while serving in the military.

#### **XV. ADJOURNMENT**

There was no further business, and Mayor Pfister adjourned the meeting at 4:46 p.m.

Respectfully,



Michelle Winegard  
Deputy City Clerk