

WINTER GARDEN
City Commission
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
September 11, 2025

A Budget Hearing and 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
City Clerk - Angela J. Grimmage

BUDGET HEARING

1. FIRST READING AND PUBLIC HEARING TO ADOPT PROPOSED BUDGETS AND MILLAGE RATE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025/2026

- A. **Ordinance 25-30:** AN ORDINANCE LEVYING TAX UPON ALL TAXABLE PROPERTY WITHIN THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, FOR THE TAX YEAR BEGINNING ON OCTOBER 1, 2025, AND ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinance 25-30 and an excerpt from Section 1 as follows: The City Commission of the City of Winter Garden hereby adopts, establishes and levies a millage rate for ad valorem taxation of real and tangible personal property within the City of Winter Garden for the Fiscal Year beginning October 1, 2025, and ending on September 30, 2026, at the rate of 4.8565 mills (\$4.8565 for every \$1,000 of assessed valuation) upon the assessed valuation of property within the corporate limits of the City of Winter Garden, Florida. This millage rate is greater than the rolled back rate of 4.2012 mills by 15.60 percent.

Finance Director Laura Zielonka stated that Ordinance 25-30 proposes setting the millage rate for the next fiscal year to 4.8565 mills, which is an increase from the current millage rate of 4.5000 mills. She referred to the recent workshop where it was noted that the intent is to increase the revenue to cover ongoing expenditures. Furthermore, Ms. Zielonka presented a PowerPoint presentation to highlight an overview of how the City budget works, challenges faced with funding, and why the proposed budget rate is being recommended to ensure long-term financial stability. Staff recommended setting the millage rate at 4.8565 mills, which would generate approximately \$2.2 million in additional and recurring revenues. Ms. Zielonka noted the second hearing for the budget items as September 25, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

Mayor Rees opened the public hearing.

An unknown attendee sought, and was provided, clarification on one of the presentation slides.

John Maull, 714 Reflections Lane, Winter Garden, Florida, inquired about the previously raised issue regarding the fire assessment fee. It was noted that this budget excludes that fee. Mr. Maull inquired about the budget and the consideration of the new building and construction in the area that would eventually, within the new year, equate to additional collections. City Manager Jon C. Williams explained the certificate of taxable value, which includes the taxable value of all new homes, new construction, and renovations. Mr. Williams noted that the taxable value of those items would not be recognized until the following year. Discussion ensued about the collection of taxes, impact fees, no prorated tax bill, and fees being based on a vacant lot for that tax year.

Brenda Vanover, 1063 Sadie Lane, Winter Garden, Florida, noted that she is aware that the fire assessment fee issue was canceled. However, she stated that there was a flyer at the Jessie Brock Center noting the new millage rate would equate to \$35. She inquired if this was per month. Mayor Rees responded that the fee would depend on the value of the home, and he gave an example. Ms. Vanover shared her status as a retiree with a limited income and children with disabilities that live with her. Discussion ensued, noting the taxable value is per year; other considerations for finding revenue have been and are being explored. Ms. Vanover suggested parking fees as an option, the importance of festivals for the City, and taxing developers because growth is the reason resources are stretched.

Bob Buchanan, 148 Roper Road, Winter Garden, Florida, suggested increases to the impact fees and charging more to builders. There was mention of unfunded State mandates.

Norine Dworkin, Vox Populi Winter Garden, inquired about the property tax and requested an example of the rollback rate in dollar amount as opposed to percentage and how much property tax would be collected versus that of last year. It was noted that staff would send this information. Ms. Dworkin inquired about the insurance cost increase, noting that the City of Ocoee is experiencing the same at about 10 percent, and she wondered if the City of Winter Garden would be about the same. City Manager Jon C. Williams responded that it is approximately 12 percent. Ms. Dworkin also requested to receive this information in dollar amounts.

Troy Knight, 1527 Hawkesbury Court, Winter Garden, Florida, spoke of the millage rate increase, added increases equating to 15 percent, and suggested rates be

increased incrementally as opposed to the suggested amounts all at once. Mayor Rees spoke of the City's approach to increases over the years, noting the questions of hindsight and whether this was the best approach. He noted costs, if increases had been made, the number of homes being less back then, and the current increase being spread over more homes during this period. City Manager Jon C. Williams noted that Ms. Knight's math is correct, and he spoke of ad valorem revenues for 2025 and 2026 inclusive of the property tax increase, public safety increases and a \$3 million deficit over that time. There was discussion about the millage rate for the City of Winter Garden being lower than most in the area.

Mayor Rees, after hearing and seeing no additional requests, closed the public hearing.

Commissioner Bennett stated that the City probably should have raised rates incrementally over the years and reiterated that it is hindsight. Everyone has their own budget, and no one wants their taxes to go up, but we do have to pay our bills, be fiscally responsible, and have a buffer. She said that the City has made cuts and is reviewing further cuts, noting that this issue is not taken lightly.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve Ordinance 25-30 with a second reading and public hearing September 25, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 5-0.

- B. **Ordinance 25-31**: AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING AND ALLOCATING ALL REVENUE AND FUNDS OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, FOR THE TAX YEAR BEGINNING ON OCTOBER 1, 2025, AND ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinance 25-31 by title and the following excerpt, which states that it is anticipated that there will be available for use and disbursement from the general funds of said City, revenue in the following amounts:

Collection of Ad Valorem	\$30,277,220
Revenue other than Ad Valorem	<u>40,026,490</u>
TOTAL REVENUES AVAILABLE FOR EXPENDITURES	\$70,303,710

Finance Director Laura Zielonka stated that Ordinance 25-31 appropriates and allocates all revenue and funds for fiscal year 2026. She noted that this ordinance sets the total general operating budget, funded through both ad valorem revenue and other revenues. 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 25-31 with a second reading and public hearing September 25, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 5-0.

- C. **Ordinance 25-32:** AN ORDINANCE APPROPRIATING AND ALLOCATING ALL REVENUE AND FUNDS OF THE COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA) OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, FOR THE TAX YEAR BEGINNING ON OCTOBER 1, 2025, AND ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2026

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinance 25-32 by title and an excerpt that the anticipated availability for use and disbursement from the CRA funds of the City was revenue in the following amounts:

Collection of Ad Valorem	\$1,742,489
Revenue other than Ad Valorem	<u>1,663,859</u>
TOTAL REVENUES AVAILABLE FOR EXPENDITURES	\$3,406,348

Finance Director Laura Zielonka stated that Ordinance 25-32 appropriates and allocates all revenues and funds for the CRA budget for the purpose of fiscal year 2026. She noted that adoption would ensure that the CRA can meet the funds needed for continuous redevelopment as needed in the CRA area. She noted that staff met with the CRA Advisory Board, who unanimously approved. Staff recommended approval.

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

Motion by Commissioner Johnson to approve Ordinance 25-32 with a second reading and public hearing September 25, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried unanimously 5-0.

- D. **Ordinance 25-33:** AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, AUTHORIZING THE APPROPRIATIONS OF CITY FUNDS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-26 IN ACCORDANCE WITH ARTICLE 3 SECTION 30 (5) OF THE CITY CHARTER OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, AND FLORIDA STATUTE 166.241 FOR THE PURPOSE OF FULFILLING THE FINANCIAL OBLIGATIONS OF THE CITY

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinance 25-33 by title only. Finance Director Laura Zielonka noted that Ordinance 25-33 reflects the budget as reviewed and considered by the City Commission, ensuring that the City meets its financial obligations for the upcoming year. Staff recommended approval.

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

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve Ordinance 25-33 with a second reading and public hearing September 25, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 5-0.

REGULAR MEETING

2. Approval of Minutes

A. Regular Meeting Minutes — August 28, 2025

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve regular meeting minutes of August 28, 2025, as submitted. Seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried unanimously 5-0.

3. First Reading and Public Hearing of Proposed Ordinances

A. **Ordinance 25-23**: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 98, PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT, TO CREATE A NEW SECTION 98-1, CITY OF WINTER GARDEN CODE OF ORDINANCES TO ADDRESS RELIEF CONCERNING DECLARED EMERGENCY RESTRICTIONS OF SECTION 28 OF CHAPTER 205-190, LAWS OF FLORIDA; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinance 25-23 by title only. Planning Director Kelly Carson stated that Ordinance 25–23 amends Chapter 98 to create a new Section 98-1. The new section would address the declared emergency restrictions in the newly adopted Senate Bill 180. She explained how the ordinance would create a new city process, whereby an applicant could apply to revert to an earlier version of the City's land development code or comprehensive plan if they provide a good-faith argument as to why an amendment is "more restrictive or burdensome" to their proposed development application. She noted that the ordinance would comply with State regulations while allowing the City to initiate changes to our own regulations. Staff recommends approval of Ordinance 25-23.

City Attorney Ardaman commented on the uniqueness of this ordinance, which was crafted by Attorney Dan Langley. Mayor Rees read an excerpt from the ordinance noting that "this ordinance serves a legitimate purpose and is in the best interest of the public health, safety and welfare of the citizens of the City of Winter Garden." Mr. Ardaman noted that this is a way as a City to make sure that we impose the fairest, most appropriate and smartest development in our City as well as protect property rights.

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

Motion by Commissioner Jones to approve Ordinance 25-23 with the second reading and public hearing being scheduled for September 25, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 5-0.

- B. **Ordinance 25-24**: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA PROVIDING FOR THE ANNEXATION OF CERTAIN ADDITIONAL LANDS GENERALLY DESCRIBED AS APPROXIMATELY 0.66 ± ACRES LOCATED AT 15359 EAST OAKLAND AVENUE, EAST OF TILDEN OAKS TRAIL, WEST OF GAYLE MILL DRIVE, SOUTH OF LANDRUM DRIVE, AND NORTH OF EAST OAKLAND AVENUE INTO THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA; REDEFINING THE CITY BOUNDARIES TO GIVE THE CITY JURISDICTION OVER SAID PROPERTY; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinances 25-24 and 25-25 by title only. Planning Director Kelly Carson stated that two properties submitted on this agenda for annexation were submitted by the same applicant. They are contiguous and will eventually come in as a single Planned Development (PD) rezoning application. She noted that there is no rezoning being requested at this time. She noted that the submittals came in as two separate applications at separate times, and she apologized for any redundancy. Ms. Carson noted that this request is for annexation, gave the property location, and noted a request for future land use designation. She spoke of the applicant's intent for rezoning after the annexation, noted the property's current use as well as its proposed use, mentioned maintaining and renovation of an existing structure, and saving of the property's legacy oaks. Staff recommended approval of the noted ordinances.

Mayor Rees sought and received information defining low density designation to that of R-2 zoning. Ms. Carson responded by clarifying the zoning designations.

There was discussion on the saving of the mansion and the trees.

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

Motion by Commissioner Sharman to approve Ordinances 25-24 and 25-25 with a second reading and public hearing on September 25, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Bennett and carried unanimously 5-0.

- C. **Ordinance 25-25**: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, COUNTY LOWNDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP OF THE WINTER GARDEN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BY CHANGING THE LAND USE DESIGNATION OF REAL PROPERTY GENERALLY DESCRIBED AS APPROXIMATELY 0.66 ± ACRES LOCATED AT 15359 EAST OAKLAND AVENUE, EAST OF TILDEN OAKS TRAIL, WEST OF GAYLE MILL DRIVE, SOUTH OF LANDRUM DRIVE, AND NORTH OF EAST OAKLAND AVENUE FROM ORANGE COUNTY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL TO CITY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

This item was addressed with the previous item 3.B.

- D. **Ordinance 25-27**: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA PROVIDING FOR THE ANNEXATION OF CERTAIN ADDITIONAL LANDS GENERALLY DESCRIBED AS APPROXIMATELY 5.59 ± ACRES LOCATED AT 15373 STATE ROAD 438, EAST OF TILDEN OAKS TRAIL, WEST OF GAYLE MILL DRIVE, SOUTH OF LANDRUM DRIVE, AND NORTH OF STATE ROAD 438 INTO THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA; REDEFINING THE CITY BOUNDARIES TO GIVE THE CITY JURISDICTION OVER SAID PROPERTY; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinances 25-27 and 25-28 by title only. Planning Director Kelly Carson noted that this is a request for annexation. She gave the property location and noted the applicant's desire to assign a future land use designation. She noted the current development of the subject property, the purposed development and the property's current and future zoning plans.

Furthermore, Ms. Carson described that after annexation, the applicant's intent is to submit a planning development (PD) rezoning application and plans to establish a subdivision, mansion renovation, and maintaining of the legacy oak trees. Staff recommended approval of the noted ordinances.

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

Motion by Commissioner Jones to approve Ordinances 25-27 and 25-28 with a second reading and public hearing on September 25, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Sharman and carried unanimously 5-0.

- E. **Ordinance 25-28**: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP OF THE WINTER GARDEN COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BY CHANGING THE LAND USE DESIGNATION OF REAL PROPERTY GENERALLY DESCRIBED AS APPROXIMATELY 5.59 ± ACRES LOCATED AT 15373 STATE ROAD 438, EAST OF TILDEN OAKS TRAIL, WEST OF GAYLE MILL DRIVE, SOUTH OF LANDRUM DRIVE, AND NORTH OF STATE ROAD 438 FROM ORANGE COUNTY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL TO CITY LOW DENSITY RESIDENTIAL; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

This item was addressed with the previous item 3.D.

- F. **Ordinance 25-34**: AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, AMENDING SECTION 22-28 OF ARTICLE II OF CHAPTER 22 OF THE WINTER GARDEN CITY CODE RELATING TO PEDDLERS, SOLICITORS AND ITINERANT VENDORS TO ALLOW WITH HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS TO HOLD NEIGHBORHOOD EVENTS WITH MOBILE FOOD DISPENSING VEHICLES SUBJECT TO OBTAINING A SPECIAL EVENT PERMIT, PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Ordinance 25-34 by title only. Planning Director Kelly Carson stated that this ordinance would amend the code section 22-28 and would add a new provision under mobile food dispensing vehicles (also known as food trucks) to allow homeowners associations (HOA) to apply for a maximum of two special event permits per year. Staff feel that this ordinance would provide more opportunities for communities to hold budget-conscious community events. Also to support and protect the City's brick and mortar restaurants. Staff recommended approval of Ordinance 25-34.

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

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve Ordinance 25-34 with the second reading and public hearing being scheduled for September 25, 2025. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 5-0.

4. Regular Business

- A. **Resolution 25-09**: A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE DOWNTOWN CORE PARKING FEE SPECIFIED IN SECTION 118-1389(f) OF THE CITY OF WINTER GARDEN CODE OF ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE

City Attorney Kurt Ardaman read Resolution 25-09 by title only. Planning Director Kelly Carson stated that the City is requesting approval of Resolution 25-09 to amend the downtown core parking fee from \$5,000 to \$10,000 per required parking space for new downtown development. She noted that this recommendation for an increase is for the City to be consistent with the provisions of City Code Section 118-1839. She noted that the fee is based on one-third the cost of land and parking to provide a typical space. Furthermore, Ms. Carson noted a minor calculation error but noted that it did not change the \$10,000 recommendation. Staff recommended approval.

Commissioner Bennett inquired if this was a one-time fee. Ms. Carson responded yes.

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

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve Resolution 25-09. Seconded by Commissioner Jones and carried unanimously 5-0.

B. Recommendation to approve SPECIAL EVENT - West Orange High School Homecoming Parade - Thursday, September 18, 2025, from 6:00 - 7:00 p.m.

Planning Director Kelly Carson stated that this is a special event request for the West Orange High School annual homecoming parade, which will be held downtown on Thursday, September 18, 2025, from 6:00 –7:00 p.m. She noted the route and street closure. Staff recommended approval, subject to staff conditions.

Motion by Commissioner Bennett to approve a SPECIAL EVENT for the West Orange High School Homecoming Parade on Thursday, September 18, 2025, from 6:00 – 7:00 p.m. Seconded by Commissioner Johnson and carried unanimously 5-0.

5. Matters From Public

Mayor Rees opened the public hearing.

Brenda Vanover, 1063 Sadie Lane, Winter Garden, Florida, stated that she enjoys the activities at the Jessie Brock Center, noting its importance to the retirees.

Dillon Torres, 15514 Firelight Drive, Winter Garden, Florida, inquired about annexation's impact on the city's budget as well as its infrastructure. City Manager Jon C. Williams responded, noting that there are service costs and user fees. Discussion ensued about streetlights being funded by the general fund, and internal lighting for subdivisions being paid for by the subdivision. Mr. Torres spoke of homeowner's associations (HOAs) and their funding, and it was noted that the HOA board controls their own budgets, and the City does not have any power over them.

Mayor Rees, after hearing and seeing that there were no additional requests for public comment, closed the public hearing.

6. Matters From City Attorney - A. Kurt Ardaman

- There were no items.

7. Matters From City Manager - Jon C. Williams

- There were no items.

8. Matters From Mayor and Commissioners

Commissioner Colin Sharman read an excerpt from a book called Inner Excellence and expressed that every person, every circumstance, is here to teach and help you. He voiced

that there are lessons to be learned.

Commissioner Chloe Johnson thanked staff for their hard work and said that it was good to see some of her constituents attending the meeting.

Commissioner Iliana R. Jones shared information regarding an accident near her workplace, and she thanked the first responders and the Fire department as their response resulted in the gentleman being able to save his arm. She again thanked them.

Commissioner Lisa L. Bennett thanked staff, noting that they always do a great job with the budget, mentioning her appreciation for the notes, which she states were very helpful. Commissioner Bennett shared that she received several calls from seniors and residents regarding the helpful services received at the Jessie Brock Center. She feels it is important for the City's consideration, among other important things. Furthermore, Commissioner Bennett specifically thanked Dillon Torres for continuing to come to the meetings and engaging.

Mayor John Rees thanked Finance Director Laura Zielonka, City Manager Jon C. Williams and staff for their efforts in preparing the budget, noting that it is a lot of work and the City Commission does take everything into consideration.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 7:33 p.m.

APPROVED:

_____/S/_____
Mayor John Rees

ATTEST:

_____/S/_____
City Clerk Angela J. Grimmage