

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Auburndale held March 16, 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 and Crystal Tijerina. Commissioner Sean Levy was present virtually for discussion only. Also, present were: Interim City Manager Amy Palmer, City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr., City Clerk Brandon Henry, and Deputy Police Chief Carin Ketcham.

Mayor Alex Cam declared a quorum present, and the Meeting was opened with prayer by Father Rick Gomer, St. Alban's, Episcopal 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 March 2, 2026. Upon vote, all ayes.

Parks and Recreation Director Cody McGhee presented Service Worker II Jeffrey Thomas with his longevity plaque for five years of service.

Interim City Manager Amy Palmer presented Finance Director Christopher Reeder with his longevity plaque for 5 years of service.

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

1. CONSIDER CITY MANAGER EMPLOYMENT AGREEMENT

Interim City Manager Palmer said the City Commission this evening will consider the City Manager's Employment Agreement. She said she knows that Mayor Cam has worked very hard on this with Mr. Brown and City Attorney Murphy. She thanked Mr. Green for also helping with the process of negotiating

Mayor Cam said on February 16, 2026, the Auburndale City Commission selected Jeffrey E. Brown as the finalist for the vacant city manager position. The Commission appointed the Mayor and City Attorney to negotiate an employment agreement with Mr. Brown and submit the agreement to the Commission for approval. Mayor Cam said he is pleased to report to the Commission that following several productive Microsoft Teams meetings, numerous phone calls between the parties, and good faith negotiations have resulted in an employment agreement spelling out terms agreed by Mr. Brown to become our next city manager. He expressed his gratitude to attorneys John Murphy and Drew Crawford for their guidance, support, and input in this process. Their knowledge of charters and statutes was invaluable. He also thanked former city manager Bobby Green for facilitating our meetings and providing a neutral and productive method for accomplishing this task. The parties utilized the approved and tested city manager employment agreements from the cities of Lakeland, Lake Alfred, Mulberry, and Auburndale as examples in reaching an agreement that is fair to all concerned. He thanked Mr. Brown, saying he showed the utmost professionalism throughout the entire process. From the very beginning, he offered terms that were fair and reasonable. In areas where there was misunderstanding, he clearly provided justification. Mayor Cam said in areas where there was conflict with the City Charter, Florida Statutes, or his concerns, Mr. Brown was reasonable in accepting the City's position. There was 'give and take' and compromise to reach agreement.

Mayor Cam said throughout the Agreement, there are several references to the City Charter, Florida Statutes, and the City of Auburndale Personnel Policy Handbook. These references are provided to show consistency between the Agreement and as provided for in adopted laws and policies. The start date of the new city manager will be either Monday April 6, 2026, or no later than Monday April 13, 2026. This will provide the manager with time to give proper notice to his current employer and to avoid lapse in health insurance coverage. The compensation, or annual base salary is agreed upon at \$189,280. Mr. Brown proposed this amount in his first draft of the Agreement and the figure is near the halfway mark of the \$185,000 to \$195,000 range advertised by the City. Annual Cost of Living adjustments are agreed to at the same amounts given to all City employees. To

provide accountability to the Commission, a formal evaluation on the job performance of the city manager is required every other year beginning in 2027. The evaluation will focus on the areas of fiscal management, management and organization of the employees, management of assets, and criteria established by the City Commission. To advance accountability and to build confidence and trust between the Commission and Manager, the Agreement stipulates one-on-one meetings with commissioners at a minimum of once a month or arranged as schedules allow. This clause was proposed by Mr. Brown. The manager will be credited with 160 hours of vacation and 80 hours of sick leave upon employment. Vacation leave of more than ten (10) business days will require City Commission approval.

Mayor Cam said Sick Leave and Vacation Leave will be accrued in the same manner as other city employees except for 80 additional sick leave hours credited in year two and 160 additional vacation leave hours credited in years two and three. The maximum amount of vacation leave will be capped at 680 hours. Unused annual leave hours more than the maximum amounts are forfeited at the manager's anniversary date. It is important to note that a three-year commitment from Mr. Brown is required to get these maximums. Health insurance and medical benefits are provided as per all other city employees. The City agrees to 401(a) contributions in an equal amount as other general employee participants. The manager currently participates in the Florida Retirement System (FRS). The City agrees to make contributions to any tax advantaged or investment account designated by the manager equal to the Florida Retirement System's total contribution rate for the Senior Management Service Class (SMSC). This parallels the language in the City of Lake Alfred Agreement. This is also a commitment from Mr. Brown in that he would not have to take employment elsewhere (with an employer that participates in the Florida Retirement System (FRS)) in order to achieve advantages similar to those vested years from the FRS. The manager is encouraged to attend and participate in professional conferences and training programs. The City agrees to pay or reimburse for reasonable and necessary travel, lodging, meals, and registration fees. The City agrees to provide a one-time payment of \$10,000 in relocation assistance. The Agreement provides for termination of the Agreement in accordance with the City Charter, and further stipulates reasons for cause including insubordination, failure to carry out lawful assigned duties, behavior which diminishes the City's goodwill in the community, violations of Florida Statutes, Code of Ethics for Public Officers, inability or refusal to perform the duties of the city manager, misconduct as defined by Florida Statues, or significant violations of City policies. Some of this verbiage parallels the text in the City of Lakeland Agreement. Another reason for termination with cause is engaging in criminal conduct. Mayor Cam said he felt these were important provisions for us to include in this agreement. The City Charter provides that the City Commission may remove the city manager at any time by majority vote of all the commission members. If the Commission elects to terminate the Agreement and remove the city manager for its convenience and without assignment of cause, the Agreement provides those situations where the city manager is entitled to receive severance pay consistent with applicable Florida law.

Mayor Cam said we want Mr. Brown to enjoy a successful tenure as city manager, but we understand it can be difficult to work for five bosses. As stated several times in the Agreement, the parties enter into this Agreement in good faith and mutually want to see success. In that spirit, and in fairness and accountability to both parties, the Agreement provides proper notices and guidelines during the acclimation period prior to the first performance evaluation. The Agreement also provides guidelines for a cooling off period to give both parties time for correction of any observed concerns. The parties agree that no severance shall be paid to the manager if he retires, voluntarily resigns, or is terminated with cause.

Mayor Cam said he is excited to have Jeff Brown join our team and take the helm as our next City Manager. He said he knows Mr. Brown has already been in great communication with our Interim City Manager on current projects and issues, including his attendance at the Utility Work Session this evening. The City Attorney has signed the agreement as legal in form. Mr. Brown has also signed the attached Employment Agreement and

accepts its terms. He is ready to come to work. Mayor Cam said it is his privilege to submit the Agreement to the City Commission for its approval.

Jeffrey Brown thanked Mayor Cam. He said he appreciates those comments and agrees with everything Mayor Cam just said, that this was a lengthy negotiation process. There was a lot of give and take. He thanked Mayor Cam for being willing to listen. Mr. Brown said his wife can attest because he was at home on several Teams calls and she heard the back and forth discussions. He would also like to reiterate thanking John Murphy and Drew Crawford for both sitting in on the sessions as well and putting their input, and Bobby Green. Mr. Green really helped bring everybody together and kept everybody focused on what we are trying to get accomplished here. Mr. Brown said he is eager to come to work here. He said he and his wife got up this morning looking at houses through early this afternoon before having dinner with his parents and then back over here. We are just really looking forward to working and getting some of the things that you saw earlier this evening accomplished, working with staff and getting the job done. He thanked Mayor Cam.

Mayor Cam asked for public comment.

Jerry Gaddis, 538 Arneson Avenue, said he would like to start by saying his questions are about process and the contract, not about any people. He said he thinks we are all excited about this and want this to work and expect it to work. But he continues to be disappointed in the way the last agreement ended. From his perspective, and he might not understand this properly, we had an employee who basically walked off the job without giving any notice and was handsomely rewarded with an extensive severance package. He said he finds that fiscally irresponsible and a little offensive because it does not work that way in the real world. So he would hope that if he does not understand that correctly, he is welcome to a correction, but he hopes that is not built into this contract as well. He said he would hate to see us make that mistake twice. He also heard about annual appraisals, and the Mayor said something about maybe an interim appraisal. He said he is just curious if there is a 90-day period or something where we could make adjustments before we got into the year.

Mayor Cam asked Mr. Gaddis if he is referring to the City Manager evaluation?

Mr. Gaddis said yes. He said he knows it was said there would be an annual evaluation, but he did not know if there would be a 90-day evaluation. He said the Mayor mentioned something about getting to know the new manager. A year is too long to wait to evaluate the performance of the new employee.

City Attorney Murphy said the city manager is evaluated every day. And every two weeks on the first and third Monday of each month, the city manager is evaluated. And he would think that particularly given the term in the contract that the commissioners and Mr. Brown commit to meeting on a monthly (at least a once-a-month basis), he expects that perhaps could be a lot more in the beginning. He said he sees very young, very fresh, and very engaged professionals who are the elected leaders of this City, and he would think that they will give Mr. Brown a run for his money. He is high energy, but they are high energy too, and so he thinks that to address Mr. Gaddis's concern, he does not see that as being an issue contractually. The contract allows for time for Mr. Brown to be here and demonstrate his skills in order for there to be a formal evaluation, and that tracks in the contract. But as a practical matter, there will be an evaluation much sooner than 90 days. He anticipates there to be a very active and engaged process. Both the Commission and Mr. Brown are very much in favor of full transparency and full engagement as appropriate for the public. So he does not anticipate any issues in that regard. He does not necessarily agree with the characterizations that were mentioned of past things that happened, but that is not something that he wants to get into tonight, nor does he think it is appropriate for the Commission to either. We are looking forward, and he thinks that is the basis on which the Mayor and the Commission are as well.

Mr. Gaddis said he is looking forward as well.

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Avery, to approve the City Manager Employment Agreement.

Vice Mayor Helms thanked Mr. Green, Mr. Brown, Mayor Cam, and City Attorney Murphy for the negotiations. He was very impressed with the contract and the level of detail that is there. Specifically, the things that Mayor Cam said out loud that were added to the contract to avoid us having sticky situations in the future. There are clear expectations set in writing, agreed upon by all parties, signed off on by the candidate and the Mayor. So he is very happy with the contract, and he just wants to say thank you to everybody that worked on it. And that he is excited to work with Mr. Brown.

Mr. Brown concurred.

Commissioner Tijerina asked where were the areas of conflict between the contract and the City Charter, as mentioned during Mayor Cam's statement?

City Attorney Murphy answered the Mayor meant there were potential areas of conflict (or areas that could be perceived as conflicting) when the contract was first presented, and then we harmonized it based on the back-and-forth conversations. He said the contract you have before you that he signed off on is legal as to form and is something that he views as consistent with our charter. The main thing that we want to keep in mind, is that the Commission employs the city manager, at their pleasure, and the Commission has the opportunity per the charter to vote by a majority vote to terminate the manager. There are certain notice requirements that kick in before the final vote can be made if requested by the city manager, which is incorporated into the contract. There is nothing in the contract that is at all contrary with our charter. Everything is consistent with the charter.

Commissioner Tijerina and Mayor Cam thanked City Attorney Murphy.

Commissioner Avery said he is happy to have Mr. Brown and is excited to move forward and get ready.

Upon vote, all ayes.

Mayor Cam congratulated Mr. Brown. He thanked Mr. Green.

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

2. PUBLIC HEARING – AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE AND ZONING MAP – FDOT PROPERTY

Interim City Manager Palmer read the public notice.

Community Development Director Julie Womble said as a result of annexation, the City has received a request for a Large-Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment and Zoning Map Amendment on approximately +/- 67.47 acres. The property consists of two separate parcels and is currently vacant. The site is located in the Central Florida Innovation District. She presented a graphic depicting the proposal.

In September of 2016, the City approved a Large-Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment and Zoning Map Amendment on the property adjacent to the south. The properties to the south are home to SunTrax, a State facility with the Florida Department of Transportation. The adjacent property has a test track for autonomous vehicles and toll testing technology.

The current request is for a Large-Scale Future Land Use Map Amendment and Zoning Map Amendment on +/- 67.47 acres in order to expand the current uses. The Department of Transportation has shown intention of expanding SunTrax with air-mobility testing technology, research and development and testing bays for autonomous modes of transportation. The proposed Land Use of Regional Activity Center (RAC) and Zoning of Commercial Highway (CH) is the same as what was previously approved on the SunTrax property to the south and would accommodate the proposed expansion.

She presented additional graphics depicting the proposal. The requested Future Land Use and Zoning Map amendments are consistent with the City of Auburndale's Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Regulations, and the City of Auburndale Joint Planning Area (JPA). The proposed amendments are compatible with the surrounding uses.

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the Map amendments on the SunTrax property (6-0, 3/3/2026). Staff recommends approval of proposed Ordinance #1848 amending the Future Land Use Map and Ordinance #1849 amending the Official Zoning Map – SunTrax property.

Interim City Manager Palmer said the proposed Ordinances were prepared by the Community Development Department and reviewed by the Interim City Manager and City Attorney. If approved on first reading, the proposed Ordinances will be presented for second and final reading on April 6, 2026. The Planning Commission and staff recommends approval.

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

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

3. ORDINANCE #1848 AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP – FDOT PROPERTY

Interim City Manager Palmer said the Planning Commission and staff recommends approval.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1848 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE, FLORIDA, AMENDING ORDINANCE NO. 752, THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE, FLORIDA, BY AN AMENDMENT TO THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP BY RECLASSIFYING PARCELS OF LAND TOTALING +/- 67.47 ACRES FROM POLK COUNTY FUTURE LAND USE INTERCHANGE ACTIVITY CENTER - X (IACX) AND BUSINESS PARK CENTER - 1X (BPCX-1X) TO CITY OF AUBURNDALE REGIONAL ACTIVITY CENTER (RAC); AND REQUESTING AN EXPEDITED STATE REVIEW; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE (General Location: Pace Road and Polk County Parkway),** by title only.

Motion by Commissioner Avery, seconded by Vice Mayor Helms, to approve Ordinance #1848 amending the Future Land Use Map – FDOT Property, as read on first reading by title only. Upon vote, all ayes.

4. ORDINANCE #1849 AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP – FDOT PROPERTY

Interim City Manager Palmer introduced the ordinance. The Planning Commission and staff recommend approval.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1849 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE FLORIDA AMENDING ORDINANCE NO 764 THE LAND DEVELOPMENT REGULATIONS OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE FLORIDA BY AN AMENDMENT TO THE ZONING MAP ESTABLISHING AUBURNDALE ZONING MAP CLASSIFICATION ON TWO PARCELS OF LAND TOTALING +/- 67.47 ACRES AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE (General Location Polk County Pkwy. and Pace Road),** by title only.

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

Motion by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Commissioner Avery, to approve Ordinance #1849 amending the Official Zoning Map – FDOT Property.

Community Development Director Womble corrected that because this is a large-scale map amendment, it will be sent to the State for expedited review. So we will probably not receive this until after the April 6th meeting, so it will likely be heard next in May.

Upon vote, all ayes.

5. PRESENTATION OF BANK LOAN REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS - UTILITY PROJECT FUNDING

Interim City Manager Palmer said the City Commission will consider bids for the necessary borrowing of funds to construct effluent filter replacement and design and engineering for expansion of the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Finance Director Christopher Reeder said in February 2026, the City of Auburndale engaged Public Resources Advisory Group (PRAG) to advise the City on debt financing for the effluent filter replacement and design and engineering for the expansion at the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant. Most recently, Public Resources Advisory Group has been the City's financial advisor during the issuance of the Series 2019 and 2024B bond offerings and bond rating upgrades.

On February 3, 2026, Public Resources Advisory Group issued a request for proposal seeking borrowing proposals for \$11,500,000 directly to over 100 contacts at approximately forty (40) banks, including those currently doing business in the City of Auburndale. On the closing date of the request (February 19, 2026) the City received eight (8) responses.

City staff held a meeting with Mickey Johnston, Senior Managing Director, Public Resources Advisory Group, the City Attorney and Bond Counsel to review the proposals. TD Public Finance, LLC ("TD Bank") was determined to provide the most competitive offer to the City with a 3.37% fixed rate option and no prepayment penalty. Subsequently, City staff was able to secure the final interest rate lock at 3.36%, one basis point less.

Interim City Manager Palmer said the Bids were reviewed by the Finance Director, Interim City Manager, City Attorney and Bond Counsel. The best financing option meeting the terms of the Request for Borrowing specification was proposed by TD Bank with a fixed 3.36% interest rate over the amortization period.

Staff recommends accepting the proposal from TD Bank.

Interim City Manager Palmer said this is very similar to a bid process that we would do if we were purchasing a large item, except this is for borrowing purposes.

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

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Tijerina, to accept the proposal from TD Bank.

Vice Mayor Helms thanked staff for the explanation.

Upon vote, all ayes.

6. RESOLUTION #2026-02 APPROVING BANK LOAN – UTILITY PROJECT FUNDING

Interim City Manager Palmer said the City Commission will consider a Resolution authorizing the issuance of the 2026A series loan from TD Bank for the construction of effluent filters and design and engineering for the expansion at the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant.

The proposed Authorizing Resolution #2026-02 is the official documentation authorizing the TD Bank loan. It includes approving the form of the loan agreement, authorizing the issuance of a promissory note in the principal amount of \$11,500,000 and authorizes execution of the loan agreement by the Interim City Manager. The proposed Resolution was prepared by Duane Draper of Bryant, Miller, Olive P.A. and reviewed by the Finance Director, Interim City Manager and City Attorney.

Staff recommends approval of Resolution #2026-02 and authorize execution of the loan agreement by the Interim City Manager.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Resolution No. 2026-02 entitled: **A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE, FLORIDA AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF THE \$11,500,000 NON-AD VALOREM REVENUE NOTE, SERIES 2026A FOR THE PURPOSE OF FINANCING AND/OR REIMBURSING ALL OR A PORTION OF THE COSTS OF THE ACQUISITION, CONSTRUCTION, AND EQUIPPING OF CERTAIN PUBLIC IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS, INCLUDING, WITHOUT LIMITATION, THE REPLACEMENT OF EFFLUENT FILTERS AT THE CITY'S ALLRED AND REGIONAL WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANTS, THE DESIGN AND ENGINEERING COSTS RELATED TO THE EXPANSION OF THE CITY'S REGIONAL WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT, AND THE COSTS OF ISSUANCE RELATED TO SUCH NOTE PROVIDING THAT SUCH NOTE SHALL BE A LIMITED OBLIGATION OF THE CITY PAYABLE FROM NON-AD VALOREM REVENUES BUDGETED, APPROPRIATED AND DEPOSITED AS PROVIDED HEREIN AND NET REVENUES OF THE CITY'S WATER AND SEWER SYSTEM ON A JUNIOR AND SUBORDINATE LIEN BASIS, IN ALL RESPECTS, WITH RESPECT TO CERTAIN BONDS AND SUBORDINATED INDEBTEDNESS ISSUED BY THE CITY AND DESCRIBED HEREIN; PROVIDING FOR THE RIGHTS, SECURITIES AND REMEDIES FOR THE OWNER OF SUCH NOTE MAKING CERTAIN COVENANTS AND AGREEMENTS IN CONNECTION THEREWITH, TAKING CERTAIN OTHER ACTIONS WITH RESPECT TO THE NOTE; ESTABLISHING REIMBURSEMENT INTENT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE**, by title only.

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

Motion by Commissioner Avery, seconded by Vice Mayor Helms, to approve Resolution No. 2026-02. Upon vote, all ayes.

7. PRESENTATION OF BIDS – DISK FILTER REPLACEMENTS

Interim City Manager Palmer said the City Commission will consider bids for disk filter replacements at both the Allred and Regional Wastewater Treatment Facilities (WWTF).

Public Utilities Director Brad Thomas said as part of effluent disposal improvements, the Public Utilities Department is seeking to replace disk filters at both the Allred and Regional Wastewater Facilities. These new disk filters are intended to replace the existing units at the respective plants with an upgraded and more robust technology to help ensure efficiencies of effluent filtration.

A Request for Proposal for Disk Filter Replacements was advertised in the local media on October 5, 2025, and placed on the City's website. On November 12, 2025, the City received the following three (3) bids:

- Carr & Collier \$6,737,300.00
- Prime Construction Group \$7,347,100.00
- Vogel Bros. Building Co. \$7,653,854.00

The disk filter project is budgeted in Fiscal Year 2025-2026 for the Allred Wastewater Treatment Plant at \$750,000 and for the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant at \$500,000, utilizing vendor quotes. Engineering and construction of the disk filter replacement at \$6,737,300 incorporates costs that would be realized during the expansion and/or renovations at the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant and the Allred Wastewater Treatment Plant in future fiscal years. The disk filters improve the quality of public access effluent, ultimately increasing the City's disposal capacity. This project would be funded through the budgeted cash reserves (\$1.25 million) and the bank loan (approximately \$5.4 million)

Carr & Collier was the low bid for the disk filter replacement in the amount of \$6,737,300. The bids were reviewed by the Public Utilities Department and City Manager's office. The City is also working with Carr & Collier on the Gapway Phase II Force Main Project.

City of Auburndale Commission Minutes March 16, 2026

Interim City Manager Palmer said staff recommends awarding the bid to Carr & Collier in the amount of \$6,737,300.

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

Motion by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Vice Mayor Helms, to award the bid to Carr & Collier in the amount of \$6,737,300.

Vice Mayor Helms asked to confirm that nothing we are doing here will be affected or redone or have additional funds spent when we do the full expansion of the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Public Utilities Director Thomas answered this is an upfront cost that is going to be taken on later with the full \$73 million.

Vice Mayor Helms said he is just making sure that if we are doing this, we do not have to spend more money later because we designed it differently.

Commissioner Tijerina asked if all the bids encompassed the same scope?

Public Utilities Director Thomas answered yes.

Upon vote, all ayes.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:43:02 p.m.

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



Brandon Henry, City Clerk