



Joint City and County 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

Chair Charles Chestnut, IV
Vice Chair Ken Cornell
Commissioner Mary Alfred
Commissioner Anna Prizzia
Commissioner Marihelen Wheeler
County Manager Michele Lieberman
County Attorney Sylvia Torres

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, Marsa Cuta, Tommy Cuta, Sharon Hiemenz, Crystal Kelly, Micah Kelly, Rudy Rothseiden, Elliott Welker, Vailma Fernandez, Michele Lee, Freddie Wehbe, Mandy Bucci, Sylvain Dore
STAFF PRESENT: Diane Amendola, Robert Bonetti, Michael Carrillo, Carson Crockett, Anne-Marie DiRocco, Lisa Freeman, Tara Malone, Damon Messina, Jesse Sandusky, Donna Smith, Rodolfo Valladares, Cap Wilson, David Wisener

City and County 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, who turned the meeting over to Chair Charles Chestnut.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Vice Chair Ken Cornell moved to approve the agenda; seconded by Member Anna Prizzia.

Chair Chestnut opened the floor for comments.

Tamara Robbins requested citizens be able to comment or be heard on items that are on the agenda, whether there was a motion or not.

Passed by unanimous consent.

I. WELCOME

II. AGENDA ITEMS

A) COUNTY UPDATE ON ROADS WITHIN ALACHUA CITY LIMITS

County Assistant Public Works Director, Brian Kauffman, introduced the presentation and provided a roadway map to the Commission and for the record.

He explained the map was from the County's Transportation Capital Improvement Plan that was passed in 2023 and provided updates on when County Road 235 and 235A would be seeing infrastructure repairs.

City Commissioner Dayna Williams asked for clarification on where the improvements for County Road 235 would start and end.

County Assistant Public Works Director Kauffman stated it would be two separate projects, and when put together, would start at the school and end at 94th Avenue.

City Commissioner Williams asked whether 235A South near the distribution centers would see improvements.

County Assistant Public Works Director Kauffman replied that there was a grant application that had been applied for 13.7 million dollars in hopes of helping with 235A near the distribution centers.

City Commissioner Williams asked what the board and citizens could do to help support the grant application.

City Manager Mike DaRoza stated Alachua County Economic Development Manager Sean McLendon reached out to the City, and staff prepared a letter of support for the grant.

City Commissioner Williams asked if that letter could be used as a template for citizens and how could that template be distributed.

City Manager DaRoza stated he would contact Mr. McClenden, as he had the template.

County Manager Michele Lieberman stated the grant application was for 13.9 million, and it would be approximately 14 million to do the segment of road near the distribution centers. She explained the process of how roads are selected to be repaired.

County Commissioner Prizzia provided further clarification on how roads are selected and suggested that the City start charging impact fees to help with the cost of roads.

City Commissioner Jacob Fletcher stated he sent a personal email in support of the grant and that he supported the idea of impact fees.

Soorya Lindberg stated she sent an email to the Commissioners with information on the grant and was in contact with County Economic Development Manager McLendon and had received around twelve letters in support of the grant.

Ms. Robbins mentioned that at the last Joint County City Meeting, former Mayor Gib Coerper and former Chair Marihelen Wheeler discussed a potential truck bypass to I-75 and requested an update. She requested that when the road improvements happen by the distribution centers, Dollar General pay their share for the repairs.

B) PINKOSON SPRINGS UPDATE ON POTENTIAL JOINT PROJECT BETWEEN CITY/COUNTY

City Economic Development Manager David Wisener introduced the item and provided the presentation.

County Commissioner Prizzia asked if the City had secured 50% of the match needed for funding through the Suwannee River Water Management District and if the City had already committed the Wild Spaces, Public Places funds to other projects.

City Economic Development Manager Wisener stated they have not been able to secure the funds, and the Wild Spaces, Public Places funds were already committed to other projects.

County Commissioner Wheeler asked if the City had spoken with the land acquisition board for Alachua County Forever.

City Economic Development Manager Wisener stated he learned the property had been previously nominated to Alachua County Forever the week prior and had not started the process yet.

County Commissioner Ken Cornell suggested if the City Commission could find \$85,000 in the Wild Spaces Public Place funds, he would be happy to help support this project.

City Commissioner Williams expressed her agreement with County Commissioner Cornell about utilizing the Wild Spaces Public Place funds in the future for the Pinkoson Springs project.

City Economic Development Manager Wisener stated he was able to look at the Alachua County Forever nominations form from 2017, and they did not have water quality data at the time to submit, so that could add value for reconsideration by the

Land Acquisition Board.

City Commissioner Fletcher asked if the adjacent properties to the left and right created a wildlife corridor or if the parcel was surrounded by commercial properties.

City Economic Development Manager Wisener stated that the left side of the property was housing and condominiums, while the right side of the property was undeveloped, and he was unaware if any of the other adjacent properties were available for purchase.

City Commissioner Fletcher asked City Manager DaRoza if, since the budget wasn't finalized, the City could utilize Wild Spaces Public Places funds for the project.

City Manager DaRoza explained that the City is looking into other internal funding sources due to the time-sensitive nature of this property sale and not wanting the property to be sold to someone else, which could lead to the property being developed.

Vice Mayor Shirley Green Brown expressed her agreement with the other commissioners that the City needed to acquire the historic property and revitalize it.

County Commissioner Cornell noted the County had funding to help with the water quality if the City was able to acquire the funding to purchase the property.

Ms. Robbins expressed frustration about the property not being purchased yet since the item was brought before the board last year.

Sylvan Dore agreed with Ms. Robbins, and he expressed frustration about the property not being purchased. He suggested a private citizen could potentially purchase the property to benefit the City.

Rudy Rothsiden expressed his concerns about rapid growth and lot sizes of the new homes coming to the City. He expressed his concerns for the impact the growth would have on Mill Creek and the water quality in the area.

C) NW 86TH DRIVE UPDATE

Assistant City Manager Rodolfo Valladares introduced the item and provided the presentation.

Ms. Robbins stated the roadway was beautiful, and she was pleased that the roadway was paid for by a returned surety bond. She encouraged the City Commission to revisit the requirements for surety bonds.

D) ALACHUA COUNTY FIRE RESCUE STATION 21 AND 25 UPDATE

Chief of Alachua County Fire Rescue Harold Theus provided an update on the new fire stations in the City. He stated the crews have already moved into the new fire station located on CR 325A, and the ribbon cutting would be held on May 30, 2025, at 10:00

am. He announced that Saturday, May 31, 2025, from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm would be a neighborhood community day when citizens could come out to the new fire station. He noted the new fire station in San Felasco Tech City would have a baby box.

City Commissioner Williams expressed her gratitude for the addition of the baby box.

County Commissioner Prizzia thanked Mitch Glaeser for his land donation to make the new Tech City fire station possible. She inquired about the accommodations of a ladder truck.

County Fire Rescue Chief Theus, provided the response, and the discussion ensued.

Ms. Robbins remarked on the location of the fire station not being on a main road, and asked for clarification on the cost associated with the baby box.

Sylvan Dore indicated his concern for the cost of the baby box.

County Fire Rescue Chief Theus explained the function and purpose of the baby box and agreed with Mr. Dore's calculations on the cost of the baby box.

County Commissioner Mary Alford questioned how the public would be notified of the baby box.

County Fire Rescue Chief Theus replied that he has not addressed that yet, but would look into a potential sign.

Mr. Glaeser spoke on the benefit of the baby box. He shared that San Felasco Tech City was entirely run on solar power and gave an update on upcoming additions.

Valma Roga emphasized the importance of having the baby box in the community and expressed her gratitude for having one.

Mr. Rothsiden expressed his appreciation to the first responders in the community.

E) ALACHUA LEARNING ACADEMY

City Commissioner Williams introduced the item and made recommendations. She requested that a school zone be placed near Alachua Learning Academy due to the increase in traffic accidents.

County Commissioner Wheeler stated the County was working on this item with Kaya Brown of the FDOT, and they were working in partnership to come to a resolution.

Vice Mayor Brown commented on her full support for a school zone.

III. COMMISSION GENERAL AND INFORMAL DISCUSSION

Asia Eichmiller inquired about the scope and nature of the development that is on 235 North near Pilot Forest.

Soorya Linbuerg expressed her desire to have open access to live City Commission Meetings.

Ms. Roga asked if the City could live stream its meetings and make them ADA compliant.

Ms. Robbins expressed her desire to have open access to livestream City Commission Meetings and have them posted for public access the next day. She asked for clarification from the County about whether they had a service for free advertisement for municipalities on their website.

Jason Sweat with Swampbots shared the accomplishments of the youth on the Swampbot team and expressed his gratitude to the City's Recreation and Culture Department and local businesses who supported them.

Vice Mayor Brown thanked Mr. Sweat and the kids for sharing their success.

City Commissioner Williams noted the Swampbots have a great social media following.

Peter Ynigo, owner of Mi Ap`a Latin Cafe, stated he was proud to be a part of the community, and he was excited for the opening of the restaurant's new location.

City Recreation and Culture Director, Damon Messina expressed his gratitude to Mr. Sweat, Freddy Wehbe, and Peter Ynigo for their continued support of the youth in the community as well as the City's Recreation and Culture Department.

Mr. Dore expressed his concerns on school zones throughout the county, and decisions at the state level on property taxes.

Mr. Rothsiden spoke on his appreciation for Mr. Sweat and what he has contributed to the community. He wanted information on what the County used its COVID funds on.

Michele Lee noted new things happening at Good Life Station. She spoke about a partnership with Josh's Place, Alachua Business League, and the City of Alachua working on a grant proposal for a downtown concert series.

Mr. Glaeser announced that Siemens has officially opened in San Felasco Tech City.

Mandy Bucchie spoke on finding budget money to close off the front end of Main Street to vehicle traffic in order to host more events and asked the County for advice on how to start the process.

Julie Smith asked the County to explain how they went about passing beer and wine

ordinances.

IV. CITIZENS COMMENTS

Chair Chestnut requested that someone address the questions from citizens.

City Manager DaRoza clarified that the development next to Pilot Forest was called Savannah Station, and the new development that was being inquired about was Fletcher Trace. He gave clarification on the accessibility for live streaming Commission Meetings and mentioned it would be discussed at the Commission Meeting to follow. He also explained that City staff was directed by the City Commission to explore options on what would entail having local beer and wine ordinance changes.

County Manager Lieberman expressed that there were numerous things the COVID money was used for.

County Commissioner Prizzia gave examples of the use of funds, such as to set up broadband internet throughout the county, emergency assistance with rent and utilities.

County Commissioner Wheeler gave an update on the truck bypass, in which she assisted in getting former Mayor Coerper in touch with David Tyler with FDOT, and it was determined that the bypass would be too close to existing interstate interchanges and would not work.

County Manager Lieberman provided information on the availability of the County's Website for Municipalities to use for legal advertisements.

County Commissioner Wheeler thanked citizens for their input and expressed her pleasure at the positive events happening within the City.

County Commissioner Prizzia expressed her excitement to meet members of the community and business owners. She thanked the City for its continued collaboration to help the community.

County Commissioner Alford stated in preparation for the meeting, she spent time in the City the week prior, having dinner, touring San Felasco Tech City, and thanked everyone for being involved in their community.

County Commissioner Cornell remarked on the citizen involvement within the community. He welcomed City Commissioner Fletcher and his ideas and the impact new members can have on a commission.

County Commissioner Chestnut congratulated Mayor Welch and City Commissioner Fletcher on winning the election. He thanked citizens for coming out and speaking about their concerns.

City Commissioner Williams expressed her gratitude to the County Staff when working

well with City Staff.

City Commissioner Ringersen thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and acknowledged that moving forward, things could be going in new directions, as citizens and members of the commission have new ideas, and it was important to listen to each other.

City Commissioner Fletcher expressed his excitement for the Swampbots team and their impact on the community. He expressed his willingness to keep an open dialogue with the County in order to see the Pinkoson Springs project move forward.

Vice Mayor Brown thanked the County for their kind words and support to the City. She expressed her desire to have more expressions of art in the City.

Mayor Welch thanked the County for being in attendance and the citizens for their comments.

ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 8:20 pm.

ATTEST:

CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF ALACHUA, FLORIDA:

Rodolfo Valladares, City
Manager/Clerk

Walter Welch, Mayor