



**CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA**  
**MAY 19, 2026, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**OFFICIAL MINUTES**

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Watford called the regular meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on May 19, 2026, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue (AVE), Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida. The invocation was offered by Pastor Matt Bowen of Christ Fellowship Church; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Council Member McAuley.

**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. AGENDA AND PUBLIC COMMENTS**

- A. There were no modifications made to the published agenda, although Exhibits 9, 10, and 11 were added and noted with their item.
- B. Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member McAuley to adopt the agenda as published.  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**
- C. No comment cards were received for public participation for issues not on the agenda.

**IV. CONSENT AGENDA**

Motion by Vice Mayor Clark, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to:

- A. Dispense with the reading and approve the May 5, 2026, Minutes [as presented in **Exhibit 1**];
- B. Approve the April 2026 Warrant Register [in the amounts of General Fund, \$781,606.95; Other Grant Capital Fund, \$242,514.00; Appropriations Grant Fund, \$129,860.39; Public Facilities Improvement Fund, \$32,532.39; and Capital Improvement Projects Fund, \$528.97; as presented in **Exhibit 2**];
- C. Approve Prime Contract Change Order No. 001, Contract Reduction No. 1, reducing payment to Proctor Construction in the amount of \$96,600.91 and Prime Contract Change Order No. 002, Contract Reduction No. 2, reducing payment to Proctor Construction in the amount of \$8,410.16 for City purchased materials [as presented in **Exhibit 3**]; and
- D. Temporarily close a portion of Southwest (SW) 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, and 4<sup>th</sup> AVEs between North and South Park Streets from 12:00 P.M. on September 6, 2026, to 5:00 P.M. on September 7, 2026, for the Labor Day Festival as submitted by Okeechobee Main Street (OKMS) [as presented in **Exhibit 4**].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

**V. NEW BUSINESS**

- A. The Regional Executive Director of Camelot Community Care, Inc., Ms. Amanda Capalbo, conveyed the urgent need for foster homes in our County. She noted that many of the Okeechobee children have to be placed in foster homes in Broward County as there are no local homes to place them. This oftentimes removes them from the one safe, constant adult or home they know. She gave several methods members of the community can do to help this crisis. First, apply to become a foster home. Second, apply to become a temporary respite foster parent, this can be a short-term commitment such as staying with children in a foster home to give the foster parents a weekend away. Third, provide financial sponsorship for foster families and agency events through Camelot. The City Council thanked Ms. Capalbo for sharing this vital information with them and the community. **This item was for informational purposes only.**
- B. Mr. John Hayford, Executive Director for the Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA), gave an update of ongoing projects. A seven slide PowerPoint presentation has been added to the official Minute file, labeled **Exhibit 9**. First, the SW 5<sup>th</sup> AVE Septic to Sewer Project: the contract was signed earlier today, the Notice to Proceed is forthcoming. Construction is estimated to begin during the rainy season, with the Contractor having one year to complete the Project. The design, permitting, construction and associated costs will be covered by the Florida Department of Environmental Protection Appropriations and United States Department of Agriculture Loan/Grant. The cost to property owners will be the OUA connection fee, abandonment of their septic tank and permit, and the installation of the pipe connecting the house to the streetside collection point of the sewer system.

## V. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- B. Continued. Property owners have the option to do the work themselves, hire a contractor, or authorize the OUA to bid the work with it to be covered by the OUA from other grants. After the property owner decides which route they will choose, they either pay the fees and costs in full or initiate a payment agreement with the OUA.

Second, the SW 2<sup>nd</sup> AVE Vacuum Pump Project: Mr. Hayford stated this Project is on the OUA Board Meeting agenda for June to approve the contract. The vacuum pump will be shared with the SW 5<sup>th</sup> AVE Project as it is being installed between both Projects. **This item was for informational purposes only.**

- C. Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Council Member McAuley to approve a [Temporary Park Use] Permit Application by OKMS to host a Summer Concert Series on July 3, August 7, and September 7, 2026, from 5:00 P.M. to 9:00 P.M. in Settlers Square, [FLAGLER PARK, as presented in **Exhibit 5**].  
**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- D. Deputy City Clerk Katie Rogers gave an update on the **City Hall 100 Year Building Celebration**, advising the City Council she has been attending meetings with staff from Okeechobee County, and Ms. Magi Cable to organize festivities to celebrate City Hall, the Okeechobee County Historical Courthouse, and the Okeechobee High School Freshman Campus building turning 100 years old in 2026. The County will be holding their celebration events in September. Most recently, Mrs. Rogers held brainstorming sessions with City staff to get ideas for the City's celebration. With the City Council's approval, they would like to host a community-wide event on Friday evening, November 13, 2026, with a 1926 theme. The event may include food trucks, a self-guided tour throughout City Hall using a Scavenger Hunt Game and a grand prize for the winner, face painting, balloon animals, a 1920's/100-Years Old Costume Contest with prizes, a photo booth, and possibly a disk jockey. One huge idea that will require help from the public and past employees to provide photographs is to show what the original offices were used for and/or how they were arranged by using decorations and/or enlarged photographs. For example, the current location of the Finance Department offices was the Mayor's Office, Police Department, a jail cell and a small kitchen that was used to prepare meals for the prisoners. Executive Assistant Jacqueline Boer confirmed with members of the Culture of Collaboration that the lights in the trees in FLAGLER PARKS can be lit by November 13, 2026. Then the remaining Christmas elements (lighted displays) could be lit in conjunction with the City's Annual Tree Lighting Ceremony, to be held on its normal date, which would be Tuesday, December 1, 2026.

Mayor Watford and several Council Members noted their excitement and approval. Mayor Watford asked for an invitation to the event be extended to the City Hall Architect's family. During the discussion, it was noted that the then Fire Chief, Mr. Olen Godwin, and his family lived on the second floor of City Hall. The Council Chambers was also located upstairs. Mayor Watford asked Mrs. Rogers to contact Mr. Jimmy Godwin (son of the late Chief Godwin) to see whether a diagram could be drawn of how the apartment and Council Chambers were laid out, and especially if there were any photographs from that time.

Mayor Watford then offered a \$100.00 reward he would personally sponsor, to the first person able to provide an authentic photograph of Mr. W.E. Holmes, the only missing photo from the "Wall of Mayors" in the Council Chambers. The document Deputy City Clerk Rogers read during her presentation has been added to the official Minute File, labeled **Exhibit 10**. **This item was for informational purposes only.**

- E. Motion by Council Member Chandler, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to amend the City Council Regular Meeting 2026 Schedule as adopted by Resolution No. 2025-05, canceling the December 1, 2026, Meeting [as presented in **Exhibit 6**].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- F. Motion by Council Member McAuley, seconded by Vice Mayor Clark to approve a Grant Agreement for the Local Government Cybersecurity Grant Program with the State of Florida Department of Management Services, Contract No. DMS-25/26-175 [as presented in **Exhibit 7**].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

- G. Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Vice Mayor Clark to approve the Interlocal Agreement with Okeechobee County relating to the Collection of Impact Fees [as presented in **Exhibit 8**].

**Motion Carried Unanimously.**

## VI. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

A copy of this update that was read from was added to the official Minute File, labeled as **Exhibit 11**.

- Advised that City Attorney John Fumero was doing well following his surgery.

**VI. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE CONTINUED**

- Reviewed the current Code Enforcement Special Magistrate Employment Contract and determined it was within the automatic renewal years.
- In discussion with Ms. Denise Whitehead to finalize the City Administrator Employment Agreement, including her potential start date. A virtual meeting is scheduled for May 21, 2026.
- Attended the May 12, 2026, Code Enforcement Special Magistrate Hearing remotely.

**VII. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE**

- Gave a status update on the City Hall Hardening Project; the windows should be delivered in two weeks. Once received, Proctor Construction will install them one office at a time. After the installation is complete, the exterior paint will be touched up by the painters. The new window frames will be bronze. The landscaping will be redone after the Public Safety Building remodeling is completed. Public Works Director Hall is working on getting the lights working or replaced along the City Hall parking lot.
- Proctor Construction has measured the Public Safety Building and is currently working on the design estimate to be presented later in June. The project is projected to be completed by Thanksgiving.
- Ms. Connie Vanassche with CAS Governmental Services, LLC., has been filing the required reports for the grants on both building projects.
- Gave an advanced warning that an increase to the CAS contract will be proposed in the Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget due to Ms. Vanassche and her staff's outstanding work.
- Advised the resurfacing project in the City's Commerce Center has been completed.

**VIII. COUNCIL COMMENTS**

- Council Member Chandler stated he is proud to be part of the events happening around the City.
- Council Member Jarriel reminded all about Memorial Day.
- Council Member McAuley stated he tested the response time for both the Okeechobee Police Department and Okeechobee County Fire Rescue and advised against storing lithium batteries by a house as they can catch fire.


Mayor Watford reminded everyone:

- There is a Memorial Day Service being held in Veterans' Memorial Square, FLAGLER PARK, at 10:00 A.M. on Monday, May 25, 2026.
- The Red, White, and Blue BBQ is on Saturday, May 30, 2026.
- To RSVP to the Treasure Coast Council of Local Governments and Treasure Coast Regional League of Cities Joint BBQ which will be held at the Okeechobee Methodist Church on Wednesday, June 3, 2026, beginning at 10:00 A.M.

**IX. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further items, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:18 P.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.