

OCOEE CITY COMMISSION

Ocoee Commission Chambers
1 N. Bluford Avenue
Ocoee, Florida

August 27, 2025

MINUTES

6:00 PM

BUDGET WORKSHOP

• **CALL TO ORDER 6:00 PM**

Mayor Johnson called the workshop to order at 6:00 PM in the Commission Chambers of City Hall. **City Clerk Sibbitt** called the roll and declared a quorum present.

Present: Mayor Johnson, Commissioner Kennedy, Commissioner Wilsen, Commissioner Firstner, and Commissioner Oliver

Also Present: City Manager Shadrix, Acting Finance Director Lawitzke, Chief Accountant Meruena, and City Clerk Sibbitt

• **FISCAL YEAR 2025/2026 BUDGET OVERVIEW 6:01 PM**

City Manager Shadrix and **Acting Finance Director Lawitzke** provided a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the 2025/2026 Budget Year which included the budget process timeline, notable changes for greater transparency, and budget commitments. **City Manager Shadrix** explained the Budget Supplement before them and its purpose. **Acting Finance Director Lawitzke** announced the millage rate and the percentage increase over the rollback rate and provided the ad valorem revenue. She explained the gross taxable rate, general fund revenues, general fund expenditures, and financial challenges.

• **DISCUSSION 6:16 PM**

Mayor Johnson opened the floor for questions from the City Commission.

Commissioner Firstner asked about the 30% increase in health insurance costs and further inquired whether any actions could be considered before deciding to increase insurance rates for employees. **City Manager Shadrix** addressed his questions. **Commissioner Firstner** inquired about the increase of the telephone costs as shown in the budget. **City Manager Shadrix** addressed his question.

Commissioner Oliver asked about the 'transfer out' amounts listed for each department and their intended use. He expressed concern about the lack of clarity in the descriptions provided for these funds. **Acting Finance Director Lawitzke** addressed his question. **Commissioner Oliver** asked for additional details regarding the sidewalk repair schedule and whether any funds from the current fiscal year would carry over into the new fiscal year for potential additional repairs. **City Manager Shadrix** addressed his question and **Public Works Director Krug** gave an update on the status of their current sidewalk repair project and outlined the amount of additional funding required. **Commissioner Oliver** inquired about the street paving that is scheduled for FY2025/2026. **Chief Accountant Meruena** shared that pages 160-161 provide a list of streets to be paved.

City Manager Shadrix noted that several Elected Officials raised the topic of speed tables, and staff is working to include funding for them in this year's budget. Staff will follow up individually to discuss further details. **Commissioner Oliver** asked about the work Alex de la Portilla had completed for the City, as referenced during the last Commission Meeting. **City Manager Shadrix** provided an overview of the free work that had been done. **Commissioner Oliver**

commented on the pool of talent among high school and college students and suggested including a budget line item to support youth summer jobs or college internships. He further asked if the City Commission would support this type of program. **Mayor Johnson** suggested revisiting the request at mid-year, after the completion of the street and sidewalk projects previously requested. He also shared his belief that that the City could potentially partner with the college to secure volunteers, eliminating the need for paid positions. **Commissioner Oliver** stated that the request was reasonable, as mid-year falls before the summer. He added that if the City is able to support the program, they could move forward quickly in partnership with CareerSource. **Commissioner Kennedy** shared he would not support a partnership with CareerSource but agrees with the Mayor on waiting until mid-year to determine healthcare funding and other priority projects. He stated that he is not opposed to having interns but explained that his firm follows a system where department heads propose specific interns for defined projects, ensuring the program is well-structured. He stated that if there is a need for interns within the City, staff should prepare and present a business case to the City Manager for review.

Mayor Johnson commented on the rising insurance costs in recent years, noting that the increase is due to several factors, including the rising cost of medication. He also expressed a desire for the City Manager to review the City clinic contract to explore potential modifications. **City Manager Shadrix** responded to his inquiry. **Mayor Johnson** requested that staff conduct a drive-through of the older parts of town, noting that several areas need improvements and that the newer sections should not be the sole focus. **City Manager Shadrix** explained that the workshops serve that purpose. He noted that by reviewing the list now, there is time before the budget is adopted to make any necessary changes to the road improvement plan. He encouraged all Elected Officials to review the lists and provide him with their priorities. **Mayor Johnson** commented that the contingency fund has an estimated \$118,000, and he would like to allocate those funds either toward sidewalks or the cemetery expansion, as there are currently no available spaces. **City Manager Shadrix** advised that a presentation can be made to the City Commission for their consideration, but he plans to request that some of those contingency funds be allocated toward completing a sidewalk project on Rewis Street.

Commissioner Wilsen commented that local municipalities are uncertain about upcoming decisions at the State level, which is why they need to prioritize budgeting based on their essential needs rather than wants, especially to maintain a balanced rate of 4.95 mills. She further commented on the increase in taxes on the TRIM notices from other agencies such as Orange County and encouraged residents to voice their concerns on those increases at their meetings as well. Brief discussion ensued on the cemetery and **City Manager Shadrix** reiterated that a plan with associated costs can be brought to a City Commission Meeting before the end of the year.

Mayor Johnson noted that fire fees will also need to be reviewed again mid-year. **City Manager Shadrix** briefly responded to the comment and clarified the specific areas the consultants were assigned to examine.

Commissioner Kennedy inquired if a survey is being completed by HR on the Healthcare Clinic. **City Manager Shadrix** addressed his question. **Commissioner Kennedy** further commended staff and noted that moving toward a functional budget will result in cost savings. He expressed

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his support for the direction the City Manager is taking. He also asked the Acting Finance Director to give a brief explanation of transfers in and out and went on to highlight the differences between private-sector accounting and governmental fund accounting.

City Manager Shadrix praised the professional staff for the reductions made in their operational budget.

Mayor Johnson also thanked staff and City Manager Shadrix for being able to include a 3.5% increase in cost of living for the employees.

Commissioner Wilsen shared that it is nice when they receive compliments from their residents on the professionalism of the City staff.

Commissioner Oliver commented that, unfortunately, many residents are not present to see the sacrifices and budget cuts made by staff in order to balance the budget and maintain the millage rate at 4.95 mills. He commended staff for all their work.

Commissioner Firstner echoed the sentiments made by those who spoke before him and thanked the Finance Team for the clear layout of the budget books, noting that they were easy to follow and promoted transparency.

Mayor Johnson announced that the next Budget Workshop is no longer necessary and received consensus from the City Commission to cancel it. Therefore, the next budget meeting is the Tentative Budget Public Hearing scheduled for September 10th.

• **ADJOURNMENT 7:02 PM**

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 PM.

APPROVED:

Attest:

City of Ocoee



Melanie Sibbitt, City Clerk



Rusty Johnson, Mayor