

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Auburndale held December 15, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. in the Commission Room of City Hall, after having been properly advertised, with the following members present: Mayor Alex Cam, Vice Mayor Jordan Helms, Commissioners: Travis Avery, Sean Levy, and Crystal Tjerina. Also, present were: Interim City Manager Amy Palmer, City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr., City Clerk Brandon Henry, and Police Chief Terry Storie.

Mayor Alex Cam declared a quorum present, and the Meeting was opened with prayer by Pastor Terry Brown, Legacy Community Church, and a salute to the flag.

**Motion** by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Avery, to approve Minutes of the City Commission Meeting of December 1, 2025. Upon vote, all ayes.

Parks and Recreation Director Cody McGhee presented Service Worker II Julieanna Wilkerson with her longevity plaque for 20 years of service.

Fire Chief Brian Bradway presented Fire Shift Commander Matt McCard (20 years) and Senior Firefighter Scott Farris (five years) with their longevity plaques for their years of service.

Police Chief Terry Storie presented Records Clerk II Mary Perez (five years), Police Corporal Murvyn Suttle (five years), and Police Deputy Chief Carin Ketcham (30 years) with their longevity plaques for their years of service.

Interim City Manager Amy Palmer presented Administrative Assistant Marsha Johnson with her longevity plaque for 25 years of service.

Mayor Cam thanked the City staff members recognized for their longevity.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. concurred. He wished everybody a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Mayor Cam asked if there was public comment on any item not on the agenda. There was no public comment.

Mayor Cam presented a proclamation recognizing The Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc. 58th Anniversary — January 24, 2026. City Attorney Murphy read the proclamation. Staff from The Agricultural and Labor Program, Inc. accepted the proclamation.

Mayor Cam closed the Regular Meeting and opened the Public Hearing.

### **1. PUBLIC HEARING – VACATING OF RIGHT-OF-WAY – PONTIAC STREET**

Interim City Manager Palmer said the City has received a petition from residents on Seminole Avenue and Osceola Street to vacate, abandon, and discontinue a portion of an unimproved right-of-way located north of Seminole Avenue. The right-of-way, known as Pontiac Street, was platted in the Winona Park Subdivision in 1914 but was never constructed. Portions of this right-of-way have been abandoned and closed in the past (1952), and this request would close the remaining portion of the right-of-way that has remained open, reserving the first 20 feet of right-of-way to maintain access for the property owner west of and adjacent to Pontiac Street.

The Resolution to vacate and close the portion of Pontiac Street shown in Exhibit "A", is subject to the reservation of a utility easement, for use by the City of Auburndale and its successors and assigns, which is consistent with the public interest relating to the provision of utility and other municipal services that may be located in the right-of-way.

The proposed Resolution was prepared by the Community Development Department and was reviewed by the City Attorney.

She thanked Community Development Director Julie Womble. She presented a graphic depicting the proposal. Staff recommends approval of Resolution #2025-11 Vacating Right-of-Way – portion of Pontiac Street.

Mayor Cam asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

Mayor Cam closed the Public Hearing and reopened the Regular Commission Meeting.

## **2. RESOLUTION #2025-11 VACATING OF RIGHT-OF-WAY – PONTIAC STREET**

Interim City Manager Palmer said staff recommends approval.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Resolution No. 2025-11 entitled: **A RESOLUTION VACATING, ABANDONING AND DISCONTINUING PORTIONS OF A RIGHT-OF-WAY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE (General Location: Seminole Ave and Pontiac St)**, by title only.

**Motion** by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve Resolution #2025-11 Vacating Right-of-Way – portion of Pontiac Street. Upon vote, all ayes.

## **3. ORDINANCE #1843 AMENDING DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT PLAN – BOARD MEMBERS**

Finance Director Christopher Reeder presented a brief history on the General Employee Pension Plan.

He said the General Employee Pension Board of Trustees has requested the City Commission to approve an amendment to the restated Defined Benefit Retirement Income Plan for general employees. The amendment provides for a change in the composition of the Board of Trustees from its current seven (7) trustees to five (5). The new board composition would comprise of two City appointed trustees, two member trustees, and a fifth trustee selected by the previous four trustees. The change would allow retirees of the plan and Deferred Retirement Option Program participants to be eligible for board nomination. This change increases the number of eligible candidates to be considered as board members as the plan continues to decrease in size. The change has no impact on the funding requirements of the program. He further explained the reason for the request.

Interim City Manager Palmer said the proposed Ordinance was prepared by the Pension Plan's attorney, Klausner Kaufman Jensen & Levinson and reviewed by the Finance Department, City Manager's Office, and City Attorney. If approved on first reading, the proposed Ordinance will be considered for second and final reading on January 5, 2026. Staff recommends approval of Ordinance #1843 amending the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1843 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE AMENDING THE RESTATED DEFINED BENEFIT RETIREMENT INCOME PLAN FOR EMPLOYEES OF CITY OF AUBURNDALE, FLORIDA, ADOPTED AND RESTATED PURSUANT TO ORDINANCE NO. 1640; AMENDING SECTION 3, BOARD OF TRUSTEES; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY OF PROVISIONS; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**, by title only.

Mayor Cam asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

**Motion** by Commissioner Avery, seconded by Commissioner Tijerina, to approve Ordinance #1843 amending the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan, as read on first reading by title only.

Commissioner Tijerina asked Finance Director Reeder for clarification on the timeline of the General Employee Pension Plan.

Finance Director Reeder said that the plan will be effective until the last member fully completes their benefits. It could be the member or be a surviving beneficiary of a member (depending on their elections). There are a lot

of years left that the plan could operate – but there is probably a much shorter period of active members before they actually retire.

Commissioner Tijerina asked that as we continue to conclude member's eligibility and membership, are we concerned about the number continuing to shrink?

Finance Director Reeder answered no. By reducing the Board, it opens another window of opportunity for us. There is a possibility that years from now that if the number of retirees shrinks down similar to where we are at now – this might be revisited, but probably not in any near future that we need to be worried about.

Upon vote, all ayes.

#### **4. CONSIDER INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT–GAPWAY/CR 559 ROUNDABOUT DESIGN**

Community Development Director Julie Womble said in May 2022, the County and City completed the Transportation Master Plan which identified needed transportation infrastructure to keep up with development demands. The Plan identified the intersection of Gapway Road and CR 559 as a needed improvement and recommended the installation of a roundabout to address future failing level of service at the intersection. In addition, the County has identified the Gapway Road roundabout in its Capital Improvements Program. Gapway Road and CR 559 are both County-maintained rights-of-way.

The proposed Interlocal Agreement states that the County and City both desire to complete this project and that the City will proceed with design and engineering of the proposed roundabout for an estimated cost of \$345,200. The County agrees that it will proceed with right-of-way acquisition if the engineered design necessitates additional right-of-way, and after an analysis of the cost feasibility of property acquisition. The City has been working with the Lanier property owners, who own all four corners of the intersection, about future development of the four corners and the roundabout layout for the intersection. This is in the Lakes District. She presented a graphic depicting the proposal.

The Interlocal Agreement states that a separate agreement will be required after design and engineering is completed that will define the necessary scope, cost, and schedule for construction of the project. In addition, another separate agreement is contemplated that would address future ownership transfer of portions of CR-559 and Gapway Road/Lake Van Road to the City.

Staff recommends approval of the Interlocal Agreement with Polk County.

Interim City Manager Palmer said design and engineering of the roundabout is a budgeted item in the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget. The Interlocal Agreement was prepared by the County Attorney and City Attorney and reviewed by the City Manager's Office, Community Development Department, and the Polk County Manager's Office. Staff recommends approval.

Mayor Cam asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

**Motion** by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve the Interlocal Agreement with Polk County.

Vice Mayor Helms expressed gratitude to staff.

Community Development Director Womble expressed gratitude to former Special Projects Director John Dickson.

Commissioner Avery asked to confirm if this helps fix the sewer issue out there.

Community Development Director Womble answered there will be some movement of utilities in this area.

Commissioner Avery asked for clarification regarding utility expansion.

Community Development Director Womble provided clarification. She said it is a different project. It is an expansion. As we look at this roundabout, we have to look at utilities and where those pipes are – so it is part of the entire project.

Interim City Manager Palmer said she believes there is a force main project planned along Gapway Road. We would coordinate the utilities and right-of-way if there is any need that arises out of the design of the roundabout. We will take that into account.

Upon vote, all ayes.

## **5. DEVELOPER’S AGREEMENT – HD INVESTCO, LLC/CULVERS**

Community Development Director Womble said in 2022, the City initiated a comprehensive review of the Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility Service Area, completed by Chastain-Skillman, which identified certain improvements required to serve and allow development in the area. HD INVESTCO, LLC plans to develop +/- 1.5 acres into commercial development, consistent with the City’s Commercial Corridor Future Land Use and Commercial Highway (CH) Zoning District. The Utility Study shows that development and construction on the HD INVESTCO, LLC property cannot discharge into the Regional Wastewater system until the Southern Force Main Re-route Utility Improvements have been completed, permitted, and operational along with the planning and design phase of the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant expansion, as identified in the Utility Study.

The proposed Developer’s Agreement is between HD INVESTCO, LLC and the City of Auburndale. The Agreement acknowledges that the City makes no representation or warranty as to when it will commence or complete the Utility Improvements. The proposed agreement allows the City to complete the review of all development plans and construction plan documents.

The City and HD INVESTCO, LLC desire to enter into the Agreement to establish the respective rights and obligations between HD INVESTCO, LLC and the City, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the proposed Utility Infrastructure and Developer’s Agreement. The improvements listed in the Developer’s Agreement plan for current and future development.

Staff recommends approval of the Developer’s Agreement with HD INVESTCO, LLC.

Interim City Manager Palmer said the proposed Developer’s Agreement was prepared by HD INVESTCO, LLC and reviewed by the Community Development Director, Public Utilities Director, City Manager’s Office, and the City Attorney. Staff recommends approval.

Community Development Director Womble presented a graphic depicting the proposal. She provided a correction and clarification regarding the graphic.

Mayor Cam asked for public comment. There was no public comment.

**Motion** by Commissioner Levy, seconded by Commissioner Tijerina, to approve the Developer’s Agreement with HD INVESTCO, LLC. Upon vote, all ayes.

## **6. DISCUSS RECRUITMENT PLAN FOR OPEN CITY MANAGER POSITION**

Interim City Manager Palmer said selecting a professional manager is one of the most important decisions a city commission will make. Former Auburndale City Manager and former Florida City and County Management Association President Bobby Green has offered to assist the elected officials and staff with the search process. Green also served two terms on the Auburndale City Commission including three years as mayor.

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Discussion at this time, will include requirements of the Auburndale City Charter and Code of Ordinances, the "Commission-Manager" form of government, proposed process of recruitment, timetable of the process, and Commission approval of the job posting/advertisement.

Following Commission approval of the job posting/advertisement, city staff will advertise the position. We anticipate doing this tomorrow morning.

The recruiting and selection of the new manager is intended to be an open and transparent process. The City Commission will review all submitted resumes, approve the selection of the final candidates, conduct the interviews, and make the final selection. The entire recruitment and selection process is intended to be transparent and in accordance with the Florida Government in the Sunshine law.

Staff recommends approval of the job posting and begin the process of hiring a new city manager.

Mayor Cam invited former City Manager Bobby Green to the podium. Mayor Cam asked that the City Commission hold any questions until after Mr. Green's presentation.

Bobby Green thanked the City Commission. He congratulated the Commission on their elections. He presented a brief history of the City Commission and a brief explainer of the City Management profession's tenure and turnover.

Mr. Green presented excerpts from the City Charter that pertain to the City Manager.

He presented excerpts from the Code of Ordinances that pertain to the City Manager.

He presented excerpts from the *Florida City and County Management Association's* "Florida City/County Manager Search Guide" – including a brief introduction to the recruitment process and a recommended generalized timeframe.

He presented proposed dates for Auburndale's recruitment and selection timeline.

He presented how creating a manager profile and identifying criteria can assist the recruitment process.

He presented the proposed job posting - including a manager profile, job duties, essential knowledge, required qualifications, preferred qualifications, and compensation.

He presented a local city manager salary comparison from nearby cities.

He presented the proposed application process, and proposed advertisement places. He presented a general outline of the overall process.

Mayor Cam expressed gratitude to Mr. Green.

Mayor Cam asked for public comment.

Jerry Gaddis, 538 Arneson Avenue, thanked the Commission for publicly addressing this issue. He said in his opinion, the silence on this has been overwhelming. He appreciates it being back on the agenda in public. He is also excited to see an agenda item that has the word "discussion" in it. It is his observation after having been to a million of these meetings, everything passes unanimously with no debate. He said from out here, it looks weird. So he is excited to see a discussion item and product. He said he is hesitant to talk after Mr. Green, who is more knowledgeable on this issue – so he will tread lightly. He encourages and reminds the City Commission that this is their decision. It is not the committee's decision, it is the Commission's decision. He said he encourages the Commission to cast a wide net, and be careful with words like requirements. He said Mr. Green compared this process to universities looking for a football coach - some people cannot get in and have to go to places. A lot

of people think that to be that coach you have to have a tie in the university, such as being alumni or family attending. He said he would be careful with those things. There are plenty of people in the market that maybe do not have a master's degree in public administration, but have 20 years of military leadership, or have been a coach for 20 years – that do not have the municipal experience but have the leadership experience. He said he just encourages the Commission to cast a wide net, to be careful with words like requirements. He said he prefers qualifications, or ideal qualifications or best practices. Just cast a wide net and include a lot of people in making the decision. He is excited to see what the Commission can do.

**Motion** by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Commissioner Avery, to approve the discussion of the recruitment plan for open City Manager position.

Commissioner Avery said he appreciates Mr. Green taking his time and volunteering his services, given Mr. Green's long tenure here and growing Auburndale leaps and bounds. He said he is thankful that as a resident coming from another neighboring town and seeing what Mr. Green produced, it is very encouraging that Mr. Green is taking the time to do this. He said he is concerned with the pay scale. Do we only look at what city managers make, or do we also look at what the assistant city managers also make?

Mr. Green answered not for the purpose of the advertisement. He said if someone is applying, you want to make it inviting and competitive. He said he would like to think as salaries go up for the manager, the City Commission needs to look at (as the manager should) salaries for all other employees.

Commissioner Avery said he agrees with that. He said one thing brought by Mr. Gaddis during public comment is in regard to required qualifications. Is there a way to word it or is there a reason why we are only looking at directors or assistant managers and not looking beyond that? For somebody that might have public service in their background, we are limiting it to just five years of experience as a director. Maybe they have been an elected official for 25 years and they own a successful business. Is there a reason why we are only looking at it from this perspective?

Mr. Green said when you include the catchphrase at the end "or comparable experience" to balance that out – it gives you the flexibility. It does not prohibit you. The Commission is going to make that selection. There are some things that the Commission would suggest they want. He recounted a story regarding a city with financial problems that hired a city manager with strong banking and financial experience – who was soon terminated for not following purchasing guidelines.

City Attorney Murphy said the City would also be providing what he would call minimum qualifications, which are criteria (as suggested by Mr. Green), that are clear with some qualifiers that allow a degree of flexibility, but you have to have minimum qualifications – where you have very little discretion. And there is a great deal of preferred qualifications that you have more flexibility on. He said that if the Commission chooses to do an application or review committee, he recommends they adhere strictly to Sunshine Law – with all meetings of that particular group be open to the public, noticed, and minutes kept.

Mr. Green said he has seen it done before where you send the committee the applicants and they send it back without a public meeting, but you will have to report those at a public meeting. There are different ways there. Regarding the qualifications, the phrase "...or an equivalent combination of education and experience" does not prohibit someone from applying and does not prohibit the Commission from making a decision.

City Attorney Murphy said regarding an application or review committee, if the committee met – even individually, he would be concerned with that.

Mr. Green said staff will confer with City Attorney Murphy on that issue. It should all be transparent. They can even meet in this room.

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City Attorney Murphy said we can confer later if that is the direction of the Commission.

Mr. Green asked to clarify the motion, as it was to approve the discussion. He thinks it should also approve the job posting with the selected criteria. It would give staff the green light to proceed.

Mayor Cam asked if we need a new motion?

City Attorney Murphy said it would be helpful to have an expressed motion as Mr. Green has suggested.

Mayor Cam asked to clarify the process.

City Attorney Murphy clarified.

Commission Tijerina **withdrew** her original motion.

**Motion** by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve the job posting as written and authorize staff to advertise. Upon vote, all ayes.

Mayor Cam wished everybody a happy and healthy holiday season.

The Meeting was adjourned at 8:27:56 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing Minutes are true and correct.



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Brandon Henry, City Clerk