

City of Auburndale Commission Minutes January 5, 2026

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Auburndale held January 5, 2026, 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 Lieutenant Matt Baker.

Mayor Alex Cam declared a quorum present, and the Meeting was opened with prayer by Community Development Director Julie Womble, 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 15, 2025. Upon vote, all ayes.

Interim City Manager Amy Palmer announced that AdventHealth is holding a groundbreaking ceremony for their new standalone emergency room on Thursday, January 8, at 9:00 a.m.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. wished everybody a Happy New Year.

Mayor Cam asked if there was public comment on any item not on the agenda.

Elizabeth Gunter, 2149 28th Street NW, Winter Haven, said the subject she has is that we do not have a street named for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in the City of Auburndale. She said the first observance of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Day as a federal holiday was January 20th, 1986. This day marks the official recognition of Dr. King's contribution to civil rights and social justice in the United States. She said when she did the math, it has been 40 years. Auburndale is a beautiful city. She said she is a 1982 graduate, so are three other siblings, so a lot of history is within herself. But we are missing an important piece of the puzzle. She said it is very saddening and sometimes emotional to her this time of the year. We should not have to take what street is left. We should be given an opportunity as a resident of Auburndale or a community citizen to a nation united and granted a few choices. She said she knows this sounds ironic, but we have not come to a clear decision for the Auburndale community. She said she knows there have been conversations brought up in the past, but we are back to square one – no Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. street. So, most of Auburndale residents are deceased with 40 years being passed. She said she knows many of our residents would have loved to see history in the making for Auburndale, of a Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. street in Auburndale. She said she would like to propose two streets – Bridgers Avenue and Bennett Street. She said she knows there have been conversations about those streets, but nothing has been said in a meeting and on an agenda. She said as a community citizen, she knows she cannot vote – but she would like to be on the committee to move things forward today. She said if we can get a date to develop a committee to present to the Commission on the January 20th City Commission meeting, that would be great. She asked that Mayor Cam and Interim City Manager Palmer give her a call so we can get this moving. We have got to come together. She said she is not saying we have been overlooked, but 40 years. This is a new Commission, this is not your fault. She said she just wants to see this happen, maybe for her grandchildren. She said she hopes we can come together as a group of loving individuals.

Mayor Cam thanked Ms. Gunter. He said we do have a street naming policy in the City of Auburndale. He said he and the Interim City Manager have spoken and we would like to continue this conversation through staff.

Interim City Manager Palmer said she will call Ms. Gunter tomorrow to set up a meeting to discuss the street naming policy and come up with a strategy to move forward and look for a street for Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., if that is the pleasure of the Commission – and we can proceed forward.

Public speaker, Sand Hill Pointe Circle, Davenport, said that grace, peace and mercy be on to each and every one – and that God our Father Lord Jesus Christ our blessed savior. He said it is so good to see so many young people here and to see them out. He said when we come before any board in Polk County, it is very unsafe to say our

address – our physical address where we live at. He said he thinks it would be wise if we had another way of doing it. If not to the public, silence so they do not hear outside, because someone can be listening to us right now on the other side of the planet, and watch us go into our physical address as we walk into our home, and they may be upset by something – something we said or did. So come let it into your hearts and see if we can fix it up another way that we do not have to give our physical address to the whole world.

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

Interim City Manager Palmer 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.

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. The proposed Ordinance was approved on first reading December 15, 2025, and is being presented for second and final reading. Staff recommends approval of Ordinance #1843 amending the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan.

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

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 citizen comment. There was no citizen comment.

Motion by Commissioner Avery, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve Ordinance #1843 amending the Defined Benefit Retirement Plan, as read on second and final reading by title only. Upon vote, all ayes.

2. DISCUSS STATUS OF CITY MANAGER SEARCH AND REVIEW COMMITTEE

Interim City Manager Palmer said on December 15, 2025, the City Commission approved the desired characteristics and criteria for the new city manager, including the job posting. The position was advertised on December 16, 2025, utilizing a variety of websites that are specific to local government. The deadline for submitting resumes is Friday January 16, 2026.

After the deadline for submitting resumes has passed, selection begins.

At the December 15, 2025, Commission Meeting, it was suggested the Commission may wish to appoint a Review Committee to assist in the selection process for the new city manager. If appointed by the Commission, the Committee would be subject to the Florida Government in the Sunshine laws and hold advertised open meetings in the Commission Room.

Former Auburndale City Manager Bobby Green began an update to the City Manager search process. He presented a screenshot of one of the postings for the City Manager and summarized similar recruitment efforts in Polk County. He presented a timeline of the recruitment and selection timeline. He presented the purpose of

an Applicant Review Committee. He presented a cross-section of community interests represented by the committee. He presented proposed names for the committee. He presented the proposed process for the Applicant Review Committee.

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

Motion by Commissioner Levy, seconded by Commissioner Tijerina, to appoint a review committee to assist the Commission in the selection process.

Commissioner Avery asked how many applications have we received so far?

Interim City Manager Palmer answered five.

Commissioner Tijerina said she knows we anticipate getting many more applications prior to closing, but do we feel comfortable moving forward with any kind of committee selection or selection if we only have five applicants? Is that an adequate pool?

Mr. Green answered not on the five now, we would not do that. He said he thinks we would extend the advertising period, give it another push to generate as many applicants – because that is really what we want. Even when we came up with the job description, we wanted to not be so tight – we wanted to be inviting to bring in as many applicants as possible. He said he thinks we are going to get to that.

Commissioner Tijerina said that at the time the committee meets, she recommends that we have a social media and media canvass to accompany their cover letters and resumes.

Interim City Manager Palmer said we can look to see what other cities have done as far as communication of the process.

Commissioner Tijerina said she feels like with such a public figure position and highly respected role, she would feel much more comfortable having a social media or media canvass of the candidates for the Commission to make a good selection.

Mr. Green said most certainly. That could come as part of the background check. This committee is not doing the background check. We will get to the background checks when the selections are made from other finalists. We will also have a good discussion as we get closer to what the interview process looks like. He said we want to make sure that it is fair to all the applicants. If you feel like a question is so important that you want to ask it – then you should ask it to all applicants as well. Their answers should be listened to by other Commissioners because it is a group decision to make that selection. In talking with Interim City Manager Palmer, if we went the route of the committee – we would make copies of applications as we get them, due to the holiday and for transparency, to be distributed to the Commission, the Applicant Review Committee, and the media. We want the public to know that this decision is being made.

Commissioner Levy asked if the Applicant Review Committee meeting will be run just like a Commission meeting? Such as time for public input during discussion?

Mr. Green answered it would be in the Commission chambers and advertised with the public having the opportunity to attend.

Commissioner Avery said but the public would not be able to speak?

Mr. Green said if someone came and provided their opinion as to what they think is important in our next City Manager, we are going to listen to that.

Vice Mayor Helms asked would it cause a hiccup in the process if we add an additional member to the Applicant Review Committee? Having a six-member committee instead of five. Is there a logistical reason for having five?

Mr. Green said five is needed for consensus. Any citizen is welcome to the interview process. They are welcome to give their three minutes when the Commission makes that final selection. It is not necessarily leaving anybody out, but rather the logistics of scheduling meetings with five members versus any more. Also, having an odd number allows us to build that consensus.

Vice Mayor Helms said he understands the aspect of an odd number. He just wants to see if there is a way, even if it means they are not a member of the committee – to assign a chaplain to the committee, similar to the invocation during Commission meetings – for someone to pray over the process. Someone in the faith community and a longstanding pastor in the Church. Terry Brown pops out to him, or Chaplain Park Love at Good Shepard, or the pastor at First Missionary Baptist.

Mr. Green said that goes back to inviting them to the meeting to start the meeting, we most certainly will.

Vice Mayor Helms said great.

Mayor Cam said just as a reminder, the purpose of this agenda item is to keep the ball rolling, to have this committee in place. He said in his opinion, this committee would cover a lot of ground for the Commission with a lot of professional and community expertise. He has the utmost confidence in this roster.

Commissioner Avery said it was mentioned the possibility of extending the process. What would cause the extension of the advertising?

Mr. Green said two things. First, the number of applicants. The second would be dissatisfaction with the pool of applicants during the selection process.

Commissioner Avery asked when would we consider that extension?

Mr. Green answered at the time you are picking the finalists and going through the applications after the application period is closed. It is the Commission's process. You could go right up to the next meeting and instead of appointing the Mayor and Attorney for the interview – you could say you are not happy with any of them. Then it comes down to three votes. The only thing he would ask is that when the decision is made, take a vote of confidence immediately after. That sets the tone that the Commission is behind that manager, he or she has the support of all five. There is nothing wrong with having preferences amongst the different candidates, but there is nothing better for the start of the new manager's tenure than to have a full vote of confidence of the Commission.

Upon vote, all ayes.

3. CONSIDER LEASE OF CITY PROPERTY – POLK STREET AND PARK STREET

Community Development Director Julie Womble said the City was approached by the property owner of 200 Park Street North, Adale Building I, LLC, to lease a small parcel of land that the City owns adjacent to the City's parking lot on Polk Street. She presented a graphic depicting the parcel. The City's parcel is approximately 0.05 acres and is adjacent to the building originally known as the movie theater located Downtown at the corner of Park Street and Polk Street. The building is being redeveloped as restaurant and retail space and the City's small 0.05-acre parcel would be utilized as outdoor seating area for the restaurant.

The term of the lease is for 15 years, which is consistent with the Adale Building I, LLC's lease for the restaurant space in the building. The lease allows the tenant, Adale Building I, LLC, to make improvements on the property that would create seating for the businesses in the building. The lease would fulfill the Community

Redevelopment Agency’s goal of downtown economic development and revitalization. Rent is being charged at \$10.00 per year.

Because the property is located in the Community Redevelopment Area, the City was required to advertise that the property was available and invited proposals for sale, lease, or transfer of the property. The proposal to lease by Adale Building I, LLC was the only proposal received. The commercial lease was prepared by Adale Building I, LLC, and reviewed by the City Attorney, Community Development Director, and City Manager’s Office. She presented graphics depicting the property.

Staff recommends approval of the commercial lease with Adale Building I, LLC.

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

Motion by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Vice Mayor Helms, to approve the commercial lease with Adale Building I, LLC. Upon vote, all ayes.

4. 2026 COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

Interim City Manager Palmer said at the first meeting in January, the City Commission typically appoints volunteers to the City’s boards and committees. She read the appointments:

Board of Adjustments

- Terry Hancock Re-Appointment (Through 01/29)
- Jerry Gaddis Re-Appointment (Through 01/29)

Planning Commission

- Skiles Jones Appointment (Through 01/29)
- Tom Dudash Re-Appointment (Through 01/29)

Community Redevelopment Agency

- Timothy J. Pospichal Appointment as Chair (Through 01/30)
- Ellie Harper Appointment as Vice Chair (Through 01/28)

Police Officer’s Retirement Trust Fund Board of Trustees

- Brittanie Ramsey Appointment (Through 9/29)

Firefighter’s Retirement Trust Fund Board of Trustees

- Dianna Jones Appointment (Through 9/29)

General Employee’s Pension Trust Fund Board of Trustees

- Angela Turner Re-Appointment (Through 01/30)
- Brian Morse Re-Appointment (Through 01/30)
- Christopher Reeder Re-Appointment (Through 01/30)
- Eric Pospichal Re-Appointment (Through 01/30)
- Caleb Gabany Re-Appointment (Through 01/30)

Ridge League of Cities Board of Directors

- Alex Cam Appointment (Through 1/28)
- Jordan Helms, Alternate Appointment (Through 1/28)

City of Auburndale Commission Minutes January 5, 2026

- Crystal Tijerina, Alternate Appointment (Through 1/28)

Transportation Planning Organization (TPO) Board

- Travis Avery, Alternate Appointment (Through 1/28)

Joint Airport Zoning Board

- Community Development Director Re-Appointment (Through 1/29)
- City Planner, Alternate Re-Appointment (Through 1/29)

Polk Transit Authority Board (PTA)

- Sean Levy Appointment (Through 1/28)

Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) Board

- Alex Cam Appointment (Through 1/28)
- Jordan Helms, Alternate Appointment (Through 1/28)

Staff recommends approval of the 2026 Committee Appointments.

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

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Avery, to approve the 2026 Committee Appointments. Upon vote, all ayes.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:41:32 p.m.

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



Brandon Henry, City Clerk