



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
MAY 11, 2026, SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL MEETING
OFFICIAL MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watford called the special meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on May 11, 2026, at 9:00 A.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast 3rd Avenue, Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The invocation was offered by Mayor Watford; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice Mayor Clark.

II. ATTENDANCE

City Clerk Lane Gamiotea called the roll. Members physically present to establish a quorum: Mayor Dowling R. Watford, Jr., Vice Mayor Monica M. Clark, Council Members Noel A. Chandler, Robert "Bob" Jarriel, and David R. McAuley.

III. NEW BUSINESS

A. The purpose of the meeting is to conduct the interviews for the City Administrator position. A Candidate Appraisal Form for each applicant was distributed to the City Council listing the 10 questions to be asked of each, an area for comments and to rate the responses as outstanding, above average, average, below average, or inadequate. Should any of the City Council need the applicant to elaborate further on an answer, they may ask at that time. Copies of each individual applicant's entire application submittal and a two-page "Do's and Don'ts of Interviews" document were distributed by HR Generalist Prince prior to the meeting. All documents distributed were incorporated into **Exhibit 1** of the official Minute File. Mayor Watford provided instructions to the candidates regarding the interview process and asked the applicants to be seated in the reception area of the Administration Office during the interviews as a professional courtesy to each other. All agreed, leaving the Chambers. HR Generalist Prince escorted the individual applicants into the Council Chambers for their interview.

B. The City Council interviewed the applicants in the following order: Mr. Mark Schneider, and Mr. Doug Baber. Mr. Baber distributed a copy of his application, letters of reference, Diplomas, and cover letter which were also provided to the City Council by HR Generalist Prince.

Mayor Watford called for a recess at 10:12 A.M. and reconvened at 10:23 A.M.

Mr. Demetre Riles and Ms. Denise Whitehead were interviewed following the recess.

C. The City Council then discussed each of the applicants' qualities and what a difficult decision this is due to the quality of applicants interviewed. Each were to rank their No. 1 and No. 2 selection on the Candidate Appraisal Form. City Clerk Gamiotea collected the completed Candidate Appraisal Forms and announced Ms. Whitehead was ranked No. 1 on all five forms. Mr. Baber was ranked No. 2 on three of the forms, Mr. Schneider was ranked No. 2 on one form, and Council Member Chandler chose not to submit a No. 2 selection. Mr. Baber, Mr. Riles, and Ms. Whitehead joined the meeting (Mr. Schneider had to leave for another engagement), **Mayor Watford announced the City Council selected Ms. Denise Whitehead to offer the position of City Administrator, should a contract not be able to be negotiated, the position will be offered to Mr. Douglas Baber. City Attorney Fumero was instructed to begin negotiations with Ms. Whitehead and bring the proposed employment agreement for City Council consideration as soon as possible.**

IV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 11:32 A.M.

Submitted By:

Lane Gamiotea, CMC, City Clerk

Please take notice and be advised that when a person decides to appeal any decision made by the City Council with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, s/he may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceeding is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. City Clerk media are for the sole purpose of backup for official records of the Clerk.