

OCOEE CITY COMMISSION
Ocoee Commission Chambers
1 N. Bluford Avenue
Ocoee, Florida

July 15, 2025

MINUTES

6:15 PM

REGULAR CITY COMMISSION MEETING

• **CALL TO ORDER 6:15 PM**

Mayor Johnson called the regular session to order at 6:15 PM in the Commission Chambers of City Hall. The invocation was led by **Ages Hart**, *Ocoee Resident*, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag led by **Mayor Johnson**. **City Clerk Sibbitt** called the roll and declared a quorum present.

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

Also Present: City Manager Shadrix, City Attorney Geller, and City Clerk Sibbitt

Absent: Commissioner Firstner

• **PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS 6:17 PM**

Legislative Session Recap - **Florida State House District 45 Representative Leonard Spencer** provided the City Commission with an update on the recently concluded 105-day legislative session and the State budget. He highlighted \$3 million in funding secured for District 45 to support water infrastructure improvements, future growth, and environmental protection, as well as \$150,000 allocated to the Central Florida Mothers' Milk Bank. **Representative Spencer** noted continued funding for the Live Local Act and reported that while the State budget includes \$2 billion in tax relief, no definitive solutions have been established for property tax or property insurance reform.

Commissioner Wilsen emphasized her belief in Home Rule, and requested Representative Spencer keep that in mind when making decisions on behalf of the City of Ocoee.

Commissioner Oliver and **Mayor Johnson** expressed their gratitude to Representative Spencer for taking the time to provide valuable information on the legislative session and budget.

AED Stations Presentation - **Fire Chief Smothers** provided an update on the project to install Automated External Defibrillator (AED) stations at several local parks. He thanked Commissioners Kennedy and Wilsen for their discretionary funding, multiple City departments for their support, and Ms. Martha Lopez-Anderson, *Parent Heart Watch*, for her donations. **Fire Chief Smothers** explained what an AED is and how it is used.

Mayor Johnson recognized Ms. Lopez-Anderson for her contributions.

Fire Chief Smothers provided an overview of all the AED stations throughout the City. He expressed gratitude to the elected officials for their continued support.

Martha Lopez-Anderson explained that she lived in Ocoee for 25 years, and that Ocoee is where her son was born and passed away. She expressed her pride in the AED project and announced that she plans to use it as an example throughout the country [through Parent Heart Watch]. She will be presenting the project to the National League of Cities (NLC) and commended the City and elected officials for their efforts. She advised that sudden cardiac arrest is the leading cause of death in the US; performing CPR and utilizing an AED before EMS personnel arrive gives patients a greater chance of survival and can reduce the risk of brain injury.

• **STAFF REPORTS AND AGENDA REVIEW** - None

• **PUBLIC COMMENTS 6:39 PM**

The following persons addressed the City Commission:

- **Susan Adams**, *Ocoee Resident*, spoke about the agreement between the City of Ocoee and D.R. Horton upon the construction of the Wynwood subdivision, wherein D.R. Horton paid \$200,000 toward the installation of a traffic signal at the intersection of E. McCormick Road and Apopka-Vineland Road. She referenced a letter that had been posted online from Brett Blackadar of Orange County Public Works Department, stating that in 2019 a traffic signal was warranted at the intersection, but a 2021 study suggested a roundabout. **Ms. Adams** implored the City to voice support to the County for the original plan for a traffic signal and explained her reasoning. **City Manager Shadrix** and **Assistant City Manager Rumer** addressed her concerns. Discussion ensued regarding the Wynwood property annexation and traffic signal agreement with Orange County.
- **Dr. Jim Moyer**, *Orange Soil and Water District 2 Supervisor*, explained Orange County's Soil and Water Conservation program and its purpose.
- **Chris Adkins**, *Ocoee Resident*, inquired about how the City Charter relates to City Management accountability, and how that is put into practice through the City Commission. **Commissioner Wilsen** addressed his inquiry. **Commissioner Kennedy** requested the City Attorney address the inquiry; **City Attorney Geller** responded accordingly. **Mayor Johnson** and **Commissioner Oliver** further addressed Mr. Adkins' inquiry.

• **CONSENT AGENDA 7:01 PM**

Consent Agenda Motion

Motion: Move to adopt Consent Agenda Items #1-9; Moved by Commissioner Wilsen, seconded by Commissioner Oliver; Motion carried 3-1 with Commissioner Kennedy opposing and Commissioner Firstner absent.

1. Approval of Minutes from the Regular City Commission Meeting held June 17, 2025. **(City Clerk Sibbitt)**
2. Approval of New Appointment to the Code Enforcement Board. **(City Clerk Sibbitt)**
3. Approval of the Design & Engineering Services for the Lake Apopka Nature Park with Kimley-Horn & Associates in the Amount of \$202,800. **(Concurrency and Commitment Coordinator McFarlane)**
4. Approval of Resolution Designating Administrative Official Authorized to Approve Plats and Replats. **(Deputy Development Services Director Whitfield)**
5. Approval of a Two-Year Warranty Surety and Maintenance, Materials, and Workmanship

- Agreement with Blue Castle Development, LLC for the Wawa - SR 50 & Clarke.
(**Development Engineer Keaton**)
6. Approval of Proposed Tentative Millage Rate for Fiscal Year 2025–2026 Budget.
(**Acting Finance Director Lawitzke**)
 7. Approval of Federal Fiscal Year 2024 Edward Byrne Memorial Justice Assistance Grant (JAG) Program. (**Police Chief Ogburn**)
 8. Approval of the One (1) Year Optional Contract Renewal with Cepra Landscape, LLC for RFP 20-005 Landscaping, Landscape Maintenance, and Mowing Services.
(**Procurement Manager Tolbert**)
 9. Approval of Award for RFP #25-007 Emergency-Disaster Debris Monitoring Services - Term Contract. (**Procurement Manager Tolbert**)

• **FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE 7:02 PM**

10. First Reading of Ordinance for 703 Center Street - Mazariegos Property Annexation & Rezoning; Project No. AX-05-25-05 & RZ-25-05-05. (**Planner I Belizaire**)

City Attorney Geller read the titles of the ordinances, and it was announced that this will be presented as a second reading and public hearing at the City Commission meeting scheduled for August 5, 2025, at 6:15 PM or soon thereafter.

• **SECOND READING OF ORDINANCE – PUBLIC HEARING 7:03 PM**

11. Second Reading and Public Hearing of an Ordinance for Envision 2045 Ocoee Comprehensive Plan - Large Scale Plan Amendment to Replace Ocoee's Comprehensive Plan in its Entirety. (**Development Services Deputy Director Whitfield**)

Development Services Deputy Director Whitfield presented an overview of Envision 2045, the updated Ocoee Comprehensive Plan, which shall be the governing policy framework to direct growth and development in the City over the next twenty years. Envision 2045 shall establish Goals, Objectives, and Policies to achieve its vision for the future of Ocoee. The proposed Ordinance will repeal the current 2002 Comprehensive Plan in its entirety and replace it with an updated comprehensive plan, entitled Envision 2045; and further, will include an option to opt-out of Envision 2045, if needed. **Development Services Deputy Director Whitfield** gave a brief overview of the plan elements' goals, policies, and objectives. She noted that while the City awaited feedback from state reviewing agencies, they used the time to connect with the community by holding a Community Outreach Meeting on Wednesday, May 28, 2025. She provided a brief summary of the public's comments and questions from that meeting. The deadline for state agency comments was June 9, 2025 (45 days after the plan was electronically submitted to all agencies). No objections were received; however, technical assistance comments were submitted and have since been addressed.

City Attorney Geller read the title of the ordinance. He further summarized the new Senate Bill (SB) 180 which is the purpose of the opt-out provision in the ordinance. He also noted that a scrivener's error had been identified and corrected in the ordinance.

The public hearing was opened.

The following persons addressed the City Commission:

- **Doug Gomber**, *Ocoee Resident*, expressed his support for Envision 2045 and praised staff for the cost savings achieved by conducting the study in-house. He also urged the City Commission to approve the ordinance.

The public hearing was closed.

Commissioner Kennedy asked that the City Attorney clarify any limitations associated with the opt-out provision and inquired about the procedures to review such requests. **City Attorney Geller** responded to his inquiry.

Commissioner Wilsen expressed appreciation to Mr. Gomber for his comment and extended thanks to staff for their efforts.

Commissioner Oliver commented that his political platform has consistently emphasized the City's lack of a defined vision and mission, and he believes that Envision 2045 now provides the foundational framework the City needs to move forward. He also commended staff for their work on the initiative. **Commissioner Kennedy** emphasized the importance of clear specifics, ongoing follow-ups, collaboration with City Management, and accountability in order to successfully realize the vision. He further shared the importance of voting to make residents' voices heard so elected officials can advocate for what their constituents want when working with City Management.

Motion: Move to approve Ordinance 2025-14 for Envision 2045 Ocoee Comprehensive Plan - Large Scale Plan Amendment to Replace Ocoee's Comprehensive Plan in its Entirety; and authorize the transmittal of the adopted Envision 2045 Comprehensive Plan to the reviewing agencies in accordance Section 163.3184(3)(c), Florida Statutes; Moved by Commissioner Wilsen, seconded by Commissioner Kennedy; Motion carried 4-0 with Commissioner Firstner absent.

Recess 7:23 PM - 7:31 PM

• **PUBLIC HEARING 7:31 PM**

12. Adoption of the Amended and Restated Final Resolution Pertaining to Fire Protection Assessments for Fiscal Year 2025–2026. **(Assistant City Manager Rumer)**

Assistant City Manager Rumer provided an overview of the Fire Assessment Services Program and the Resolution proposing a new initial assessment. He outlined the completed steps, which included conducting a fire assessment study, adopting an initial assessment resolution, sending notices to all property owners, and publishing legal advertisements. His presentation covered several key areas: general government revenue, millage rate breakdown, general fund expenditures, proposed property tax reform, types of fire assessments, current costs under the existing rate, and projected costs under the proposed rate.

Fire Chief Smothers followed with a summary of fire incident types, the proposed 2026 fire budget, and both existing and recurring fire service costs.

Assistant City Manager Rumer concluded the presentation by highlighting average public safety salaries, personnel-to-population ratios, and recommended adopting the Amended and Restated Final Assessment Resolution for FY 2025–2026. The proposal includes a rate increase from \$69.50 to \$139.23 per fire protection unit. He also briefly introduced the consultants assisting with the program.

Sandi Neubarth, *Anser Advisory*, provided an overview of the purpose and objectives of the fire assessment. She further explained the concept of non-ad valorem assessments, the demand-availability apportionment methodology, the proposed maximum rate, and the total assessable revenue.

City Attorney Geller read the title of the resolution.

The public hearing was opened.

The following persons addressed the City Commission with inquiries related to the fire assessment:

- **Amelia Ambrosio**, *Ocoee Resident*, inquired about the calculations used to determine her factored fire protection units to establish her fire assessment fee. **Assistant City Manager Rumer** addressed her inquiry.
- **Keith Butts**, *Ocoee Resident*, inquired about collecting revenue from EMS calls and auto accidents where non-residents are involved, and why a fire engine and rescue respond to calls at nursing homes. **Fire Chief Smothers** addressed his inquiries.
- **Kelly**, *Ocoee Resident*, commented on accountability with respect to the budget and the vision related to the Comprehensive Plan, and pondered why the fee is such a big hit at one time as opposed to a smaller fee each year for the past several years. **City Manager Shadrix** responded to his comments.
- **Manuel Delgado**, *Ocoee Resident*, inquired how long the fire fees will be in effect. **City Manager Shadrix** responded to his inquiry.
- **Betty Haas**, *Ocoee Resident*, inquired about the difference between raising the fire assessment fee and raising the millage rate, and if all the upcoming development has been considered as a part of the assessment. **Assistant City Manager Rumer** responded to her inquiries.
- **Margaretta McKenzie**, *Ocoee Resident*, inquired about people living in apartments paying their share of the fire assessment fees, and if the golf club purchase was related to the fees. **City Manager Shadrix** addressed her inquiries.
- **Herbert Whitter**, *Ocoee Resident*, inquired about businesses who have benefitted from Ocoee's population increase, such as Walmart and Publix, as well as the toll authorities and local hospitals, paying portions of the assessment. **City Manager Shadrix** responded to his inquiries. Brief discussion ensued.

The following persons spoke in opposition to the Fire Assessment Resolution:

- **Michael Rogers**, *Ocoee Resident*
- **David Denmark**, *Ocoee Resident*
- **Kim Denmark**, *Ocoee Resident*
- **John Wilkison**, *Ocoee Resident*
- **Rembert Edwards**, *Ocoee Resident*
- **Ralph Jones**, *Ocoee Resident*
- **Joe Bandur**, *Ocoee Resident*
- **Daniel Plate**, *Ocoee Resident*
- **Angela Williams**, *Ocoee Resident*
- **Gray**, *Ocoee Resident*

The public hearing was closed.

Assistant City Manager Rumer briefly addressed a question from one of the residents.

City Manager Shadrix informed the City Commission that, if the proposed fire assessment fee increase is not approved, an increase in the millage rate will be necessary to keep up with the rising costs of police and fire services. He also noted the intention to implement budget cuts in light of recent legislative changes that may affect local government funding and agreed with earlier comments that small, incremental increases should have been adopted in previous fiscal years.

Commissioner Kennedy thanked all the residents for speaking and sharing their opinions. He expressed support for adopting a zero-based budgeting approach, noting that it is not currently in use. He also voiced his confidence in City Manager Shadrix's leadership, recognizing that he is moving in that direction. Additionally, he highlighted several voter-approved legislative changes that are now impacting municipal revenue. He expressed his support for establishing a dedicated Fire Fund, with all related fees allocated directly and entirely to the Fire Department and discussed the current fiscal challenges the City is facing.

Commissioner Wilsen commented on the millage rate and the importance to set it in compliance with TRIM notice requirements. She spoke about the need for continued attentiveness to City issues, encouraged residents to voice their concerns and come together on legislative matters, and explained the necessity of securing adequate funding to address the services and needs requested by the community.

Commissioner Oliver remarked that the issue at hand is complex and does not lend itself to a simple solution. He expressed his discomfort with having to inform residents of a proposed 100% increase. He also raised concerns about the funds used for the golf course purchase, suggesting that those resources might have been better used to support the Fire Department's budget needs. While acknowledging the importance of the Fire Department and the benefits of its ISO rating for residents' taxes, he asked what the projected millage rate would be if the assessment does not pass. **City Manager Shadrix** addressed his question and explained his rationale for proposing the current rate at 5.5 mills.

Mayor Johnson addressed the comment regarding the golf course, explaining that it generates revenue and is a City-owned asset that required the City to assume the lease in order to properly manage its operations. He noted that eliminating services such as parks, recreational activities, and community events would also lead to public dissatisfaction. He explained that impact fees collected by Orange County do not return to the City, which limits the local funding options, and emphasized that he does not want to raise the millage rate. He informed the residents that they have the option to pay the assessments quarterly. Additionally, he noted that municipalities across the board are facing the need to increase budget funding for public safety services due to collective bargaining pressures and a competitive labor market.

Motion: Move to approve Resolution 2025-08 adopting the Amended and Restated Final Assessment Resolution for the FY 25-26 Fire Protection Assessments; Moved by Commissioner Wilsen; Motion died for lack of a second.

Motion: Move to recalculate the Fire Fee as a separate fund to pay for 100% of the Fire Department, create a Fire Fund through the budget process, reduce the ad valorem by the amount of the Fire Fund, and lower the millage rate accordingly;

Mayor Johnson inquired what the total amount would come to for the fire fee. **City Manager Shadrix** addressed his inquiry. Discussion ensued.

Moved by Commissioner Kennedy; Motion died for a lack of a second.

Mayor Johnson inquired if the Commission could vote to approve the Amended and Restated Final Resolution Pertaining to Fire Protection Assessments for one (1) year, allowing for staff and the City Commission to work through a solution for the future.

Mayor Johnson handed the gavel to Mayor Pro Tem Wilsen.

Motion: Move to approve Resolution 2025-08 adopting the Amended and Restated Final Assessment Resolution for the FY 25-26 Fire Protection Assessments for one (1) year and then work through a solution for the future; Moved by Mayor Johnson, seconded by Commissioner Kennedy;

Commissioner Kennedy commented that the notice states that the assessment is an ongoing fee and inquired if that would be an issue. **Assistant City Manager Rumer** addressed his question.

Commissioner Oliver asked how long it would take to come up with a proposal for the fire fee for next year, based on the Mayor's motion. Discussion ensued; **City Manager Shadrix** addressed his question.

Following the discussion, Motion carried 4-0 with Commissioner Firstner absent.

• REGULAR AGENDA – None

• COMMENTS FROM COMMISSIONERS 10:08 PM

Commissioner Wilsen – Commented on the following: 10:08 PM

1) Advised that she will be hosting a community meeting for the Pickleball facility and requested to utilize the Commission Chambers for the meeting. Consensus of the City Commission was to approve the use of the Commission Chambers for the community meeting.

• ADJOURNMENT 10:09 PM

APPROVED:

Attest:

City of Ocoee



Melanie Sibbitt, City Clerk



Rusty Johnson, Mayor