

CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE

Regular City Commission Meeting  
Monday, March 23, 2026

The City Commission met in formal session Monday, March 23, 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  
Stephen Slaughter, Director, Public Works & Utilities  
Amy Skinner, Director, Planning and Building  
Melissa Wissel, Director, Communications  
Jon Marston, Police Chief  
Carlos Aviles, Fire Chief  
Elyse Wiemann, Senior Recording Secretary

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**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**

Commissioner Jim Springfield **MOVED** to approve the Regular Agenda. The motion was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Jon DePreter.

David Birchim, City Manager, advised that there were many citizens that wanted to comment on Resolution 2026-09 related to

Nights of Lights. He asked if that should take place during general public comments or would the commission prefer the comments to be heard during the resolution.

**AMENDED MOTION**

Commissioner Springfield **MOVED** to **AMEND** the **MOTION** as recommended and hold comments during Resolution 2026-09. The motion was **SECONDED** by Commissioner DePreter and **APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.**

**3.Special Presentations, Recognitions and Proclamations**

**3.A. Proclamation 2026-10: Proclaims April 2026 as Landscape Architecture Month** (J. Springfield, City Commissioner)

**3.B. Proclamation 2026-11: Proclaims March 29, 2026, as Education Sharing Day (N. Sikes-Kline, Mayor)**

**3.C. Proclamation 2026-13: Proclaims March 2026 as Women’s History Month (B. Blonder, Vice Mayor)**

**4. General Public Comments (3 minutes per individual)**

The Commission heard from the following members of the public:

- Robin Thomas
- Joanne Werling
- Nancy Murphy
- Lauren Giber
- Patricia Ramos
- Heather Wilson
- Thomas Reynolds
- Katherine Zodda
- Jeffrey Leibovitz
- Gina Blevins
- 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 DATE: NONE

CA.3 Reminder of Upcoming Meetings:

- 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
- April 27, 2026, 3:00PM, Community Redevelopment Agency Meeting
- April 27, 2026, 5:00PM, Regular City Commission Meeting

CA.4 APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM PRIOR COMMISSION MEETINGS:

- February 9, 2026, Regular City Commission Meeting
- February 23, 2026, Special City Commission Meeting
- February 23, 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 Proclamation 2026-12: Proclaims April 13–20, 2026 as International Dark-Sky Week (B. Blonder, Vice Mayor)

CA.9 Six Remnant Defendants' Opioid Settlement Due May 4, 2026 (I. Lopez, City Attorney)

END CONSENT AGENDA

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

(None)

**5.B. Approval of Consent Agenda**

**MOTION**

**Commissioner DePreter MOVED to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield 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**

#### **7.A.1. Neighborhood Council Nights of Lights Resident Survey Report (R. Franklin, Assistant City Manager)**

Reuben Franklin, Assistant City Manager, introduced Melinda Rakoncay, President of the Neighborhood Council to review the findings of the resident survey conducted among the City's neighborhood associations regarding Nights of Lights (NoL).

Melinda Rakoncay, President of the Neighborhood Council, reviewed the findings of the survey conducted among the City's twelve neighborhood associations.

#### **7.A.2. Nights of Lights Economic Impacts Presentation by St. Johns County Visitors and Convention Bureau (M. Wissel, Communications Director)**

Melissa Wissel, Communications Director, stated as requested by the City Commission, Susan Philips, CEO of the St. Johns County Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB) was here to provide a report regarding Nights of Lights.

Susan Philips, CEO of the St. Johns County Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB), stated Isiah Lewis, Downs & St. Germain would review the Economic Impact Report. She said this was the first year this data was available and she felt it would be beneficial when making decisions regarding NoL. She added this was a report the VCB planned to continue in the future.

Isiah Lewis with Downs & St. Germain Research reviewed the economic impact report for Nights of Lights. He highlighted the key takeaways were:

- Economic Impact
- Nights of Lights as a Visitor Draw
- First-Time and Repeat Attendees

Ms. Philips reviewed the Year over Year (YOY) Comparison Report for the NoL season.

Mayor Sikes-Kline clarified that the data provided focused on bed nights and did not include attractions, restaurants, bars or other activities.

Ms. Philips replied that was correct. She said the VCB paid for the study, as they wanted to be data driven to make more informed decisions; however, not all data was available. She advised that the VCB would continue to conduct the study and use it more as a tool to determine the correct ways to move forward. She said any additional questions the City may want to add to the survey could be as they wanted this to be a collaborative approach.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked what the visitor spend was.

Mr. Lewis replied that the total was \$93 million, which was the amount spent by visitors during NoL.

Commissioner Springfield commented that the total spent per person was \$330.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked if the survey asked if the visitors would return for future seasons.

Mr. Lewis replied that on the larger survey that was a question.

Commissioner Springfield asked if it could be assumed that hotel occupancy increases or decreases could be related to restaurants or tourist sights.

Ms. Philips replied that whether the hotels were doing well or remaining the same did not always correlate with the other businesses as spending habits had changed. She said the reason for focusing on hotel lodging was to have a baseline, which would help determine if there was a worsening problem for the other attractions and restaurants.

Commissioner Springfield said for the 2024-2025 NoL season had a total of nine weeks and the 2025-2026 NoL season had a total of eight weeks. He said more people attended during 2024-2025 than during 2025-2026 as shown on the graph, therefore, not compacting more people into those weeks.

Mr. Lewis replied they were capturing paid day-trippers, and unpaid visitors.

Commissioner Springfield clarified he was looking at the occupancy rate.

Irving Kass explained there was not a way to obtain an accurate conclusion with the numbers provided in the presentation. He said 40% of the money was not in hotels, and what that spent was a year ago was data they did not have. He said since the economy had been impacted, more people may have stayed with family and friends rather than at a hotel, and without baseline, there was no way to know one way or other. He said if occupancy was down, it could be assumed that businesses had a deficit but there was no data showing if that was true or not.

Commissioner Springfield said the concern people had by reducing NoL by a week was that more people would be compacted into the limited timeframe; however, the data indicated that was not the case. He said the data showed that the occupancy rate of hotels was that there were less people in attendance this year than last year, when NoL had more weeks.

Irving Kass explained that if each day were to be reviewed individually, the peak days

to include the weekends would be at maximum capacity if not extended to overcapacity but other days like the first week of December, which had decreased tremendously; therefore, the numbers could be affected when averaged together. Ms. Philips commented that there were several new hotels that opened during the NoL season.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked how many new hotels were available this season.

Ms. Philips replied she believed there was a total of two new hotels with about 142 rooms each.

Commissioner DePreter asked what the discrepancy was between the hotel occupancy rate and the actual Tourist Development Tax (TDT), which the bed tax collected. He said specifically for the City zip code, the TDT rate had increased by 9.9% in November, 5.5% in December, and it decreased 7% in January, however, the total for those three months was an increase of 3.9%. He said after reviewing the data provided, he felt it was not accurate but with new hotels opening it could have skewed the occupancy rate and hotels could have increased their rates resulting in the amount of money collected. He suggested next time providing a number of beds and not a percentage rate to help provide a clearer picture.

Ms. Philips felt this was to help start the conversation and more information could be provided at a later time as some of the data was available but other data was not.

Commissioner DePreter said he attended the VCB meetings and listened to the business owners who felt the VCB was responsible for bringing people to the City and as a commissioner he felt the commission's job was to know what to do with the visitors when they arrived for NoL. He said after a review of the resident survey the concerns were traffic, congestion, and parking. He said he did an analysis of where the people visiting were

from with a focus on mobility. He explained the outcome of his analysis:

- 92,600 Residents
- 279,600 People from the County (25%)
- 165,790 People used lodging (45%)
- 113,810 People were day trippers (35%)

Commissioner DePreter questioned where the 45% stayed while visiting to understand their mode of transportation into the City and determined the following:

- St. Augustine Historic Area Hotels 21%
- Beach Front Hotels: 15%
- I95 Corridor Hotels: 7%
- Ponte Vedra Hotels: 1%

Commissioner DePreter said 293,979 people arrived from outside the downtown area, which was most of the people attending NoL. He said he was not questioning the data provided but felt this really highlighted the concerns. He asked if the VCB should focus less on day trippers and more on visitors who would use lodging.

Ms. Philips clarified that the VCB did not advertise in the local market; however, NoL was shared on social media, by word of mouth, and friends and family, which was outside their purview. She said those things had an impact on the mobility as day trippers may not spend the same amount as other visitors, which should be taken into consideration. She said the survey questions could be structured to help with unanswered questions. She noted the occupancy numbers in the report for 32084 included the I95 Corridor, State Road 16, and Vilano Beach.

Commissioner Garris thanked Ms. Philips for providing the research and data as it was very important for making decisions. She said word-of-mouth from family and friends and the City being ranked as a top destination to visit would bring in many visitors. She said the amount of bed tax collected had decreased.

Ms. Philips replied that it was correct and the correct number was not available as the bed tax data could be delayed by one or two months.

Commissioner Blonder asked for clarification on the graphs.

Mr. Lewis replied that it was the likely year over year (YOY) percent change.

Ms. Philips said the graphs shown were a simple representation of the YOY comparison. She said for zip code 32084, November 2025 the occupancy was 67.8% and in November 2026 the occupancy rate had decreased to 59.4%.

Commissioner Blonder pointed out that the occupancy rate had decreased in November, and an additional week had been added. She said in December it had declined by 1%, and then in January it declined by 12% with eight days less. She said this was not what was expected as there was an additional week added in November. She asked when noting "resident" in the report, did that include people who lived in St. Johns County.

Mr. Lewis replied that in the affirmative.

Commissioner Blonder said the resident survey was distributed strictly to people who lived within the City limits and were residents of the City, not the county. She said the baseline for this year's NoL and based off occupancy.

Mr. Lewis replied in the affirmative.

Commissioner DePreter asked how the number of attendees was calculated.

Mr. Lewis replied that they reviewed the total visitor number based on the survey results.

Mayor Sikes-Kline thanked Ms. Philips and Mr. Lewis for the information and their presentations.

**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 2026-01: Amendments to General Employees' Pension Plan (M. Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager)**

Meredith Breidenstein, Assistance City Manager, reviewed Ordinance 2026-01.

Mayor Sikes-Kline clarified the term used was 'eligible spouse' no longer 'domestic partner'.

Ms. Breidenstein replied in the affirmative.

Mayor Sikes-Kline noted a typographical error on page seven in the first sentence.

Commissioner Springfield asked if the Ordinance 2026-01 had been reviewed and approved by the General Employees' Pension Board.

Ms. Breidenstein replied in the affirmative.

Commissioner Garris said there were people in domestic relationships. She questioned why it was being changed.

Ms. Breidenstein replied that the people who were in domestic relationships were allowed to be married. She said when this was first implemented being married was not an option in Florida, therefore, spouse or domestic partnership was recognized by the pension plan; however, now they were able to be a spouse.

**MOTION**

**Commissioner Springfield MOVED to pass Ordinance 2026-01 on first reading and moved to second reading. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner DePreter.**

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, read the Ordinance.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2026-01**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 20, ARTICLE IV OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE PROVIDING FOR REVISED PROVISIONS TO THE 1977 CITY EMPLOYEES' RETIREMENT SYSTEM; PROVIDING FOR GENDER NEUTRAL TERMINOLOGY; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION IN THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

**VOTE ON MOTION:**

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

**NAYES: NONE**

**MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

**9.A.2. Ordinance 2026-12: Amendments to St. Augustine Police Officer's Retirement System (M. Breidenstein, Assistant City Manager)**

Meredith Breidenstein, Assistance City Manager, reviewed Ordinance 2026-12.

Commissioner Springfield clarified that this was not an item negotiation with the Police Union; however, it was an item that the Board recommended to the Commission.

Ms. Breidenstein replied in the affirmative.

Mayor Sikes-Kline commented that this seemed reasonable and was much needed.

**MOTION**

**Mayor Sikes-Kline MOVED to pass Ordinance 2026-12 on first reading and moved to second reading. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield.**

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, read the Ordinance.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2026-12**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 20, ARTICLE VI OF THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE PROVIDING FOR REVISED PROVISIONS TO THE ST. AUGUSTINE POLICE OFFICERS RETIREMENT SYSTEM; PROVIDING FOR GENDER NEUTRAL TERMINOLOGY; CORRECTING THE NAME OF THE POLICE OFFICERS' BENEVOLENT ORGANIZATION; PROVIDING FOR FORFEITURE OF FUNDS; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION IN THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

**VOTE ON MOTION:**  
**AYES:** Sikes-Kline, Springfield, DePreter, Garris  
**NAYES:** NONE  
**MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Commissioner Blonder not present for vote.

**9.A.3. Ordinance 2026-09: Vacate Right of Way, 81 Magnolia Drive (S. Slaughter, Utilities and Public Works Director**

Commissioner DePreter recused himself.<sup>2</sup>

Stephen Slaughter, Utilities and Public Works Director, reviewed Ordinance 2026-09.

Mayor Sikes-Kline asked if the other properties contiguous to this segment were also vacated.

David Birchim, City Manager, replied that the sections of this right-of-way to the south had been previously vacated.

**MOTION**

**Mayor Sikes-Kline MOVED to pass Ordinance 2026-09 on first reading and moved to second reading. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield.**

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, read the Ordinance.

**ORDINANCE NO. 2026-09**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE, FLORIDA, VACATING, DISCONTINUING AND ABANDONING THAT CERTAIN PORTION OF AN UN-NAMED, UNOPENED ALLEYWAY LOCATED WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS OF ST. AUGUSTINE ON PROPERTY KNOWN AS 81 MAGNOLIA DRIVE, PORTIONS OF LOT(S) 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9, BLOCK A, CAPO'S ADDITION, ANASTASIA, LOCATED WITHIN THE CITY LIMITS OF ST. AUGUSTINE AND MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED HEREIN; PROVIDING FOR REPEAL OF CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION IN THE CODE OF THE CITY OF ST. AUGUSTINE; PROVIDING FOR

<sup>2</sup> Recusal form attached to original minutes.

SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

**VOTE ON MOTION:**

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

**NAYES: NONE**

**MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY<sup>34</sup>**

**9.B. Resolutions**

**9.B.1. Resolution 2026-07: Setting Dates for Nights of Lights (M. Wissel, Communications Director)**

Melissa Wissel, Communications Director reviewed Resolution 2026-07.

Commissioner DePreter asked for clarification about the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

Ms. Wissel replied that the way the resolution was written continued NoL to the second Saturday in January. She said reviewing the next five years, the second Saturday for one year had the MLK holiday included and the preamble of the resolution protected that holiday. She said if the holiday were to remain excluded from NoL then an exception would need to be made.

The Commission heard from the following members of the public:

- Jackie Hird
- Anthony Sexton
- JoAnne Engle
- Susan Philips
- Thomas Day
- Charlie Robles
- Geroge Decker
- James Edwin Young IV
- Edith Stein
- Isabelle Renault
- Lewis Bird
- Melinda Rakoncay
- Susan Gregory

<sup>3</sup>Commissioner DePreter not present for vote

<sup>4</sup> Break from 7:01p.m.-7:10p.m.

- Judy Glazebrooke
- Cindy Stavely
- Joshua Luke
- Aaron Jockers
- Manda Gerber
- Shelia McCarthy
- Fredrick Russell
- Jenn Goodrick
- Scott York
- Martha Mickler
- County Commissioner Ann Taylor
- Brandon Ingram
- Gabriella Moreno
- Isabel Dixon
- Jeffrey Leibovitz
- Karl Bedford
- Thomas Reynolds
- Karen Zander

Mayor Sikes-Kline said this was an encouraging meeting and she appreciated that so many people came to speak. She said the main commonality was that everyone loved St. Augustine and cared about the City in their own way. She said it had been clearly stated that continued work was needed on the shuttles, traffic, parking, and just general access to bathroom; however, overall, the survey indicated that that most were happy with the direct NoL was headed in general. She said for residents the survey pointed out that this event had gone well far pass what they could support. She felt many still supported NoL but they were bearing the burden of it and were not seeing a return on investment. She said it was a balance between having a vibrant economy and a quality of life. She said shifting the dates and shortening the NoL last year was to provide a bit of relief to the residents, and she did not feel the impact on the businesses was extreme. She said there were many different aspects such as lodging, restaurants, bars, or parking garages, which made it complicated to fully understand without having the correct data and that was not available. She said she the data that she felt was solid was the resident survey. She suggested leaving the dates as they were permanently, and in all

fairness, she felt this was a good compromise and balance for the businesses and residents.

Commissioner Garris said there had been a lot of discussion and NoL was a beautiful time of year, and most appreciated the season. She said the businesses urged the Commission last year to continue NoL until after the Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. weekend; however, the dates were changed. She said she supported the idea of keeping NoL going through MLK Jr. weekend, as it was a three-day weekend, which could be the extra needed help to sustain businesses just a bit further. She suggested that the permanent dates should start later in November and extend throughout MLK Jr. weekend. She said a lot of people in her community enjoyed celebrating MLK Jr. weekend in the City and would enjoy the NoL. She pointed out that St. Johns County gave the City extra funds last year and she felt the City would be seeking additional funds this year and felt everyone should work together. She understood there was traffic, but traffic was year-round not just during NoL. She explained that many business owners spoke about the decrease in income, and the data provided showed the decreases and that was her major concern. She understood it was difficult for the residents, and she was one, but it was once a year.

Commissioner DePreter said it had been a long year of continuous discussion. He said a few points that had resonated with him had been that eight weeks was acceptable, but it was a matter of moving around. He said his issue was traffic as it was intensive use with a surge during the holidays. He said his concern was having a buffer in between events, and if the dates were moved to include the MLK Jr. weekend, there may not be enough recovery time for the residents. He felt that the MLK Jr. holiday could be marketed with the Tourist Development Council (TDC) on its own and be successful as NoL was branded towards Christmas. He said after a bit of research, he learned no other City

sponsored Christmas event lasted longer than six weeks. He said if NoL continued for eight weeks it would be the longest Christmas City sponsored event. He said throughout the year, he had requested economic data, but the only information he could obtain was regarding the tourist development tax and that it had increased, which could be from more hotels in the area or hotel room cost; however, that data was not clear. He said his major concern was that they would be limiting the economic vitality of the event in some significant way. He agreed that the dates proposed were fine, but it would be fine if the dates changed as it was eight weeks. He said if this were passed, the City would have to request funds from another agency, as the City was only able to fund the event for thirteen days. He thanked Melinda Rakoncay, Neighborhood Council, for putting the survey together as he appreciated the effort.

Commissioner Springfield thanked Melinda Rakoncay, Neighborhood Council, and Susan Philips, Susan Philips, CEO of the St. Johns County Visitors and Convention Bureau (VCB), for the data provided and felt it was a good start for future years to come. He said parking and traffic were the main concerns no matter when NoL took place. He said some had expressed having NoL take place the Saturday prior to Thanksgiving and end around the Martin Luther King (MLK) Jr. holiday and he would support that as long as it remained eight weeks. He said that data showed that 49% of the hotel stays were not in the City, which meant only half of the people staying could walk downtown. He said when planning, shuttling had to be a priority. He said NoL was not being canceled nor dwindled down to four weeks, as the economic extremes would be inexcusable. He agreed that planning could not take place without dates, which needed to be set in order to have everything in place and ready for the season. He expressed his appreciation for the support given by the County and the TDC, as he felt this was a county event even though the City was

responsible for the dates and hosting the event. He said City residents paid county taxes, which did not count for the TDC money, and he suggested that in the request this year, the City could ask for additional funds from the county. He reiterated that he was in favor of moving the dates to what they were previously, Saturday before Thanksgiving and end by Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.

Commissioner Blonder said the Commission had been discussing NoL for quite some time and had held many meetings since last summer. She agreed that a decision needed to be made. She said she had received some compelling feedback from some long-time business owners that NoL was not good for their business; however, she was not anti-business as she felt having the variety of different businesses was a benefit. She thanked everyone for coming as she appreciated hearing the feedback from the community. She said last year NoL was not fully funded even though the County provided \$850,000 the City residents were left with the remaining debt and she did not want them to have to fund any of it this year. She said the City had the ability to pay for thirteen days of the event; however, there was no budget set aside by the County specifically for NoL, which she felt was unfair. She said during NoL, staff priorities shifted and the level of service the City residents had diminished due to the management of NoL. She said the City was allocating resources and adding additional fatigue to the City staff with an exuberant amount of time being devoted to NoL. She felt both could be used elsewhere if NoL was not the focus. She said City resources used for NoL were quantifiable, costing more time and money to residents and the City. She supported the idea of not having vehicular traffic in the City during peak times and felt that could be pursued. She supported the resolution as proposed, as she thought it was good to maintain the MLK Jr. holiday.

## MOTION

**Commissioner Garris MOVED to have the date for Nights of Lights begin the Saturday prior to Thanksgiving and end the Tuesday, after the Martin Luther King Jr. holiday.**

Commissioner DePreter clarified that the lights would come down on that Tuesday, after the holiday.

Commissioner Garris replied in the affirmative.

**The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield.**

Commissioner DePreter said his concern was that NoL could conflict with the MLK Jr. holiday; however, he felt it would not stop the VCB from promoting NoL as more of a light show in January.

Commissioner Blonder said with the change, there would not be a buffer between the two events.

Mayor Sikes-Kline called for the vote.

### VOTE ON MOTION:

**AYES: Garris, Springfield, DePreter**

**NAYES: Blonder, Sikes-Kline**

**MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY<sup>5</sup>**

## MOTION

**Mayor Sikes-Kline MOVED to extend the meeting by an additional twenty minutes. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Blonder and APPROVED BY UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.**

### 10. Staff Reports and Presentations

**10.A. Consideration of a Petition to Vacate Right of Way, Schooners/Prado Ave (S. Slaughter, Utilities and Public Works Director)**

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<sup>5</sup> Break from 9:00p.m.-9:10p.m.

Stephen Slaughter Utilities and Public Works Director reviewed the petition to vacate the right-of-way, a portion that was located at Prado Avenue.

Commissioner DePreter said he reviewed the request and felt it could move to the next step in the process.

#### **MOTION**

**Commissioner DePreter MOVED to APPROVE the Consideration for a Petition to Vacate Right of Way, Schooners/Prado Avenue. The motion was SECONDED by Commissioner Springfield.**

#### **VOTE ON MOTION:**

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

**NAYES: NONE**

**MOTION APPROVED UNANIMOUSLY**

#### **11. ITEMS BY CITY ATTORNEY**

Commissioner Blonder questioned the email sent regarding diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) legislation and asked if there were any impacts on the City.

Isabelle Lopez, City Attorney, explained that DEI legislation would impact the City. She said official lists were created identifying what could be declared or observed. She said if it was not listed, it most likely could not be recognized.

#### **12. ITEMS BY CITY CLERK**

##### **12.A. Request for one (1) appointment – Corridor Review Committee (D. Galambos, City Clerk)**

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, said the request was for an appointment to the Corridor Review Committee; however, an updated application was received from Michael Blake requesting to apply for the Historic Architecture Review Board (HARB). She said she wanted to delay this

request and bring his application back as he was qualified to serve on HARB.

##### **12.B. Notification of one (1) vacancy – Planning and Zoning Board (D. Galambos, City Clerk)**

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, informed the Commission of a vacancy on the Planning and Zoning (PZB) Board and that position was being advertised.

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

For information only.

Darlene Galambos, City Clerk, said there was a request to hold a workshop for Ordinances 2026-10 and 2026-11, which were the Vehicle for Hire (VFH) and Franchise ordinances. She stated a memo had been provided with suggested dates which were as listed:

- May 8, 2026, 9:00a.m -12:00p.m.
- May 14, 2026, 9:00a.m -12:00p.m.
- May 15, 2026, 9:00a.m -12:00p.m.

After a brief discussion, there was a consensus to have the workshop on May 8, 2026.

#### **13. ITEMS BY CITY MANAGER**

David Birchim, City Manager, explained there were two horse carriage franchises that were able to renew as of September 30, 2026, and the deadline to inform them, if renewal was not taking place, was March 30, 2026. He said they wanted to inform the franchises that they would not be renewed but would be given first right of refusal to renew once the new ordinances were adopted. He said it could be done immediately, or they had the option to wait until September 30, 2026. He said the goal was to have all the franchises aligned with new ordinances when adopted and not grandfathered in. He said this was in line with the decision the Commission

made in February, when deciding not to renew County Carriages Franchise and to apply a consistent methodology to the other franchise holders. He asked for acknowledgement that he was moving in the direct as directed.

Commissioner Springfield said there were two other franchises that were not up for renewal. He asked if they would be grandfathered in.

Ms. Lopez advised that City Code indicated the franchises were required to adhere to the franchise code as it could be updated and amended as needed. She said they were on notice that change was coming. She said these two were up for renewal, it helped create a more seamless way to address it and then they could address the other franchises as needed.

After a brief discussion, there was consensus to move forward with notification.

Mr. Birchim announced that 7 Aviles Street was in poor condition, which was a commercial property adjacent to the Spanish Military Hospital. He said it was possible that the building may have to be demolished under an emergency demolition process and the property owner had been in contact with Jude Kostage, Structural Engineer. He said the City was awaiting the report from the engineer and the City was preparing to hold a special Historic Architecture Review Board (HARB) meeting to approve the demolition, as he was informed it was in unrecoverable condition.

Commissioner Garris requested photos of the building to understand exactly where the building was located.

Mr. Birchim replied that photos would be attached to the engineering report and the City would provide a staff report at the HARB meeting, which would have photos and other documentation.

#### **14. Items by Mayor and Commissioners**

Commissioner Blonder expressed her thanks and recognized Paul Weaver for his service of twenty-three years on the HARB Board, as he had made a great impact on the City. She called attention to the drought and asked everyone to pay close attention to the water restrictions. She asked the City to check the irrigation systems to be checked to ensure compliance.

Commissioner Garris thanked everyone for coming out to discuss NoL. She said she had heard from many residents that the changes made this past year had helped and she hoped that they would be able to continue to make improvements to be stronger and better.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said that Lauren Giber had come several times expressing her concern about speeding on Iberia Street. She agreed that with the additional residents on Iberia Street the traffic must have increased. She asked if the speed on Iberia Street could be looked into to help find a solution.


Mr. Birchim replied that the City Commission voted to not add speed humps or traffic delineators several years prior. He said this was done mostly due to the emergency vehicles that used Iberia Street to help serve the Assisted Living Facility. He said the concern was a reduction in response time. He said they would be willing to address speeding without reducing the response time from emergency services.

Mayor Sikes-Kline said having data would be beneficial when deciding, and she felt it should be revisited.

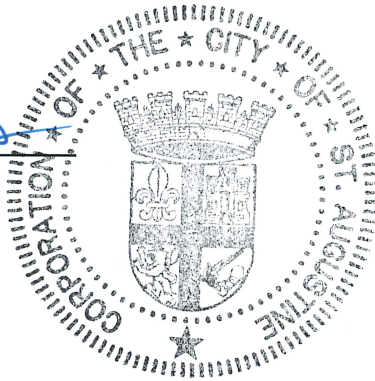
Mr. Birchim agreed to look into the issue.

**15. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:30 P.M.<sup>6</sup>

  
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Nancy Sikes-Kline, MAYOR

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Darlene Galambos, CITY CLERK



<sup>6</sup> Transcribed by Elyse Wiemann