



# Ocala

## City Council

### Minutes

110 SE Watula Avenue  
Ocala, FL 34471

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**Tuesday, January 20, 2026**

**4:00 PM**

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**1. Call to Order**

**2. Roll Call**

**Present:** Mayor Ben Marciano  
Pro Tem Jay A. Musleh  
Council Member Kristen M. Dreyer  
Council Member James P. Hilty Sr  
Council Member Barry Mansfield  
Council President Ire J. Bethea Sr

**a. New Employees**

- Laura Eaglen, Human Resources
- Tyler Olender, Human Resources
- Anjali Singh, Human Resources
- Caleb Boyd, Electric
- Kyle Stender, Electric

**3. Public Notice**

- **Public Notice for the January 20, 2026 City Council Regular Meeting was posted on January 8, 2026**

**4. Proclamations and Awards**

**4a. Service Award - Rudy Charlot - Engineering Department - 25 Years of Service**

Mayor Marciano and City Manager Pete Lee presented a service award to Rudy Charlot in appreciation of his 25 years of service to the City of Ocala.

**4b. The Mayor's Citizen Recognition Award will be presented to Ashley Gerds**

Mayor Marciano presented the Mayor's Citizen Recognition Award to Ashley Gerds in appreciation of her community support efforts. Ms. Gerds expressed gratitude to those who supported her vision and mission for the community since moving here 12 years ago. She acknowledged various individuals and organizations for their contributions, highlighted collaborative efforts with nonprofits, and credited Mayor Maricano for his early support and guidance in her community work.

**5. Presentations**

**5a. Ocala Fiber Update presented by Uptown Services**

Chief Financial Officer Janice Mitchel introduced Dave Stockton and Neil Shaw,

Principals with Uptown Services, LLC.

Mr. Stockton presented an update on OFN, referencing last year's study that analyzed opportunities, challenges, and strategic direction. The study found that OFN's fiber technology positions it as a premier broadband option, offering superior speed and reliability compared to competitors. However, challenges include lower brand awareness and the need to strengthen marketing efforts to compete with established providers like Cox. The study also highlighted OFN's advantage as a local provider with strong community ties and flexibility on ROI expectations, which can support long-term investment and customer service. He also discussed progress on OSS vendor selection.

Mr. Stockton continued his presentation by reviewing the competitive landscape. He noted that Cox holds 68% market share and CenturyLink 12%, with other providers offering fixed wireless, hybrid fiber, cellular, and satellite services. OFN was evaluated across key dimensions:

- Technology: OFN's fiber network is the most robust compared to competitors.
- Brand Awareness & Image: Among non-customers, 44% are aware of OFN, and about half have a positive image of the brand-stronger than legacy providers, which show low satisfaction in national surveys.
- Localness: OFN is the only true local provider, offering an advantage in responsiveness and community trust.
- Value: OFN delivers the highest value in the market at approximately \$0.07 per megabit, outperforming Cox and CenturyLink.
- Brand Preference: Survey results show 38% of respondents prefer the City as their broadband provider, far exceeding legacy competitors.

He emphasized OFN's strong competitive position due to technology, value, and local trust, while noting opportunities to increase capacity and further improve brand awareness.

Mr. Stockton concluded by discussing ROI expectations, noting that OFN's long-term outlook and lack of quarterly profit pressure provide flexibility compared to publicly traded competitors. He summarized OFN's strong 20-year track record and positive survey results but highlighted one key improvement: eliminating the high upfront installation fee, which the study showed would significantly increase demand and take rates. He then addressed the OSS (Operations Support System) upgrade, recommending a move from a general utility platform to fiber-specific OSS software to improve operational efficiency. Stockton outlined the rigorous vendor selection process: initial outreach in June, reissued in September, seven responses received, three shortlisted, and a lead candidate now in negotiations. Implementation will follow contract finalization.

Neil Shaw outlined the engineering approach for OFN's expansion to provide citywide service. Uptown has been hired to design the first expansion area on the east side, covering approximately 4,500 homes and businesses. The design includes a new backbone, feeder, and distribution network. Mr. Shaw noted challenges due to existing

mixed infrastructure-some neighborhoods fully built, others with one-off connections-making this a “brownfield” deployment rather than greenfield. The team is working with OFN staff to accurately document existing assets, reuse viable infrastructure, and develop a migration plan for older systems. Preliminary design is complete, and final documentation is expected by late March or early April.

## 6. Consent Agenda

Consent Agenda items are considered to be routine and will be enacted by one roll call vote. There will be no separate discussion of these items unless members of Council or the public request specific items to be removed for separate discussion and action.

**RESULT:** APPROVED THE CONSENT AGENDA

**MOVER:** Jay A. Musleh

**SECONDER:** Kristen M. Dreyer

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 6a.** Budget Resolution 2026-123 to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget to accept and appropriate grant funds from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement for the purchase of furniture and specialized equipment for the Real Time Crime Center in the amount of \$30,000

**Presentation By:** Michael Balken

- 6b.** Budget Resolution 2026-124 to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget to appropriate funds from the Police Trust and Agency Fund Reserve for the purchase of a dual-purpose K9 in the amount of \$13,300

**Presentation By:** Michael Balken

- 6c.** Budget Resolution 2026-125 to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget to accept and appropriate funds from the Department of Justice in the amount of \$8,000

**Presentation By:** Michael Balken

- 6d.** The addition of City-owned parcel 2246-011-002 to the affordable housing surplus property list

**Presentation By:** James Haynes

- 6e.** See Item 7

## 7. Consent Agenda Items Held for Discussion

Should any items be removed from the Consent Agenda for discussion, they will be discussed at this time.

- 6e.** Budget Resolution 2026-126 to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-26 Recreation and Parks Fee Schedule

**Presentation By:** Julie Johnson

City Manager Pete Lee addressed baseball field rental fees, explaining that a previous budget change inadvertently removed youth registration fees, resulting in a tenfold

increase in seasonal field costs-from \$350 to \$3,500. After reviewing maintenance costs and usage, staff adjusted the fee to \$500 per season to balance affordability with field upkeep. Mr. Lee noted most teams are non-profit but acknowledged concerns about possible for-profit teams exploiting loopholes, which will be researched further.

Mayor Marciano and Council Member Dreyer thanked City staff for their hard work.

There being no further discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** ADOPTED

**MOVER:** Jay A. Musleh

**SECONDER:** Kristen M. Dreyer

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

## **8. Introduction and First Readings of Ordinances**

## **9. Public Hearings / Second and Final Readings / Adoption of Ordinances**

- 9a.** Public Hearing to consider a Concurrency Development Agreement pursuant to Chapter 163, Florida Statutes (West Oak) for approximately 198.80 acres located south of NW 35th Street, east of NW 27th Avenue, north of NW 21st Street, and west of the Florida Northern Railroad Right-of-Way (CDA25-0001); this is the first of two public hearings; the second will be held on February 3, 2026, before the City Council

Presentation By: Jeff Shrum

Council President Bethea opened the public hearing at 4:35 PM.

Growth Management Director Jeff Shrum presented the first of two public hearings on the concurrency development agreement for the West Oak project, a 198-acre development including 308 single-family homes, 1,902 multifamily units, 90 senior housing units, and 25,000 sq. ft. of retail space. The agreement addresses traffic impacts (1,082 peak-hour trips) and includes proportionate share payments of approximately \$368,000 to the City and \$62,000 to Marion County for road improvements. Mr. Shrum noted a minor applicant-requested change allowing future amendments related to proportionate share obligations. No action was required at this meeting; a clean version will be presented at the next hearing.

No public comment.

## **10. General Business**

- 10a.** Additional expenditures under the agreement with Oracle Elevator Holdco, Inc., for the City Hall elevator modernization project in the amount of \$188,545

**Presentation By:** John King

Fleet and Facilities Director John King confirmed the City hired a consultant and vendor to maintain the elevator.

City Manager Pete Lee confirmed the estimated installation date is expected to be scheduled for May or June. The City will setup reasonable accommodations on the first floor of City Hall for any public meetings held during renovations.

There being no further discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** Jay A. Musleh

**SECONDER:** Kristen M. Dreyer

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10b.** Task work order with Infrastructure Consulting & Engineering, PLLC, to provide design and construction phase services for Runway 36 safety area grading in the amount of \$154,924

**Presentation By:** Matthew Grow

Airport Director Matthew Grow confirmed the support team consists of five people with one grant writer.

There being no further discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** James P. Hilty Sr

**SECONDER:** Barry Mansfield

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10c.** Award of the contract to Gulf Side Improvements, LLC, for a new build of the Woodbury residence located at 826 NW Sixth Avenue with a total project cost not to exceed \$100,016

**Presentation By:** James Haynes

Community Development Services Director James Haynes confirmed the new existing dwelling will be demolished Community Development Services Director James Haynes confirmed the existing dwelling will be demolished and rebuilt. The home has been on the waiting list since it was determined to be dilapidated and eligible for housing rehabilitation assistance in 2002.

There being no further discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** Kristen M. Dreyer

**SECONDER:** Jay A. Musleh

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10d.** Fifth amendment to the agreement with ElectRx and Health Solutions, LLC, renewing

the contract for a two-year term in an amount not to exceed \$800,000

**Presentation By:** Todd Swanson

There being no discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** Barry Mansfield

**SECONDER:** James P. Hilty Sr

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10e.** Purchase of an electric JLG Compact Crawler Boom Lift from Federal Contracts Company utilizing the General Services Administration Multiple Award Schedule in the amount of \$175,257

**Presentation By:** Gary Crews

Facilities Division Head Gary Crews confirmed two people will be in the truck in response to Council President Bethea's query.

There being no further discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** James P. Hilty Sr

**SECONDER:** Jay A. Musleh

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10f.** Award of the contract to replace the HVAC chiller for City Hall and Citizen Service Center to Sherman Mechanical Contractors in an amount not to exceed \$363,668

**Presentation By:** Gary Crews

Facilities Division Head Gary Crews confirmed the building will not be without HVAC during workdays. The replacement is planned to be done over a weekend, and if the task isn't completed by start of business Monday, the company will provide HVAC for temporary cooling.

Council Member Mansfield abstained from the vote.

There being no further discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** James P. Hilty Sr

**SECONDER:** Kristen M. Dreyer

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, and Bethea Sr

**ABSTAIN:** Mansfield

- 10g.** One-year renewal of the agreement for as-needed electrical repair and installation services with Chuck Stokes Electric of Central Florida in the amount of \$125,000

**Presentation By:** Gary Crews

There being no discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** Barry Mansfield

**SECONDER:** Jay A. Musleh

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10h.** Additional expenditures under the Agreement for Overhead Door Repair, Maintenance, and Replacement with Material Handling Systems, Inc., for an increased aggregate expenditure not to exceed \$100,000

**Presentation By:** Gary Crews

There being no discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** James P. Hilty Sr

**SECONDER:** Kristen M. Dreyer

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10i.** Purchase of Grundfos pumps and consumable parts from FJ Nugent and Associates, Inc., with an estimated annual expenditure of \$300,000

**Presentation By:** Sean Lanier

There being no discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** Kristen M. Dreyer

**SECONDER:** James P. Hilty Sr

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10j.** Proposal from E-Z Go authorizing the manufacturing of 82 new golf carts and one new beverage cart for an aggregate expenditure not to exceed \$566,238

**Presentation By:** Julie Johnson

Recreation & Parks Director Julie Johnson requested Council approval for a fleet proposal with E-Z Go to manufacture 82 new golf carts and one beverage cart for Ocala Golf Club, at a total cost not to exceed \$566,237.76. The proposal includes a 48-month lease-purchase agreement with annual payments of \$89,809.44 and a \$207,000 balloon payment at lease end, giving the City the option to retain the carts. E-Z Go has provided a letter of commitment to purchase the carts at the end of the lease for the cost of balloon payment. E-Z Go was selected as the lowest bidder based on price, warranty, and reliability. Staff also seeks authorization for designated officials to negotiate and execute the lease agreement, subject to legal review.

Assistant City Manager Ken Whitehead clarified the several purchase/lease options the City evaluated. The City is recommending the most cost-effective option. He noted the City has never had an issue with E-Z Go's promise to buy out the carts at the end of the lease; they know they are receiving four-year old used golf carts. Additionally, the vendor has local mechanics to repair the carts as needed as compared to other vendors who outsource their repair work. Mr. Whitehead discussed considering electric golf carts in the future and reviewed some of the improvements that would be required at the golf course in advance of such procurement.

Council Member Musleh recognized Easy Go for their competitive pricing and great work servicing the carts. Furthermore, he supports considering electric carts in the future.

Ms. Johnson explained how electric cart technology is evolving every year.

Mr. Whitehead believes the electric cart models weigh more than the gas cart models, but commented that many golf courses already use electric carts.

City Manager Pete Lee and Council Members Mansfield and Musleh, recognized City staff for maintaining the golf course for the public, especially the improvements over the last few years.

There being no further discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** Kristen M. Dreyer

**SECONDER:** Jay A. Musleh

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10k.** Resolution 2026-12 authorizing the City Manager, Assistant City Manager or Chief Financial Officer to execute Lease-Purchase Agreements with PNC Equipment Finance, LLC, for 82 new golf carts and one new beverage cart for Ocala Golf Club in an amount not to exceed \$566,238

**Presentation By:** Julie Johnson

There being no discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.

**RESULT:** ADOPTED

**MOVER:** Jay A. Musleh

**SECONDER:** James P. Hilty Sr

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10l.** Continued utilization of Sourcewell's Cooperative Purchasing Agreement with SHI International Corp. for the purchase of Microsoft 365 cloud subscriptions, server licenses, and desktop licenses in the amount of \$314,994

**Presentation By:** Joshua Sasso

There being no discussion the motion carried by roll call vote.



**RESULT:** APPROVED

**MOVER:** Barry Mansfield

**SECONDER:** Kristen M. Dreyer

**AYE:** Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

**11. Internal Auditor's Report**

**12. City Manager's Report**

- **Recognition of the upcoming retirement of Recreation and Parks Director Julie Johnson**

City Manager Pete Lee reported that today is Julie Johnson's last meeting, due to her upcoming retirement. He recognized Ms. Johnson for her outstanding leadership over the years.

Recreation & Parks Director Julie Johnson expressed gratitude for being able to serve as a City employee.

Council President Bethea shared his wonderful experience working with Ms. Johnson.

- **2026 State Legislative Priorities and Appropriation Priorities**

City Manager Pete Lee debriefed City Council on the 2026 state legislative priorities and appropriation priorities. The City is requesting feedback from Council regarding the proposed list.

**13. Ocala Police Department Report**

- **Overview of Crime and Traffic Stops**

Police Chief Mike Balken reported on crime data for the period, December 28, 2025 to January 11, 2026: 8,140 total incidents, 5,690 proactive calls, 2,450 dispatched calls, quadrant breakdown (dispatched versus proactive), 271 crimes, 192 arrests, 1,020 traffic stops, and 151 crashes.

- **Department Highlights**

Police Chief Mike Balken reported the department successfully covered several past political events.

**14. Ocala Fire Rescue Department Report**

- **Unit Responses**

Fire Chief Clint Welborn reported on unit responses for a two-week period, January 6, 2026 to January 19, 2026. The two busiest units: Fire Rescue Four (157-unit responses) and Fire Engine Four (103-unit responses).

- **Service calls update**

Fire Chief Clint Welborn reported on call type spotlights for a three-week period, January 6, 2026 to January 19, 2026: motor vehicle accidents 90, structure fires 1, and community paramedicine/core 45, and calls for service 919 (1,233 calls-to-date).

- **Department Highlights**

Fire Chief Clint Welborn reported the department attended the Florida Fire & EMA conference. To note, OFR Captain, Jesse Blaire, received the Marilyn Crook EMS Pioneer Award; and the department welcomed a new Firefighter EMT named Joseph Hann.

**15. City Attorney's Report**

**16. Public Comments**

- **Darrin Williams, 3194 NW 16th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34475, commented on interactions with staff of the City Manager's Office**

Mr. Williams explained the inappropriate behavior he was subjected to by the staff of the City Manager's Office. He requested Council take into consideration his comments.

City Manager Pete Lee requested Mr. Williams contact him directly to further discuss the incident.

- **Kent Guinn, Douglas Law Firm representing Wire 3, 110 N Magnolia Avenue, Ocala, FL 34475, presented a letter of intent to City Council**

- **Jay Romachunran, CEO, Wire 3, requested City Council consider their offer regarding Ocala Fiber Network**

Jay Romachunran, CEO, Wire 3, debriefed City Council on Wire 3's business operations. He requested City Council consider their offer regarding Ocala Fiber Network.

Council Member Musleh commented it would be appropriate for City staff to evaluate the offer and report back to Council, and asked if this matter could be discussed in a shade meeting.

City Attorney Sexton advised City Council that a shade meeting cannot be scheduled for this matter.

**17. Informational Items and Calendaring Items**

- Tuesday, January 27, 2026 - TPO Meeting - 3:00pm - McPherson Governmental Campus Auditorium

- Tuesday, February 3, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers

- Tuesday, February 10, 2026 - Vision 2050 workshop - 12:00pm - Council Chambers

- Tuesday, February 17, 2026 - CRA Board meeting - 3:45pm - Council Chambers

- Tuesday, February 17, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers

- Tuesday, March 3, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers

- Tuesday, March 17, 2026 - CRA Board meeting - 3:45pm - Council Chambers

- Tuesday, March 17, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers

**17a.** Monthly budget-to-actual report and Capital Improvement Project status report as of November 30, 2025

**17b.** Fully Executed Contracts Under \$50,000

**18. Comments by Mayor**

- **Recreation and Park Director Julie Johnson's retirement**

Mayor Marciano recognized Recreation & Park Director Julie Johnson for her years of service to the City of Ocala.

- **Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade**

Mayor Marciano recognized the City for hosting a successful Martin Luther King Jr. Day Parade.

- **Recognition of the Communications Department**

Mayor Marciano recognized the Communications Department for their community outreach efforts.

- **Recognition of Police Chief Mike Balken**

Mayor Marciano recognized Police Chief Mike Balken for his great leadership.

**19. Comments by City Council Members**

- **Council Member Dreyer commented on the 2026 Legislative Priorities and systemic failures of not institutionalizing the mentally ill**

Council Member Dreyer expressed concern about the lack of long-term mental health care, citing a recent Orlando tragedy and local incidents involving individuals with untreated mental illness. She emphasized that current systems fail families and communities, leaving dangerous gaps in care. Dreyer urged the Council to direct staff and lobbyists to prioritize mental health reform at the state and federal levels, advocating for institutional solutions to protect both the public and those suffering from mental illness. Police Chief Balken concurred, noting rising Baker Act cases and the absence of long-term treatment options.

- **Council Member Musleh congratulated Julie Johnson on her retirement**

- Council President Bethea recognized City staff for hosting successful MLK Jr. Day events

**20. Adjournment**

- Adjourned at 5:42 pm

**Minutes**

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Kristen M. Dreyer  
Council President

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Angel B. Jacobs  
City Clerk