

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Auburndale held August 3, 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 Pastor Gene Bassham, New Hope Fellowship Church, and a salute to the flag.

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Avery, to approve Minutes of the Special City Commission Workshop and Regular City Commission Meeting of July 20, 2026. Upon vote, all ayes.

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

1. ORDINANCE #1851 AMENDING THE OFFICIAL ZONING MAP - SUNTRAX

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. 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). It is within the Innovation District.

The proposed Ordinance was prepared by the Community Development Department and reviewed by the City Manager and City Attorney. The proposed Ordinance was approved on first reading July 20, 2026, and is being presented for second and final reading. The Planning Commission recommended approval of the Zoning Map amendment of the SunTrax Property (5-0, 7-7-26).

Staff recommends approval of Ordinance #1851 amending the Official Zoning Map – SunTrax Property.

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.

Mayor Cam asked for public comment.

Dennis Young, 2092 Summerlake Drive, said SunTrax Air is FDOT's premier research and development hub for advanced air mobility (AAM) for the State of Florida and features nations first AAM aerial test track. This 212-acre aviation campus supports a wide range of AAM aircraft and includes vertiports, 20,000 square foot hangers, and versatile high speed charging pads designed to accommodate evolving vehicle sizes and power requirements. In the future, SunTrax Air plans to include an elevated vertiport that simulates rooftop urban takeoff and landing conditions, making this facility the nation's most comprehensive environment for developing the next generation of aerial transportation systems. This is the today, tomorrow, and the future development. It is a feather in Auburndale's cap. However, he has two important questions – all the test flights that take place, will they take place over this test track airspace? Or will they be on the corridor testing from the air corridor from Tampa to Orlando to Daytona? Second question – what safety equipment will be on site in case there is a hazardous situation? These are basically battery-operated vehicles that have a lithium battery powering them, and we already know when there is an accident or crash, the Fire Department will have to respond carefully and judiciously. Those are the two questions he has to maintain the safety of the individuals and the workers at SunTrax as well as the housing subdivision to the north, south, and east.

Community Development Womble said at this time they would be testing on the actual facility site. As far as the future with expansion of testing along Interstate 4 – that is to be determined. That would be something we would educate the Commission and residents as we know. Regarding the second question – any site that develops in the City has to go through fire code and building codes. She said she also knows that State Fire Marshal has been on site as well, and the State Fire Marshall and the City Fire Marshal have met and have been going through all the procedures and safety – and they feel that everything out there is adequate and meets code. If the Florida Fire Marshal feels it meets the intent, we should feel pretty safe.

Fire Chief Brian Bradway said the City's Fire Marshal is out there weekly and multiple times. He has had many inspections with the State Fire Marshal, they have been the lead on it for several months. They talk quite a bit. There is a robust sprinkler system involved with the facilities out there. Regarding suppression, there are batteries involved, and they can be difficult to extinguish. We have a game plan for that. In talking to the facility and the Fire Marshal, one of the tactics for extinguishing is to move them outside of the buildings.

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

Commissioner Levy asked about the location of the new fire station in relation to SunTrax.

Fire Chief Bradway clarified the location.

Commissioner Levy asked how far out will SunTrax be from having this facility active.

Community Development Director Womble said the first hanger will receive their certificate of occupancy within the next 30 days. But there are phases. They also have made sure with our Utilities Department to ensure adequate water pressure to put out fires. They have met with City teams to go over fire needs.

Commissioner Levy said our ability to respond to any situation will be greatly enhanced once the new fire station opens?

Fire Chief Bradway confirmed.

Commissioner Tijerina said she is assuming if they start testing outside the facility, there would be some kind of notice given.

Community Development Director Womble answered yes, the FAA has requirements. Their intention right now is just to test on the facility. We are ways out before testing is done on highways and rooftops. The State will roll out that information, and City staff will put that information out to residents.

Upon vote, all ayes.

2. ORDINANCE #1852 AMENDING CITY CODE – CEMETERY RATES

City Manager Brown said the proposed Ordinance amends Sec. 8-15 and deletes Sec. 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. The proposed Ordinance was passed on first reading July 20, 2026, and is being presented for second and final reading.

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.

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

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

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

Motion by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Vice Mayor Helms, to approve Ordinance #1852 amending City Code – Cemetery Rates, as read on second and final reading. Upon vote, all ayes.

3. PRESENTATION OF FISCAL YEAR 2027 ANNUAL BUDGET

Section 23.5 of the Charter of the City Auburndale authorizes the City Manager to prepare and submit to the City Commission the annual budget and budget message. Approval of the annual budget is the most important responsibility of the City Commission. In accordance with the City Charter, it is with great honor to present for your review and consideration the Fiscal Year (FY) 2027 Proposed Budget. Since 2005, the proposed budget has been two budget years being presented. The new Fiscal Year and the second proposed year. However, due to the uncertainty of the proposed State Constitution Amendment 3 on the agenda in November, staff has decided to submit FY 27 alone. Starting FY 28, staff will reinstitute the process of submitting two fiscal years in the budget preparation.

During this recent period of historic growth, the City of Auburndale has continued to strive to meet the needs of our citizens with a focus on core services including public safety, infrastructure investment, parks, and community / economic development. Significant additions to personnel, utility infrastructure improvements, and development of park space highlight the proposed budget to keep pace with the development of new housing

and industry within the City. The population of Auburndale in 2025 grew by 5.1 %. Polk County is still one of the fastest growing counties in Florida and the United States. Quality of life for residents and businesses remains at the forefront in budget planning and preparation. This document represents months of work by dedicated staff and reflects revenue estimates and proposed expenditures based upon an ongoing review of operations.

City Manager Brown hopes you find the following information helpful and explanatory as we continue the process of meeting our City's goals and the statutory obligation of adopting a balanced budget.

Since 2010, City Staff started presenting the various sections of the proposed budget at Regular Meetings before the City Commission in April or May. This initiative allows the elected officials and the public greater opportunities to be informed and participate in the budget process, and in a timelier manner. This year the City Commission was presented the Capital Outlay Section on June 1, 2026, the Expense Section on June 15, 2026, and the Revenue Section on July 6, 2026, and Payroll on July 20, 2026. Public Hearings on the proposed Budget and millage rate will be held on Thursday, September 3, 2026, and prior to final adoption on Tuesday, September 15, 2026.

The Proposed Budget recommends a total spending level of \$124,772,956 in FY 2027. This represents an overall increase of \$37,130,602 over FY 26. Several large-scale capital projects are in progress either in the design phase, under construction, or are nearing completion which includes \$6,000,000 for Fire Station #2, \$10,000,000 for Lake Myrtle Improvements, \$783,500 for new vehicles in the Police Department, \$3,325,000 for the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant Design and \$10,026,000 for initial construction. \$2,000,000 for the Highway 542 water main extension and \$2,550,000 for Regional Master Lift Station upgrade.

The FY 2027 Budget is estimated conservatively as growth indicators have declined year-over-year due to sewer capacity availability. The City completed the Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility Service Area Evaluation that identified several large-scale capital sewer system improvements needed for future development in Auburndale. Construction of those projects is ongoing. The City Commission has approved numerous developer's agreements since the Study was completed. As the various sewer projects are completed, development and growth is anticipated to increase in future years. Due to the large demand on the sewer infrastructure and anticipated future growth, the City's consulting engineer and staff have begun studying the expansion of the Regional Wastewater Treatment Facility from 4 million gallons per day (MGD) of sewer treatment capacity to 6 MGD.

The City of Auburndale functions with five (5) funds to support the day-to-day operations of the City. The five (5) categories of Funds include the General Fund, the Community Redevelopment Agency Fund, the Public Utilities Fund, the General Impact Fee Fund, and the Public Utility Connection Fee Fund. In addition to the Proposed Budget being balanced, each individual fund is also balanced.

General Fund revenue sources include Taxes (including Franchise Fees), Licenses and Permits, Intergovernmental Revenue, Charges for Services, Fines, and Miscellaneous Revenue. The General Fund proposed budget is \$61,658,886 for FY 2027 before the interfund transfer.

Recent numbers from the Polk County Property Appraiser's Office suggest that the gross taxable value of all property within the City limits increased 6.3% over the July 2025 estimate. This information allowed City Staff to recommend 4.2515 as the proposed operating millage rate for the ninth year. The City of Auburndale will maintain the lowest ad valorem tax millage rate in Polk County for the fourth year. The preliminary taxable values on July 1, 2026, were \$3,034,515,601, an increase of \$159,612,231 with \$148,524,456 attributable to net new taxable construction.

Auburndale has historically levied a low tax millage, or property tax, to help fund general government expenditures including Public Safety, Public Works, Parks and Recreation, the Public Library, Community Development and other General Fund activities. The current and proposed tax rate of 4.2515 mills represents the

lowest municipal tax levy in Polk County and generates \$12,256,180 an increase of \$678,591 over the current year total ad valorem proceeds. The increase in ad valorem proceeds is as a result of annexations, the continued growth in new commercial and residential construction, and the inflation in property values within the incorporated City limits.

To continue to meet the City's standard of delivering high-quality service as new businesses and residents move into the City, significant investments in personnel, infrastructure, and park space investments are needed and have been programmed into the City's aggressive Five-Year Capital Improvements Plan (5-Year CIP). To accomplish those planned future capital expenditures, the budget maintains the City's conservative approach of setting aside reserve funds to be utilized as a future offset. The additional revenues generated by the increased ad valorem base will allow the City of Auburndale to maintain the lowest operating millage rate in Polk County, while at the same time continuing a high level of customer service and quality of life for our citizens and businesses.

The General Fund proposed budget for FY 2027 includes \$10,325,369 of reserve funding as revenue coming into the budget from monies set aside in previous budget years to complete various projects. In addition, \$7,813,100 of reserve funding is allocated as an expense, or reserve funding to complete various projects in the future. The largest General Fund expenditures within the various departments in FY 2027 include the redevelopment of the Public Works Facility totaling \$1,880,000, Lake Myrtle Improvements in the amount of \$10,000,000, and beginning the design, engineering and construction of Fire Station #2 in the amount \$6,000,000.

The Auburndale Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) was created in February 1992. The CRA was created to develop and implement a Community Redevelopment Plan to redevelop, rehabilitate, and conserve its Community Redevelopment Agency district. In 2005, the Community Redevelopment Agency voted to extend the time certain for completing planned projects within the CRA Plan through 2035. In November 2025, the Community Redevelopment Agency voted to amend the Plan to extend the timeframe of the CRA through its 60-year time certain expressed in State Statute, through the year 2052.

The CRA Fund also benefits from increased activities and increased property values within the CRA District. The Community Redevelopment Agency Fund proposed budget is balanced at \$4,019,428. The Proposed Budget allocate \$1,535,438 in new increment funding from Polk County and \$983,890 from the City of Auburndale. In addition to \$1,500,000 from reserves.

The Budget provides reserves of \$500,000 in FY 2027 to Masterplan the Wiley Drive Streetscape, the Splash Pad, Dog Park, and Skateboard Park located at the old Miss Auburndale Softball fields; and reserve of \$500,000 for the expansion of the Cindy Hummel Tennis Center to include additional tennis and pickleball courts. The FY 2027 CRA Budget includes \$75,000 to complete a corridor plan for US Highway 92 and Havendale Blvd. The General Fund also includes \$75,000 so the study can complete a full corridor inside and outside the CRA.

The Community Redevelopment Agency Board gave tentative approval to the proposed CRA Budget on June 15, 2026.

The Public Utilities Fund accounts for the activities associated with providing potable water and sewer collection, treatment, and disposal services to area residents and businesses. The Public Utilities Fund derives its revenue from fees collected to address the operating and capital needs of our municipal utility services and to maintain the financial stability of the system.

The Public Utilities Fund proposed FY 2027 Budget is \$45,240,335 not including the inter-fund transfer to the City's General Fund, needed for balancing. The inter-fund transfer proposed in the FY 2027 Budget is \$3,656,788.

In May 2023, the City completed the Regional Wastewater Treatment Plant Service Area Evaluation. Several large-scale capital sewer system improvements were identified to allow for future development in Auburndale and were included in the City's Five-Year Public Utilities Capital Improvement Plan. These projects are all in progress either in the design phase, under construction, or nearing completion.

The General Fund Impact Fee Fund is projected in FY 2027 to generate \$250,250 in Fire Impact Fees, \$135,800 in Police Impact Fees, and \$309,925 in Recreation Impact Fees. These dollars are used to offset eligible expenses in each of these departments or placed in reserves for future expenses.

The Public Utility Connection Fee Fund is projected in FY 2027 to generate \$775,950 in Water Impact Fees, \$1,490,300 in Sewer Impact Fees, and \$23,000 in Fire Sprinkler Impact Fees. These dollars are all used to help offset and pay debt service.

An important purpose of the budget process is to allow staff and the City Commission to focus more closely on the future community needs and determine how to allocate resources to address those needs. One way we accomplish this is by integrating the budget process with the Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). This allows for the blending of the City's planning process with a more stable and consistent budget process.

In the same Ordinance that the City Commission will adopt the Budget, the Commission will also be adopting a revised Five-Year CIP. The City of Auburndale maintains an aggressive capital improvement program targeted to improve aging or inadequate infrastructure, redevelopment needs, and enhanced recreation facilities. Many of the projects in the City's Five Year CIP are multi-year programs that begin in one year and continue construction, or completion into future fiscal years. All projects in the CIP are incorporated into the proposed Budget.

The Payroll Section of the Budget provides the necessary funding for 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 adjustments for employees completing the one-year probationary period and completing four, six, eight, and now ten years of service. The proposed budgets provide a 3% cost of living adjustment (COLA) for all City employees in FY 2027.

The proposed FY 2027 Payroll Budget operates with a staffing level of 248 full and part-time employees, an increase of sixteen (16) employees. The proposed positions include:

- 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

The 2026 Salary Study prepared by Creative Insights of Lutz and USF Professor John Daly identified issues important to staying competitive with the local job market particular to certain positions within the City. Based on the Salary Study with staff review, the proposed FY 2027 Payroll Budget also reflects a pay adjustment for the Police Department, Public Utilities operators, Police and Fire Chiefs.

Total payroll including miscellaneous certificate and education pay in FY 2027 equals \$15.43 million, an increase of 1.45%.

During the planning process of the budget, City Staff projects a 10% increase in health insurance premium costs for each year. The City was recently notified that due to claim history over the past year, a 5.7% increase will take effect in FY 2027. Total health insurance costs in FY 2027 are projected at \$2,917,447 representing an additional cost of \$525,554 compared to the current year Adopted Budget.

In closing, he presents to the Commission the City of Auburndale spending plan for FY 2027. He wishes to convey his gratitude to the City employees for the outstanding work they perform day in and day out for the citizens and visitors to the City of Auburndale. He would also like to thank the City Commission for the honor of serving as the City Manager for the City of Auburndale and the continued support of this organization.

Commissioner Avery said he saw across an article in the newspaper that says Fort Meade is increasing their millage rate by 12%. He would like to commend staff and the City for being fiscally conservative and coming up with a budget that keeps it at a level playing field for the next year.

4. APPROVE PROPOSED FISCAL YEAR 2027 ROLLED-BACK RATE AND MILLAGE RATE

City Manager Brown said Florida Statutes require the City to compute a proposed millage rate necessary to fund the proposed budget. The City must advise the Property Appraiser of its proposed millage rate, rolled-back rate and the date, time and place for a public hearing. The Property Appraiser utilizes this information in preparing the notices of proposed property taxes, which are mailed to property owners.

The City's existing millage rate is 4.2515. Using the current millage rate times our current year's gross taxable value; the ad valorem proceeds would represent an increase of \$678,591 over the prior year. The Rolled-back rate for the 2026 Certificate of Taxable Value Form is 4.2500 and would provide the City with the same ad valorem revenue for FY 2026-2027 as the prior year.

The proposed FY 2026-2027 Budget is balanced utilizing the current millage rate of 4.2515. If approved by the City Commission, the millage rate could be lowered but not increased above the 4.2515 rate without the expense of re-advertising to all property owners.

Florida Senate Bill 4-F changes how local governments calculate the maximum millage rate they may adopt with a simple majority vote. The bill now establishes the rolled-back rate as the new baseline for determining the highest millage rate that may be approved by a majority vote. The rolled-back rate is the tax rate that would generate approximately the same amount of property tax revenue from existing properties as the previous year, excluding revenue from new construction.

As a result, cities and counties seeking to increase property tax revenues above the rolled-back rate face more restrictive voting thresholds as established in Florida law. The change is intended to limit automatic growth in property tax revenues resulting from increases in property values and to make property tax increases more transparent and deliberate. This means for the City to set a millage rate of 4.2515, a 4/5 vote will be needed to adopt.

Staff recommends approving 4.2500 as the Rolled-back rate and 4.2515 as the proposed operating millage rate for the 2026 Certificate of Taxable Value Form and Budget Year 2027.

City Manager Brown presented and explained a summary of millage calculations, the City's Certification of Taxable Value, and the City's Maximum Millage Levy Calculation Preliminary Disclosure.

Staff recommends approving 4.2500 as the Rolled-back rate and 4.2515 as the proposed operating millage rate for the 2026 Certificate of Taxable Value Form and Budget Year 2027.

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

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve 4.2500 as the Rolled-back rate and 4.2515 as the proposed operating millage rate for the 2026 Certificate of Taxable Value Form and Budget Year 2027.

Vice Mayor Helms thanked City Manager Brown. Over the last few years, we watched the total budget grow. It is not because of irresponsible financial behavior, it is because we planned and saved and worked well with our partners – such as receiving funds from the County. When you look at the total budget, you can say “oh my gosh”, but every time we talk about the millage rate – that is what drives it home. We are holding the same millage rate for the ninth year in a row, and for the fourth year we are the lowest in Polk County. He is extremely impressed and thanked staff. He is talking as a resident, not as a commissioner. He likes a small property tax bill.

Upon vote, all ayes.

5. APPROVE PUBLIC HEARING DATES FOR PROPOSED FISCAL Y 2027 BUDGET

City Manager Brown said staff recommends approving Thursday, September 3, 2026, and Tuesday, September 15, 2026 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall for the required Public Hearings on the proposed FY 2027 Budget.

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

Motion by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Vice Mayor Helms, to approve Thursday, September 3, 2026, and Tuesday, September 15, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall for the required Public Hearings on the proposed FY 2027 Budget. Upon vote, all ayes.

6. SET BUDGET WORK SESSION DATE (08-20-26), COMMISSION DAY

City Manager Brown said staff recommends setting Thursday, August 20, 2026, for Commission Day activities and for a proposed budget work session, if needed.

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

Motion by Commissioner Avery, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve setting Thursday, August 20, 2026, for Commission Day activities and for a proposed budget work session, if needed. Upon vote, all ayes.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:48 p.m.

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



Brandon Henry, City Clerk