



CITY OF WINTER GARDEN

City Commission REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

April 24, 2025

REGULAR MEETING of the Winter Garden City Commission was called to order by Mayor Rees at 6:30 p.m. at City Hall, 300 West Plant Street, Winter Garden, Florida. An Opening Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance were given.

Present:

Mayor John Rees
Commissioner District 1 - Lisa L. Bennett
Commissioner District 2 - Iliana R. Jones
Commissioner District 3 - Chloe Johnson
Commissioner District 4 - Colin Sharman

Also Present:

City Manager Jon C. Williams
City Attorney Kurt Ardaman
City Clerk Angela J. Grimmage

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Commissioner Johnson to approve regular meeting minutes of April 10, 2025, as submitted. Seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried unanimously 4-0.

2. PRESENTATIONS

- A. **Proclamation 25-07**: Proclaiming May as Public Service Recognition Month was read and presented by Mayor John Rees and the City Commission.

Commissioner Sharman arrived at this point in the meeting.

- B. **Proclamation 25-08**: Proclaiming May 1, 2025, as a National Day of Prayer was read by Mayor John Rees.

3. First Reading and Public Hearing of Proposed Ordinance

- A. **Ordinance 25-14**: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, AMENDING SECTION 78-50 OF CHAPTER 78, ARTICLE II OF THE WINTER GARDEN CODE OF ORDINANCES CONCERNING UTILITY ACCOUNT DEPOSITS; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinance 25-14 by title only. Finance Director Laura Zielonka stated that Ordinance 25-14 amends Section 78-50 of the City's Code of Ordinances. She noted that it would reduce the time for returning residential utility account deposits from a two-year period to one year. She also mentioned a non-interest-bearing account, which would eliminate having to pay interest on a deposit.

Mayor Rees opened the public hearing; hearing and seeing none, he closed the public hearing.

Motion by Commissioner Jones to approve Ordinance 25-14 with a second reading and public hearing on May 8, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Bennett and carried unanimously 5-0.

4. **REGULAR BUSINESS**

A. **Recommendation to approve Garden Theatre Business Plan and authorize City Manager implement operational next steps to reopen Theatre as a public benefit**

Economic Development Director Marc Hutchinson noted that the agenda packet contained a 14-page business plan detailing the proposed direction that the City would like to take for the theatre. He noted that he would give a PowerPoint presentation to summarize those plans. His presentation included some background history of the theatre, an economic and marketplace overview, business model and programming options, as well as financial/operating considerations. Furthermore, Mr. Hutchinson provided the business plan values and philosophy, recommendations, and noted the rental rates. He stated that the next steps would be programming and related operating requirements. Also mentioned was the partnering with a third-party management company, assessment and cure of any renovation needs, as well as efforts to launch the reopening of the Garden Theatre.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve the Garden Theatre Business Plan and authorize the City Manager implement operational next steps to reopen the Garden Theatre as a public benefit. Seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried unanimously 5-0.

B. **Recommendation to approve Special Event – Summer Sidewalk Sale in downtown Winter Garden on Saturday, August 2, 2025**

Economic Development Director Marc Hutchinson described the Summer Sidewalk Sale event, associated activities, and noted the scheduled event date of Saturday, August 2, 2025. He noted that there would be no road closures with this event. Staff recommended approval.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve the Special Event for the Summer Sidewalk Sale in downtown Winter Garden on Saturday, August 2, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 5-0.

5. **MATTERS FROM PUBLIC**

Norine Dworkin, VoxPopuli of Winter Garden, addressed a proclamation request for a day of reasoning, which she alleged was denied. She noted that proclamations are at the discretion of Mayor Rees and spoke of questions she had asked the City Manager, which were all referred back to Mayor Rees. Ms. Dworkin read a proclamation entitled a National Day of Reason.

Mayor Rees voiced concerns regarding those that have no respect for our country, for our flag, for the pledge of allegiance, and no respect for this City Commission. He expressed that it is sad.

6. MATTERS FROM CITY ATTORNEY

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman informed of the Orange County Redistricting Commission undergoing the task of redistricting the entire Orange County. He stated that districts would go from six to eight to balance population throughout the County. He asked the City Commission if they had a preference to having a single County Commissioner represent the City of Winter Garden along with Ocoee, Oakland, and Windermere as municipalities of West Orange County or whether there was no preference at all. Furthermore, Mr. Ardaman noted the City of Ocoee likely wanting to band together with the City of Winter Garden as they have common interests. There was discussion on this decision needing to be made quickly, and that the decision for the eight districts had already been finalized.

It was the **consensus** of the City Commission to move forward with banding together with the other West Orange County municipalities regarding the redistricting. City Attorney Ardaman stated that he would collaborate with the City Manager for crafting a letter to the Orange County Redistricting Committee, letting them know that the City of Winter Garden would like to be consolidated with the other municipalities and be kept in the same district as one County Commissioner. Furthermore, Mr. Ardaman mentioned that the population in this area may require also incorporating some other areas of Orange County.

7. MATTERS FROM CITY MANAGER

City Manager Jon C. Williams announced the Bloom and Grow Society celebration of National Arbor Day at Tucker Ranch and described some event activities. He also announced the upcoming SoBo Art event and noted the availability of VIP tickets.

8. MATTERS FROM MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Sharman noted the earlier proclamation for staff was well deserved and thanked staff for doing a good job.

Commissioner Johnson echoed Commissioner Sharman's comments and thanked staff for all their hard work.

Commissioner Jones thanked staff for everything they do and for keeping the City so beautiful.

Commissioner Bennett thanked Economic Development Director Marc Hutchinson for his presentation and noted how staff does things to make the Commission's job so much easier.

Mayor Rees expressed that it is a joy living here because of our staff and expressed his appreciation.

The meeting adjourned at 7:16 p.m.

ATTEST:

APPROVED:

_____/S/_____
City Clerk Angela J. Grimmage

_____/S/_____
Mayor John Rees