



Minutes

City Commission

August 14, 2025, 6:30 p.m.

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 - Kurt Ardaman
Assistant City Clerk - Ronisha Martin

1. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting Minutes – July 24, 2025

Motion By Commissioner Bennett to approve the regular meeting minutes of July 24, 2025, as submitted. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 4-0.

2. Presentation

A. Proclamation 25-10: West Orange Healthy Selfie Day – September 19, 2025

Proclaiming West Orange Healthy Selfie Day was read and presented by Mayor Rees and the City Commission. Krista Carter, Director of Healthy West Orange, accepted the proclamation, thanked the City Commission and shared information about related activities.

3. Regular Business

A. Resolution 25-08: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, RELATING TO THE PROVISION OF FIRE RESCUE SERVICES, FACILITIES, AND PROGRAMS IN THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA; PROVIDING PURPOSE; PROVIDING FINDINGS; PROVIDING FOR AMENDMENT, RATIFICATION, AND CONFIRMATION OF INITIAL ASSESSMENT RESOLUTION; PROVIDING FOR ADOPTION OF FINAL FIRE ASSESSMENT RATES AND IMPOSITION OF FIRE ASSESSMENTS; PROVIDING FOR EFFECT OF ADOPTION OF FINAL RESOLUTION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, CODIFICATION, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Commissioner Sharman arrived at this point in the meeting at 6:35 p.m.

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Resolution 25-08 by title only. City Manager Jon C. Williams stated that he recommends the City Commission not proceed with the public hearing to impose fire protection and rescue assessment. He noted that the initial resolution was adopted in late June before receiving certified taxable values, state budget adoption, and revenue estimates. He informed them that staff has been working on the operating budget and identified \$4.1 million in reductions, including \$1.19 million in personnel and operating expenses and \$2.2 million in capital expenditure. Mr. Williams noted that the savings were achieved through zero-based budgeting, staff cuts, capital reductions, and a hiring freeze for nonpublic safety positions.

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to cancel and not proceed with the Fire Assessment Fee. Seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried unanimously 5-0.

Mayor Rees clarified that the fire assessment fee will not be implemented, but the discussion on the matter was not cancelled.

B. Recommendation to award contract to Schwenn Services for purchase and installation of rooftop A/C Unit at the Garden Theatre in the amount of \$54,202.90

Facilities Operations Manager David Markland stated that this is a request for purchase and installation of a rooftop A/C unit (RTU) by Schwenn Services. He noted that this unit is part of the multi-phase plan to replace the theater's aging air conditioning systems and will service the backstage area, second-floor dressing room, and third-floor practice room. Mr. Markland informed that a small section of the new ductwork will also be installed on the third floor. Staff recommended approval.

Commissioner Jones inquired whether the price from January was acceptable. Mr. Markland responded that he met with the vendor and the price is still valid.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to award contract to Schwenn Services for purchase and installation of rooftop A/C Unit at the Garden Theatre in the amount of \$54,202.90. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 5-0.

C. Recommendation to approve SPECIAL EVENT – Annual Oktoberfest by the Crooked Can Brewery (Plant Street Market) - October 17, 18 and 19, 2025 – with street closure and subject to conditions

Planning Director Kelly Carson stated that Crooked Can is requesting approval for their annual Oktoberfest at Plant Street Market on October 17-19, 2025, with food, beverages, live music and alcohol allowed on closed streets. Staff recommended approval with conditions.

Commissioner Bennett raised concerns about noise levels affecting nearby residents.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve special event - Annual Oktoberfest by the Cooked Can Brewery (Plant Street Market) - October 17, 18 and 19, 2025 with street closure and subject to conditions. Seconded by Commissioner Jones and Sharman simultaneously and carried unanimously 5-0.

D. BOARD APPOINTMENTS: Planning and Zoning Board

Planning Director Kelly Carson informed of a vacancy on the Planning and Zoning Board due to the resignation of a district member. She described the current board composition and recommended an appointment from either District 3 or 4. She informed of an additional application that was distributed to the commissioners.

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to appoint TJ Ryan to the Planning and Zoning Board. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 5-0.

4. Matters From Public

Gary Miller, 764 Lake Brim Drive, Winter Garden, Florida, thanked City Manager Williams for not moving forward with the fire assessment fee and voiced concerns about short notice, unclear funding, and prioritizing essential services.

George Douglas Laman, 1150 East Plant Street, Winter Garden, Florida, stated he is a long - time Winter Garden business owner, and supports dedicated funding sources for fire and police to attract top talent. He acknowledged rising costs, suggested fair alternatives, and praised the city's fiscal responsibility and commissioners' service.

Stasha Boyd, 541 N. Boyd Street, Winter Garden, Florida, stated that the previous meeting didn't fully acknowledge the challenges residents face with rising costs, highlighted seniors on fixed incomes struggling with basic needs like air conditioning and encouraged the city to stay attentive to supporting vulnerable populations and addressing homelessness.

Alan Bruun, stated that he, along with Fernando Varela and GG Cook, proposed partnering to operate the Garden Theatre. He emphasized their passion for space and community, their ability to balance profit, nonprofit, and technical production aspects, and belief that they can be strong, collaborative operating partners with the city to revitalize the theatre.

Joan Giovanni, Virginia Drive, Winter Garden, Florida, suggested that instead of asking speakers to share their addresses publicly, the city should use safer methods to verify residency, ensuring residents can speak freely while protecting their privacy.

Daniel Johnson, 206 West Story Road, Winter Garden, Florida stated that he lived at the property for many years without experiencing flooding until recently. He noted that his property backs up to the retention pond, which has held standing water since the last heavy rainfall and does not go away and wanted to bring the issue to the city's attention.

Jerry Hall, 220 West Story Road, Winter Garden, Florida, shared history of inheriting his property and noted new build elevation issues which are causing flooding to the older properties and the efforts to combat further damage. He noted that progress is great, but progress has to include what has already been in Winter Garden and believes that it is an oversight of the City at this point.

City Manager Jon C. Williams noted that the City is aware of the situation and expressed that he has directed staff to remediate the problem and seek recovery from the developer.

Mr. Hall further expounded on the property boundaries and easement and a local retention pond.

Commissioner Bennett noted receiving an unsigned letter regarding this issue, which she brought to the City Manager's attention. Mr. Hall thanked her and noted that he would forward additional information.

Kim Hall, spoke on behalf of her husband and cousin (206 West Story Road), noting the situation has caused significant family stress.

Ken Brown, 432 New Hearth Circle, Winter Garden, Florida, thanked city staff for installing stop signs at New Hearth Boulevard. He also voiced frustration with the poor condition of CenturyLink's buildings and advocated for their maintenance. Additionally, he highlighted a flooding issue addressed by ordinance in Crystal River restricting new buildings to their existing footprints and prohibiting the raising of elevations with fill. His closing remarks addressed management of community growth, new residents, and the electing of officials.

Sarah Wolfe, 221 N. Boyd Street, Winter Garden, Florida, announced that the Governor of Florida cancelled the 2050 growth development of Orange County. She noted that the local municipalities do not always have the ability to make the final decision regarding growth in our communities.

Maurice Arbelaez, 331 Courtlea Park Drive, Winter Garden, Florida, addressed concerns regarding speed bumps in the community, speeders, and the need for additional speed bumps closer to the subdivision entrance.

5. Matters From City Attorney – There were no items

6. Matters From City Manager

City Manager Jon C. Williams thanked Lauren Jose and staff for their work in preparing and presenting during the community engagement meeting, developing the budget, and incorporating resident input. Mr. Williams noted the need to find cost savings, review fees,

and consider adjustments to achieve financial goals. He addressed comments regarding special events, stating that he recommends canceling Halloween Fest, noting it was initiated during COVID and was never intended to be permanent.

Commissioner Sharman suggested a future workshop to review events and determine which to continue.

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to cancel Halloween Fest. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 5-0

7. Matters From Mayor and Commissioners

Commissioner Sharman thanked the citizens for attending the meeting and noted that the City of Winter Garden listens to its constituents. He acknowledged City staff and their efforts to balance the budget and voiced appreciation for everything they do, but again, noted that we listen to our constituents.

Commissioner Johnson thanked staff for the hard work that they continue to do day in and day out. She thanked the Police and Firefighters. Commissioner Johnson thanked the residents and said that the City Commission was listening to them.

Commissioner Illiana R. Jones thanked staff for the work on items for tonight's discussion. She voiced appreciation to the Police and Fire Departments for their hard work. She thanked the residents attending the meeting for their participation, voiced thoughts and opinions. She expressed that the City Commission does hear them.

Commissioner Lisa L. Bennett said she echoed all the City Commissioner's comments.

Mayor Rees commented on the staff and the City Commission doing a good job of going through the City's budget. He spoke of the millage rate staying the same since 2018, the inflation rate and cost increases, and staff's battle to review and maintain the budget. Mayor Rees noted that items that are important to one may not be important to another and the difficulty staff and the City Commission face in the collection of this data and trying to do what is in the best interest of the citizens of Winter Garden and particularly our families.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

ATTEST:

_____/S/
Assistant City Clerk Ronisha Martin

APPROVED:

_____/S/
Mayor John Rees