

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Regular City Commission Meeting
Monday, March 9, 2026

The City Commission met in formal session Monday, March 9, 2026, at 5:00 P.M. in the Alcazar Room at City Hall. The meeting was called to order by Mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline, and the following were present:

1. Roll Call: Nancy Sikes-Kline, Mayor/City Commissioner
Barbara Blonder, Vice Mayor/City Commissioner
Cynthia Garris, City Commissioner
Jim Springfield, City Commissioner
Jon DePreter, City Commissioner

Also Present: David Birchim, City Manager
Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney
Darlene Galambos, City Clerk
Meredith Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager
Reuben Franklin, Assistant City Manager
Corey Sakyrd, Director, General Services
Jacob Webber, Grant Administration Coordinator
Melissa Wissel, Director, Communications
Jon Marston, Police Chief
Carlos Aviles, Fire Chief
Elyse Wiemann, Senior Recording Secretary

MOMENT OF SILENCE and PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Nancy Sikes-Kline requested a moment of silence and Vice-Mayor Barbara Blonder led the pledge of allegiance.

2. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

2.A. Modification and Approval of Regular Agenda

MOTION

Mayor Sikes-Kline **MOVED** to approve the Regular Agenda. The motion was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Jon DePreter and **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.**

3. Special Presentations, Recognitions and Proclamations

3.A. Proclamation 2026-05: Proclaims the Month of March 2026, as Archaeology Month (N. Sikes-Kline, Mayor)

3.B. Proclamation 2026-08: Proclaims the Month of March 2026, as Irish Heritage Month (N. Sikes-Kline, Mayor)

3.C. Proclamation 2026-09: Proclaims March 16–20, 2026, as Government Finance Professionals Week (N. Sikes-Kline, Mayor)

4. General Public Comments (3 minutes per individual)

The Commission heard from the following members of the public:

- Cullen Forest Brever
- Francis Ryan
- Ed Swift

- JoAnne Engle
- Wyndham Yancy
- Joshua Luke
- Thomas Reynolds
- Annika Kendrick
- Aaron Jockers
- Patricia Ramos
- Katherine Zodda
- Scott York
- Chloe Cracolici
- JoAnne Werling
- BJ Kalaidi

5. Consent Agenda

David Birchim, City Manager, read the Consent Agenda.

CA.1 Preview of upcoming Commission meetings.

CA.2 THE FOLLOWING ORDINANCES ARE TENTATIVELY SCHEDULED FOR SECOND READING ON March 23, 2026:

- Ordinance 2026-08: Amending an existing Planned Unit Development (PUD) at 24 Cathedral Place and the corner of Charlotte and Treasury Streets
Second Reading April 27th
- Ordinance 2026-10: Amending Vehicles for Hire (Ch27) Ordinance
- Ordinance 2026-11: Amending Franchises (Ch14) Ordinance

CA.3 Reminder of Upcoming Meetings:

- March 23, 2026, 5:00PM, Regular City Commission Meeting
- April 13, 2026, 4:30PM, Award Presentation to Jen Lomberk, Red Cedar Award for Environmental Impact
- April 13, 2026, 5:00PM, Regular City Commission Meeting

CA.4 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PRIOR COMMISSION MEETINGS:

- January 26, 2026, Regular City Commission Meeting

CA.5 RELEASES OF LIEN FOR UNIT CONNECTION FEE MORTGAGE(S):
NONE.

CA.6 PROPOSED PROCLAMATIONS, CERTIFICATES OF APPRECIATION/RECOGNITION. (COMMISSION APPROVAL REQUIRED). (TO BE READ AT A SUBSEQUENT MEETING). NONE.

CA.7 NOTIFICATION OF PROCLAMATIONS/CERTIFICATES OF RECOGNITION ISSUED: NONE.

CA.8 Satisfaction and Release of Mortgage Lien - 116 Kings Ferry Way (I. Lopez, City Attorney)

END CONSENT AGENDA

5.A. Additions, deletions or modifications to Consent Agenda

(None)

5.B. Approval of Consent Agenda

MOTION

Mayor Sikes-Kline MOVED to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner DePreter and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

6. Appeals

(None)

7. General Public Presentations, Items of Great Public Importance, and Other Items Requiring Public Hearings

7.A. General Public Presentations

(None)

7.B. Items of Great Public Importance

(None)

7.C. Other Items Requiring Public Hearing

(None)

8. Ordinances and Resolutions – Public Hearing Required.

8.A. Ordinances – Second Reading

(None)

8.B. Ordinances – First Reading (only if required by law)

(None)

8.C. Resolutions – Public Hearing (only if required by law)

(None)

9. Ordinances and Resolutions - No Public Hearing Required

9.A. Ordinances – First Reading

9.A.1 Ordinance 2026-10: Amending Vehicles for Hire (Ch27) Ordinance (R. Franklin, Assistant City Manager)

Reuben Franklin, Assistant City Manager, reviewed Ordinance 2026-10. He provided an overview of City Code Chapters 27 and 14.

Mayor Sikes-Kline requested an overview of the recommended changes.

Mr. Franklin advised the changes were as follows:

- Updated definitions for drivers, pedicab, vehicles for hire (VFH) and VFH administrator
- VFH prohibited from providing tours except pedicabs.
- Clearly outlined penalties for violations and detail an increase in penalties with violations
- Franchise administrator and code enforcement authorized to provide enforcement for this chapter
- Permits to be capped at twenty-five (25) for motor vehicles and twenty (20) for pedicabs.
- Pedicabs can operate five (5) cabs per permit.

- All drivers must have a Florida driver's license
- Required background checks for operators and drivers
- Vehicles must be distinct and not like other approved operators

Commissioner Springfield asked if Uber would be regulated.

Mr. Franklin replied that Uber was a transportation network company and it was not regulated by the City; however, there was a provision that if they chose to use the designated taxi stands, a medallion and inspection would be required.

Commissioner Springfield asked if there were specific locations for people to use these companies.

Mr. Franklin stated that this past Nights of Lights, the City implemented a prohibited area on Fridays and Saturdays with Uber and Lyft and provided pickup locations on the periphery of the historic downtown area. He advised that this was year around from 5:00p.m. to midnight both days.

Commissioner Springfield said 100 pedicabs seemed to be too many. He said the operation out at the St. Augustine Amphitheatre was dangerous as it was very dark. He asked if an approved driver was caught driving under the influence (DUI) would the commission be notified.

Mr. Franklin replied that there was a provision that stated the operator was supposed to notify the City but if the City was not notified it would be discovered at the annual background check.

Commissioner Springfield encouraged Mr. Franklin to look into how notification could be promptly provided as DUI were important to know about.

Commissioner Garris agreed that 100 pedicabs were too many to have as they held up traffic. She asked for clarification

about the definition of Vehicles for Hire (VFH).

Mr. Franklin replied that the VFH only included pedicabs, taxis, and shuttles and were for transportation only. He said the franchises would include the tour and trolley companies, plus the horse carriages.

Commissioner DePreter thought it was important to remember this started with the mobility plan. He said there were many new inspections and new enforcement. He asked prior to the next hearing if information could be provided regarding how this would work financially with Code Enforcement. He questioned what was meant by possible restrictions to congested areas.

Mr. Franklin replied that the code allowed the City to identify congested areas, which allowed for designation of certain areas.

Commissioner DePreter felt there was too much leeway and leniency in the enforcement section of the code. He said other than money, he was concerned with enforcing the code as that was where problems could arise. He supported having 100 pedicabs as he thought the mobility plan identified alternative modes of transportation. He disagreed that having pedicabs at the St. Augustine Amphitheatre were dangerous as most were electric and drove speeds of twenty miles per hour, and he did not feel it would cause a problem if spread out throughout the entire City.

Commissioner Blonder thanked staff and felt it was necessary to address both ordinances, and she thought it was moving in the right direction. She agreed that 100 pedicabs were too many and should be reduced by at least fifty percent. She said pedicabs seemed to be receiving preferential treatment by being allowed to do tours and being included with VFH and suggested creating a tier three for the franchises with pedicabs.

Mayor Sikes-Kline felt there was a lot of spill over between the two ordinances. She agreed that 100 pedicabs was too many for the City and mentioned that most of the complaints was about the bad behavior. She said she was concerned about adding a staff position as there was uncertainty with the state as they were potentially removing revenue through property tax. She appreciated the addition of background checks but was concerned with drivers receiving DUI's. She stated she had no other data from other communities indicating what they were doing, which made her feel blind. She agreed with having annual inspections as safety should be a priority. She asked if the fees could remain at the same level as things were being added and she felt some type of data should be reviewed to help determine a fair rate. She requested a current list of all businesses including those who were permitted, licensed, and registered.

Commissioner Springfield commented that noise should be included in the ordinance, to state 'limited or no amplified music' as it was not entertainment.

Mayor Sikes-Kline agreed that request was reasonable.

Mr. Franklin requested to impose a freeze on accepting applications for VFH and franchisees.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said she did not feel that was necessary after her discussion with the City Attorney.

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, advised that the suggestion from that staff was due to new forms need to be created, new insurance, requirements and training would take place. She said the request was not to process any new applications between today and final reading of the ordinance, as there could be several changes.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said she understood and agreed that while in the process,

applications should not be approved or accepted.

There was consensus to not accept applications during the ordinance updates.

Mayor Sikes-Kline questioned if the ordinance was ready for second reading.

Mr. Birchim commented that based on the discussion a motion moving the ordinance to second reading would be recommended.

MOTION

Commissioner DePreter MOVED to pass Ordinance 2026-10 to second reading.

Motion failed for lack of a second.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked if commissioners had changes prior to moving forward.

Commissioner Blonder replied she had many changes regarding the ordinance and did not feel it was ready for second reading.

Commissioner DePreter understood that if the ordinance was passed to second reading, it would not hinder staff from providing more information. He stated his request was focused on the financials with the proposed changes.

Mr. Birchim commented that this would not end the ability to request additional information.

Mayor Sikes-Kline was concerned that the ordinance was not ready for second reading.

Commissioner Blonder felt the ordinance was not ready for second reading and did not believe the proposed timeline would be efficient to address all her concerns.

Commissioner Garris agreed that corrections needed to be made prior to second reading.

Mayor Sikes-Kline questioned if there was consensus to have the changes made and then present ordinance 2026-10 again on first reading.

Commissioner DePreter replied that he was not opposed to any option but wanted to make sure all necessary questions were answered.

Ms. Lopez suggested informing staff of any specific changes to the ordinance, that way the updates could be made, or requested information could be gathered.

Commissioner Blonder said she had several items regarding VFH but thought there was more concern with the franchises excluding the amount of pedicabs.

Commissioner DePreter asked how long staff felt it would take to prepare for second reading after hearing the feedback from the Commissioners.

Mr. Franklin said based on feedback, the ordinance could be heard at the April 27, 2026, commission meeting on second reading as the short title would not change; however, if needed, the ordinance could have two second readings, but it would allow for community and stakeholder input. He said this ordinance and the following ordinance should be done in tandem, but he felt that was enough time depending on the discussion regarding franchises (Ch14) ordinance.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said she was not supportive of passing this ordinance to second reading, when everyone disagreed on the amount of pedicabs and the lack of data to make a better decision.

Mr. Franklin noted that Friday, he pulled all active business accounts and that was represented in the charts provided. He said there were a total of fourteen licensed pedicab companies in the City that were active. He suggested reducing the 25 to 15 and the number of cabs from 5 to 3, which

would be a drastic reduction in pedicabs or reducing it to 15 operators and allowing up to 5 cabs.

Commissioner Springfield said the income should be calculated in totality and not separated out.

Commissioner DePreter asked if the VFH and the franchises should be reviewed together or separately. He said VFH seemed to be totally separate and could be passed to second reading. He asked if both ordinances had to be passed together.

Ms. Lopez commented that both ordinances would need to be passed together for final adoption. She said the first ordinance removed sections that would apply, which could leave a vacuum. She said for purposes of first reading, ordinance 2026-10 could be passed to second reading but for final adoption it should be synchronized so the effective dates were the same.

Commissioner Springfield suggested not moving forward with ordinance 2026-10 until ordinance 2026-11 was presented.

Commissioner Blonder said she wanted to frame this around mobility and noted her comments were to address both ordinances. She pointed out in ordinance 2026-11, it stated mobility plan emphasized strategies that included "reducing conflicts between mobility modes" and "reducing adverse impacts on the transportation network", with similar language in ordinance 2026-10, with that in mind having 100 pedicabs in the City, it would increase conflicts between mobility modes and increased the impacts on the transportation network. She agreed with Commissioner Springfield regarding the noise and felt it should be addressed in ordinance 2026-10. She felt the insurance minimums for VFH and franchise tier 2 and horse and carriage should be increased significantly. She proposed having the insurance requirements be the same as

the county's if that was more appropriate. She stated the fees for permits and franchises should be proportionate to the cost of administration processes and any of the hidden costs that may be related, as she did not feel the fees associated right now were adequate. She suggested reducing the proposed contract by half, except for horse drawn carriages as it had been reduced to five years. She thought exclusion zones, such as residential areas, should be considered for pedicabs and tours. She stated the violations were too lenient and felt that if within six months a company had three violations, that could be an indication of bad business. She suggested creating a tier three for the pedicabs offering tours and asked staff to consider regulations for scooters and scooter rentals. She said overall the ordinances focused on the tourism industry and not mobility and she wanted a balance of both.

Mayor Sikes-Kline thanked Commissioner Blonder and noted she brought forth some great points but was unsure how to assess it at this point. She noted that the insurance requirements were under review at the state level and the requirements could possibly change.

Mr. Franklin advised that the ordinance referenced the state statute for the minimum insurance requirements. He said if there were changes at the state level, then the VFH would have to comply. He said they decided to keep the insurance requirements at the state minimum, which was the same as before; however, under the franchise tier 2, the insurance requirements had been raised. He said this was open for discussion and he could provide other options for the board to consider.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said she wanted to review other options and wanted to understand how the audible issue with noise would be addressed. She felt the argument Commissioner Blonder made regarding contract lengths was compelling.

She expressed that she was uncomfortable moving the ordinance to second reading with so many unanswered questions.

Mr. Franklin explained he was not trying to rush as he knew it was a complicated topic, and he had been working on both ordinances for the past year and half, while engaging with stakeholders.

Commissioner DePreter asked, after hearing more of the concerns, how long did he felt it would take to prepare for second reading.

Mr. Birchim suggested having Mr. Franklin review ordinance 2026-11 and then determine how to proceed, either ordinance could be passed to second reading or if needed, a workshop could be scheduled.

9.A.2. Ordinance 2026-11: Amending Franchises (Ch14) Ordinance (R. Franklin, Assistant City Manager)

Reuben Franklin, Assistant City Manager, reviewed Ordinance 2026-11. He provided a brief overview of the proposed changes which were as follows:

- Updated definitions for sightseeing motor vehicles, sightseeing tier one franchisee, tier two franchisee, and franchise administrator
- Tier One franchises - 11 or more passengers, capped at two operators (existing operators Old Town Trolleys and Red Train Tours), 16 vehicles on street at any time, term agreement good for 20 years
- Tier Two franchises – 11 passengers or less, capped at fifteen operators with three per franchise agreement, term agreement good for 10 years
- Background checks required for all drivers and owners, current Florida driver's licenses for drivers
- Grantee may not own, operate, or have any financial, legal, or ownership interest in more than one tier one franchise and one tier two franchise

- Appearance and design had to be unique and distinct from other operators
- Annual renewals for vehicle inspections and drivers required
- Tier One and Two loading zones required to be 100 feet apart to avoid confusion
- Advised of insurance requirements for all franchises
- Tier One had fixed routes; tier two did not
- Franchise Fees: Tier One: remained the same; Tier two \$2,000 per franchise
- Prohibited vehicles: megacycles, amphibious vehicles, pedal pubs, golf carts, and pedicabs (pedicabs permitted under VFH)
- Outlined the penalties for violations and potentially levy a suspension or termination of the franchise agreement

Animal Drawn Carriage:

- Definitions updated to include franchise administrator, medallion and transfer station
- Medallions allowed were reduced from thirty to fifteen and each franchise allowed up to five medallions per agreement not exceeding the total of fifteen medallions
- Agreement terms reduced to five-year periods
- Must have valid Florida driver's licenses, background checks, and annual renewal for inspections and drivers
- Would have fixed carriage routes adopted by resolution
- Franchise fee of \$1,000 per year per medallion
- Updated care of animals to include health and abuse
- Updated section regarding health certificates
- Changed equine heat guidelines to 85-degree threshold for temperature and 90-degrees to cease operations
- Penalties matched motor vehicles

Commissioner DePreter said he did not want to add any additional cost to the taxpayers and questioned if the City should be profiting from this. He asked what the methodology was for selecting competing requests, since he thought VFH were more about mobility than franchises.

Mr. Franklin referred to the chart¹ and explained that the first page indicated the existing operators for VFH, which was a total of 49 to include 14 pedicabs, 19 taxi/shuttles, and 16 tours. He said the 16 identified under VFH would be moved to Tier two, which was limited to fifteen franchises; however, he pointed out there had been some businesses set up in late 2025 through early 2026.

Commissioner DePreter reiterated how selection of competing requests would be selected, especially when there was already one more than allowed under tier two category.

Mr. Birchim commented the method used was a lottery system. He explained that when more people applied than allowable franchises or medallions the City would provide an application deadline, confirm valid applications, randomly assign numbers to applicants, and spin for a franchise agreement. He said it was the same method used for spaces at the public market for vendors.

Mr. Franklin continued reviewing the chart. He said there were currently seven franchise operators, Old Town Trolley and Red Train Tours, and then five Horse and Carriage franchises. He said with the proposed changes, the addition of the tier two was added, which was how the franchise operators in totality would be at twenty-two. He said the caps were the maximum numbers allowed but not what was currently operating in the City.

Commissioner DePreter asked for the total collected from the tier one franchises.

Mr. Franklin replied that he could provide that information at a later date.

Commissioner DePreter added that he would like to restrict areas for small tour operators even though the small scales made this a good business option; however, he did not feel that residential neighborhoods were the place with amplified noise. He felt that after three to five years these ordinances should be reviewed.

Commissioner Garris agreed there needed to be a tier three. She felt the vehicles should be limited, because the agreements were capped at fifteen increasing the number of vehicles on the streets; however, she thought the Tasting Tours should be allowed to have three vehicles.

Mr. Franklin replied that in his stakeholder engagement session, the Tasting Tours had three vehicles.

Commissioner Garris said the Tasting Tours should be grandfathered in, but future trolleys should be limited. She said her reasoning was that the City streets were not getting any wider and the traffic was increasingly difficult no matter the time of day. She said most visitors utilized the Red Train Tours or Old Town Trolleys and the fees associated with the trolley franchises were substantial. She said moving forward, the Horse and Carriage franchises should be monitored closely to avoid past issues. She felt this was an opportunity to recognize businesses who ran their organizations correctly and those who did not. She pointed out there was one operator who owned a little red train and recommended sending him a letter as she received an email about him being aggressive. She clarified this was not to be confused with the Red Train Tours. She stated that businesses who had been operating for years within the City should be put in the right category to remain in operation and successful.

¹ Attached to original packet

At the request of Commissioner Springfield, Mr. Franklin said he had been working on the two ordinances for the past two years.

Commissioner Springfield said he felt there was no reason to be in a rush, as Mr. Franklin just indicated he had been working for the past two years on both ordinances. He agreed that the fees should not only cover the cost for an employee to supervise the program but to cover the road damage and other things that would need to be dealt with, which was one of the reasons, why the tier one franchise operators paid a high rate as it was a percentage of their income; however, he did not agree with the way their fees were assessed. He explained that a tier one franchise agreement should remain at twenty years due to their investment and commitment to the City. He said if a franchise operator was given a medallion the requirement should be that it had to be used or they would lose it. He said in the past medallions had been used as leverage and he felt that was unfair to other companies. He felt that a committee should decide on who was issued a franchise agreement for tier two and horse carriages and the City Commission should determine when medallions should be limited and not left to the City Manager. He was in support of having a tier three for the smaller tour operators. He disagreed with taking the horses temperature but agreed that when the temperature reached 90 degrees, that work should cease. He said the ownership of any franchise should be a person or an incorporated business with a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) that way the City could hold someone accountable when problems arise. He recommended no longer allowing a trust or a company without a CEO to have a franchise or medallions. He asked if a mile would be added to the horse carriage route if they were to move to the clock tower at the parking garage.

Mr. Franklin replied that the clock tower was on the existing carriage route. He said

route modifications were done through resolution, but the distance would remain the same. He said the proposed route change resolution would be presented soon. He felt it should be clarified that a horse could work eight hours in a twenty-four-hour day as that was more than enough for any horse. He noted the horse medallions should be limited to three instead of five per franchise.

Commissioner Blonder said if the number of franchisees were limited in each tier then the grantees should not be allowed to have both a tier one and tier two franchises and requested for that to be removed. She suggested reviewing the maximum number of passengers for each tier, limiting tier two to nine passengers and then incorporating a tier three as she mentioned previously. She explained that golf carts were prohibited, but it seemed that many golf carts were used and asked what they were if that was not what they were considered.

Ms. Lopez replied that golf carts were not street legal; however, what appeared like a golf cart under Florida law was called a slow-moving vehicle.

Commissioner Blonder added in the prohibited uses she did not want to have party bikes or party carts, which allowed a various amount of guests to drink while taking a tour. She said she was not opposed to tours that visited different establishments but not ones that were a party experience and not for tours or transportation. She said companies should be required to operate at least six months a year and not just during peak times like Nights of Lights. She said the horse and carriage update was a big improvement, but she did not want horses to be moved from one carriage to another on a public street as it could be a hazard. She said the horse breaks were not completed as required, which was an enforcement issue, similarly she felt horses working in a seven-day period should only work five-days. She suggested using a heat index number instead of a certain degree, which

was available from the National Weather Service (NOA).

Mayor Sikes-Kline said this was affirmation that the horse and carriage industry was supported and the commission was trying to make it better. She felt after hearing all the comments that she was unsure how to move forward and thought it was a bit complicated.

Mr. Birchim suggested holding a workshop to discuss both ordinances, breaking them down by each component, notating both commissioner's comments and public comments. He said proposed dates for a workshop could be provided at the next commission meeting. He said using the information heard tonight, decisions could be made and a new first reading of the ordinances could take place.

Commissioner DePreter noted that under the prohibited vehicles pedal pubs were included.

Commissioner Blonder understood and added she wanted to include a cart as well.

Ms. Lopez commented that drinking alcohol on City Street was a criminal violation; however, the language could be reviewed.

MOTION

Commissioner DePreter MOVED to TABLE the discussion until a workshop was held and then scheduled a first reading. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield.

Mayor Sikes-Kline stated that motion was for Ordinance 2026-10, as there should be a motion for each separately.

VOTE ON MOTION:

AYES: DePreter, Springfield, Garris, Blonder, Sikes-Kline

NAYES: NONE

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

Commissioner DePreter MOVED to TABLE the discussion until a workshop was held and then scheduled a first reading for Ordinance 2026-11. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Blonder.

VOTE ON MOTION:

AYES: DePreter, Blonder, Garris, Springfield, Sikes-Kline

NAYES: NONE

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

9.B. Resolutions

9.B.1. Resolution 2026-05: Florida Inland Navigation District, Waterways Assistance Program, Salt Run Navigation Channel Maintenance Dredging 2026 (J. Webber, Grant Administration Coordinator)

Jacob Webber, Grant Administration Coordinator, reviewed Resolution 2026-05.

Commissioner DePreter said Salt Run was very important and he thought this was a good cause.

MOTION

Commissioner DePreter MOVED to pass Resolution 2026-05. The motion was SECONDED by Mayor Sikes-Kline.

Ms. Lopez asked if the motion included the Interlocal agreement.

MOTION AMENDED

Commissioner DePreter AMENDED the motion to include the approval of the Interlocal Agreement. The motion was SECONDED by Mayor Sikes-Kline.

VOTE ON MOTION:

AYES: DePreter, Sikes-Kline, Garris, Springfield, Blonder

NAYES: NONE

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

9.B.2. Resolution 2026-06: Grant Funds for Firefighting Vessel (C. Pacetti, Deputy Chief St. Augustine Fire Department)

Carlos Aviles, Fire Chief, reviewed Resolution 2026-06.

MOTION

Commissioner DePreter MOVED to pass Resolution 2026-06. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield.

Commissioner Springfield thanked Chief Aviles for the hard work and dedication that the Fire Department did for the City.

VOTE ON MOTION:

AYES: DePreter, Springfield, Garris, Blonder, Sikes-Kline

NAYES: NONE

MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY

10. Staff Reports and Presentations

10.A. Zora Neale Hurston Park Update (J. Perkins, Community Services Director)

Jaime D. Perkins, Community Services Director, provided a brief update on the improvements at the Zora Neale Hurston Park.

Commissioner Blonder advised that when this project was presented previously, there had been a lengthy discussion and the minutes from that meeting were included in the packet. She asked if this was to revisit what had been discussed and decided upon.

Ms. Perkins replied that it was not the expectation as she had reviewed the minutes and meeting video, spoke to the City Manager and Assistant City Manager; however, this was just to clarify this was the direction the Commission wanted before moving forward as she was new to the project.

Commissioner Blonder said she was still in support of the project.

Commissioner Garris said from her recollection, she was not in support of the project and the wall said "Zora Neale Hurston" was not being built; however, more trees were going to be added in the area. She said since then, she discussed with the City Manager about creating a shadow box to connect West and East Augustine and added that to the park that could tell the history of Zora Neale Hurston and other influential people that other parks were named after. She felt once the parking garage in West Augustine was completed, people would be walking more and passing through the area. She was not in support of the design as it was and especially not for \$200,000. She felt it should be an inviting green space, eye catching but durable.

Commissioner Springfield agreed that the "Zora Neale Hurston" wall was not appropriate and felt a historic marker would be a better alternative. He said it was mentioned that the wall would be used for seating, he questioned if there would be a sidewalk in front of the wall, as he did not believe that was discussed at the previous meeting.

Ms. Perkins replied that the sidewalk was not in the previous conceptual design, but she understood from the previous meeting that the hard-scape feature without the signage had been approved.

Commissioner Springfield said it was his understanding that there would be a wall, but nothing written on it.

Ms. Perkins replied in the affirmative. She said it seemed fitting for the wall to act as a seating space since there was consensus to not include benches.

Commissioner Springfield said the addition of a sidewalk could be beneficial as there were many students that walked through that area and right now, and he did not feel

like it was a park, but having people pass through it would make it park. He said he thought they were moving in the right direction.

Commissioner DePreter was in support of the changes including no sign and he felt the addition of the sidewalk was a great idea.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said there was a consensus; however, she did not agree as it made it look more like a subdivision instead was an entry to the City and should have a sense of arrival. She said the powerlines were distracting and not depicted in the conceptual drawings, and there was work that needed to be done in the park. She liked adding the sidewalk, the addition of the historic marker, and the connection of West and East Augustine.

Ms. Perkins recapped the details which were as follows:

- Tree Plantings
- Green Space
- Sidewalk
- Interpretative Plaque with historic information

Ms. Perkins asked for clarification on the shadow box as she was not completely clear on how to proceed.

Commissioner Garris suggested reaching out to the Anderson family, since he was a contractor and had ties with the Hurston family, that way the Commission could see if that would be something they wanted to add or not. She pictured it having lights that came on when people engaged in it and would blend in with the greenery and the space and still provide history.

Mayor Sikes-Kline questioned the Nights of Lights sign as that was integrated previously.

Ms. Perkins replied that currently at the park there was built in concrete cinder-block style infrastructure where the Nights of Lights signage could be added. She said

it could be left and built around, or brackets could be placed on the back side of the wall hidden out of the way of the walking path.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said she was interested in seeing how that could look.

David Birchim, City Manager, commented that for permanent brackets to be installed, the wall would have to be built.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said there had been consensus to not include a bench. She said Commissioner Springfield mentioned Flagler students walking through that area daily, and when the hotel was converted to dorms, Flagler College set aside \$500,000 for a public benefit for connectivity and asked if any assistance could be provided as it was to help achieve the same goal.

Mr. Birchim replied that the language of the Planned Unit Development (PUD) amendment could be reviewed. He said he thought that money had been specific to how it was supposed to be used.

10.B. St. Augustine Community Table: Sharing Food. Sharing stories. Sharing heritage. A collaboration with Flagler College and St. Augustine Sister Cities event update (M. Wissel, Communications Director)

Melissa Wissel, Communications Director, provided an update on the St. Augustine Community Table event, which would take place on Friday, March 27, 2026.

Commissioner Blonder said she was in support of the idea; however, questioned if the \$20 tickets would pay for the cost and if not where the additional money would come from.

Ms. Wissel replied that the lunches were around \$20, and the money earmarked for Sister Cities' events would be used to help cover the additional cost, which was \$15,000, in addition to Flagler College assisting with other related costs.

Commissioner Garris thanked Ms. Wissel for helping put the event together as she felt this was a way to bring a little bit of Spain to our beautiful City. She said this would be a glimpse of what dining and laughter could do for a community. She said she hoped it grew large enough to be held on Francis Field as she felt it had the potential too. She thanked Ms. Wissel again for her hard work.

10.C. Revenues Generated During Nights of Lights — November and December 2025, and January 2026 (M. Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager)

Meredith Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager, presented the revenues generated during Nights of Lights.

Commissioner Springfield said that the Tourist Development Councils (TDC) funds increased \$26,000 with a week less and the City's parking garage fees increased \$620,000. He asked how much debt was left on the parking garage.

Ms. Breidenstein replied those numbers were correct; however, she did not know the exact amount that the City owed on the parking garage but believed it would be paid off in 2041.

Commissioner Springfield noted that any revenue made from the garage would contribute to debt services or be put in reserves for the new parking garage. He asked if there was enough money for the archeology program.

Ms. Breidenstein said the funds that were transferred to the general fund for historic preservation and archeology did not cover the entire department, but it did pay for the two out of three archeologists, contributions to the Historical Society, University of South Florida La Florida University of Florida Preservation Institute, and any historic preservation projects at the City.

Commissioner Springfield said that not all of archeology was being paid for and the

taxpayers were having to pay for part of the archeology department even though fees were collected but those fees did not cover the deficit. He said if this amount of income continued at the garage the burden could be removed from taxpayers for the archeology department altogether.

Ms. Breidenstein agreed.

Commissioner DePreter said the tourist development tax (TDT) for our zip code in 2024/2025 was \$2.7 million tax dollars and the TDC gave the City \$200,000.

Ms. Breidenstein commented that the St. Johns County tax collector was able to capture the amount of revenue collected by the TDC monthly by City limits.

Commissioner DePreter explained that in 2026 for only the City zip code November had increased by 9.9%, December increased by 5.5%, then county wide November increased 6.3% and December increased 3.9%. He said for 2026 the City zip code collected \$2,120,578, which did not include January and the TDC gave the City \$850,000. He said the TDC money helped run a better event and he felt the return on investment had increased.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said she was pleased that the City had this information, as it would make it easier to request additional funds.

Ms. Breidenstein provided the TDT amount collected in the City for the month of December 2025, which was \$944,411.77.

Mr. Birchim confirmed that \$944,411.77 was the amount of bed tax collected inside the City limits for one month.

Ms. Breidenstein replied in the affirmative. She said she would like to continue gathering this information yearly from the tax collector as it was very helpful.

Commissioner Blonder said the City should ask the TDC to increase the funds to the greatest extent possible. She said she

understood there were differing opinions on how TDT money could be used; however, she did not want the City taxpayers to fund Nights of Lights.

Commissioner Springfield agreed and noted that the TDC spent a large amount of the money on advertising; however, with the increase of business, there was an increase in sales tax, which went to the state and that money was distributed and the City received only a small portion, whereas the County received a larger portion based on the success of this event.

Mayor Sikes-Kline stated that it was due to the population and based on the University of Florida, the population within the City limits was 16,400.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked what the plan and process was for moving forward.

Mr. Birchim said at the next meeting the dates for the upcoming Nights of Lights seasons would be set. He said if the Commission wanted staff to present a funding request that could be done as it was in the previous season and present it to the TDC board and the County Commissioners.

Mayor Sikes-Kline felt the money contributed by the country was well spent and the data the City had confirmed that.

11. ITEMS BY CITY ATTORNEY

11.A. Request to Confirm City Commission Policy to Defend Submerged Lands Ownership (I. Lopez, City Attorney)

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, reviewed the policy to defend the Submerged Lands Ownership with the City Commission and requested the ability to continue to defend the City's ownership rights, including through litigation if necessary.

There was a Board consensus to allow the City Attorney to continue to enforce the submerged land policy.

12. ITEMS BY CITY CLERK

12.A. Reminder: Open Positions on Boards and Committees (D. Galambos, City Clerk)

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, reviewed the Boards that had openings and told them that applications were still being accepted. She explained today, a Planning and Zoning Board member had resigned and advertisements for that position would begin immediately.

13. ITEMS BY CITY MANAGER

(None)

14. Items by Mayor and Commissioners

Commissioner Garris expressed her gratitude about the youth that came to the meeting and spoke during public comment. She felt the signage for 'no wake zone' should be added to Salt Run to ensure more protection as it must be a challenge to be on the water and worried about other boats. She asked the City Manager to explore the possibilities of getting the signs in as soon as possible.

Commissioner DePreter agreed that he appreciated having the youth speaking during public comments. He said when he was on the Planning Board, he felt there would be some conflict with other boats and the Sailing Center; however, the reality was the Sailing Center would be there, and he felt having a 'no wake zone' there was the best option.

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, commented that the challenge was it could not be done without data supporting an ordinance and then that ordinance would have to be supported by the Fish and Wild Life Commission and in the past, they did not

believe there was enough justification to make the area a 'no wake zone' .

Commissioner DePreter said an email had been received about a notice to the 'Little Red Train'. He said there had been some conflict and issues with him obeying the traffic laws and felt a letter should be sent to him as a reminder. He asked for the information regarding the Zora Neale Hurston House and how he could visit.

Commissioner Garris replied that she would speak to the Anderson Family and provide that information.

Commissioner Springfield confirmed that the Fredrick Douglas statue was added to state property and asked if the state would usually ask the City for approval prior to a project.

Mr. Birchim replied that normally the state would go through the Historic Architectural Review Board (HARB) review process. He said that was the intent and the application was waiting to be completed.

Commissioner Springfield commented that the statue was very nice and the press conference held afterwards was informative. He said the Irish display at the Visitors Information Center was wonderful and encouraged everyone to go check it out.

Commissioner Blonder felt that the ' no wake zone' was able to be done in Hospital Creek and with the youth being on the water, she felt parents would be paying attention more and the documentation would be helpful. She explained that she participated with Habitat for Humanity during Women's History month on International Women's Day.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said the Irish exhibit was fantastic and the premiere historian from Ireland was present as well as the Ministry of Tourism, who would be in Florida all week. She encouraged everyone to visit the Irish exhibit, and the

Government House had an art exhibit and noted both were free. She thanked Melissa Wissel, Communications Director and David Birchim, City Manager, for bringing these types of things to the City. She noted the wake zone had not been able to happen in the past but perhaps with the increased usage, more eyes would be on it and a 'no wake zone' may be able to be added. She thanked Ms. Kalaidi for coming and advised that it was important to keep the area clean, and ending homelessness was very important.

Commissioner Springfield advised that Sam Dennis who helped him get the painting to Spain had passed and expressed his gratitude for the help he provided to the City.

15. Adjournment

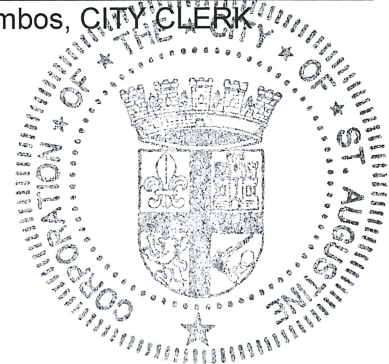
There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:33 P.M.²



Nancy Sikes-Kline, MAYOR



Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK



² Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann