



Ocala

City Council

Minutes

110 SE Watula Avenue
Ocala, FL 34471

www.ocalafl.gov

Tuesday, January 6, 2026

4:00 PM

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

Municipal Officers/Others Present: The meeting was also attended by City Manager Peter Lee, City Attorney William Sexton, Assistant City Manager Ken Whitehead, City Clerk Angel Jacobs, Deputy City Clerk Pamela Omichinski, Fire Chief Clint Welborn, Police Chief Michael Balken, Internal Auditor Randall Bridgeman, Assistant Finance Director Peter Brill, Public Information Officer Gregory Davis, Economic Development Manager Roberto Ellis, Planning Director Aubrey Hale, Budget Director Tammi Haslam, Community Development Services Director James Haynes, Deputy Director Fiber Network Kenneth Jamerson, Senior Planner Emily Johnson, City Engineer & Director of Water Resources Sean Lanier, Senior Planner Endira Madraveren, Chief Financial Officer Janice Mitchell, Director of Public Works Darren Park, Director of Electric Utility Doug Peebles, Director of Ocala Fiber Network Mel Poole, Strategic & Legislative Affairs Administrator Jeannine Robbins, Procurement & Contracting Officer Daphne Robinson, Growth Management Director Jeff Shrum, Chief of Staff Chris Watt, Ocala Police Dept Representative, IT Representative, The Press and other interested parties.

2a. New Employees

- William Polykronis, Facilities
- John Shinnick, Facilities
- Gary Bozeman, Public Works

3. Public Notice

- **Public Notice for the January 6, 2026 City Council Regular Meeting was posted on December 3, 2025**

4. Proclamations and Awards

- 4a.** Presentation of the Arbor Day Proclamation to the Presidents of Pioneer Garden Club Jacqua Ballas and Marjorie Hendon

Mayor Marciano presented a proclamation for Arbor Day. The City proclaims January 16, 2026, as Arbor Day.

- 4b.** Presentation of the Newton A. Perry Day Proclamation to Jessica Fieldhouse, Ocala Main Street Executive Director, and to Delee Perry, daughter of the late Newton A. Perry
- Mayor Marciano presented a proclamation for Newton A. Perry Day. The City proclaims January 6, 2026, as Newton A. Perry Day.

- 4c.** Presentation of the Marion County's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Day Proclamation to Ms. Paula Leahmon, President of Marion County's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemorative Commission, Inc.

Mayor Marciano presented a proclamation for Marion County's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Day. The City proclaims January 19, 2026, as Marion County's Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Commemoration Day.

- 4d.** Presentation of the late Honorable Mrs. Mary Sue Rich Proclamation to the family of Mrs. Mary Sue Rich

Mayor Marciano presented a proclamation to the family of the late honorable Mrs. Mary Sue Rich in honor of her community support efforts.

5. Presentations

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: James P. Hilty Sr

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

- 6a.** Fiscal Year 2026-27 tentative budget calendar

Presentation By: Tammi Haslam

- 6b.** Budget Resolution 2026-119 to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget to appropriate funds from the Police Trust and Agency Fund reserve account to supplement the purchase of handheld x-ray equipment in the amount of \$48,515

Presentation By: Michael Balken

- 6c.** Certified administrative costs for SunTran's Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget as required by Section 341.071 of the Florida Statutes

Presentation By: Tom Duncan

- 6d.** Four-year renewal agreement with Truist Bank for comprehensive banking services through May 31, 2030

Presentation By: Peter Brill

- 6e.** Resolution 2026-10 to accept the donation of outdoor sculpture "Flamingo", valued at

\$9,500 into the City's public art collection for permanent display at Tusawilla Park

Presentation By: Emily Parkman

- 6f.** Resolution 2026-11 to appoint members to the City of Ocala's Affordable Housing Advisory Committee for three-year terms ending December 31, 2028

Presentation By: James Haynes

- 6g.** Budget Resolution 2026-120 to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget to accept and appropriate program income for the City of Ocala's State Housing Initiative Program grant in the amount of \$1,152

Presentation By: James Haynes

- 6h.** December 16, 2025 City Council meeting minutes

Presentation By: Angel Jacobs

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.

8. Introduction and First Readings of Ordinances

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

- 9a.** Public hearing to review and receive comments concerning SunTran's proposed budget for Federal Fiscal Year 2025 which includes Section 5307 grant funding from the Federal Transit Administration, Florida Department of Transportation Block Grant funding, toll road revenue credits, and local matches from the City and County for a total budget of \$6,300,562

Presentation By: Tom Duncan

Council President Bethea opened the public hearing.

Transit Administrator Tom Duncan discussed SunTran's proposed budget for Federal Fiscal Year 2025. The budget includes grant funding from the State, Federal, and City. He provided a brief overview of the budget criteria.

No public comment.

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

- 9b.** Public Hearing to consider the issuance of a location permit for the sale of beer, wine and liquor for off-premises consumption for Wal-Mart Stores East, LP, doing business as, Walmart #4245 located on Parcel 29850-001-00 (Quasi-Judicial)

Presentation By: Endira Madraveren

Council President Bethea opened the public hearing.

Chief Planning Official Endira Madraveren discussed an application submitted by Wal-Mart Stores East, LP, for the property located on Parcel 29850-001-00. The

applicant is requesting an alcohol permit to allow the sale of beer/wine/liquor for off-premises consumption. She provided a brief overview of the following: development project, surrounding uses, and staff findings. To note, staff recommends approval.

No public comment.

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

- 9c.** Ordinance 2026-5 to amend the Code of Ordinances, City of Ocala, Florida, Section 122-1225 to authorize the use of above-ground air curtain burners as an ancillary use to a materials recovery facility as well as establishing conditions and limitations relating to such ancillary use (COD25-0004)

Presentation By: Jeff Shrum

Introduced By: James P. Hilty Sr

Motion Amended to postpone Ordinance 2026 5 to amend the Code of Ordinances, City of Ocala, Florida, Section 122 1225 to authorize the use of above ground air curtain burners as an ancillary use to a materials recovery facility as well as establishing conditions and limitations relating to such ancillary use (COD25 0004) to February 3, 2026 City Council meeting

Council Member Dreyer requested anyone who had signed up to speak for this item be allowed the opportunity to speak if they cannot return for the February 3rd meeting. Council President Bethea concurred; the two speakers who had signed up were no longer present.

RESULT: POSTPONED

MOVER: Jay A. Musleh

SECONDER: James P. Hilty Sr

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

- 9d.** Ordinance 2026-6 to rezone approximately 3.57 acres for a portion of property located at 2336 NW Seventh Street (Parcel 22682-000-00) from M-1, Light Industrial, to M-2, Medium Industrial (Case ZON25-0014) (Quasi-Judicial)

Presentation By: Emily Johnson

Introduced By: Kristen M. Dreyer

Motion Amended Ordinance 2026-6 to rezone approximately 3.57 acres for a portion of property located at 2336 NW Seventh Street (Parcel 22682-000-00) from M-1, Light Industrial, to M-2, Medium Industrial (Case ZON25-0014) (Quasi-Judicial), removing Section 7(1) from the Ordinance

Council President Bethea opened the public hearing.

Planner Emily Johnson discussed the adoption of Ordinance 2026-6. The applicant requested to rezone the subject property from M-1 (Light Industrial) to M-2 (Medium Industrial) to allow outdoor storage. She provided a brief overview of the following: surrounding area, zoning, and staff findings. The Planning & Zoning Commission and staff recommend approval.

Growth Management Director Jeff Shrum requested City Council consider striking Section 7(1) of the ordinance.

Fred Roberts, Attorney, 40 SE 11th Avenue, stated the applicant plans to expand manufacturing operations in the City. The applicant agrees with the City's recommendation to eliminate Subsection 1 of the ordinance.

No public comment.

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

RESULT: ADOPTED

MOVER: Kristen M. Dreyer

SECONDER: James P. Hilty Sr

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

10. General Business

- 10a.** One-year renewal of the Construction Services Agreement with Miller Pipeline, LLC, for Water Resources Improvement Program Projects in an amount not to exceed \$2,000,000

Presentation By: Sean Lanier

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

- 10b.** Renewal of contract with Art Walker Construction, Inc. for lime sludge hauling services at Water Treatment Plant No. 1 with a two-year expenditure of \$180,000

Presentation By: Sean Lanier

There being no 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

- 10c.** Cost-share agreement with St. Johns River Water Management District for the Ocala Lower Floridan Aquifer Conversion Phase IV project in the amount of \$2,000,000

Presentation By: Sean Lanier

There being no 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

- 10d.** Budget Resolution 2026-121 to accept and appropriate funds from St. Johns River Water Management District for the Lower Floridan Aquifer Conversion Phase IV project in the amount of \$2,000,000 and transfer the cost share amount of \$2,000,000 from the Water Resources fund reserve for contingencies account

Presentation By: Sean Lanier

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

RESULT: ADOPTED

MOVER: Kristen M. Dreyer

SECONDER: Barry Mansfield

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

- 10e.** Item pulled.

- 10f.** Budget Resolution 2026-122 to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget to accept and appropriate 2025-26 State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program grant funding in the amount of \$242,771

Presentation By: James Haynes

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

- 10g.** Purchase of various inventory items for Ocala Fiber Network from multiple vendors in an amount not to exceed \$207,590

Presentation By: Mel Poole

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

RESULT: APPROVED

MOVER: Kristen M. Dreyer

SECONDER: Barry Mansfield

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

- 10h.** A three-year Agreement with Exceleron Software, LLC, for MyUsage Prepaid Software in an amount not to exceed \$1,500,000

Presentation By: Veronica Martinez

There being no 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

11. Internal Auditor's Report

12. City Manager's Report

- Legacy contracts update

City Manager Pete Lee reported on progress following Councilwoman Dreyer's request to review legacy contracts. The City identified 3,255 contracts across 27 units and 21 departments, including leases and revenue agreements. Departments are reviewing contracts to close expired or unnecessary items, with Finance overseeing the process. Initial efforts in Recreation and Parks closed 58 contracts, returning \$116,918 to reserves. Mr. Lee emphasized the goal of minimizing rollover funds and ensuring budgeted amounts are properly spent. Updates will continue as the deep-dive review progresses.

- Business tax revenue

City Manager Pete Lee discussed the annual business tax revenue collection over the years and ordinance issues. The City will present an amended ordinance at a future meeting for City Council to consider.

Council Member Dreyer suggested eliminating the ordinance to support businesses in the City.

Council Member Hilty noted issues with the ordinance, as the City never verifies that businesses have paid the annual tax.

- 2050 Vision Workshop scheduled for Tuesday, February 10, 2026, at 12:00 pm in Council Chambers

- Baseball field rentals

City Manager Pete Lee reported the City will present an amended ordinance to rectify issues regarding the collection of baseball field rental fees at a future meeting for City Council to consider.

- **Train derailment on Magnolia**

City Manager Pete Lee reported a third train derailment in less than a year on Magnolia Avenue, raising serious safety concerns. He requested Council's permission to send a letter to the Florida DOT and state representatives addressing the issue. Council Pro Tem Musleh agreed and urged involving U.S. senators, congressional representatives, and state legislators, citing public safety hazards and previous derailment debris still posing risks. Both emphasized the need for immediate communication and action to prevent future accidents.

- **Safe Routes to School meeting scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 5:00 pm at Howard Middle School**

City Manager Pete Lee provided a brief overview of DOT's Safe Routes to School project. He encouraged the public to attend the Safe Routes to School meeting scheduled for Thursday, January 8, 2026, at 5:00 pm at Howard Middle School.

13. Ocala Police Department Report

- **Overview of Crime and Traffic Stops**

Police Chief Mike Balken reported the departments response efforts for the past two years: Year 2025 - 192,751 total incidents, 128,064 proactive calls, and 64,687 dispatched calls; and Year 2024 - 168,196 total incidents, 102,557 proactive calls, and 65,639 dispatched calls. Annual crime data for year 2025: 7,231 crimes, 5,558 arrests, 28.1k traffic stops, and 3,852 crashes. Overdose responses and deaths for the past two years: Year 2025 - 96 overdose responses and 28 deaths; and Year 2024 - 123 overdose responses and 24 deaths.

- **Department Highlights**

Police Chief Mike Balken reported homicides have significantly decreased over the years. Furthermore, the department will present a year-end report in February.

14. Ocala Fire Rescue Department Report

- **Unit Responses**

Fire Chief Clint Welborn reported on unit responses for a two-week period, December 16, 2025 to December 31, 2025. The two busiest units: Fire Rescue Four (224-unit responses) and Fire Engine Four (158-unit responses). Unit responses for a five day period, January 1, 2026 to January 5, 2026, two busiest units: Fire Rescue Four (57-unit responses) and Fire Engine One (42-unit responses).

- **Service calls update**

Fire Chief Clint Welborn reported on call type spotlights for a three-week period, December 16, 2025 to December 31, 2025: motor vehicle accidents 123, structure fires 6, and community paramedicine/core 28, and calls for service 1,093 (25,141

calls-to-date). Call type spotlights for a five day period, January 1, 2026 to January 5, 2026: calls for service 317.

- **Department Highlights**

Fire Chief Clint Welborn reported the department promoted three employees for the New Year! Furthermore, he confirmed the addition of station eight will help decrease the call volume.

15. City Attorney's Report

16. Public Comments

- **Shanta Norton, 117 NW 16th Terrace, Ocala, FL, spoke on student safety**

Shanta Norton, 117 NW 16th Terrace, Ocala, FL, submitted a pedestrian safety proposal that aims to reduce pedestrian incidents and improve safety for the public.

Council President Bethea expressed condolences for Ms. Norton's late sister. He spoke in support of infrastructure improvements to support pedestrian safety.

- **Dr. Kathryn Crowell-Grate and Nathaniel Grate, 2825 SW 34th Avenue, Ocala, FL, spoke on pedestrian safety**

Dr. Kathryn Crowell Grate and Nathaniel Grate, 2825 SW 34th Avenue, Ocala, FL, requested City Council consider installing a flashing light near Kingdom Christian Academy to improve pedestrian safety, as well as requested assistance to clean and secure the retention pond on the property adjacent to the church.

City Manager Pete Lee stated the City will contact FDOT.

Public Works Director Darren Park stated the drainage retention area is owned by FDOT; City staff contacted FDOT yesterday to remedy the matter.

- **Jason Tolbert, 201 NE 37th Court, Ocala, FL, requested permission to place Wingstop signage near the public sidewalk and street median**

Jason Tolbert, 201 NE 37th Court, Ocala, FL, requested permission to place Wingstop signage near the public sidewalk and street median to attract more customers.

City Manager Pete Lee confirmed the step signage is not permitted.

Council Member Dreyer suggested the local business hire someone to market the business by holding a sign outside to attract customers.

- **Jerry Lourenco, 9875 SE 58th Avenue, Ocala, FL, expressed concern regarding the City's Roll-Off Compactor Ordinance**

Jerry Lourenco, 9875 SE 58th Avenue, Ocala, FL, raised concerns about the City's

compact waste ordinance and its application to commercial waste services. He explained that while he supports the ordinance for residential areas, he objects to the City competing for commercial accounts, particularly with his existing customers. He described a recent situation where a customer requested a compactor, but the City claimed the account, creating confusion and potential conflict. Lourenco emphasized that the ordinance was intended for residential service, not commercial, and requested clarification on whether he can proceed with servicing his customer.

City Manager Pete Lee noted the requested service is for a new address, which was not grandfathered into the ordinance. He stated the City will evaluate the matter and present a recommendation to City Council at a future meeting.

Council Member Hilty expressed concern regarding the existing ordinance. Furthermore, he urged the City to address the matter properly.

City Attorney Sexton clarified there were 73 locations listed in the policy adopted by Council, not vendors; he cited Publix as an example of one vendor with multiple locations on the list to remain allowed to be serviced by contracted private companies. He noted the solid waste ordinance states the City is responsible for providing solid waste services within the City.

Mayor Marciano expressed concern regarding the matter.

Mr. Lee stated the City will meet with Mr. Lourenco to further discuss the matter.

Mr. Lourenco clarified the zero-waste process with Council Member Dreyer.

17. Informational Items and Calendaring Items

- Tuesday, January 13, 2026 - City Council workshop Re: Sanitation Rate Study - 12:00pm - Council Chambers
- Monday, January 19, 2026 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day Holiday - City Offices closed
- Tuesday, January 20, 2026 - CRA Board meeting - 3:30pm - Council Chambers
- Tuesday, January 20, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers
- 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 17, 2026 - CRA Board meeting - 3:45pm - Council Chambers
- Tuesday, February 17, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers

17a. Power Cost Adjustment Report - November 2025

18. Comments by Mayor

- Mayor's Fitness Challenge 2026

Mayor Marciano reported the Mayor's Fitness Challenge for public schools launched for the New Year.

- **Mental health services for the incarcerated**

Mayor Marciano reported the City is working on offering mental health services to the incarcerated as part of their mandatory sentencing. The plan is to help the incarcerated overcome addictions and offer job training prior to being released.

Council Member Dreyer suggested integrating pro-project techniques.

19. Comments by City Council Members

- **Council Member Dreyer requested the City schedule a meeting with the County's Affordable Housing Committee to assist the County in streamlining their process for affordable housing**

- **Council Member Dreyer commented on the public notice sign posted in front of the strip mall located near State Road 40**

Council Member Dreyer requested more information regarding the public notice sign posted in front of the strip mall located near State Road 40.

Planning Director Aubrey Hale clarified the signage remained from the original permitting application and had not yet been removed. He confirmed the City will retrieve the leftover signage.

- **Council President Bethea thanked the City for services provided for Mrs. Mary Sue Rich's celebration of life**

20. Adjournment

- **Adjourned at 5:35 pm**

Minutes

Ire J. Bethea Sr.
Council President

Angel B. Jacobs
City Clerk