

MINUTES
City of Cocoa
Special Meeting of The City Council

February 18, 2025

A Special City Council Meeting was held on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, in Cocoa City Hall, in City Council Chambers, located at 65 Stone Street, in Cocoa, Florida, 32922, as publicly noticed.

I. Opening Matters:

Mayor Blake called the meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

Councilmember Hearn provided the invocation, and Commander Anthony Marchica led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The City Clerk took the roll.

PRESENT:	Michael C. Blake	Mayor
	Patricia Weeks	Deputy Mayor
	Alex Goins	Councilmember
	Lavander Hearn	Councilmember
	Lorraine Koss	Councilmember
	Anthony Garganese	City Attorney
	Stockton Whitten	City Manager
	Monica Arsenault	City Clerk

ABSENT:

OTHER STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Rebecca Bowman, Finance Director; Director; Jonathan Lamm, Fire Chief; Anthony Marchica, Police Commander; Samantha Senger, Communications and Economic Development Director; Abigail Morgan, Public Works Director; Tammy Gemmati, Administrative Services Director; Jack Walsh, Utilities Director; Robert Beach, Chief

Technology Officer; Breanna Earley, Assistant City Clerk; and Megan Crutcher, Help Desk Support Tech.

II. Approval of Agenda and Minutes:

1. Agenda: Special Meeting of February 18, 2025. (2025-123).

III. Special Meeting Topics:

1. Priority Areas and Performance Measures

City Manager Whitten reviewed the Agenda for the evening. The City Manager provided a State of the Nation overview. He talked about House Bill 1365, which addresses unauthorized public camping and sleeping on public property effective October 1, 2024. He pointed out that only the County is authorized to designate the public property and submit it to DCF for certification. If within a municipality, then that municipality must concur with the designation by majority vote of the City Council. Additionally, the bill does not provide cities with the authority to independently establish shelters or designate public camping or sleeping areas without county approval and DCF certification.

City Manager Whitten discussed Police and Fire pay and retention.

Councilmember Hearn asked about conducting some research regarding what government agency will take on liability for public sleeping and camping.

City Attorney Eick spoke about House Bill 1365 and where liability would be.

Mayor Blake asked for clarification on House Bill 1365.

City Attorney Eick pointed out that only the County can designate public camping areas. She also recommended the City move forward with updating ordinances to allow criminal charges against public camping and sleeping.

Commander Anthony Marchica stated officers are patrolling the parks. Officers will issue trespass warnings to campers in public spaces and if they fail to leave, they will be arrested.

City Manager Whitten wanted to ensure that this issue is not being ignored.

Councilmember Goins spoke of Provost Park and frustration with seeing the same group of people camping in public spaces.

City Manager Whitten reiterated the issue is not being ignored and officers are making nightly checks. He spoke about the approach to panhandling as well.

Commander Anthony Marchica stated they will monitor panhandlers and make arrests.

Councilmember Hearn wanted to highlight the work the Police Department does. But he understands the frustration Councilmember Goins mentioned.

City Manager Whitten acknowledged the City is working on getting the issue under control and that it is not an overnight fix. He highlighted the crime rate for 3 years in a row being down.

Deputy Mayor Weeks inquired about motion detecting cameras. She asked how long panhandlers stay in jail. In response, Commander Anthony Marchica stated they do not stay in jail for long.

City Manager Whitten stated that there are more cameras than people realize.

Mayor Blake spoke about frustration about mandates being made but no funding being available to enforce the mandates.

Councilmember Koss inquired about the growing population.

City Manager Whitten stated it was just under 20,000 the last census.

Ms. Senger reviewed priority areas and performance measures. She listed Public Safety and Community Standards, Public Infrastructure, Economic and Community Development, Community Outreach and Engagement, and Organizational Effectiveness.

Councilmember Hearn asked for an update on a project the Cocoa Housing Authority was looking at doing a while back.

City Manager Whitten stated he will investigate it and get him an update.

2. Fund Balance Updates

Ms. Bowman provided a financial update. She talked about the Assigned Fund Balance for the General Fund.

City Manager Whitten wanted to highlight some things in the report, including roof repairs and other maintenance projects at the Police Department, increased funding for paving and Cocoa Village parking. He also mentioned the Brightline grants and funding commitments for it.

Ms. Senger spoke about the grant application and an environmental protection portion that needs to be completed. Staff is working with Public Works to complete that.

City Manager Whitten spoke about purchasing mitigation credits on properties the City owns.

Ms. Bowman provided a history of the City's completed projects over the last several years.

Ms. Bowman provided new money estimates to include:

- 3% Property Tax Increases
- 3% Fire Assessment
- 5% Utility/Stormwater Indirect Cost Allocation
- 10% ROI

The total estimated increase in revenue of \$1,711,097.

Ms. Bowman provided an estimate for the increase in expenses. This includes:

- General Fund Salaries
- 7.5% Medical Insurance
- 5% General Funds Utilities
- 5% General Fund Liability Insurance
- 5% General Fund Fuel

The total estimated expense increase is \$1,743,536.

She also shared the CBA Wage Increases.

Ms. Gemmati talked about the fire and police cadet program and expanding it for Cocoa employees.

* **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Deputy Mayor to approve amending the Cadet program to include hiring cadets.**

Mayor Blake opened the meeting for public comment.

There being no questions or comments, and the public portion of the meeting was closed.

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

Chief Lamm spoke about replacing a fire truck and the alerting system for the fire station. They are no longer able to get parts for the alerting system due to it being outdated.

- * **MOTION by Deputy Mayor Weeks; Seconded by Mayor Blake to take a 5 minute recess.**

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

- * **MOTION by Deputy Mayor Weeks; Seconded by Mayor Blake to resume the meeting.**

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

3. **Parks Update/Discussion**

Ms. Morgan gave a Parks Operations and Maintenance Agreement overview. She explained that the City will maintain Carl Anderson park, Cocoa Manor, and Gilmore Community park.

Ms. Senger and Ms. Morgan talked about the Junny Rios Martinez Park survey results. Based on the survey, the costs for the individual project components are:

1. Construct a Park Perimeter Walking Loop- \$70,000
2. Expand Playground- \$100,000
3. Install a Pavilion- \$150,000
4. Construct two Pickleball Courts- \$180,000

Ms. Morgan provided staff's recommendations for additional park improvements to include:

- County provided cost estimate for Stradley Park Football Field concessions renovations- \$619,300

- County Capital Revenue budgeted for the Football Concession Project- \$284,000
- City Cost- \$335,300
- Softball and Baseball Concession Project County Budget- \$200,000

Deputy Mayor Weeks spoke about the easement to the Cocoa Conservation area. She would like to see a sign indicating that area.

Councilmember Koss suggested looking into making an entrance to the Cocoa Conservation Area.

Councilmember Hearn suggested adding a small parking area using coquina as a more economic option.

- * **MOTION by Deputy Mayor Weeks; Seconded by Mayor Blake to investigate making the easement and parking lot to the conservation area.**

City Manager Whitten asked for clarification on the motion.

- * **MOTION AMENDED by Deputy Mayor Weeks; Seconded by Mayor Blake to improve access of the easement and parking lot to the conservation area; to stabilize the surfaces by the tennis courts; expand or improve the walking loop; and install markers for the trailhead and add signage at the conservation.**

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

- * **MOTION by Councilmember Koss; Seconded by Mayor Blake to approve the Stradley Park Football Field concession project with the County contributing \$284,000 and the City contributing \$335,300 as part of the City's Park inventory.**

Further discussion was held on the park improvements.

Councilmember Goins expressed that he would like himself and the football organization involved in the project.

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

Mr. Beach explained what a mini pitch is.

City Manager Whitten discussed the Provost Park mini pitch grant. The estimated cost to construct is \$200,000. It is a rolling application with the first round due March 31st. It would bring in a variety of activities and amenities that bring families to utilize the park.

A discussion on the location of the mini pitch in Provost Park took place.

- * **MOTION by Deputy Mayor Weeks; Seconded by Mayor Blake to explore obtaining grants to build a mini pitch.**

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

Ms. Senger discussed special needs playground equipment at Provost Park. She shared several quotes from different companies about the special needs playground equipment.

- * **MOTION by Councilmember Goins; Seconded by Mayor Blake to pursue special needs playground equipment not to exceed \$100,000 to potentially be sited at Anderson and Provost Park.**

Further discussion about the motion.

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

Ms. Bowman asked for Council direction to approve the final assigned fund balance list for Fiscal Year 2024.

- * **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Deputy Mayor Weeks to approve the assigned fund balance list to include \$100,000 for special needs playground equipment and 335,300 for the football field concession project.**

Mayor Blake opened the meeting for public comment.

There being no questions or comments, and the public portion of the meeting was closed.

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

- * **MOTION by Mayor Blake; Seconded by Councilman Goins to extend the meeting's end time to 8pm.**

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

4. Public Safety Priorities

Chief Lamm discussed Public Safety priorities. He noted that there has been a population increase due to new residential and commercial developments leading to demand for public safety personnel. Additional patrol needed to maintain safety and traffic management. Enhanced fire and medical response capacity and the possibility of additional stations and resources. Brightline Station leading to increased development, higher daily population, and increased traffic. Proactive investment to keep with growth.

5. Waste Management

Ms. Senger discussed yard and bulk waste. The new Waste Management contract requires residents to call-in bulk yard waste and bulk waste to be picked up instead of a regularly scheduled bulk pick-up days. This helped to lower the number of increases customers received. The City's current contract runs through 2028. In order to communicate information about yard and bulk waste, the City sends out postcards, magnets, newsletters, videos, and social media campaigns.

City Manager Whitten stated the biggest issue in the City seems to be bulk yard waste. The city is currently working with Waste Management to get pricing for additional regular service. Waste Management is also working on additional ideas for bulk waste pickup.

Ms. Senger pointed out that yard waste must be called in to Public Works to be put on the list for pickup.

6. Public Comment

Frank Cervone, 504 Fiske Blvd, Cocoa, spoke about the Fiske Boulevard construction project and shared concern because one of his driveways was deleted in the process of the project and because construction took so long his property was overrun with rats. He mentioned that he submitted a claim to the City's insurance company, but he didn't know what else to do.

Aleck Greenwood, 640 Brevard Ave, Cocoa, would like Council to consider the expenses related to security in Cocoa Village. He would also like Council to consider allowing golf carts in the Downtown area.

City Attorney Eick spoke about low-speed vehicles already being allowed in the Downtown area. She stated that golf carts would have to have designated streets they can be driven on.

Councilmember Goins asked if Council could discuss food trucks after 10pm and the code related to attention seeking devices at a future meeting.

IV. Adjournment:

- * **MOTION by Deputy Mayor Weeks; Seconded by Mayor Blake to adjourn the Special meeting of February 18, 2025.**

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Hearn, Goins, Koss

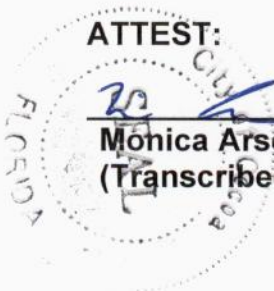
THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

The meeting adjourned at 8:11 p.m.


Michael C. Blake, Mayor

ATTEST:


Monica Arsenault, CMC, City Clerk
(Transcribed by Breanna Earley, Assistant City Clerk)



Handwritten text, possibly a signature or date, located in the center of the page.

25/11/10
City of Council

Mayor