



Ocala

City Council

Minutes

110 SE Watula Avenue
Ocala, FL 34471

www.ocalafl.gov

Tuesday, July 21, 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

2a. New Employees

- Natanael Rodriguez, Public Works

3. Public Notice

- **Public Notice for the July 21, 2026 City Council Regular Meeting was posted on June 3, 2026**

4. Proclamations and Awards

4a. Service Award - Priscilla Davis - Recreation & Parks - 20 Years of Service

City Manager Pete Lee and Mayor Marciano presented a service award to Priscilla Davis in appreciation of her 20 years of service to the City of Ocala.

4b. Service Award - Alton Peebles, Jr. - Ocala Electric Utility - 25 Years of Service

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

4c. Service Award - Linda Roos - Ocala Police Department - 25 Years of Service

City Manager Pete Lee and Mayor Marciano presented a service award to Linda Roos in appreciation of her 25 years of service to the City of Ocala.

4d. Service Award - Captain Sandra Duryea - Ocala Police Department - 30 Years of Service

City Manager Pete Lee and Mayor Marciano presented a service award to Sandra Duryea in appreciation of her 30 years of service to the City of Ocala.

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: James P. Hilty Sr

SECONDER: Jay A. Musleh

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

- 6a.** Five-year Pole Attachment Agreement between the City of Ocala and BellSouth Telecommunications, LLC, doing business as AT&T Florida, outlining the terms for attaching telecommunications equipment to City-owned utility poles

Presentation By: Chad Lynch

- 6b.** Second Amendment to Agreement with Powerserve Technologies, Inc. to Extend Delivery Deadline and Increase Contract Amount by \$82,721

Presentation By: Chad Lynch

- 6c.** Contract for environmental water testing services with Advanced Environmental Laboratories, Inc., for a not to exceed amount of \$66,517

Presentation By: Sean Lanier

- 6d.** Annual renewal of GrayKey forensic software for \$74,740

Presentation By: Michael Balken

- 6e.** Additional funding of \$6,367 for the emergency rental of a 25-ton air conditioner from Sunbelt Rentals in the amount of \$10,403

Presentation By: John King

- 6f.** 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

(Second and Final Reading - August 4, 2026)

- 8a.** Ordinance 2026-22 to rezone approximately 82.10 acres for property located at 5575 SW 52nd Street (Parcel 23835-000-00) from A-1, General Agriculture (County) to PD, Planned Development (City) (Case PD26-0001) (Quasi-Judicial).

Introduced By: Jay A. Musleh

musleh

RESULT: INTRODUCED

- 8b.** Ordinance 2026-23 to change the Future Land Use designation from Neighborhood to Public, for property located in the 2800 block of SW 20th Street (Parcel 23476+001-00),

approximately 4.06 acres (Case LUC26-0003) (Quasi-Judicial)

Introduced By: James P. Hilty Sr

hilty

RESULT: INTRODUCED

- 8c. Ordinance 2026-24 to rezone from R-1, Single- Family Residential, and B-1A, Limited Neighborhood Business, to G-U, Governmental Use, for property located at the 2800 block of SW 20th Street (Parcel 23476+001-00), approximately 4.06 acres (Case ZON26-0008) (Quasi-Judicial)

Introduced By: Kristen M. Dreyer

dreyer

RESULT: INTRODUCED

- 8d. Ordinance 2026-25 to change the Future Land Use designation from Neighborhood to Low Intensity, for property located in the 2800 block of SW 20th Street (Parcel 23472-003-00, 23472-002-00, and a portion of 23472-001-00), approximately 4.88 acres (Case LUC26-0004) (Quasi-Judicial)

Introduced By: Barry Mansfield

mansfield

RESULT: INTRODUCED

- 8e. Ordinance 2026-26 to rezone from R-3, Multi-Family Residential District, to INST, Institutional District, for properties located in the 2800 block of SW 20th Street (Parcel 23472-004-00 and a portion of 23472-001-00), approximately 2.99 acres (Case ZON26-0009) (Quasi-Judicial)

Introduced By: James P. Hilty Sr

hilty

RESULT: INTRODUCED

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

- 9a. Ordinance 2026-21 amending Chapter 43, Article V, Code of Ordinances, City of Ocala, Florida (Police Officers' Retirement System), to conform to the 2025-2028 Collective Bargaining Agreement Between the City of Ocala and the Fraternal Order of Police

Presentation By: Janice Mitchell

Introduced By: Barry Mansfield

Chief Financial Officer Janice Mitchell explained that the ordinance updates the police retirement system to reflect pension provisions negotiated in the 2025-2028 collective bargaining agreement. The changes include higher employee pension contributions, a funding method for future cost-of-living adjustments, revised use of Chapter 185 tax revenues, and updated retirement option plan rules. These provisions have already been in effect since October 1, 2025, and the ordinance formally adds them to the City Code.

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

RESULT: ADOPTED
MOVER: Barry Mansfield
SECONDER: James P. Hilty Sr
AYE: Musleh, Dreyer, Hilty Sr, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

10. General Business

- 10a.** Additional expenditure for the purchase of two auto transformers from PTI Transformers, Inc., in the amount of \$1,100,000

Presentation By: Chad Lynch

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

RESULT: APPROVED
MOVER: Jay A. Musleh
SECONDER: Barry Mansfield

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

- 10b.** Contract with Robert Daniel Dean, Sr., doing business as C & M Lawncare and Tree Service for grounds maintenance services at Ocala Wetland Recharge Park in an amount not to exceed \$110,250

Presentation By: Sean Lanier

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, Mansfield, and Bethea Sr

- 10c.** Second amendment to contract with Polydyne, Inc. for liquid polymer supply and delivery services at Water Treatment Plant No. 1, Water Reclamation Facility No. 2, and Water Reclamation Facility No. 3 with an estimated aggregate expenditure of \$250,000

Presentation By: Sean Lanier

There being no 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.** Three-year contract for janitorial services with JJ Holding and Services, LLC in the amount of \$35,700 annually and an aggregate expenditure of \$107,100

Presentation By: Michael Balken

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

- 10e.** Fourth Amendment to agreement with Wear Gloves, Inc. for the final one-year renewal term of the contract for annual litter control and drain inlet surface cleaning services in the amount of \$539,682

Presentation By: Darren Park

Mayor Marciano commented on the great job Wear Gloves does with this contract and hopes to see it grow further. Council President Bethea echoed Mayor Marciano's compliments.

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

- 10f.** Second Amendment to agreement with Infrastructure Consulting & Engineering, PLLC for continuing professional general aviation engineering services

Presentation By: Matthew Grow

There being no 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

- 10g.** Second Amendment to agreement with McFarland Johnson, Inc for continuing professional general aviation engineering services

Presentation By: Matthew Grow

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

- 10h.** Resolution 2026-44 to accept a Federal Aviation Administration Airport Improvement grant to design Taxiway A Holding Bay in the amount of \$178,558

Presentation By: Matthew Grow

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

- 10i.** Budget Resolution 2026-151 to amend the Fiscal Year 2025-26 budget to appropriate \$178,558 in grant funding from the Federal Aviation Administration and transfer a match of \$9,398 from the Airport reserve for projects account to design taxiway-A Holding Bay for a total cost of \$187,956

Presentation By: Matthew Grow

There being no 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

- 10j.** Continue the grant application process for the State Homeland Security Program (SHSP) Grant to fund the Real Time Crime Center project in the amount of \$1,300,000

Presentation By: Michael Balken

RESULT: PULLED

11. Internal Auditor's Report

12. City Manager's Report

12a. Discuss interview date for Internal Auditor

City Council members agreed to holding interviews for City Auditor applicants on August 11, 2026 beginning at 9:00am. The public meeting will be held at 1:00pm, following the Budget Workshop at noon.

- **Introduction of Jameel Barnes, new Procurement Director**

- **Update on July 11th storms**

Mr. Lee noted there were 70 power outages across the City following the storms on July 11, affecting nearly 7,200 people. Public Works removed approximately 32 tree. He commended staff for the efforts in restoration.

- **Travel Leisure Magazine recognized Ocala as one of the eight best U.S. cities to live in**

13. Ocala Police Department Report

Chief Balken reported that violent crime is slightly higher than at this time last year, with 196 incidents investigated, most of which were simple misdemeanor batteries. Property crimes have also risen modestly, with frauds making up the largest share and economic crimes detectives working to reduce those numbers. Narcotics violations and internet-related offenses represent a significant portion of reported cases. During the reporting period, the department handled over 7,800 incidents, an 11% increase, including more than 5,000 proactive calls, 227 arrests, nearly 1,000 traffic stops, and 135 crash investigations. Case highlights included an arson on Southwest Forest Street, ongoing efforts targeting street drugs and firearm violations, and progress in concluding the 2024 homicide case of Derek Brown, with one co-defendant now convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

14. Ocala Fire Rescue Department Report

Chief Wellborn reported that the fire department handled 1,110 calls during the two-week period, bringing the yearly total to 15,249. Engine and rescue units responded to high call volumes, including 162 motor vehicle accidents, two structure fires, and 97 community care calls. He noted a significant weather event on July 11-12 that left many residents without power and generated 28 emergency calls, most within the first 90 minutes of the storm. Crews responded effectively throughout the event, and no injuries were reported.

15. City Attorney's Report**16. Public Comments**

- **Christopher Dippon, 1612 NE 25th Ave, Lot B, discussed a road rage incident and expressed concern about his experience with OPD**

Christopher Dippon described a road-rage incident in which another driver displayed a firearm after he honked, and expressed concern over what he felt was a delayed and inadequate police response. He stated that OPD later told him the other driver had a right to display the weapon, which he believes reflects a mishandled investigation, and he indicated he is pursuing the matter with state officials. Council President Bethea thanked him for sharing, noted that police likely followed protocol, and apologized for the other driver's behavior while acknowledging the concern but stating the issue could not be resolved during the meeting.

- **Alicia Gonzalez Julias, 5565 SW 8th Loop, spoke on the death of her brother from Kratom**

Ms. Alyssa Gonzalez Julias shared the loss of her 41-year-old brother, whom she believes died from kratom toxicity, and described the medical complications she witnessed as a cardiovascular specialist. She urged stronger regulation or an outright ban on kratom products, called for greater manufacturer accountability and warning labels, and appealed for action to prevent other families from experiencing similar tragedies.

- **Ian Crawford, 900 SE 3rd Ave, discussed his near-death experience from taking 7 Stacks Kratom Hydrogen Blend**

Mr. Crawford recounted a severe overdose incident involving a kratom “nitrogen blend” product that left both him and a friend in comas. He described the lasting physical, emotional, and financial impacts of the experience and emphasized the risks posed by easily accessible, unregulated kratom products. He urged the Council to take action to ban the sale of this specific kratom blend in Ocala to prevent similar harm to others.

17. Informational Items and Calendaring Items

- Tuesday, August 4, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers
 - Tuesday, August 11, 2026 - City Council workshop RE: FY 2026/27 Budget - 12:00pm - Council Chambers
 - Tuesday, August 18, 2026 - Community Redevelopment Area Agency meeting - 3:45pm - Council Chambers
 - Tuesday, August 18, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers
 - Tuesday, August 25, 2026 - TPO Meeting - 2:00pm - Marion County Board of County Commissions Auditorium
 - Tuesday, September 1, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers
 - Monday, September 7, 2026 - Labor Day - City Offices Closed
 - Wednesday, September 9, 2026 - Community Redevelopment Area Agency meeting - 4:45pm - Council Chambers
 - Wednesday, September 9, 2026 - City Council Special Meeting for First Public Hearing re: FY 2026/27 Budget and Fire Assessment - 5:00pm - Council Chambers
 - Tuesday, September 15, 2026 - City Council meeting - 4:00pm - Council Chambers
 - Tuesday, September 15, 2026 - Second Public Hearing to adopt Final Budget and Final Millage Rates - 5:01pm - Council Chambers
- 17a.** Monthly budget-to-actual report and Capital Improvement Project status report as of May 31, 2026
- 17b.** Fully Executed Contracts Under \$50,000

18. Comments by Mayor

- **Mayor Marciano discussed options on banning Kratom sales within Ocala**

Mayor Marciano thanked the speakers who shared their kratom-related experiences and stressed that kratom has become a serious and growing public safety concern in Ocala. He referenced medical cases, overdose incidents, and rising reports received over recent months, noting that several states-and even California-have already banned kratom. He emphasized that statewide action may eventually come but urged the city not to wait. He proposed partnering with Marion County to draft and adopt an ordinance banning the sale of kratom locally and noted that preliminary work with the county attorney has already begun.

City Attorney Sexton stated that he has coordinated with Marion County attorney’s office, which is prepared to move forward with its own kratom ordinance. He explained that Ocala can collaborate with the county to adopt a similar ordinance or tailor one

based on Council feedback. He noted that few jurisdictions have enacted such bans but said potential legal issues can be addressed, and requested direction from the Council on how they wish to proceed.

Council Member Mansfield emphasized the seriousness of kratom's risks, stating that the city should take a clear stance and pursue whatever legal measures are available to restrict or eliminate its sale. He urged stronger standards for sellers and action to protect young people, noting that the product appears deceptively harmless. Council Member Dreyer sought clarification on the proposed ban and confirmed that enforcement could be handled through code enforcement, supported by law enforcement as needed. Mayor Marciano confirmed the County's intention to use their code enforcement officers. Council Member Dreyer noted speaking with Chief Balken; OPD is on board with enforcement.

City Attorney Sexton noted potential legal concerns, explaining that a local kratom ban could be viewed as stricter than what state law (Senate Bill 180) allows. He said he has not yet discussed with county counsel how their draft ordinance addresses this issue but plans to do so. He added that the law provides some flexibility to revise regulations if challenged without incurring additional penalties. Sexton advised that these concerns can be worked through during drafting and that the Council will have the opportunity to reconsider its approach if a legal challenge arises.

Mayor Marciano discussed the various forms the product can come in. Council Member Mansfield highlighted the lack of regulations and testing available to verify what is in any of the products, noting the medical marijuana won't touch the product. He stated the City needs an ordinance.

Council President Bethea stated the City should not blindly copy the County's ordinance.

Council Pro Tem Musleh questioned whether it would be classified as a code violation or a criminal violation? If code, would that make the Code Enforcement Board the arbiter, or the Special Magistrate? If the Code Board, they will require education on the subject. He further questioned whether advertising would be a violation.

Mr. Sexton confirmed the intention would be to make the marketing and selling of kratom illegal. The current law states it is illegal to sell to anyone under 21. The proposed County version would empower the County to remove the certificate of occupancy of a business, effectively shutting down the business. The City may consider that law enforcement would be more appropriate.

Council Members Dreyer and Musleh agreed. Pro Tem Musleh noted a code violation allows for the City to levy fines, follow repeat offenders, and revoke occupancy certificates.

City Manager Lee commented that the DEA has, within the last week, issued an emergency notice regarding the 7-OH version of kratom, placing it into Schedule One drugs.

Mayor Marciano noted that 7-OH is only one compound and there are many other derivatives.

Mr. Sexton explained the problem remains that there are many derivatives of kratom, and one of the pitfalls of traditional methodology allows for loopholes. The County's ordinance very broadly defines kratom and doesn't limit it to specific variations being regulated or prohibited. He noted he has his direction from Council.

- **Mayor Marciano recognized Community Housing Services Director James Haynes for his efforts in finding housing for those in need**

19. Comments by City Council Members

- **Council Pro Tem Musleh spoke in remembrance of former council member Charlie Ruse**
- **Council President Bethea commended staff for a quick recovery following storms on July 11**

20. Adjournment

5:20 pm

Ire J. Bethea Sr.
Council President

Angel B. Jacobs
City Clerk