



**City Commission and
Community Redevelopment Agency
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

April 23, 2026

A **Regular Meeting** of the City of Winter Garden City Commission was called to order by Mayor Rees at 6:30 pm. 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 - A. Kurt Ardaman
Interim City Clerk - Ronisha Martin

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Regular Meeting Minutes – April 9, 2026

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to approve the regular meeting minutes of April 9, 2026. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 5-0.

2. PRESENTATIONS

A. **PROCLAMATION 26-07:** Proclaiming Public Service Recognition Week was read by Mayor John Rees and the City Commission. Senior Human Resources and Risk Manager Kimberly Helfant accepted the proclamation on behalf of all city employees. Mayor Rees voiced his appreciation for all the hardworking city employees.

3. FIRST READING AND PUBLIC HEARING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE

A. **ORDINANCE 26-11:** AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, VACATING AND ABANDONING A PORTION OF THE PLAT DEDICATED UTILITY AND DRAINAGE EASEMENT UPON LOT 478 AND TRACT P, OAKLAND PARK UNIT 5, ACCORDING TO THE PLAT THEREOF RECORDED AT PLAT BOOK 101, PAGE 73, PUBLIC RECORDS OF ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE AND RECORDING

City Attorney Kurt Aradaman read ordinance 26-11 by title only. Planning Director Kelly Carson stated that the applicant is requesting to vacate drainage and utility easements at 841 Tilden Oaks Trail and 15411 East Oakland Avenue to combine the lots for a mixed-use building approved as part of the McKinnon Square Planned Commercial Development (PCD) at the March 26, 2026, City Commission meeting. She noted that approval is contingent upon the easement vacation. Staff recommended approval.

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

Motion by Commissioner Jones to approve Ordinance 26-11 with second reading and public hearing May 14, 2026. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 5-0.

4. SECOND READING AND PUBLIC HEARING OF PROPOSED ORDINANCE

- A. **ORDINANCE 26-10:** AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 14, SECTION 14-1 OF THE CITY CODE TO REPEAL AND REPLACE EXISTING ANIMAL CONTROL PROVISIONS AND TO ADOPT THE ORANGE COUNTY ANIMAL SERVICES ORDINANCE, AS AMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME, BY REFERENCE; AMENDING CHAPTER 14, SECTION 14-2 TO ESTABLISH CITYWIDE LEASH AND DIRECT CONTROL REQUIREMENT FOR ANIMALS IN PUBLIC SPACES; AMENDING CHAPTER 27, SECTION 27-9 RELATING TO DOMESTIC ANIMALS IN PARKS AND RECREATION FACILITIES; AMENDING CHAPTER 118, ARTICLE XII, SECTION 118-1612 RELATING TO THE DOG FRIENDLY DINING PROGRAM; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinance 26-10 by title only. Economic Director Marc Hutchinson stated that section 14-2 related to leash and control requirements was revised. He further explained that the ordinance amends Chapters 14, 27, and 188 to enhance public safety, reinforce regulatory language, align with Orange County Animal Control standards, and update requirements for the dog-friendly dining program. Mr. Hutchinson further noted that there are no anticipated adverse costs for pet-friendly businesses. Staff recommended approval.

There was a brief discussion regarding dog parks and leash length requirements.

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

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to adopt Ordinance 26-10. Seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried unanimously 5-0.

5. REGULAR BUSINESS

- A. **RESOLUTION 26-05:** A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN PURCHASING MANUAL ADOPTED BY RESOLUTION NO. 25-06; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, CODIFICATION, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Resolution 26-05 by title only. Finance Director Laura Zielonka stated that the resolution adds additional language related to federal procurement spending for federally expended grants. She further noted that the proposed changes ensure compliance with applicable federal regulations and satisfy requirements for federal grant funding. Staff recommended approval.

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to approve Resolution 26-05. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 5-0.

- B. Recommendation to approve contract with T. D. Thomson Construction, Inc. to remove and replace sidewalks in Regency Oaks, Daniels Crossing and Daniels Road in the amount of \$224,649.64

Assistant City Manager of Public Services Stephen Pash stated that this request is to approve four purchase orders with T.D. Thomson Construction, Inc., to remove and replace damaged sidewalks in Regency Oaks, Daniels Crossing, and both sides of Daniels Road. He further noted that the project included 7,648 square feet of 5-foot-wide sidewalk and 3,970 square feet of 10-foot sidewalk, along with root pruning, grading, and sod repair. Staff recommended approval.

There was discussion regarding project costs and sidewalk conditions, with Mr. Pash noting the locations were identified based on complaints and field review of the most damaged areas.

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to approve contract with T.D. Thomson Construction, Inc to remove and replace sidewalks in Regency Oaks, Daniels Crossing and Daniels Road in the amount of \$224,694.64. Seconded by Commissioners Johnson and Jones simultaneously and carried unanimously 5-0.

- C. Recommendation to approve RFQ 26-001-ED rankings and authorize staff to negotiate awarding contract to DNA Event Creative, LLC as the Presenting Partner of the Garden Theatre

Economic Development Director Marc Hutchinson stated that the city issued RFQ 26-001-ED seeking proposals from performing arts organizations to serve as the presenting partner for the Garden Theatre. He noted that seven proposals were received and evaluated by the selection committee, with DNA Event Creative, LLC determined to be the highest-ranked, most responsive, and best-qualified proposer. Staff recommended approval.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve RFQ 26-001-ED rankings and authorize staff to negotiate awarding contract to DNA Event Creative, LLC. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 5-0.

- D. Recommendation to approve SPECIAL EVENT – Shop, Dine and Stroll – Downtown Winter Garden on Saturday, May 2, 2026

Economic Development Director Marc Hutchinson described the Shop, Dine, and Stroll event scheduled for May 2, 2026, featuring downtown shopping, raffles, and live entertainment with no road closures. Staff recommended approval.

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to approve SPECIAL EVENT – Shop, Dine and Stroll – Downtown Winter Garden on Saturday, May 2, 2026. Seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried unanimously 5-0.

- E. Recommendation to approve SPECIAL EVENT – Summer Sidewalk Sale event in

Downtown Winter Garden on Saturday, August 1, 2026

Economic Development Director Marc Hutchinson described the Summer Sidewalk Sale event and associated activities and noted the scheduled event date of Saturday, August 1, 2026, in conjunction with the back-to-school tax holiday, with no road closures. Staff recommended approval.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve SPECIAL EVENT – Summer Sidewalk Sale event in Downtown Winter Garden on Saturday, August 1, 2026. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 5-0.

- F. Recommendation to approve SPECIAL EVENT - West Orange High Sen'ya Later School Parade Downtown – Wednesday, May 13, 2026 - 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. with street closure
Planning Director Kelly Carson stated that this is a request for West Orange High School to hold their Sen'ya Later parade. She noted the time, staging location, parade route, and no vehicles included, except for the one permitted golf cart, with a temporary road closure. Staff recommended approval subject to conditions.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve SPECIAL EVENT – West Orange High Sen'ya Later School parade Downtown on Wednesday, May 13, 2026 with street closure. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 5-0.

Dispense as City Commission and convene as the Community Redevelopment Agency at 6:50 p.m.

Members Present:

CRA Chairman John Rees and CRA Members Lisa L. Bennett, Iliana R. Jones, Chloe Johnson, Colin Sharman and CRA Advisory Board Member Larry Cappleman

Members Absent:

Orange County Appointee Charlie Mae Wilder

- G. Recommendation to authorize City Manager execute Retail Strategies Inc. Consulting Agreement in the amount of \$50,000 annually for three years
Economic Development Director Marc Hutchinson stated that recent market changes impacting the normal ebb and flow of the downtown area have prompted the city to explore targeted strategies to support small businesses while maintaining its established vision. He explained that the city is seeking to engage Retail Strategies Inc. to provide data-driven analysis, including market and business mix strategies, stakeholder engagement, and actionable recommendations, along with ongoing support for business recruitment and retention. He further stated that the agreement is for a three-year term, with year one focused on recommendations and years two and three proving continued support. Staff recommended approval.

CRA member Larry Cappleman stated that the Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board (CRAAB) held a video call with Retail Strategies Inc. and emphasized the need to include CRA boundaries, including East Winter Garden, and to conduct annual performance reviews to ensure effectiveness.

Mayor Rees allowed public comment.

Troy Knight, 1427 Hawkesbury Court, Winter Garden, Florida, inquired about funding sources and was informed that it would be funded through Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) funds.

Heidie Hardman, 505 Macchi Avenue, Oakland, Florida, inquired how the program would support small businesses, particularly those relocated or in a less desirable area. Mr. Hutchinson responded that the approach would be data and stakeholder driven, providing tailored strategies, policy recommendations, incentives, and potential relocation solutions to support small businesses.

CRA member Larry Cappleman stated that the agreement is a positive follow-up to the city's original plan and provides an opportunity to evaluate current conditions and guide future progress. He noted the importance of annual reviews to ensure meaningful results and highlighted that Retail Strategies Inc. will engage the community to align business recruitment with public interest, enhancing the diversity and long-term success of downtown businesses.

Motion by CRA Member Larry Cappleman to authorize City Manager execute Retail Strategies Inc. Consulting Agreement, subject to annual review in the amount of \$50,000 annually for three years. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 6-0.

Adjourn as Community Redevelopment Agency and reconvene as the City Commission at 6:58 p.m.

6. MATTERS FROM PUBLIC

Heidie Hardman, 505 Macchi Avenue, Oakland, Florida, expressed concern regarding the impact of attracting new businesses while existing small businesses have been displaced or relocated. She questioned how the proposed efforts would support current small businesses and where newly recruited businesses would be located.

In response, Mayor Rees noted that business recruitment is still in the early stages and may take one to two years before any development occurs. He emphasized that the city remains committed to supporting small, unique businesses rather than large chains. It was also stated that all efforts must comply with applicable laws, and the initiative will include training opportunities to help existing businesses improve operations and remain competitive.

Irvin Lipscomb, 4328 Lake Underhill Road, Orlando, Florida, expressed appreciation for the city's efforts to re-open the Garden Theatre and support its continued success. He also shared his excitement about Alana Friskus returning as theatre manager, stating that she played a major role in the theatre's past success.

Kevin Ream, 2154 Rickover Place, Winter Garden, Florida, expressed concerns regarding ongoing reclaimed water service disruptions related to wastewater treatment plant construction and requested the city explore alternatives to minimize outages. He also raised

concerns about significant increases in water, sewer, and reclaimed water rates over recent years. Mr. Ream further inquired about police, fire and recreation impact fees, noting they have not been adjusted since 2015.

City Manager Jon C. Williams explained that construction at the wastewater treatment plant may cause periodic service disruption but noted recent outages were due to system clogs that have since been resolved and service restored. He stated that efforts are being made to minimize future distributions and improve communication. Mr. Williams also noted that a review and potential update of impact fees is being considered.

7. MATTERS FROM CITY ATTORNEY – There were no items.

8. MATTERS FROM CITY MANAGER – There were no items.

9. MATTERS FROM MAYOR AND COMMISSIONERS

Commissioner Colin Sharman thanked the Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board (CRAAB) for bringing a diverse perspective and noted the value of teamwork. He also expressed support for the reopening of the Garden Theatre.

Commissioner Chloe Johnson expressed appreciation to staff for their continued hard work and thanked residents for attending and supporting the meeting.

Commissioner Iliana Jones thanked staff and first responders and shared support for the reopening of the Winter Garden Theatre.

Commissioner Lisa L. Bennett echoed comments regarding staff.

Mayor Rees thanked staff for their hard work behind the scenes to keep operations running smoothly and expressed excitement about the reopening of the Garden Theatre and the return of community events.

ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 7:11 p.m.

APPROVED:

_____/S/_____
Mayor John Rees

ATTEST:

_____/S/_____
Interim City Clerk Ronisha Martin