



Ocala

City Council

Minutes

110 SE Watula Avenue
Ocala, FL 34471

www.ocalafl.gov

Tuesday, December 2, 2025

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

3. Public Notice

- **Public Notice for the December 2, 2025 City Council Regular Meeting was posted on November 7, 2025**

4. Proclamations and Awards

4a. Annual President's Award

Council President Dreyer presented the annual President's Award, established in 2011 to recognize a City of Ocala employee or group of employees for outstanding accomplishments that enhance city services and improve the quality of life for Ocala residents. The award is presented annually by the outgoing Council President.

Nominees for the 2025 President's Award included:

- Discovery Center Staff
- Ocala-Marion Fire Rescue Mentorship Program Team
- Shay Roberts Green, Procurement and Contracting Division
- Information Technology Staff
- Don Lee, Ocala Electric Utility Team

Following the announcement of nominees, Council President Dreyer expressed appreciation for their dedication and contributions, noting the difficulty in selecting a single winner due to the high caliber of all nominees.

The 2025 President's Award was presented to the Ocala-Marion Fire Rescue Mentorship Program Team, which includes Firefighter/EMT Andrew Bowyer, Firefighter/EMT Delano Christie, Captain Paramedic Chris Hickman, Captain Paramedic Anthony Ortiz, Firefighter Paramedic Theron Remington, and Firefighter Paramedic Brian Stoothoff and two retired members. Council President Dreyer recognized the team for their impactful mentorship efforts within the department and the broader community.

Captain Paramedic Anthony Ortiz expressed gratitude for the President's Award and shared insights into the evolution of the Ocala-Marion Fire Rescue Mentorship Program. Initially developed as a recruitment tool, the program has grown into a broader initiative supporting personal and professional development across the community.

He highlighted the program's outreach efforts, which include working with military veterans seeking new career paths and engaging with high school students exploring future opportunities. Through hands-on experiences and guidance, the program helps participants discover suitable career directions, including roles in fire rescue, law enforcement, and other city departments.

Ortiz emphasized the program's impact, noting that some participants have gone on to join the department, including two current team members. He acknowledged the challenges and rewards of mentorship and expressed pride in contributing to the growth of young individuals.

Council President Dreyer added that the program had secured over 50 career opportunities in the last quarter alone, commending the team's dedication to preparing the next generation of first responders, military personnel, and medical professionals.

5. Presentations

5a. Comments by outgoing Council President

Council President Dreyer reflected on the past year, highlighting steady progress, investments in public safety, technology modernization, recreation, and neighborhood revitalization. She expressed gratitude to Council members, staff, and citizens for their support and engagement. She concluded by presenting personalized gifts to Council members sourced from local businesses and welcomed the incoming leadership.

5b. Presentation of Plaques and Gifts

Council President Dreyer presented gifts filled with goodies from local small businesses to her fellow City Council Members and Mayor Marciano.

President Pro Tem Bethea presented a plaque to Council President Dreyer in appreciation of her service.

5c. Swearing-In of Reelected Council Members

1. City Council District 1 – Barry Mansfield
2. City Council District 3 – Jay A. Musleh
3. City Council District 5 – James P. Hilty Sr.

5d. Swearing-In of Mayor Ben Marciano

5e. Council Reorganization

1. Election of Council President Ire J. Bethea Sr.

RESULT: APPROVED

MOVER: James P. Hilty Sr

SECONDER: Jay A. Musleh

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

2. Election of Council President Pro-Tem Jay A. Musleh

RESULT: APPROVED

MOVER: Kristen M. Dreyer

SECONDER: James P. Hilty Sr

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

3. Change of seating and name plates

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: Kristen M. Dreyer

SECONDER: James P. Hilty Sr

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

- 6a. Agreement to accept Victims of Crime Act grant funds received from the State of Florida, Office of the Attorney General, in the amount of \$59,412

Presentation By: Michael Balken

- 6b. Budget Resolution 2026-115 to amend the Fiscal Year 2024-25 budget to accept and appropriate Victims of Crime Act grant funds received from the State of Florida, Office of the Attorney General, in the amount of \$59,412

Presentation By: Michael Balken

- 6c. Expenditures for utility services provided by SECO Energy for Fiscal Year 2025-26 with an estimated expenditure of \$84,000

Presentation By: Peter Brill

- 6d. Resolution 2026-8 to amend each respective community redevelopment plan for the four redevelopment subareas: West Ocala, East Ocala, North Magnolia, and Downtown

Presentation By: Aubrey Hale

- 6e. Appointment of Donald Gulling to the Downtown Ocala Redevelopment Area Advisory Committee for an unexpired term ending March 1, 2029

Presentation By: Angel Jacobs

- 6f. Minutes from November 18, 2025 City Council Meeting

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 - December 16, 2025)

- 8a.** Ordinance 2026-4 designating a historic landmark at the southeast corner of 117 E Silver Springs Boulevard (Parcel ID# 2823-064-007) and installing a historic marker titled “Elvis in Ocala, Tom Petty Inspired” (Quasi-Judicial)

Introduced By: James P. Hilty Sr

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

- 9a.** Ordinance 2026-1 to amend the code of ordinances for permitted uses in the M-1, Light Industrial, zoning district to include churches/places of worship located on major and minor arterial roadways subject to supplemental regulations (COD25-0003)

Presentation By: Emily Johnson

Introduced By: Ire J. Bethea Sr

Council President Dreyer opened the public hearing.

Senior Planner Emily Johnson presented a proposed code amendment to allow churches and places of worship as permitted uses in the M-1 Light Industrial zoning district, specifically along major and minor arterial roadways. The amendment includes supplemental regulations and special exception requirements for associated uses such as private schools and daycares. Staff and the Planning Commission recommended approval.

Jimmy Gooding, Applicant’s Attorney, 1531 SE 36th Avenue, explained the historical and procedural background of the proposed ordinance amendment to allow churches and medical offices in the M-1 zoning district. He noted the property's location in a historically industrial area and emphasized the ordinance’s intent to permit such uses only along major and minor arterial roadways. He confirmed staff review and support for the amendment and offered to answer questions.

No public comment.

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

RESULT: ADOPTED

MOVER: Barry Mansfield

SECONDER: Jay A. Musleh

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

- 9b.** Ordinance 2026-2 to change the future land use designation on approximately 10.36

acres (Parcel 21454-000-00) located at 2500 NW 31st Avenue from Medium Intensity/Special District to Employment Center (Case LUC25-0005) (Quasi-Judicial)

Presentation By: Emily Johnson

Introduced By: James P. Hilty Sr

Senior Planner Emily Johnson presented a request to change the future land use designation of approximately 10.36 acres from Medium Intensity Special District to Employment Center, and to rezone the property from R-1 and R-2 residential to M-1 Light Industrial. The change aligns with adjacent industrial uses, including a nearby landfill and Commerce Park, and supports unified development. Staff and the Planning and Zoning Commission recommended approval.

No public comment.

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

RESULT: ADOPTED

MOVER: James P. Hilty Sr

SECONDER: Kristen M. Dreyer

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

- 9c.** Ordinance 2026-3 to rezone approximately 10.36 acres (Parcel 21454-000-00) located at 2500 NW 31st Avenue from R-1, Single-Family Residential and R-2, Two-Family Residential to M-1, Light Industrial (Case ZON25-0012) (Quasi-Judicial)

Presentation By: Emily Johnson

Introduced By: Jay A. Musleh

Council President Dreyer opened the public hearing.

Planner Emily Johnson discussed the adoption of Ordinance 2026-3. The applicant requested to rezone the property from R-1 (Single Family Residential) and R-2 (Two Family Residential) to M-1 (Light Industrial). She provided a brief overview of the property's history, zoning, and staff findings. Planning & Zoning Commission and staff recommend approval.

No public comment.

There being no further 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

10. General Business

- 10a.** Redevelopment Agreement between the City of Ocala and Marion Opportunity Zone Investment I, LLC, for the rehabilitation and redevelopment of the historic Hotel Marion property, with total City incentives not to exceed \$2,896,670

Presentation By: Aubrey Hale

Rob Batsel, Applicant's Attorney, 1531 SE 36th Avenue, Ocala, FL 34471, provided a brief history of the historic Hotel Marion.

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

- 10b.** Purchase of physical security equipment from Morse Communications Inc., including digital cameras, building access controls, and alarms with an estimated expenditure \$245,725

Presentation By: Christopher Ramos

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

- 10c.** One-year renewal of software maintenance agreement with Harris Corporation for the City's customer management system, Cogsdale, with an estimated expenditure of \$258,373

Presentation By: Christopher Ramos

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

- 10d.** Renewal of agreement for professional electric transmission design and engineering services with GAI Consultants, Inc., in an amount not to exceed \$2,500,000

Presentation By: Doug Peebles

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

- 10e.** Utilization of Florida Department of Management Services cooperative purchasing agreement with Point Blank Enterprises for the purchase of replacement ballistic vests for the Ocala Police Department SWAT team in the amount of \$161,449

Presentation By: Michael Balken

Council Member Hilty questioned what happens to the old vests. Police Chief Balken explained the the police department has donated ballistic vests to smaller agencies, but noted the material in the vests degrades over time.

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

- 10f.** Authorization to enter into a purchase and sale agreement for real property located along the 1900 block of NW 21st Street, approximately 10.49 acres, further identified by parcel ID: 21943-000-00, in an amount not to exceed \$868,000

Presentation By: Roberto Ellis

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

- 10g.** Three-year renewal of the Agreement for Agent of Record and Insurance Consulting Services with Risk Management Associates, Inc., with a total contract value not to exceed \$270,000

Presentation By: Todd Swanson

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

11. Internal Auditor's Report

12. City Manager's Report

- **Light Up Ocala event**

City Manager Pete Lee reported the City hosted a successful Light Up Ocala event with over 30,000 people in attendance.

- **Council Board appointments**

City Manager Pete Lee reviewed Council Board appointments. Council preferred keep their current assignments.

Council Member Dreyer reminded Council members of the importance of attending the TPO meetings, and to contact alternate TPO member Council Pro Tem Musleh if they need to miss a meeting.

- **Ocala Golf Course update**

City Manager Pete Lee provided a brief update on completed/planned improvements for the Ocala Golf Course.

13. **Ocala Police Department Report**

- **Overview of Crime and Traffic Stops**

Police Chief Mike Balken reported on crime data for the period, November 10, 2025 to November 23, 2025: 7,106 total incidents, 4,474 proactive calls, 2,632 dispatched calls, quadrant breakdown (dispatched versus proactive), 267 crimes, 177 arrests, 847 traffic stops, and 161 crashes.

- **Department Highlights**

Police Chief Mike Balken reported the department hosted a successful Light Up Ocala event. Furthermore, the department is preparing for the Ocala Christmas Parade on December 13, 2025.

14. **Ocala Fire Rescue Department Report**

- **Unit Responses**

Fire Chief Clint Welborn reported on unit responses for a two-week period, November 18, 2025 to December 1, 2025. The two busiest units: Fire Rescue Four (164-unit responses) and Fire Engine One (120-unit responses).

- **Service calls update**

Fire Chief Clint Welborn reported on call type spotlights for a three-week period, November 18, 2025 to December 1, 2025: motor vehicle accidents 92, structure fires 1, and community paramedicine/core 22, and calls for service 968 (23,072 calls-to-date).

- **Department Highlights**

Fire Chief Clint Welborn reported the department successfully concealed a fire on Thanksgiving Day. Furthermore, the Department partnered with several non-profit organizations to collect non-perishable goods and supplies before December 5, 2025. He encouraged the public to attend the upcoming Ocala Christmas Parade on December 13, 2025.

15. City Attorney's Report

16. Public Comments

- **Jason Tolbert, 1700 NE 50th Avenue, Ocala, FL, discussed a mixed-use proposal for City Council to consider**

Jason Tolbert, 1700 NE 50th Avenue, Ocala, FL, discussed a mixed-use proposal (Ocala Opportunity Tower) for City Council to consider. He provided a brief overview of the following: housing crisis solution, commercial project phase, project funding (estimated cost \$3.8 million), and projected revenue.

- **Kibbie Fulton, 520 NE 1st Avenue, Ocala, FL, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**

Kibbie Fulton, 520 NE 1st Avenue, Ocala, FL, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom. She requested the Mayor take into consideration the residents in the community.

- **Shane Bores, 887 NW 6th Terrace, Ocala, FL 34475, requested the Mayor meet with residents in the community to discuss Kratom**

Shane Bores, 887 NW 6th Terrace, Ocala, FL 34475, requested the Mayor meet with residents in the community to discuss Kratom. He requested City Council take into consideration the residents in the community.

- **Jimmy Voelkel, 129 Marion Oaks Drive, Ocala, FL 34473, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**

Jimmy Voelkel, 129 Marion Oaks Drive, Ocala, FL 34473, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom. He shared how Muddy Lotus Tea's social environment with Kratom products has helped him combat alcohol addiction.

- **Dillon Craig Aldridge, 2950 NE 14th Street, Ocala, FL 34470, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**

Dillon Craig Aldridge, 2950 NE 14th Street, Ocala, FL 34470, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom. He shared his wonderful experience working at the Muddy Lotus Tea and consuming Kratom products.

- **Brigitte Smith, 4275 SW 85th Avenue, Ocala, FL, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**

- Brigitte Smith, 4275 SW 85th Avenue, Ocala, FL, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom. She explained the medical properties of Kratom, as well as the difference between the natural leaf products served at Muddy Lotus Tea and the synthetic version, 70H. Furthermore, she shared how medical Kratom has greatly benefited her health as an active nurse in the community.
- **Serena Mojica, 731 SE 13th Street, Ocala, FL 34471, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**
Serena Mojica, 731 SE 13th Street, Ocala, FL 34471, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom. She shared her wonderful experience working at the Muddy Lotus Tea and explained how Kratom products support the underserved residents in the community.
 - **Christy House, 240 NW 137th Terrace, Ocala, FL 34482, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**
Christy House, 240 NW 137th Terrace, Ocala, FL 34482, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom. She shared her wonderful experience consuming Kratom for healing purposes at the Muddy Lotus Tea.
 - **Wesley McNair, 1756 NE 3rd Avenue, Ocala, FL, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**
Wesley McNair, 1756 NE 3rd Avenue, Ocala, FL, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom. He shared his wonderful experience consuming Kratom for healing purposes at the Muddy Lotus Tea.
 - **Mitchell Tucker, 401 NW 1st Avenue, Ocala, FL, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**
Mitchell Tucker, 401 NW 1st Avenue, Ocala, FL, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom. He shared his wonderful experience visiting the welcoming social environment at the Muddy Lotus Tea.
 - **Heather Cook, 4100 NE 37th Place, Ocala, FL 34480, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**
Heather Cook, 4100 NE 37th Place, Ocala, FL 34480, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom. She shared her wonderful experience consuming Kratom for healing purposes at the Muddy Lotus Tea.
 - **Kimberly Bailey, 11616 SE 55th Avenue, Bellview, FL 34420, encouraged the Mayor and City Council to support Muddy Lotus Tea and Kratom**
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17. Informational Items and Calendaring Items

- Tuesday, December 16, 2025 - 4:00pm - City Council meeting - Council Chambers
- Wednesday, December 24 and Thursday, December 25, 2025 - Christmas Eve & Christmas Day Holidays - City Offices closed
- Thursday, January 1, 2026 - New Year's Day Holiday - City Offices closed
- Tuesday, January 6, 2026 - City Council meeting - Council Chambers
- Tuesday, January 20, 2026 - City Council meeting - Council Chambers
- 17a.** Power Cost Adjustment Report - October 2025
- 17b.** Fully Executed Contracts Under \$50,000

18. Comments by Mayor**- Kratom Bill**

Mayor Marciano expressed concern about the local impact of kratom, citing personal experiences and community feedback, including youth struggling with addiction. He emphasized the need for federal regulation, supported potential state-level legislation, and called for local action to address synthetic drug sales and promote a healthier community environment. He plans to bring forward related proposals at a future meeting.

- Light Up Ocala event

Mayor Marciano recognized the City for hosting a successful Light Up Ocala event. Additionally, he encouraged the public to tag him on social media or email, to share acts of kindness during the holiday season.

19. Comments by City Council Members

- **Council Member Mansfield recognized past Council President Dreyer for her great leadership**
- **Council Member Hilty recognized Council Member Dreyer for her service as the past Council President**
- **Council Member Dreyer commented on the importance of TPO attendance**

Council Member Dreyer discussed the importance of TPO attendance. Furthermore, she reminded Council that the TPO meeting is held on the fourth Tuesday of every month.
- **Council Pro Tem Musleh expressed gratitude to be able to serve on the City Council for another term and recognized past Council President Dreyer for her great leadership**
- **Council President Bethea recognized past Council President Dreyer for her great leadership**

20. Adjournment

- **Adjourned at 6:00 pm**

Minutes

Ire J. Bethea Sr.
Council President

Angel B. Jacobs
City Clerk