



City of Palm Coast Minutes CITY MANAGER SEARCH

City Hall
160 Lake Avenue
Palm Coast, FL 32164
www.palmcoastgov.com

Mayor Michael Norris
Vice Mayor Theresa Pontieri
Council Member Charles Gambaro
Council Member Ty Miller
Council Member David Sullivan

Tuesday, April 29, 2025

6:00 PM

**City Hall - Jon Netts
Community Wing**

City Staff

Lauren Johnston, Acting City Manager

Marcus Duffy, City Attorney

Kaley Cook, City Clerk

- Public Participation shall be in accordance with Section 286.0114 Florida Statutes.
- Other matters of concern may be discussed as determined by City Council.
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- It is proper meeting etiquette to silence all electronic devices, including cell phones while Council is in session.
- Any person who decides to appeal any decision of the City Council with respect to any matter considered at this meeting will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose, may need to hire a court reporter to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based.

A. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Norris called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

B. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG AND A MOMENT OF SILENCE

C. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Kaley Cook called the roll. All members were present with Council Member Sullivan appearing virtually.

D. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public Participation shall be held in accordance with Section 286.0114 Florida Statutes. And pursuant to the City Council's Meeting Policies and Procedures:

- (1) This agenda item has a thirty (30) minute limit.
- (2) Each speaker shall at the podium, provide their name and may speak for up to 3 minutes.
- (3) The Public may provide comments to the City Council relative to matters not on the agenda at the times indicated in this Agenda. Following any comments from the public, there may be discussion by the City Council.
- (4) Public speakers may address their comments to the Council as a whole, the Mayor, or to an individual Council Member
- (5) When addressing the City Council on specific, enumerated Agenda items, speakers shall:
 - (a) make their comments concise and to the point;
 - (b) not speak more than once on the same subject;
 - (c) not, by speech or otherwise, delay or interrupt the proceedings or the peace of the City Council;
 - (d) obey the orders of the Mayor or the City Council; and
 - (e) not make any irrelevant, impertinent or slanderous comments while addressing the City Council; which pursuant to Council rules, shall be considered disorderly.
- (6) Any person who becomes disorderly or who fails to confine his or her comments to the identified subject or business, shall be cautioned by the Mayor and thereafter must conclude his or her remarks on the subject within the remaining designated time limit.

Any speaker failing to comply, as cautioned, shall be barred from making any additional comments during the meeting and may be removed, as necessary, for the remainder of the meeting.

Members of the public may make comments during the public comment portion of the meeting. Please be advised that public comment will only be permitted during the public comment portions of the agenda at the times indicated by the Chair during the meeting.

Mayor Norris briefly outlined the rules and procedures of public comment.

Kandi Stevens shared about a project that was approved, asked about varying speed limits, flashing pedestrian lights, shared traffic concerns, shared about a meeting with staff and asked for the scheduling of projects.

Robert MacDonald discussed his history of living in the City of Palm Coast, wanted the changes to stop, wanted the right decision to be made tonight, urged Council to do the right thing and make the right call, thanked Council Members and the Acting City Manager for their attendance at the recent Tunnel to Towers Event.

Mayor Norris advised Mr. McDonald that he could not speak on the topic of the City Manager as it is a scheduled item on this agenda.

Bruce Stone discussed water, utility bill pricing, correcting problems, problems in the city, stated that Council needs to figure out how to work together, asked for details of alleged time theft and employee terminations, and discussed the process of filling Council vacancies.

Carol Ann Stotten thanked the Mayor for his efforts, discussed developments, saying no to developers, appointed Council Members, City staff positions, recent newspaper articles, staff salaries, and supported an audit.

Dennis McDonald discussed the Governor and related news articles, wanted to share facts of the history of allegations against the Mayor, believed there to be Sunshine Violations, discussed Council Member Gambaro's attendance at Council Meetings, and urged Council to view the optics.

C.D. Roussell discussed traffic calming, shared his experience as a former police officer in LA, and encouraged inverted systems.

Denise Henry discussed complaints and allegations made against Mayor Norris, discussed employee complaints about the Mayor that were filed before he took office, and encouraged the other Council Members to see if there are any complaints about them.

Jeremy Davis discussed accountability for flooding and swales, development, consequences, upgrades and corrections, City efforts, and shared his expectations.

Jeff Knotts stated that only two people on the dais were voted on by the people and that he is watching what you're saying and doing.

Gary Kunas asked Vice Mayor Pontieri if she is aware of the damage done to vehicles from the speed bumps, shared costs and that he will be coming after the city for future costs, spoke about letters in utility bills, building inspectors and plans, monies from utility bills, and wanted a forensic audit.

Donna McGevna discussed appointed versus elected officials, shared that this is a City that is suffering, discussed time wasting and the need to address items that are far more important to the City.

Mayor Norris asked Ms. Johnston about budget preparations in regard to flashing lights as discussed in public comment.

Ms. Johnston replied yes that the item was discussed during the 10 year-CIP evaluation and Strategic Action Plan, and it will come forward for future budget considerations.

Mayor Norris asked Ms. Johnston to reach out to the resident regarding inverted systems.

Ms. Johnston replied yes and shared that the traffic calming plan is scheduled for City Council on May 13, 2025.

Ms. Johnston replied to public comment to share that a referenced ditch was cleaned on April 14, 2025, and that she will confirm further with staff.

Mayor Norris asked the City Clerk to provide requested records of an internal staffing investigation to Council Members.

Council Member Miller clarified public comments on elected members of the Council to share that he was also elected and shared the voting numbers and history.

Council Member Sullivan asked everyone to please speak into the microphones.

E. DISCUSSION - CITY MANAGER SEARCH

1. DISCUSSION - CITY MANAGER SEARCH

Doug Thomas, SGR, provided a background of the item and process thus far.

City Council held lengthy discussion on the topic to include; compliments to both candidates, thanks to the candidates for going through the process, candidate experience, resume details, remembering the goals set at the beginning of the search process, unease from Council Members, concern for lack of comparable budgeting experience, highlighting the many challenges for whomever takes the role, the City at an inflection point, support for Ms. Johnston, salary expectations, potential cost savings from a candidate not using the City's benefits, base salary versus total compensation, cost effectiveness as important but not being the only consideration, start date and timeline, and a reminder to consider the best decision for the future of the City.

Mayor Norris passed the gavel to Vice Mayor Pontieri.

Mayor Norris made a motion to appoint Mr. Hough to the position of City Manager.

Council Member Miller seconded the motion for discussion.

Vice Mayor Pontieri reiterated her earlier comments to share the importance of setting the selected candidate up for success, taking a hard look at what is truly the right thing, putting aside all personal agendas that may exist, focusing on the right decision for the future of the City, and wanted Council to keep those considerations in mind.

Public Comment:

Carol Ann Stotten asked what will happen to the Acting City Manager, the assistants, and if there will be 3 salaries.

Jeff Adams said it seems that it has come to a point where a decision has to be made, discussed the potential of losing the candidates and having to start the process again, said to eliminate the new City Manager if they don't perform or match your expectations, shared that issues need to be addressed and that kicking the can down the road doesn't benefit anyone.

Kandi Stevens shared her experience and review of the City Manager candidates, the need to find someone who is going to fit with what we have, and shared support for putting a military member in the position.

Robert MacDonald discussed salary, asked when the salary begins, shared a history of selecting City Managers, asked why the hurry to select a City Manager, and felt that neither one of the candidates has the experience.

David Ferguson agreed with the comments of Vice Mayor Pontieri that the decision should be unanimous, did not believe the vote would be unanimous based on the discussions, suggested reviewing the rankings of the candidates and selection of finalists, believed the candidates to be impressive people and asked Council if these are the candidates they really want, asked if they are settling because they are desperate to have a City Manager, shared City Council's prior ranking of the candidates, shared that he was not impressed with either candidate, and encouraged ranking both candidates.

Dennis McDonald discussed the concerns for budget experience and wanted Mr. Thomas to elaborate on a point he made earlier in the meeting regarding going from a small city to a larger one to share insight and how the experience was successful or unsuccessful.

Eddie Lang discussed the difficult decision, did not feel that there is a rockstar, stated that the person with the most experienced is the Acting City Manager, shared concern for continued rotation of City Managers, and encouraged a unanimous vote.

Denise Henry shared that she was in attendance during the interviews, and meet and greet, and shared support for Mr. Hough.

Donna McGevna shared an HR perspective, shared concerns for picking the wrong person including contractual buyouts and relocation costs, shared considerations and encouraged Council to tread lightly.

Jeremy Davis supported Mr. Hough because of his comments regarding transparency.

Council Member Gambaro discussed his deliberation on the topic, his natural tendency to gravitate towards military experience, his review of the requirements of the City and the direct experience of the candidates, appreciated the input that has been given tonight, and still believed Mr. Trombino to be the best choice.

Mayor Norris reiterated comments from Mr. Hough during the interview, highlighted his understanding of politics, expressed confidence in both candidates, and found Mr. Hough to be his choice.

Council Member Sullivan shared support for Mr. Hough with regards to public presentation and instilling confidence.

Vice Mayor Pontieri responded to public comment that the Acting City Manager would return to her prior role, shared her thoughts on the candidates throughout the process, believed both candidates were lacking in certain areas, believed it to be imperative that the Council doesn't settle, and was struggling to see if either candidate had every quality that is needed for the job.

Mayor Norris urged a roll call vote.

Failed

Denied - 3 - Vice Mayor Theresa Pontieri, Council Member Charles Gambaro, Council Member Ty Miller

Approved - 2 - Mayor Michael Norris, Council Member David Sullivan

Mayor Norris retrieved the gavel.

Council Member Gambaro motioned to appoint Mr. Trombino. The motion was seconded by Council Member Miller.

Public Comment:

Robert MacDonald discussed the vote, salary requirements, relocation expenses, and lack of information available.

Mayor Norris replied to public comment to share the motion at hand and to share about the City Manager contract.

Passed

Approved - 3 -, Council Member Charles Gambaro, Council Member David Sullivan, Mayor Norris

Denied - 2 – Vice Mayor Theresa Pontieri, Council Member Ty Miller

Attorney Duffy shared that the Council would need to direct someone to negotiate the contract.

Mayor Norris shared an upcoming absence and asked Vice Mayor Pontieri to negotiate the contract with Mr. Trombino. City Council concurred.

Mr. Thomas described the process for contract negotiation.

Mayor Norris thanked both candidates for interviewing, shared comments for Mr. Hough, and looked forward to working with Mr. Trombino.

Vice Mayor Pontieri echoed the comments and looked forward to working with Mr. Trombino.

Council Member Miller echoed the comments, sharing that the interview process is not easy, felt both candidates were good candidates, and was happy for the conclusion and ability to move forward as a city.

Council Member Gambaro reiterated his earlier message wishing that we could hire them both and wished Mr. Hough the best.

Council Member Sullivan discussed Mr. Trombino's qualifications for the job, but that he picked Mr. Hough and offered congratulations to Mr. Hough.

A point of order was called by Vice Mayor Pontieri.

Mayor Norris explained to Council Member Sullivan that the vote was to select Mr. Trombino.

Council Member Sullivan stated that it was a mistake on his part, based on audio issues.

Attorney Duffy recommended a revote to clarify the record.

The City Clerk stated that this will be a revote for a motion to appoint Mr. Trombino.

Failed

Denied - 3 - Vice Mayor Theresa Pontieri, Council Member Ty Miller, Council Member David Sullivan

Approved - 2 - Mayor Michael Norris, Council Member Charles Gambaro

Attorney Duffy shared the options available.

Mayor Norris sought a motion for reconsideration.

Council Member Sullivan made a motion to consider Richard Hough.

The Council clarified that the motion is improper, since Council Member Sullivan voted in favor previously.

Attorney Duffy shared that Mr. Thomas, the City's consultant, may be able to advise on additional options.

Vice Mayor Pontieri suggested, if both candidates were willing, to do a whitepaper or short presentation on their experience handling budgets.

Attorney Duffy advised the Mayor to please remind the audience that this portion of the meeting is silent and not open for public comment.

Mayor Norris asked the public to please keep it down and let the Council work this out.

Mr. Thomas addressed a deadlocked process and provided recommendations.

Council Member Sullivan expressed difficulty hearing the audio from the dais.

Council Member Sullivan made a motion to reconsider Mr. Trombino. The motion was seconded by Council Member Gambaro.

Passed

Approved - 3 - Council Member Charles Gambaro, Council Member David Sullivan, Mayor Norris

Denied - 2 – Vice Mayor Theresa Pontieri, Council Member Ty Miller

Council Member Sullivan made a motion to select Paul Trombino as the Palm Coast City Manager. The motion was seconded by Council Member Gambaro.

Public comment:

C.D. Roussell addressed concern on budgetary experience and applied Mr. Trombino's experience.

Jeff Knotts asked the Council to think about what the people want for a City Manager.

Carol Stone asked which candidate was the higher salary and recommended going for lower salary.

Marilyn Mack stated that the Council was unbelievable and discussed total compensation.

Eddie Lang addressed indecisiveness of the Council, stated that it is obvious there is not full confidence in the selection, and that Council should rethink before the vote.

Carol Ann Stotten discussed the differences in salary between the two candidates.

Denise Henry was confused by Council Member Sullivan, the votes, and shared concerns with the candidate.

Council Member Sullivan believed the vote should be unanimous.

Mayor Norris asked for the vote to be called.

The City Clerk reiterated that the motion is to select Mr. Trombino for the City Manager position.

Failed

Denied - 3 - Vice Mayor Theresa Pontieri, Council Member Ty Miller, Council Member David Sullivan

Approved - 2 - Mayor Michael Norris, Council Member Charles Gambaro

Mayor Norris supported an earlier recommendation from Vice Mayor Pontieri, that he would like to have both candidates write a 2-page whitepaper on their budgets handled during their careers. Council concurred.

Discussion was held on timeline and the requested details. Council concurred to add the topic to the May 6, 2025, Business Meeting.

Mr. Thomas shared that he will be in the area on May 6, 2025, and asked if the item could be placed later on the agenda so that he can attend the meeting in person.

F. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Remainder of Public Comments is limited to three (3) minutes each.

Attorney Duffy shared a reminder that this section of public comment is for non-agenda items.

Dennis McDonald discussed Mr. Ferguson and the recent appointment of the District 3 seat and recommended giving everyone the opportunity to be heard during the appointment process.

Jeff Knotts suggested asking the candidates to include how they could improve the City or what their directions are for the City.

Bruce Stone stated that a resident made a recommendation to challenge developers, asked if Council had gone with that approach, and recommended allowing open sessions.

Marilyn Mack stated that nobody has ever addressed funds that were required by the a developer for westward expansion, that the City paid for representatives for Tallahassee, paid for Council to go to Tallahassee, that no updates have been given, that no one from City staff have broken down what is included in the utility increase, and was angered about reserve water usage notices that went out.

Carol Ann Stotten asked when there is going to be a moratorium against development, asked about water supply, eroding roads, and asked who is going to have the nerve to stop letting developers run our town.

Carol Stone encouraged a building moratorium, discussed signs, shared about a TPO meeting, increased traffic on Seminole Woods, and did not want the City to annex anything additional.

Leslie Johnson was perturbed with the events of the evening, asked if the City Manager applicants know how contentious the environment is, and was upset that 4 Council Members attacked an absent Mayor.

Mayor Norris asked Ms. Johnston about a sign on Seminole Woods.

Ms. Johnston replied that staff will look into it.

G. DISCUSSION BY CITY COUNCIL OF MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Vice Mayor Pontieri wanted to clear up a few of the public comments; that the \$120 million referenced were State appropriations, provided details of the development order and DRI, and explained that the City has not yet received appropriations this year as the legislators are still in session.

Council Member Miller explained that a DRI has to be activated for any conditions of the DRI to be required, shared about a TPO vision zero event, short and long-range planning, funding, importance of advocacy, and encouraged the public to provide input.

Council Member Gambaro echoed the Council comments regarding State Appropriation requests, shared his efforts, shared his upcoming attendance at a Northeast Florida Regional Council (NEFERC) meeting on May 1, 2025, and thanked the team and community for the recent Tunnels to Towers event.

Council Member Sullivan apologized for the confusion on the vote and shared about the audio issues.

H. DISCUSSION BY CITY ATTORNEY OF MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None

I. DISCUSSION BY CITY MANAGER OF MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

None

J. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

*Respectfully submitted by: Kaley Cook, CMC, FCRM
City Clerk*