



CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FLORIDA
AUGUST 18, 2026, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL MEETING
AND BUDGET WORKSHOP FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026-27
OFFICIAL MINUTES

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Watford called the regular meeting of the City Council for the City of Okeechobee to order on August 18, 2026, at 6:00 P.M. in the City Council Chambers, located at 55 Southeast 3rd Avenue (AVE), Room 200, Okeechobee, Florida (FL). The invocation was offered by Council Member McAuley; followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Vice Mayor Clark.

II. ATTENDANCE

Deputy City Clerk Katie Rogers called the roll. Members 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. Mayor Watford announced the following modifications to the published agenda: the motion for Consent Agenda item V.A.2. to read "as revised;" withdraw Public Hearing item VI.B.; and add New Business item VII.C., Exhibit 10. Additional documents distributed at the meeting have been added and noted with their items.

B. Council Member Jarriel made a motion, seconded by Council Member McAuley to adopt the agenda as amended.

Motion Carried Unanimously.

C. No comment cards were received for public participation for issues not on the agenda.

IV. PRESENTATIONS

A. Mayor Watford recognized the 12U "O"zone Division 1 Youth Baseball Team as State Champions by presenting the Team with a Certificate of Outstanding Achievement and read into the record as follows: **"The City Council is proud to recognize your dedication, sportsmanship, and team spirit throughout the 2026 season and extend our congratulations on your hard-earned FL Diamond Youth State Championship."** [The "O"Zone Players who were present and recognized were Ryhett Morris, Talan Flores, Griffin Cook, Levi Rodriguez, Keagan Leiva, Remy Luviano, James Gagliardi, Caston Storey, Racey Buckner, Kaleb Crawford, Korbin Koedam, and Cale Ferrell; Coaches present and recognized were Cody Storey, Matt Crawford, and Ireneo "Neyo" Flores. A copy of the certificate presented has been added to **Exhibit 1** of the official Minute File].

V. CONSENT AGENDA

Vice Mayor Clark made a motion, seconded by Council Member Jarriel to:

A. Dispense with the reading and approve the following Minutes:

1. July 29, 2026 [as presented in **Exhibit 2**];
2. August 4, 2026, as revised [and presented in **Exhibit 3**]; and

B. Approve the July 2026 Warrant Register [in the amounts of General Fund, \$770,152.79; Capital Improvement Projects Fund, \$216,157.11; Other Grant Capital Fund, \$198,587.69; Appropriations Grant Fund, \$47,250.00; and Public Facilities Improvement Fund, \$31,980.46, as presented in **Exhibit 4**].

Motion Carried Unanimously.

VI. MAYOR WATFORD OPENED THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATION (LDR) AMENDMENTS AT 6:12 P.M.

A. Motion by Vice Mayor Clark, seconded by Council Member Chandler to read by title only, proposed Ordinance No. 1329, providing for Text Amendments to the LDRs Definitions Section 66-1, Mixed-Use and Residential Planned Unit Developments (PUD-M) and (PUD-R) and their Permitted Uses, Code Sections to be amended are 90-416 through 90-419, and 90-428 through 90-434, as requested in Application No. 25-001-TA submitted by Erin Lees of WGI, Inc on behalf of the Applicant, Edison Real Estate Partners, LLC [as presented in **Exhibit 5**].

Motion Caried Unanimously.

VI. PUBLIC HEARING CONTINUED

- A. Continued. Assistant City Attorney Stephen Conteagüero read into the record the title of proposed Ordinance No. 1329 as follows: **"AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FL; PROVIDING FOR AMENDMENT TO PART II OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE CODE OF ORDINANCES, SUBPART B - LDRS, WITHIN CHAPTER 66 - GENERAL PROVISIONS, SPECIFICALLY AMENDING SECTION 66-1. - DEFINITIONS PROVIDING FOR AMENDMENTS TO CHAPTER 90 - ZONING, ARTICLE III. - DISTRICTS AND DISTRICT REGULATIONS, DIVISION 13. - PUD-R DISTRICT SPECIFICALLY AMENDING SECTIONS 90-416. - GENERALLY, AND 90-417. - PERMITTED USES, RENAMING AND AMENDING SECTION 90-418. - FROM DIMENSIONAL TO DEVELOPMENT STANDARDS, AMENDMENT TO SECTION 90-419(1). - ADDITIONAL REGULATIONS; PROVIDING FURTHER AMENDMENTS TO SAID CHAPTER 90, DIVISION 14. - REGULATIONS APPLICABLE TO ALL PUD-M AND PUD-R DISTRICTS, SPECIFICALLY AMENDING SECTIONS 90-428. - GENERAL DEVELOPMENT REVIEW STANDARDS, 90-429. - PETITION REQUIREMENTS FOR REZONING TO PUD-M OR PUD-R DISTRICT, 90-430. - OTHER REQUIREMENTS AND CONDITIONS, 90-431. - STATUS OF AN APPROVED PUD-M OR PUD-R DEVELOPMENT, 90-432. - REVIEW AND APPROVAL PROCESS FOR REZONING PUD-M AND PUD-R ZONING DISTRICTS, 90-433. - AMENDING AN APPROVED PLANNED DEVELOPMENT AND ADDING SECTION 90-434. - DEVIATIONS, AS SUBMITTED IN LDR TEXT AMENDMENT APPLICATION NO. 25-001-TA; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**

Motion by Council Member Chandler, seconded by Council Member McAuley to approve the second reading, and adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1329 [as recommended by the Planning Board and Planning Staff, and based on the findings of facts outlined in the revised Staff Report].

City Planner Ben Smith of Morris-Depew and Associates, 2914 Cleveland AVE, Fort Myers, FL 33901, attending remotely, noted that the revised Ordinance includes the requested change from the first reading. Specifically, Section 3, Code Section 90-418(9) now requires all single family and multi-family dwelling units to be at least 1,000 square feet. He added that this requirement is also defined elsewhere within the Code.

Vice Mayor Clark and Council Member Jarriel expressed concern over eliminating the minimum parcel size and permitting residential structures up to 45-feet in height, without requiring a Special Exception. Planner Smith responded with the following points: Code permits a maximum height of 45-feet in Residential Multiple Family Districts and 30-feet in Residential Single Family-One Districts. He advised against lowering the 45-feet height limit to maintain alignment with State Statutes and Senate Bill 180 (effective October 1, 2027, though currently in litigation), which prohibits municipalities from adopting more restrictive LDRs. He recommended against requiring Special Exceptions for 45-feet heights, clarifying that Special Exceptions apply to property/building uses; whereas Deviations and Variances govern dimensional uses. The City can adopt PUD Development Standards tailored to surrounding neighborhoods and remain protected under Code Section 90-428(2). Proposed PUDs undergo a multi-step review, including Site Plan Review, the Planning Board recommendations, and multiple City Council Public Hearings for Rezoning and Plat Approvals. There were no comments from the public.

Roll Call Vote: Chandler – Yea, Clark – No, Jarriel – No, McAuley – Yea, Watford – Yea.
Motion Carried with Vice Mayor Clark and Council Member Jarriel Voting No.

- B. **ITEM WITHDRAWN FROM AGENDA:** Motion to read by title only, approve the second reading, and adopt proposed Ordinance No. 1328, providing Text Amendments to the LDRs PUD-M and the Permitted Uses, Code Sections to be amended are 90-401 through 90-415, as requested in City initiated Application No. 26-001-TA (**Exhibit 6**). Planning Board and Planning Staff recommend adoption. The item was withdrawn by City Planner Smith. The final Public Hearing for this item will be rescheduled to be held in conjunction with the final Public Hearing for proposed Ordinance No. 1330.

MAYOR WATFORD CLOSED THE PUBLIC HEARING FOR LDR AMENDMENTS AT 6:41 P.M.

VII. NEW BUSINESS

- A. Public Safety Director/County Fire Rescue Chief Justin Hazellief presented the second quarter (April through June 2026) Fire Services update pursuant to the Interlocal Agreement [a seven page report was distributed and added to **Exhibit 7** of the official Minute File]. Call Volume and Service Demand, totaled 342 calls, while Fire Prevention Activity (Inspections), totaled 137. The average incident response time was 4 minutes and 52 seconds, a reduction from 5 minutes in the second quarter of 2025 and 5 minutes and 23 seconds in the first quarter of 2026.

VII. NEW BUSINESS CONTINUED

- A. Continued. Community outreach, public relations, and training events conducted across the first and second quarters totaled 16. Fire Chief Hazellief noted ongoing partnerships with the Army Corp of Engineers, South Florida Water Management District, and the National Weather Service (NWS). He stated that while the current hurricane season is trending below average, the NWS predicts a wetter-than-normal winter for 2026. Pending County approval of the Bass Pro Shops project (anticipated August 20, 2026) Station 2 (Treasure Island) will initially handle emergency responses for the site. Upon execution of a pending agreement with the Okeechobee Utility Authority (OUA), a new Fire Rescue Station will be constructed on State Road 78 to serve as the primary response unit for this area. **This item was for informational purposes only.**
- B. Motion by Council Member Jarriel, seconded by Vice Mayor Clark to adopt a new Drug Free Workplace Policy to include the classification change of medical marijuana and clarification of the definition of mandatory testing positions [as presented in **Exhibit 8**].
Motion Carried Unanimously.
- C. **ITEM ADDED:** Motion by Council Member McAuley, seconded by Vice Mayor Clark to adopt proposed Resolution No. 2026-08, approving the Sale of the East 1.69 acres of Tract A, CITY OF OKEECHOBEE COMMERCE CENTER, Plat Book 7, Pages 10 through 14, Okeechobee County public records located at 850 Northeast (NE) 9th Street (ST), in the amount of \$245,050.00 [as presented in **Exhibit 10**].

Assistant City Attorney Conteagüero read into the record the title of proposed Resolution No. 2026-08 as follows: **"A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF OKEECHOBEE, FL, AUTHORIZING THE SALE OF CITY-OWNED REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 850 NE 9TH ST, OKEECHOBEE, FL, BEING A PORTION OF TRACT "A", CITY OF OKEECHOBEE COMMERCE CENTER, TO CEL & MOR PROPERTIES LLC, AS SUCCESSOR IN INTEREST TO WSF PROPERTIES, LLC; APPROVING AND AUTHORIZING EXECUTION OF A DEED AND ALL RELATED CLOSING DOCUMENTS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE."**
Motion Carried Unanimously.

VIII. CITY ATTORNEY UPDATE

A copy of the written update, as read by Assistant City Attorney Stephen Conteagüero, was added to the official Minute File, labeled as **Exhibit 11**.

- Prepared Resolution No. 2026-08, which was added to the agenda and adopted.
- Attended remotely and participated in the Code Enforcement Special Magistrate Hearing on August 11, 2026.
- Continuing review of the Public Safety Building Design Build Plans with Proctor Construction. Proctor currently holds the Plans.
- Completed the Building Permit Review Guidelines draft, which is currently undergoing City staff review.
- Drafted an Ordinance to remove the Technical Review Committee from Sunshine Law requirements and submitted it to City staff for review prior to City Council consideration.

IX. CITY ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

- Due to the absence of Administrator Whitehead, no verbal report was given. Mayor Watford extended condolences to Administrator Whitehead and her family for their recent loss. Then noted the July 2026 Monthly Department Report was distributed prior to the meeting and directed the City Council members to contact Executive Assistant Boer with any questions. A copy of the report was added and labeled as **Exhibit 12** in the official Minute File.

X. COUNCIL COMMENTS

- Council Member Jarriel inquired about the opening timeline for Culver's in Park Street Commerce Center. Mayor Watford stated multiple delays regarding the OUA sewer connection and reassigning the easement, a road dedication, and paving have caused issues. Opening is anticipated in November.
- Council Member McAuley noted the Florida League of Cities (FLC) is taking action regarding Constitutional Amendment 3 and urging municipal officials to inform residents about potential impacts on local municipal services.
- Mayor Watford congratulated Council Members Jarriel and McAuley on their unopposed re-elections and expressed appreciation to citizens for their continued trust in the City Council's leadership.

XI. MAYOR WATFORD RECESSED THE REGULAR MEETING AND OPENED THE FISCAL YEAR (FY) 2026-27 BUDGET WORKSHOP AT 7:11 P.M.

- A. The purpose of the Workshop is to review and discuss the proposed Budget for FY 2026-27, as revised based on the consensus and discussions during the August 4, 2026, Workshop, **Exhibit 9**.

XI. BUDGET WORKSHOP CONTINUED

A. Continued. For the purposes of this Workshop, only the spreadsheet pages of the General Fund, Public Facilities Improvement Fund, and Capital Improvement Projects Fund of the Budget Booklet were provided.

General Fund (pages 1 through 3) provided the detailed line-item breakdown (or source) of the estimated revenues. The Official State revenue figures have still not been released. The sub-totals of each source category are: beginning Fund Balance, \$4,342,502.00; using the lower Millage Rate of 5.8962 generates an estimated \$3,185,005.00 in ad valorem property tax revenue. \$1,035,000.00 from Other Fees and Revenues, \$2,227,250.00 from Intergovernmental Revenues, \$1,846,580.00 from Charges for Services, \$25,300.00 from Fines, Forfeitures, and Penalties, \$350,000.00 Uses of Money and Property, \$79,750.00 from Other Revenues, \$54,400.00 to be transferred from the Capital Improvement Projects Fund (Reserves), and \$350,000.00 to be transferred from the Public Facilities Improvement Fund.

Estimated Expenditures reduced from the August 4, 2026, Budget Workshop now total, \$9,153,285.00. Departmental Budgets (pages 4 to 22) are as follows:

0511-Legislative/City Council, (pages 4 and 5)	Total Personnel:	\$ 81,900.00
	Total Operating:	\$ <u>94,100.00</u>
	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 176,000.00
0512-Executive/Administration (pages 6 and 7)	Total Personnel:	\$ 234,250.00
	Total Operating:	\$ <u>74,200.00</u>
	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 308,450.00
1512-Executive/Human Resources (pages 8 and 9)	Total Personnel:	\$ 84,150.00
	Total Operating:	\$ <u>28,000.00</u>
	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 112,150.00
2512-Executive/City Clerk (pages 10 and 11)	Total Personnel:	\$ 302,900.00
	Total Operating:	\$ <u>84,350.00</u>
	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 387,250.00
0513-Finance (pages 12 and 13)	Total Personnel:	\$ 268,350.00
	Total Operating:	\$ <u>120,550.00</u>
	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 388,900.00
0514-Legal Services (page 14)	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 140,950.00
0519-General Services (pages 15 and 16)	Total Personnel:	\$ 232,100.00
	Total Operating:	\$ <u>481,600.00</u>
	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 713,700.00
0521-Police Department (pages 17 and 18)	Total Personnel:	\$ 3,398,980.00
	Total Operating:	\$ <u>614,650.00</u>
	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 4,013,630.00
Personnel costs were reduced based on eliminating the second School Resource Officer position.		
0522-Fire and 0529-Public Safety (pages 19 and 20)	Total Personnel (Retirement):	\$ 55,000.00
	Fire Contractual Services:	\$ 928,205.00
	Operating for Public Safety Building:	\$ <u>54,500.00</u>
	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 1,037,705.00
The Fire Contractual Services estimated fee was reduced after being provided by the County.		
0541-Public Works (pages 21 and 23)	Total Personnel:	\$ 829,500.00
	Total Operational:	\$ <u>1,045,050.00</u>
	FY 2026-27 Proposed Total:	\$ 1,874,550.00

The **Public Facilities Improvement (Transportation) Fund** (page 23), figures were presented as follows: beginning Fund Balance, \$419,982.00; projected Revenues, \$787,500.00; estimated Expenditures, \$812,500.00; plus \$350,000.00 to be transferred to the General Fund. Fund Balance, \$44,982.00.

XI. FY 2026-27 BUDGET WORKSHOP CONTINUED

A. Continued. The **Capital Improvement Projects Fund** (page 24), figures were presented as follows: beginning Fund Balance, \$2,508,367.00; projected Revenues, \$40,000.00; estimated Expenditures, \$1,355,000.00; plus \$54,400.00 to be transferred to General Fund. Fund Balance, \$1,138,967.00 The Capital Projects earmarked are: \$20,000.00 for the Finance Department; \$50,000.00 for the General Services Department; \$235,000.00 for Law Enforcement; \$25,000.00 for the Public Works Department; \$15,000.00 for Parks; \$10,000.00 for the Tree Program; and \$1,000,000.00 for road infrastructure.

Due to the projected increases in revenues (highlighted in Exhibit 9, pages 1 to 3) and reduction of expenditures, **by majority consensus of the City Council, staff was directed to prepare the FY 2026-27 proposed Budget applying the roll-back millage rate of 5.8321 for consideration at the September 3, 2026, First Budget Hearing.**

XII. MAYOR WATFORD ADJOURNED THE BUDGET WORKSHOP AND RECONVENED IN REGULAR SESSION AT 7:26 P.M.

A. There were no unfinished items or issues from the Budget Workshop requiring official action.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further items of discussion, Mayor Watford adjourned the meeting at 7:26 P.M.

Submitted By:



Lane Gamiotea, CMC, City Clerk