WINTER GARDEN

City Commission and Community Redevelopment Agency
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
August 28, 2025

A Budget Workshop and Regular Meeting of the City of 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 - A. Kurt Ardaman
City Clerk - Angela J. Grimmage

BUDGET WORKSHOP

1. **BUDGET WORKSHOP**
   A. **FISCAL YEAR 2025/2026**

   A budget workshop PowerPoint presentation highlighting some of the budgeted items was provided by City Manager Jon C. Williams and Finance Director Laura Zielonka. (See attached - **Exhibit A)**

   City Manager Jon C. Williams began by noting his pleasure in presenting the proposed operating budget for the City of Winter Garden for Fiscal Year 2025/2026. He noted that the budget, as presented, includes a recommendation for a small millage rate adjustment. He indicated that this workshop does not require any action from the City Commission. Mr. Williams then recognized Finance Director Laura Zielonka to start the budget PowerPoint presentation.

   Ms. Zielonka presented explanations and highlights of the proposed 2025/2026 budget, which included how the budget works, government services and funding, and budget details. She noted that the next steps would also be addressed.

   City Manager Williams provided information on some of the larger projects that would be focused on in the Fiscal Year 2026 budget, afterward noting that staff would continue to review items throughout the year. Mr. Williams stated that the next steps would be the budget hearings on September 11, 2025, and September 25, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. He commended Finance Director Laura Zielonka, the City staff, and the department directors for their efforts in preparation of this proposed budget.

After the presentation, Mayor Rees commended the staff for doing a great job with the budget and its presentation. He requested that the City Commission study the budget and submit their questions to the City Manager.

Commissioner Sharman spoke of future workshops addressing events, suggesting that the event list be taken down to zero and then event items added. Discussion ensued regarding everyone wanting their favorite event, the related challenges in deciding, and future budget struggles. Also discussed were ongoing revenues and expenditures, future review of areas for budget adjustments, monetization, the zero-based budget, and future operating costs. Additional conversations included tax reforms, fire schedule, significant costs, state mandates, and the pursuit of grants.

REGULAR MEETING

2. **Approval of Minutes**

   A. Regular Meeting Minutes - August 14, 2025

   Motion by Commissioner Jones to approve the regular meeting minutes of August 14, 2025, as submitted. Seconded by Commissioner Bennett and carried unanimously 5-0.

3. **Regular Business**

   A. Recommendation to approve Memorandum of Understanding and Amendment 2 Revenue Agreement Time Extension with St. Johns River Water Management District for Final Design and Permitting of Lake Apopka Newton Park Access Channel/Habitat Dredging and Material Placement

   Assistant City Manager for Public Services Stephen Pash stated that this is a request for approval of a memorandum of understanding and a second amendment to the revenue agreement between the City of Winter Garden and St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) for the material placement and dredging project at the Lake Apopka and Newton Park. He noted that the design work is completed and the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) states that SJRWMD would apply for and hold the permit until the City/District finds 100 percent of the funding for the project. Furthermore, Mr. Pash named other agencies that are working on finding funding. He explained that once the funding is found, SJRWMD would convert the permit to the City, who would then move forward with constructing the project with the District's assistance. He explained that amendment 2 extends the design and permitting agreement to September 30, 2026. He indicated that there are no financial obligations with these agreements, and this MOU does not obligate either party to construct the project. Staff recommended approval.

   Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve Memorandum of Understanding and Amendment 2 Revenue Agreement time extension with St. Johns River Water Management District for final design and permitting of Lake Apopka Newton Park Access Channel/Habitat Dredging and Material Placement. Seconded by

Commissioner Sharman and Johnson simultaneously and carried unanimously 5-0.

B. Recommendation to approve Amendment to Non-Exclusive Franchise Agreement for Plant Street Recycling, LLC and authorize City Manager to sign agreement
Assistant City Manager for Public Services Stephen Pash stated that Plant Street Recycling, LLC. is requesting to amend their original agreement to operate outside the original neighborhood and along public streets. He noted that they have been contacted by many citizens throughout the City requesting to expand their services. He noted that the request is to amend the agreement, allowing them to operate until such a time that they would be required to use larger vehicles. Furthermore, he spoke of the City's willingness to assist in this effort. Staff recommended approval.

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to approve the Amendment to the Non- Exclusive Franchise Agreement for Plant Street Recycling, LLC and authorize the City Manager to sign the agreement. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and Jones simultaneously and carried unanimously 5-0.

C. Recommendation to authorize the City Manager execute and award construction services contract RFP 25-0001 for Fire Station 21 to Mulligan Constructors, Inc in the amount of $7,112,902.96 including a 10 percent contingency
Fire Chief Jose P. Gainza, Jr., expressed excitement in presenting this item, noting that Fire Station 21 is a critical project needed to meet the City's growth and service needs. He stated that the City received four strong proposals in response to RFP 25- 0001 for the construction of Fire Station 21. He noted that following a thorough evaluation process, Mulligan Constructors, Inc. (MCI) was ranked as the most responsive and responsible bidder for an amount of $6,466,275.42 plus a 10 percent contingency, for a total amount of $7,112,902.96. Staff recommended approval.

There was discussion and confirmation that this amount was lower than what was budgeted.

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to approve authorizing the City Manager to execute and award construction services contract RFP 25-0001 for Fire Station 21 to Mulligan Constructors, Inc in the amount of $7,112,902.96, which includes a 10 percent contingency. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 5-0.

D. Recommendation to award purchase order to USSI, LLC for sanitary sewer system inflow and infiltration inspection and repairs in the amount of $137,040
City Engineer Jim Monahan stated that this is a request to approve a purchase order (PO) to USSI, LLC for sanitary sewer system inflow and infiltration inspection and repairs. He explained the process and components involved in the pricing. Furthermore, Mr. Pash noted a revision to the estimate containing a mobilization and demobilization fee of $3,500, which was removed, but requested to have it remain as a contingency if the amount of the project goes over. He noted those funds would

not be used if not needed. Staff recommended approval.

Motion by Commissioner Jones to approve awarding a purchase order to USSI, LLC for sanitary sewer system inflow and infiltration inspection and repairs in the amount of $137,040. Seconded by Commissioner Bennett and carried unanimously 5-0.

E. Recommendation to approve site plan for 244 West Story Road (Winter Garden Retail Development)
Planning Director Kelly Carson stated that this is a request for site plan approval to permit the development of a commercial building. She noted the location, building size, a former demolition, a new proposed building and use. She noted that, due to the proximity of other buildings, it has been designed to be more residential and characteristic in form. Furthermore, Ms. Carson noted the property's zoning and its approval from the Planning and Zoning Board. Staff recommended approval, subject to conditions.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve the site plan for 244 West Story Road (Winter Garden Retail Development). Seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried unanimously 5-0.

Dispensed as the City Commission and reconvened as the Community Redevelopment Agency at 7:11 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 and Orange County Appointee Charlie Mae Wilder

F. Recommendation to approve cost reimbursement of the City's General Fund by the CRA for design work completed by Murray Design Group at Zanders Park in the amount of $20,020
Economic Development Director Marc Hutchinson stated that to avoid delays and move the Zanders Park upgrades forward, the City pre-approved a proposal and an invoice from the Murray Design Group for the required conceptual design work for the open gathering space next to the Bouler pool. He noted that the proposed work estimate was $33,330 and the invoice paid by the City's General Fund for the completed conceptual work was $20,020. The Zanders Park amenity upgrades are significant for the Historic East Winter Garden Neighborhood and have been one of the first visible signs of improvements to the overall community's revitalization effort. Staff recommended approval.

CRA Member Cappleman mentioned the Community Redevelopment Agency Advisory Board's approval.

Motion by CRA Member Cappleman to approve cost reimbursement of the City's General Fund by the CRA for design work completed by Murray Design Group at Zanders Park in the amount of $20,020. Seconded by CRA Member Charlie Mae Wilder and carried unanimously 7-0.

Adjourned as the Community Redevelopment Agency and reconvened as the City Commission at 7:13 p.m.

4. **Matters From Public**

Christina Spillane, a volunteer with the Pet Alliance, spoke of stray cats and expressed gratitude to the City Commission and the City for their efforts in partnering to assist in care and concerns regarding the cat population in Winter Garden. She spoke of the unknown number of cats in the community, the trap, neuter, vaccinate and return program (TNVR) and how displaced animals, due to new buildings and construction, are affecting people's pets. Furthermore, Ms. Spillane explained the program services, spoke of the trapping, the waiting lists, and partnerships as the best choice. There was discussion on the 587 cats and over 100 kittens benefited by this program. Mayor Rees thanked their organization for all that they do.

Norine Dworkin, Vox Populi Winter Garden, inquired about the term zero-based budgeting and the importance of why this was noted as a new process. City Manager Jon C. Williams replied by explaining how zero-based budgeting does not follow the traditional methods of having set items that are adjusted up and down, but the budget is zeroed out, and all requests for expenditures are then reviewed by priority.

Sarah Wolfe, 221 N. Boyd Street, Winter Garden, Florida, inquired about where the grants are sourced. City Manager Jon C. Williams responded by explaining how the City pursues grants, some from governmental agencies, primarily from the State and the County. It was noted that the City pursues Federal grants. However, private grants were also discussed as a possibility.

Ken Brown, 432 New Hearth Circle, Winter Garden, Florida, thanked the building and permitting department. He teasingly noted intentions to complain about the HalloweenFest cancellation but expressed that he changed his mind after hearing about the budget and deficit. Instead, he inquired about the City having an event coordinator and suggested reaching out to the non-profits and businesses for sponsorship of some events, noting the benefit to their businesses as well as to the City.

Dillon Torres, 15514 Firelight Drive, Winter Garden, Florida, addressed concerns regarding flooding issues in the Tiny Road and Tilden Road area due to a retention pond failure. He inquired if a smart light could be installed at Tildenville Road and CR 535, noting the inability to turn into the shopping plaza. He inquired about the status of the Dillard Street repavement project and wondered if this was also budget related. Furthermore, Mr. Torres suggested smaller business-friendly options as a budget solution, such as tax exemptions and possibly lowering fees to pull those smaller businesses into the City. Mr. Torres suggested redevelopment to include multi-use buildings, including residential and commercial, noting that the more people, the more revenue for the City. Additionally, Mr. Torres inquired about the postal service and its maximum efficiency, although this is a Federal issue. Furthermore, he spoke of the quality of construction and possible controls to ensure the use of quality materials. Lastly, he addressed the City, aiding in efforts to address the increasing energy costs and transportation.

5. **Matters From City Attorney -** There were no items.

6. **Matters From City Manager**
City Manager Jon C. Williams provided the City Commission with a list of scheduled events for their reference. He also complimented Finance Director Laura Zielonka and staff for the proposed budget, noting that this was not the easiest process and he thanked them for their hard work in the effort.

7. **Matters From Mayor and Commissioners**
Commissioner Colin Sharman thanked Dillon Torres for his comments, noting that a few of those items fall within the City's jurisdiction and many of them do not, but he again thanked Mr. Torres for bringing a young voice to the issues. Commissioner Sharman shared advice he received during the week, expressing that you do not know what someone is thinking until you ask them.

Commissioner Chloe Johnson noted that she echoed comments made by City Manager Jon C. Williams in thanking staff and Finance Director Laura Zielonka for their efforts with the budget. Commissioner Johnson noted a conversation held with a constituent who voiced a complaint. She noted that an explanation was given in response to that resident about the City's efforts, the community's lack of engagement in public meetings where these items and concerns are addressed and noted the citizen's apology after her explanation. Commissioner Johnson thanked staff for going the extra mile.

Commissioner Iliana R. Jones thanked staff, noting one area's issue with the rain and flooding and the staff's amazing response to resolving the issue. She thanked the staff for the budget, the residents for their feedback, and voiced that it makes the city better when what the residents want is stated. She spoke of it being encouraging to hear from young people and thanked everyone for their suggestions.

Commissioner Lisa L. Bennett agreed with Commissioner Jones on resident Dillon Torres, stating that he took on big topics and stated that it was impressive and encouraged him to continue. She also thanked the staff for their efforts and expressed her appreciation for them.

Mayor John Rees thanked City Manager Jon C. Williams and Finance Director Laura Zielonka. He sorrowfully encouraged everyone to remember the people in Minneapolis regarding the tragedy and asked that we keep them in our prayers.

8. **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 7:34 p.m.

APPROVED:

___/S/______________________
Mayor John Rees

ATTEST:

__/S/_____________________
City Clerk Angela J. Grimmage