



Regular City Commission Meeting Minutes
May 19, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Mayor Walter Welch
Vice Mayor Shirley Green Brown
Commissioner Jacob Fletcher
Commissioner Jennifer Ringersen
Commissioner Dayna Williams

City Manager Mike DaRoza
City Attorney Marian Rush

Meeting Location: James A. Lewis City Commission Chambers
15100 NW 142 Terrace
Alachua, FL 32615

CITIZENS PRESENT: Mary Diaz, Wynn McDonald, Asia Eichmiller, Soorya Lindberg, Bill Smith, Julie Smith, Connie Meyer, Jason Sweat, Jordan Costagliola, Nate Woodend, Margo Cush, Tommy Cush, Sharon Hiemans, Crystal Kelly, Micah Kelly, Rudy Rothseiden, Elliott Welker, Vailma Roca Fernandez, Michele Lee, Freddie Wehbe, Mandy Bucci, Sylvain Dore, Suzy Wise.

STAFF ATTENDING: Diane Amendola, Robert Bonetti, Carson Crockett, Anne-Marie DiRocco, Lisa Freeman, Tara Malone, Jesse Sandusky, Dona Smith, Rodolfo Valladares, David Wisener, Cap Wilson.

City Commission Meeting

Notice given pursuant to Section 286.0105, Florida Statutes. In order to appeal any decision made at this meeting, you will need a verbatim record of the proceedings. It will be your responsibility to ensure such a record is made.

CALL TO ORDER

Led by Mayor Walter Welch.

INVOCATION

A moment of silence was observed.

PLEDGE TO THE FLAG

Led by Mayor Welch.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Commissioner Jennifer Ringersen moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Vice Mayor Sirley Green Brown.

Mayor Welch opened the floor for comments.

Bryan Buescher requested the Commission add an item to the agenda to follow up on Commissioner Dayna Williams's motion from February 10, 2025, to have the City Attorney seek an outside firm to investigate the resignations within the City's Planning Department.

Tamara Robbins agreed with the comments from Mr. Buescher. She reminded the Commission that the City Commission works for the citizens of the City of Alachua. She expressed her concerns that the Commission Committee Assignments weren't on the agenda. She inquired about how Commissioner Williams was appointed to the County's Tourism Development Council.

Commissioner Williams stated that the position was advertised as a policy notice; she applied, and the Alachua County Commission appointed her.

Commissioner Jacob Fletcher stated he felt the minutes didn't properly reflect the Commission's comments.

City Manager Mike DaRoza and Commissioner Williams explained the process.

Commissioner Fletcher asked City Manager DaRoza to check the minutes when they were added to the agenda.

Vice Mayor Brown asked about adding the item suggested by the citizens to the agenda.

City Attorney Marian Rush explained the process.

Vice Mayor Brown moved to add the discussion item from February 10, 2025, to have the City Attorney look into the resignations of members of the Planning Department; seconded by Commissioner Fletcher.

Mayor Welch opened the floor for comments.

There were no comments.

Mayor Welch opened the floor for comments or questions from the Commissioners.

Commissioner Fletcher stated he wanted clarification regarding the resignations. He expressed his concerns about hiring new planners without understanding what had happened. He stated his goal was for the City to be transparent.

Commissioner Ringersen stated that the original thought was to have an interview, not an investigation. She stated she wasn't prepared to vote on this item at that time.

City Attorney Rush clarified the motion.

Commissioner Fletcher - Yes
Commissioner Ringersen - Yes
Commissioner Williams - No
Vice Mayor Brown - Yes
Mayor Welch - Yes

Passed 4-1 by roll call.

Mayor Welch placed the item on the agenda as Item C.

Commissioner Ringersen rescinded her motion.

Commissioner Ringersen moved to approve the agenda as amended; seconded by Vice Mayor Brown.

Commissioner Fletcher - Yes
Commissioner Ringersen - Yes
Commissioner Williams - No
Vice Mayor Brown - Yes
Mayor Welch - Yes

Passed 4-1 by roll call.

**APPROVE READING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS BY
TITLE ONLY**

Commissioner Williams moved to approve the reading of proposed ordinances and resolutions by title only; seconded by Commissioner Ringersen.

Passed by unanimous consent.

I. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

A) BHAKTIVEDANTA ACADEMY STUDENT ARTIST APPRECIATION

Assistant Deputy City Clerk Diane Amendola stated that before the Joint County/City Commission meeting, the representative from Bhaktivedanta Academy received the certificates on behalf of the students.

B) FLORIDA LEAGUE OF CITIES HOMETOWN HEALTH AWARD FOR FY 23/24

Compliance and Risk Management Director Cap Wilson introduced the item and made the presentation.

Lindsey Fisher, Health Marketing Manager for Florida Municipal Insurance Trust, and Gwen Mahabere, Hometown Health Manager, presented the award.

City Manager DaRoza thanked Ms. Fisher, Ms. Mahabere, and the staff.

C) WACCASASSA WATERSHED FLOOD RISK REVIEW MEETING

Assistant Deputy City Clerk Amendola introduced the presentation.

Mary Diaz, Suwannee River Water Management District, made the presentation.

Commissioner Fletcher asked if the City boundaries were within the Waccasassa watershed.

Ms. Diaz stated the City of Alachua had a small portion in the watershed.

D) MUNICIPAL CLERKS WEEK PROCLAMATION

Assistant Deputy City Clerk Amendola introduced the proclamation.

Mayor Welch read the proclamation.

Vice Mayor Brown congratulated the Clerk's office.

E) STOP THE BLEED DAY

Human Resources Director Tara Malone introduced the proclamation.

Safety Specialist Wesley Barrett thanked the Commission and City Manager DaRoza for their support.

Commissioner Fletcher stated this was a great program.

Safety Specialist Barrett provided more information.

Vice Mayor Brown asked if new employees were also trained.

Human Resources Director Malone said, yes, new employees were trained.

Mayor Welch read the proclamation.

F) MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH 2025

Human Resources Director Malone introduced the proclamation.

Mayor Welch read the proclamation.

II. COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS ON SUBJECTS NOT ON THE AGENDA

(Please Limit to 3 Minutes. Any citizen who is unable to speak at this time will have an opportunity to speak at the end of the meeting)

Rudy Rothseiden thanked City Manager DaRoza for the training the staff engaged in for emergencies.

III. COMMITTEE REPORTS/COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS/CITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

IV. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND ORDINANCES

(Presentations, other than the applicant, please limit to 3 Minutes)

- A) ORDINANCE 25-08 - AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ALACHUA, FLORIDA; EXTENDING THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF ALACHUA, FLORIDA TO INCLUDE CERTAIN LANDS LYING CONTIGUOUS TO THE EXISTING CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY (TAX PARCEL 04015-000-000); PROVIDING THAT ALL EXISTING LAWS, ORDINANCES, RULES AND REGULATIONS SHALL APPLY IN SAID AREA; PROVIDING THAT THE PROPERTY LAND INHABITANTS ARE SUBJECT TO EXISTING INDEBTEDNESS AND LIABLE FOR TAXATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE (FIRST READING; LEGISLATIVE HEARING).**

City Attorney Rush read Ordinance 25-08 by title only.

Planner Carson Crockett introduced the item and provided the staff report.

Mayor Welch asked the commissioners for questions or comments.

Commissioner Williams requested the applicant provide their presentation.

Clay Swegar, the applicant's agent, provided a presentation.

Commissioner Williams referenced statements about the neighboring properties and asked if the thought was that, in the future, the neighbors may also want to annex into the City.

Planner Crockett stated all annexations were voluntary.

Commissioner Fletcher asked if the public right-of-way could act as a barrier between municipal boundary lines. He raised concerns that CR 241 did not act as an adequate barrier, and therefore, this annexation would create an enclave.

Planner Crockett disagreed with this conclusion and provided the information.

Discussion ensued.

Commissioner Williams moved that this Commission (1) adopt Ordinance 25-08 upon first reading and (2) schedule the second and final reading of Ordinance 25-08 for June 9, 2025: seconded by Commissioner Ringersen.

Mayor Welch opened the floor for comments.

Suzy Wise inquired about the property's future plans. She expressed concern that annexing into the City would change the development regulations, as the County requires five acres for agricultural properties, whereas the City does not.

Mandi Bucci stated she couldn't see anything good coming from annexation. She questioned where the wildlife would go if the land were cleared.

Ms. Robbins spoke in opposition to additional properties using wells and septic systems. She agreed with Ms. Wise's comments. She stated that she had not received a mailed-out notice despite being on the mailing list.

Tommy Cook spoke about the potential for increased traffic surrounding this property if it were developed and asked if there was something that could be done.

Soorya Lindberg asked if the County had been asked about this property. She asked if there was another ordinance forthcoming. She questioned if the City had an adequate water supply.

Mr. Buescher stated this annexation would create an enclave. He said he looked up the property, and it was advertised as commercial.

Mr. Rothseiden expressed his concerns about this property and agreed with many of the comments made. He cautioned the Commission on approving this annexation.

Sharon Heimans agreed with the statements that this property was being annexed to increase the density regulations.

Commissioner Fletcher asked if there was a legal opinion stating that this did not create an enclave.

City Attorney Rush stated she agreed with Planner Crockett's interpretation of the statutes.

Planner Crockett read the statutes.

Discussion ensued.

Planner Crockett addressed some of the concerns regarding the future use of the property. He stated that the City's agricultural zoning requirements were the same as those of the county. He noted that a copy of the notice was sent to the County, but a response was not received. He stated that no applications or requests had been made from this property owner. He reiterated that this annexation would not create an enclave.

Mr. Sweger stated that the owners would like to be part of the City of Alachua and would come to the City for any further plans.

Commissioner Fletcher requested an amendment to the motion.

City Attorney Rush explained parliamentary procedure concerning amendments to motions.

Commissioner Williams stated that she was the maker of the motion and asked Commissioner Fletcher to state his proposed amendment.

Commissioner Fletcher stated he would like to add, "Upon the formal opinion of an attorney specializing in land use loss, supports that there was no issue with Florida Statute Chapter 171."

Commissioner Williams asked Commissioner Fletcher if he was saying that he wasn't accepting the City Attorney's interpretation and wanted the Commission to engage an outside attorney and pay them for a second opinion.

Commissioner Fletcher stated he wanted a written opinion.

Commissioner Williams stated she would withdraw the motion and defer the item so City Attorney Rush could write her opinion for Commissioner Fletcher.

City Attorney Rush stated that there may not be a case that precisely addresses the issue this item concerns. She said this situation is a matter of interpretation of the

statutes.

Commissioner Fletcher expressed his confusion.

Commissioner Fletcher - No
Commissioner Ringersen - No
Commissioner Williams - Yes
Vice Mayor Brown - Yes
Mayor Welch - No

Failed 2-3 by roll call.

V. AGENDA ITEMS

A) RFB 2025-01-R - THEATRE PARK PROJECT - AWARD

Purchasing Specialist Donna Smith introduced the item and made recommendations.

Mayor Welch asked the commissioners for questions or comments.

Commissioner Fletcher asked about the bids submitted.

Purchasing Specialist Smith provided the information.

Commissioner Fletcher confirmed the funds were Community Redevelopment Agency funds. He expressed his delight in this project.

Vice Mayor Brown moved to accept the bid from Trimark Construction Group in the amount of \$571,950.00 and authorize the City Manager to enter into a contract with Trimark Construction Group to complete the work as needed under the provisions of RFB 2025-01-R; seconded by Commissioner Fletcher.

Mayor Welch opened the floor for comments.

Ms. Robbins stated that she couldn't access the visual project and requested that pictures of this type of project be provided.

City Manager DaRoza stated that the details of this project were presented at several previous public meetings.

Passed 5-0 by roll call.

B) DISCUSSION ON STRATEGIES TO INCREASE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND TRANSPARENCY

Commissioner Fletcher stated he felt there wasn't enough time to discuss this item and

requested that it be withdrawn.

C) Discussion Regarding the Resignations of Planners Kathy Winburn, Justin Tabor, and Adam Hall.

Vice Mayor Brown moved to direct the City Attorney to search for two or three outside attorneys to recommend to the Commission for consideration in examining the concerns regarding the City Planners' resignations.

City Attorney Rush stated she would like parameters from the Commission for this search. She suggested a motion to direct the City Attorney to seek two or three attorneys to look into the circumstances surrounding the resignations of Kathy Winburn, Justin Tabor, and Adam Hall from employment with the City of Alachua.

City Manager DaRoza requested that all parties involved in the issue be included in the inquiry. He reminded the Commission that the original request was that the attorneys sought should have insight into planning.

Commissioner Fletcher stated that the original request was the correct course of action.

City Attorney Rush stated she would look for someone outside the Alachua area. She requested permission to deliver the open letter from Justin Tabor to the attorney chosen.

Commissioner Brown asked if anyone had seconded her motion.

Commissioner Fletcher asked if the motion contained the City Attorney's parameters.

City Attorney Rush restated her recommended motion.

Vice Mayor Brown moved to direct the City Attorney to seek two or three attorneys to look into the circumstances surrounding the resignations of Kathy Winburn, Justin Tabor, and Adam Hall from employment with the City of Alachua; seconded by Commissioner Fletcher.

Mayor Welch opened the floor for comments.

Ms. Robbins asked if the attorneys sought would have a planning background.

City Attorney Rush stated she would try to find attorneys with a planning background, but there was no guarantee.

Ms. Robbins stated that having an attorney with a planning background was important to this issue.

Human Resources Director Malone asked the Commission to waive the rules of procedure as it was 11:00 p.m.

Commissioner Fletcher moved that the rules of procedure be waived to extend the time by 15 minutes; seconded by Commissioner Williams.

Mayor Welch opened the floor for comments.

Jim Curington asked if there would be time for Citizen Comments.

Commissioner Fletcher withdrew his motion.

Commissioner Fletcher moved to waive the rules of procedure to extend the time by 30 minutes; seconded by Commissioner Williams.

Passed by a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Ringersen dissenting.

Human Resources Director Malone expressed her concerns regarding an investigation. She stated that there had been times in the past when several employees from other departments had left, but it had not led to an inquiry. She explained that the Commission was elevating three employees over a workforce of 150.

Commissioner Williams stated her appreciation for Human Resources Director Malone's comments.

Mr. Buescher stated this was an important item, as Mr. Tabor alluded to outside influence. He spoke of a Suwannee River Water Management District meeting he had attended. He mentioned he had requested the exit interviews of the planners, and only one oral interview had been conducted.

Commissioner Williams asked if the planning positions had been filled yet.

City Manager DaRoza stated the Planning Director and a Principal Planner had been hired.

City Attorney Rush requested clarification on her direction, specifically regarding who was to be interviewed.

City Manager DaRoza stated the interviews should be with Assistant City Manager Rodolfo Valladares, himself, and the planners.

Planner Crockett requested that he be interviewed as well.

City Manager DaRoza clarified: anyone involved in the meetings should be interviewed.

City Attorney Rush asked if the letter from Justin Tabor was to be given to the attorney selected.

City Manager DaRoza stated he would encourage the Commission to allow this letter to be given to the attorney.

Passed by a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Williams dissenting.

VI. COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS ON SUBJECTS NOT ON THE AGENDA

(Please Limit to 3 Minutes. Any citizen who did not speak during the Citizen Comments period at the beginning of the meeting may do so at this time.)

Mr. Curington stated the seniors had a wonderful trip to St. Augustine. He thanked the Recreation and Culture Department and the Commission for taking care of seniors.

Ms. Robbins mentioned a video she had requested through public records. She went into detail regarding the redaction and exemptions of this request. She requested that the full video be released.

City Manager DaRoza stated the statutes were followed, and the form in question was not required for the City. He stated that he would discuss the issue with any Commissioner.

Discussion ensued.

Ms. Robbins submitted the form to the record.

Mr. Buescher discussed his experience concerning public records requests for the video.

Commissioner Fletcher asked the City Attorney to look into it.

Commissioner Williams stated she had seen the video at the employee Christmas luncheon.

VII. COMMENTS FROM CITY MANAGER AND CITY ATTORNEY

No comments.

VIII. COMMISSION COMMENTS/DISCUSSION

Commissioner Ringersen stated that, as it was Mental Health Month, it was a good time to speak to those around you. She stated that she would like to go through the training mentioned in the Stop the Bleed program. She said she was pleased to see the new Fire Stations in the community.

Commissioner Williams requested that the Commissioners meet with the City Manager regarding the Committee Assignments.

ADJOURN

Commissioner Ringersen moved to adjourn; seconded by Vice Mayor Brown.

Passed by unanimous consent.

CONSENT AGENDA

Consent Agenda items represent routine City operations and business. These items are approved at the beginning of the Regular City Commission meeting upon approval of the meeting agenda.

A) APPROVE MAY 5, 2025, CITY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

ATTEST:

**CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF
ALACHUA, FLORIDA:**

Rodolfo Valadares, City
Manager/Clerk

Walter Welch, Mayor