

City of Auburndale Commission Minutes July 20, 2026

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Auburndale held July 20, 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 Tijerina. Also, present were: City Manager Jeffrey Brown, 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 Police Department Chaplain Anthony De Francisco, and a salute to the flag.

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve Minutes of the City Commission Meeting of July 6, 2026. Upon vote, all ayes.

Police Chief Terry Storie presented a donation to Victory Ridge Academy in honor of Autism Awareness Month.

Community Development Director Julie Womble presented an art donation depicting historical Auburndale.

City Manager Brown asked the Commission to arrive early on August 3rd to discuss the itinerary for the Florida League of Cities Conference. Several event notices were provided in their packets and RSVPs should be submitted to staff.

City Manager Brown said staff would like to pull Items 3 and 4.

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to remove Items 3 and 4 and relocate it to August 17th. Upon vote, all ayes.

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

Dennis Young, 2092 Summerlake Drive, said he attended the previous workshop meeting that was had. And most of the workshops he has had in the past or attended, everyone takes home something to do. So with that in mind, he said he would like to discuss the two topics that were brought up at the meeting. One was delaying the capital projects as a potential revenue opportunity, and the have-to's versus likes. Where is the discretionary funding going? He said he is thinking some of that money is going to the Capital Improvement Program. He said he would recommend that the City Manager give each of the Commissioners a capital improvement list. Homework for the Commissioners would be to prioritize that list based upon what is needed and what is like to have. Once it is completed, they would send back to the City Manager to be recapped and discussed at the August Commission meeting. He said he thinks that will align all of the Commissioners to know all of the priorities. For example, the North Auburndale fire station would be a very high priority because it services the entire community 24 hours a day in its emergency needs. He said the pickleball court, which he dearly loves because he plays pickleball, would be a lower priority. So that would give the Commissioners the opportunity and the City Manager to help look at managing those funds as we move forward with the potential of losing the shortfall revenues that we are having in the future.

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

1. PUBLIC HEARING – ZONING MAP AMENDMENT – SUNTRAX PROPERTY

Community Development Director Julie Womble said 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, which is now home to SunTrax, a State facility with the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). The adjacent property has a test track for autonomous vehicles and toll testing technology.

Properties adjacent to the west were annexed into the City in January of 2026 and given a Future Land Use of Regional Activity Center (RAC) and a Zoning Map Amendment of Commercial Highway (CH) and are part of the Suntrax use.

The current request is to rezone 19.32 acres in order to be consistent with the zoning on the rest of the site adjacent to the south and to the west. The proposed zoning map amendment is compatible to existing zoning classifications and uses adjacent to the site.

Commercial Highway Zoning permits automobile service stations, hotels, restaurants including drive-in, retail, commercial recreation, veterinary, sales and display lots, package and retail sale of alcohol, financial institutions, offices, clinics, laboratories and mini-warehousing. 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 amendment is consistent with uses to the south. The requested Zoning Map amendment is consistent with the City of Auburndale's Comprehensive Plan, Land Development Regulations, and the City of Auburndale Joint Planning Area (JPA). She presented a graphic depicting the proposal.

The Planning Commission recommended approval of the Zoning Map amendment of the SunTrax Property (5-0, 7-7-26). Staff recommends approval of proposed Ordinance #1851 amending the Official Zoning Map – SunTrax Property.

Mayor Cam asked for public comment.

Dennis Young, 2092 Summerlake Drive, asked what is air mobility testing technology? Is that flying cars? Which seems to be the vogue right now. He said he lives 1.7 miles from this area. Are there going to be FAA regulations involved with this? Is there going to be a radar station involved with this? You are approving something that is perhaps not zoned properly for this area. He said he would recommend, since this is a preliminary approval and the Commission is going to be approving it again on August 3rd, that someone from SunTrax comes to this meeting, and fully explain what is a Air Mobility Testing and Technology Research and Development Testing Base. This is a new technology coming out, if it is the flying car stuff. He said he has a lot of experience around helicopters and those kinds of things, and they do crash every once in a while. A new technology he would not want to have that crashing close to his house.

Community Development Director Womble further explained autonomous air mobility.

Nicholas Hartley, SunTrax representative, further explained autonomous air mobility, and FDOT's intentions with the facility.

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

2. ORDINANCE #1851 RECOMMENDATION AMENDING THE ZONING MAP

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1851 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 RECLASSIFYING AN AUBURNDALE ZONING MAP CLASSIFICATION ON A PARCEL OF LAND TOTALING +/- 19.32 ACRES FROM CITY OF AUBURNDALE ZONING CLASSIFICATION OF INDUSTRIAL PLANNED DEVELOPMENT (IPUD) TO COMMERCIAL HIGHWAY (CH); AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE (General Location: Polk County Pkwy and Pace Road),** by title only.

Motion by Commissioner Avery, seconded by Commissioner Tijerina, to approve Ordinance #1851 amending the Official Zoning Map – SunTrax Property, as read on first reading by title only. Upon vote, all ayes.

3. ORDINANCE #1852 AMENDING CITY CODE – CEMETERY RATES

City Manager Brown said the proposed Ordinance amends Section 8-15 and deletes Section 8-16 by replacing the codifying of the current rates for the sale of cemetery spaces and services such as openings and closings in the City's three cemeteries with language to allow the City Manager the ability to establish prices and fees for all cemetery sales and charges. The proposal also adds a two and one-half (2½) percent annual adjustment for all cemetery fees.

The last two Ordinance modifications were most recently in 2023 and prior to that in 2012.

The proposed changes are based on a recent survey of neighboring cities and their charges. The cities of Winter Haven, Lakeland, Lake Wales, and Bartow were used in the comparison.

The proposed Ordinance was prepared by the Parks and Recreation Director and City Manager's Office and reviewed by the Parks and Cemetery Superintendent, Finance Director and City Attorney. If approved on first reading, the proposed Ordinance will be considered for second and final reading on August 3, 2026.

The effective date of the new rate schedule will be October 1, 2026.

Staff recommends approval of proposed Ordinance #1852 amending the cemetery rates.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1852 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTIONS 8-15 AND 8-16 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE RELATING TO CEMETERIES (AMENDING SALE PRICES FOR GRAVE SPACES AND OTHER FEES AND CHARGES); REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CODIFICATION, AND THE ADMINISTRATIVE CORRECTION OF SCRIVENER'S ERRORS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE**, by title only.

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

Motion by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve Ordinance #1852 amending City Code – Cemetery Rates. Upon vote, all ayes.

4. ATHLETICS FACILITIES AGREEMENT, FLORIDA POLYTECHNIC UNIVERSITY

City Manager Brown said the City Commission will consider an Athletics Facilities Agreement for athletic field usage with Florida Polytechnic University to host practices and home games for various sports within their NAIA Athletics program.

Parks and Recreation Director Cody McGhee said the proposed Agreement allows for usage of the Lake Myrtle Sports Complex, the Auburndale Softball Complex, and the Auburndale Community Center as host facilities for various athletic programs of Florida Polytechnic University. This agreement would allow for scheduled practices and games to be played for a period of three years with the option of two additional years.

The proposed agreement includes a yearly fee of \$50,000 for scheduled usage of the facilities and allows for possible future tournaments or additional events that may be requested by Florida Polytechnic University at a discounted rate.

The proposed agreement was prepared by the Parks and Recreation Director and City Manager's Office and reviewed by the City Attorney, Florida Polytechnic University Staff and Attorney.

Katie Daniels, Florida Polytechnic University counsel, introduced Florida Polytechnic University staff in attendance. She said they are very excited for this partnership.

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

Motion by Commissioner Levy, seconded by Commissioner Tijerina, to approve the Athletics Facilities Agreement, Florida Polytechnic University.

Commissioner Tijerina asked Parks and Recreation Director McGhee to explain the competitiveness of the rate we are charging Florida Polytechnic University, and some of the intangible benefits of this relationship.

Parks and Recreation Director McGhee answered there are two different types of fees. There are the regular practice and scheduled games fees, and then there is also an opportunity for any other additional events or tournaments to be able to come in. He explained how the fee structure was created.

Commissioner Levy asked for details regarding the sports Florida Polytechnic University is launching with.

Parks and Recreation Director McGhee answered, and explained the sports the City is able to accommodate with its facilities.

Katie Daniels, Florida Polytechnic University counsel, answered that basketball and softball will be hosted elsewhere – but that they are open to a partnership should City facilities change over the life of the agreement or in the future.

Parks and Recreation Director McGhee further explained status of City facilities.

Commissioner Avery said it is a great partnership and he is excited to get out there and watch some games.

Commissioner Levy and Mayor Cam concurred.

Upon vote, all ayes.

5. PRESENTATION OF PAYROLL – FISCAL YEAR 2027 AND FISCAL YEAR 2028 ANNUAL BUDGETS

City Manager Brown said the Payroll Section of the Budget provides the necessary funding for the staffing levels to adequately deliver an accepted level of service to our citizens. In addition to salaries, the Payroll Section provides incentive funding for certifications and education, longevity pay, and automatic step adjustments. The proposed budgets provide a 3% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for all City employees in Fiscal Year 2027 and no COLA in Fiscal Year 2028.

The draft budget has the following proposed positions:

- . 1 - Accounting / Payroll Specialist
- . 2 – New Firefighters
- . 1 – Property and Evidence Custodian
- . 1 – Part Time Property and Evidence Custodian
- . 3 – Service Worker II Sanitation
- . 1 – Fleet Supervisor
- . 1 – Mechanic III
- . 1 - Mechanic II
- . 1 – Service Worker II Fleet
- . 1 – GIS Technician

. 1 - Part Time Service Worker II Lake Ariana

. 3 – Service Workers II Lake Myrtle

City Manager Brown provided context as to the proposed positions.

He highlighted the Annual Pay Study, and listed proposed pay adjustments by position.

He presented a graph depicting employees per department and total number of employees by year.

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

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Avery, to tentatively approve the proposed Payroll as presented by City Staff.

Commissioner Tijerina said it is important for us to talk about the fact that we recognize the challenges we have and the economic environment. She appreciates the City Manager for going back and adding in all the details on the added positions and why they are necessary, not just something we would like to have. She encourages the City to look for ways to utilize technology to prevent the need to fill or create new positions moving forward so that we make sure that we are maintaining that very tight line and how we budget for staffing. She loves that we are looking at a COLA adjustment for our staff. We have a really good staff, and she wants to maintain the talent that we have. And so while it may not be the most popular thing all the time, she thinks it is really important that we show the people that work here and do such a good job how much we care about them, that we want them to have a livable wage.

Upon vote, all ayes.

City Manager Brown outlined the upcoming budget calendar.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

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


Brandon Henry, City Clerk