

# FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 CONTINUED BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES



July 10, 2025  
5:30PM  
City Hall Lake Butler  
200 SW 1<sup>st</sup> Street  
Lake Butler, Florida 32054

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## MINUTES – Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Workshop CONTINUED

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### 1. Call to order – Roll Call

Mayor Hendrix called the continued budget workshop to order at 5:31pm.

#### **Roll Call:**

City Commission – Commissioner Sirmones, Commissioner Redman, Commissioner Stephenson, Vice-Mayor Huggins (Microsoft Teams)

City Staff – City Manager Hayes, Administrative Assistant Page, Finance Director Mecusker

Absent – City Attorney Maines

#### a. Admin Content

*If a person decides to appeal a decision made with respect to any matter at this meeting or hearing, he or she will need a record of the proceedings and may need to ensure that a verbatim record is made.*

### 2. City Commission Discussion on 2025-2026 Annual Operating Budget (FOR CITY COMMISSION DISCUSSION ONLY).

City Commission Budget Workshop. Discussion of 2025-2026 Annual Operating Budget.

Mayor Hendrix explained that this workshop is just for discussion, and that no voting will take place, and is just for the Board to say what they want to have included in the upcoming budget, and that the Board will most likely need to schedule another workshop. Mayor Hendrix opened the floor to discussion.

Mayor Hendrix said that City Manager Hayes and Finance Director Mecusker asked the Board to bring any wants or needs they have to the workshop and stated that Mrs. Hayes and Mr. Mecusker also had a list of things that the City staff has requested.

Mayor Hendrix informed City Manager Hayes that regarding the underground locator, she was able to get some pricing and will provide that to her later and explained to the Board what the locator is.

Commissioner Stephenson referenced request item #5 from the letter from Mrs. Hayes for new carpet for City Hall that has been in place since 2005, making it 20 years old, and expressed that the carpet is in good enough shape and condition and suggests it be removed from the request list, because it is not needed, and stated that his understanding is if the Board agrees to keep these items in the workshop, and once the budget is fully approved, then the Board would not have another chance to revisit or consider these changes because they would already be approved and it would be a done deal.

Mayor Hendrix and City Manager Hayes both stated that this is the purpose of the workshops, is to bring these kind of items up for discussion, and Mayor Hendrix asked about the budget workpaper page 5, concerning the expense account titled Capital Outlay for City Hall for \$10,000 and said that we already spent \$1,305 and asked if she was reading the document properly. Finance Director Mecusker explained that this is a very rough draft of the budget, and the items that were requested were accounted for in the PROPOSED budget that is a work in process.

Mayor Hendrix clarified on her question, and was just making sure she understood what it said.

Commissioner Redman stated that the Capital Outlay account is not necessarily for carpet, but for other things in City Hall that could be improved.

Finance Director Mecusker explained the root and purpose of the original dollar amount came from, referencing the air conditioner problems that were occurring a couple of years ago.

Mayor Hendrix reiterated her question and concern regarding the Capital Outlay expense account, stating that there is some money that we have not spent yet in that account, that could be used for carpet.

City Manager Hayes clarified her decision on not replacing the unit, and stated that the company told her that it needs to be replaced, but that we would not fix it until it is broke.

Commissioner Redman elaborated on what Mayor Hendrix is saying regarding the Capital Outlay, stating that in the event that they wanted to use the remaining approximately \$8,000 for carpet, then they could.

City Manager Hayes & Finance Director Mecusker stated that the cost to replace carpet would not come close to the \$8,000 and would be more.

Commissioner Redman asked if the new carpet is something that is really needed. City Manager Hayes responded stating it was more of a want, and stated that some staff members have allergy problems and are consistently sneezing, but stated that she could get it cleaned like she did last year.

Mayor Hendrix asked if we needed the carpet, or if we could do just tile floors.

City Manager Hayes stated that she when she was at the County, she redid the floors and took out the carpet cause of the allergy issues.

Commissioner Redman stated that parts of the carpet can be replaced, and not all of it.

City Manager Hayes stated that the Board room is in good condition and would not need to be replaced.

City Manager Hayes reiterated that the new carpet is a want, whereas the locator is a need, and the Board collectively agreed the need for the underground locator.

Commissioner Stephenson referenced the other items listed on the request list, naming the new vehicle, the Christmas by the Lake, and the approximately \$10,000 locator, and stated that none of these items were budgeted before.

Mayor Hendrix explained that these items are for the next year's budget, and that we have to spend a certain amount of money, and that we should honestly do Capital Outlay of some kind each year.

City Manager Hayes referenced item #4, Christmas by the Lake, stating that would be using CRA funds. Mayor Hendrix stated we would be making money off of this event, by charging for the rental of Christmas trees.

City Manager Hayes reiterated that she had requested the Board to bring to the table ideas and suggestions, and stated that the carpet is a want, not a need, and that these were brought to the Board for discussion.

Commissioner Redman asked about the item requesting a vehicle, and Mayor Hendrix asked why we needed another one. City Manager Hayes explained that the vehicle that Mike Gray is driving, the timing belt is not working, and it is in bad shape. Mayor Hendrix stated that was a newer truck, like a 2018 or something, referenced vehicle #9. City Manager Hayes clarified that the 4-wheel drive one is the vehicle that Jason took for the Sprayfield, and that the one Mike started driving is in bad shape. City Manager Hayes explained that she was not aware that the truck Mike has been driving is in such bad a shape. Mayor Hendrix asked what the price was, and City Manager Hayes said the last one she bought while at the County was around \$44,000, and Mayor Hendrix stated that she will do some checking, and referenced the 2 used vans that the City had purchased from the City of Gainesville Fleet Management.

Mayor Hendrix said that Christmas by the Lake is sort of like a fundraiser, and that the City would get back some of the money that is put into it, and City Manager Hayes said that we could charge for food trucks to set up for the event, and that if this would move forward, she wants to put together a committee with citizens to get involved and come up with some ideas to make it better, and referenced the Christmas decorations at Green Cove Springs. Mayor Hendrix said that we needed to bring more to the City, and stated that she had spoken with Union County Commissioner Melissa McNeal about a fall festival too, to bring more to the City.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about the decorations and lighting on Main Street and asked if we were doing anything about those. City Manager Hayes explained that she was going to be getting all new decorations and also fix the light bulbs, and fix the black lantern lights, and is waiting to see where the budget was at, and stated that the lantern lights are within the CRA district per Mr. Mecusker, and that funds from CRA could be used to fix those lights, and said that the City had to work with FPL to get the wiring redone so it meets FPL standards, and that FPL said that the current wiring can stay as is until the City and FPL can work together to fix the wiring situation on the power poles, and said that FPL said that we are good for this year, and they would look and see if there was any funding to help the City pay for the rewiring, and stated that she has built a very good relationship with the ladies at FPL, but they said to move forward with the current wiring setup.

Mayor Hendrix referenced request item #2, the cost-of-living increase, and referenced the 5% increase given last year, and referenced increasing the crossing guards for the minimum wage requirement and stated that the increase should affect the crossing guard and part-time people as well. Mayor Hendrix stated that her concern is with the people that just started, that the COLA should only be for the people who have been here more than 6 months.

Commissioner Redman asked if we had any employees that have been here for less than 6 months, and City Manager Hayes responded saying yes.

Mayor Hendrix also referenced the increases that took place due to State Statutes as well, referencing the employees who went from \$50,000 to \$58,000.

Commissioner Redman stated that she would also like to see the Crossing Guards receive an increase as well, agreeing with Mayor Hendrix's earlier comment.

Vice-Mayor Huggins expressed agreement with Mayor Hendrix's comment regarding the 6-month probationary period, and suggested it be a 12-month period before they were to be considered for an increase, and also agreed with increasing the Crossing Guards because they are getting the kids of the community across the street safely, and asked if there was any increase that took place last year for the crossing guards. Mayor Hendrix said that because of the minimum wage act, they went from \$14 to \$15, so they got that extra dollar last year.

Vice-Mayor Huggins referenced the COLA adjustments, stating that it did not encompass the City Commission. Vice-Mayor Huggins proposed a 5% increase to the City Commission for their involvement and contributions to the City. Mayor Hendrix explained that there has not been an increase for the City Commission in quite some time, and confirmed Vice-Mayor Huggins' point of the 3% increase for the full-time and part time employees who have been here longer than a year, and the 5% for the Commission.

City Manager Hayes reminded the Board that she had proposed an increase for the Commission last year, and Mayor Hendrix stated that the focus was the staff last year, and that she would agree with Vice-Mayor Huggins' point. Commissioner Redman asked if we could do 5% across the board for everybody. Mayor Hendrix clarified on Vice-Mayor Huggins' point of 3% for staff here longer than a year and 5% for the commissioners, and Vice-Mayor Huggins confirmed. Vice-Mayor Huggins also stated that last year, the focus for the increase was aimed at staff for their hard work, but that this year, a suggestion is for the commissioners to get a 5% increase, and a 3% increase for staff.

Finance Director Mecusker clarified and explained the positions the City has, part-time, OPS, full-time, salary positions.

Mayor Hendrix clarified that whatever the permanent part-time people, excluding OPS, would get the 3% increase, and that any part-time would be subject to the increase.

Commissioner Stephenson said that the Commission gets paid for what they are worth, and referenced Mr. Walker and the stuff that he did, and said that this Board is the Board that let him get away with what he did, and that we are only 1 year out with the new regime, and that we are starting to track a much better financial picture than what we had before, and now we are going to give ourselves a raise. Mayor Hendrix stated that she does not see an issue with the 5% increase, reiterating that the Commission has not received an increase in a long time. Commissioner Stephenson responded stating the Commission knew that when they ran for office. Mayor Hendrix stated they did not receive a raise last year. Mayor Hendrix also explained that when you look at the percentage, it is not that much of an increase. Finance Director Mecusker confirmed it would not be much of an increase for all 5 commissioners.

Vice-Mayor Huggins provided his calculations, stating it would be approximately \$20.94 per pay period of an increase. Vice-Mayor Huggins explained that he understands that the Commissioners are part-time, but that he can compare to the increases of the County Commissioners, and references the sacrifices made, and that the Board was all in agreement to not take an increase last year, and that we all agreed to take care of the employees, and that was the purpose of his proposal.

Commissioner Redman commented and explained what happens when the Commission hires a City Manager, and stated she does not believe in micromanaging, and that when she attends meetings, and asks questions, she hopes they would give her correct answers, and stated that she is not an accountant, but that she puts a lot of faith in the City Manager, and that she has worked with 3 different managers while being on the Commission.

Commissioner Redman stated that with the other City Managers, she trusted them to do the right thing and be upfront with them, and stated that with what happened under Mr. Walker, she will take some responsibility for what happened, but that when she went to him, and got the paperwork, it looked legit, we have the money, and he showed us we have the money, but if you do not tell us about certain things that come in, and that with previous city managers had their act together, and that she expects all the city managers to have their act together, and does not expect to be over their shoulder 24/7, and even still, they can blindside you.

Mayor Hendrix stated that she is a numbers person, and when she got there, and asked him questions, and it did not look right, she started digging deeper, and looked through one thing after another, and attended some board meetings, and brought documents to the meetings, and asked for credit card statements too, because he was just not telling the truth.

Commissioner Redman stated that she did not go back and look, and that she did not have that problem with previous city managers.

Mayor Hendrix stated that we are definitely moving in the right direction, and that we have a city manager now who is very tight financially, and that she works her job and treats it like her own checkbook, and that the Board is doing very good about checking everything and keeping an eye on everything, and referenced that she was at City Hall for awhile, and that she no longer has to come up several times a day, because she trusts Mrs. Hayes and staff.

City Manager Hayes commented on the proposal for the commission's increase, recapping that last year, she tried to do that and she thinks for what they do, and what their responsibilities are, and all the calls they get, and that they are the face of the City, and the City Hall staff are in the office, but the Commissioners are the ones getting the complaints, phone calls, and with the expectations of the Board, she feels they do deserve a raise for what they do.

Commissioner Redman clarified the 3% for employees and 5% for commissioners, excluding the ones in the probationary period of one year, and the effective date would be 10/1 that they would need to be here to be considered for the increase.

Commissioner Redman clarified that we will budget for the equipment.

Mayor Hendrix reviewed the list, stating that the consensus of the Board for item #1 is a yes for the equipment.

Item #2 for the consensus of 3% for the staff, full and part time, excluding the probationary staff, and 5% for the commission, Huggins says yes, Redman says yes, Stephenson says yes, Sirmones said yes, and Hendrix said yes.

Item #3 for the new vehicle – Mayor Hendrix suggested getting together some numbers, or maybe a vehicle inventory. City Manager Hayes said that she will get them a list of the City's fleet. Finance Director Mecusker asked about the new employee and the vehicle they are assigned. Mrs. Hayes explained that Gabe is in training, and would be with Jason most of the time, and we will make do with that. Mayor Hendrix asked if we still had the dog catcher truck, and City Manager Hayes confirmed yes but that she has gotten with Mike to have that listed on Gov Deals when things settle down. Mayor Hendrix suggested having an updated list of the inventory at the next budget workshop. Commissioner Stephenson asked about the mosquito spraying equipment, City Manager Hayes explained that the equipment is currently on a trailer but is in process of being moved to the truck, and that spraying should start soon. Mayor Hendrix confirmed that this is further discussion for the next budget workshop, and the board agreed.

Item #4 for Christmas by the Lake – the board's consensus was a unanimous approval.

Item #5 for replacing the carpet at City Hall would be a no at this time, and the board agreed to not recarpet the building at this time. City Manager Hayes said that she can have the carpet cleaned, like last year. Vice-Mayor Huggins asked City Manager Hayes about the carpet upstairs, if it is any thicker, and it is the same carpet. City Manager Hayes said this can be at a later time, and can have it cleaned, and Mayor Hendrix stated that maybe do a room at a time, using inmate labor to lay tile.

Mayor Hendrix referenced the wish list Mrs. Hayes asked for and referenced the Community Center, with the condition of the floor and the stove. City Manager Hayes she would get some quotes for fixing the floor and would also get pricing for a new stove. Mayor Hendrix suggested just sprucing up the Community Center since we raised the rates. Commissioner Redman asked about the broken tables at the Community Center, and Mrs. Hayes responded saying that we have ordered new tables and have taken out the old ones.

Mayor Hendrix also asked if it was possible to finish the sidewalk from McDonald's to the curve to connect to the sidewalk recently installed on NW 3<sup>rd</sup> Street a couple of years ago. Mayor Hendrix asked about getting cameras put up at all the parks due to the increase in vandalism. City Manager Hayes explained that she was already planning on cameras, and was hoping to get some in August, after the budget is reviewed. City Manager Hayes also stated that she hopes to upgrade the cameras at Lakeside Park as well to be able to zoom in.

Mayor Hendrix referenced the dog pens, and City Manager Hayes stated that she is working with the Public Works Director on this, and Mayor Hendrix also asked if there was a way to bring the animals inside when it is cold, because the City got a lot of negative feedback from leaving them out in the cold or inclement weather. City Manager Hayes said that she is hoping to work with rescues to make sure the animals are not outside during these times, and Mayor Hendrix asked if there was a way they can be stored in the Public Works building in the event the rescue groups cannot pick them up. City Manager Hayes said that we will do better with the dogs during bad weather now.

Mayor Hendrix referenced previous sensitive discussions regarding the Depot building and explained the original purpose of the building and suggested installing a shower head and code locks for the hikers to use. City Manager Hayes explained that she is already working on this and has already discussed it with staff this week.

Commissioner Stephenson asked about the lights from NAPA to SR 100 and asked for a study to be done to see if we can improve that lighting for the people that walk that sidewalk often. Commissioner Stephenson also referenced the splash park, and clarified that there is an owner that is willing to spend around \$30,000 to fix it, if that will fix it, but in any event, if the City wants to get it fixed, it is going to

cost a lot of money and that he was not sure if there was any money in the budget to cover that.

Mayor Hendrix responded and stated that we may not be able to handle the paying of that, and that it may be a couple hundred grand, at a minimum, and that would probably have to be a grant. Mayor Hendrix stated that a few citizens as well as the Rotary have offered to help with fixing it too.

City Manager Hayes explained that Bart Andrews has the plans now, and Mayor Hendrix stated that he has a plumber that are going to partner up, and City Manager Hayes that it is in their hands now to see if they can fix that, and if that doesn't work, then we can go to plan B, like she had said, maybe work something out with the City of Starke who she has spoken with on the phone, who said they may be interested in helping fix it for us, but she does not know how much it will cost. Mayor Hendrix explained that there is not just one thing wrong with the splash park, and that there are many issues with it, and that while it is down, the things that need to be fixed can be fixed so that when the switch is ready to turn on, it is ready to go.

Mayor Hendrix explained to the Board that we do budget for the park and the Splash Pad, and referenced page 8 of the budget workpaper that lists the repair expense accounts, and stated that we can use some of the CRA dollars for Lakeside Park, that is in our CRA section, but maybe we can look at Westside Park and that Fletcher Myers park is getting lots of attention with new fencing, and getting that ready for the dedication, but that there is not a lot budgeted for Westside Park.

Mayor Hendrix reviewed the dollar amounts listed in repairs and maintenance to the parks and the splash park, and suggested that if we do not need as much money for Lakeside Park, that we can increase the amount in the splash park account and reduce the Lakeside Park account and stated that as long as the money is in the same bucket, than money can be moved from line to line.

Commissioner Stephenson suggested moving the money that was set aside for new carpet to the splash park account, and Mayor Hendrix stated that is an option.

Mayor Hendrix and the Board suggested moving the carpet money to the repairs for the splash park.

Commissioner Stephenson asked if the City received any FEMA funds for the hurricane damages from last year, and City Manager Hayes responded that we are still working with them and and that they have asked for our insurance policy, and we are providing them all the information they have requested and that it is a work in progress and that it takes a very long time.

Finance Director Mecusker stated to the Board that he would go over it with City Manager Hayes and would have it ready at the next budget workshop.

Finance Director Mecusker and City Manager Hayes stated that this would be reviewed line by line now that they know the Board's thoughts and wishes, and that it can be explained more in depth, and Mayor Hendrix stated that these workshops really help with the budget process.

Vice-Mayor Huggins stated he was aligned with what the rest of the Board has suggested. The Board discussed the possibility of purchasing a golf cart for the City.

Commissioner Sirmones agrees with the rest of the Board regarding improvements to the Community Center regarding the floor, stove, and fridge. Mayor Hendrix suggested getting a bigger fridge.

Finance Director Mecusker referenced the rental of the Townsend Green Building, and reviewed the rates with the Board, stating that we are charging the same for both buildings, and the Board collectively agreed the rates for renting the Townsend Green Building need to be reduced due to the difference in size, and Mayor Hendrix suggested that this can be brought up at the next regular meeting if that was possible. City Manager Hayes stated it can be added to the July agenda.

Mayor Hendrix stated that the consensus on the golf cart was a yes.

Mayor Hendrix reviewed the requested improvements to the Community Center, with the commercial stove and commercial sized fridge, as well as the floor.

Mayor Hendrix stated that the next budget workshop can be set up to continue to the next one.

City Manager Hayes stated that August 13 – 16 is the Florida League of Cities conference, and that would not be a good week. The Board suggested August 7<sup>th</sup>.

Finance Director Mecusker said that it would be very tight trying to close the books for July 31<sup>st</sup> and prepare the budget, it would be very difficult, and suggested after the conference would be better.

The Board suggested August 21<sup>st</sup>, and that date works for everyone, and the time was agreed upon to be 5pm.

The continued budget workshop would take place on Thursday, August 21, 2025 at 5:00pm and Mayor Hendrix set the continuation of the Budget Workshop for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 to August 21, 2025 at 5:00pm.

3. Workshop Adjournment or Continuance:

**IN THE EVENT THE BOARD DOES NOT COMPLETE THE DISCUSSION, THE MAYOR CAN SET A DATE AND TIME TO CONTINUE THIS WORKSHOP.**