

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Auburndale held September 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: Sean Levy and Crystal Tijerina. Commissioner Travis Avery was absent. 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 Stephen Stover, Central Assembly of God, and a salute to the flag.

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve Minutes of the City Commission Meeting of August 17, 2026. Upon vote, all ayes.

City Manager Jeffrey Brown announced that the City has hired a Human Resources Manager – who will be in attendance at the next meeting.

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Tijerina, to remove Agenda Item 4 ORDINANCE #1855 AMENDING SEC.4-2 AND 4-4. OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES - ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES from tonight's agenda and rescheduling for October. Upon vote, all ayes.

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

Blake Levison, 1489 Louise Avenue, said he is here on behalf of himself and many of the neighbors regarding the strictness of the slow pace of changing Auburndale's current residential corner lot fence setback code. Currently, the City requires a 15-foot setback from the sidewalk on corner lots. However, before his neighborhood was annexed into the City - they were under Polk County jurisdiction. Polk County measures their fence setback from the center line of the street. Because of that, every house that acted while it was in Polk County jurisdiction have pre-existing fences that do not match the City's code. He said that when he decided to build a fence, he wanted to carry off of his neighbor's fence, only to find out that he can go only two feet to the side of his home and back, which does not match anyone else in the neighborhood that has a corner lot. So that being said, the purpose of him coming here as a new dog owner for about a year is to see if we can have that changed a lot faster. He said he knows City Planner Jesse Pearson and Community Development Director Julie Womble mentioned that they are working a year out from now to have that code changed. He said his goal is to see if the City would put it on the agenda, maybe for the next vote. He is trying to do the right thing, get a permit, get it approved. He has paid the contractor to do the work. His only ask is that the City work with him on trying to get this fast-tracked so he can have his fence, and at the end of the day, his dog can go play in the backyard. He thanked the Commission.

Mayor Cam said he understands the we are in the process of updating the Land Development Regulations. It would probably be good if we could take a look at our fence code sooner than later, specifically corner lots.

City Manager Brown said that he and Community Development Director Julie Womble had further conversation earlier in the afternoon – we are fast tracking this change. So we will not make it part of the Land Development Regulations rewrite that the Commission will not see until next year. So we will bring this at a faster pace.

Commissioner Tijerina asked to clarify whether we are changing the code or fast-tracking Mr. Levison's particular exception?

City Manager Brown clarified that we are trying to massage our code to match what the character is of that neighborhood, to allow the fence to be more inclusive of Mr. Levison's backyard. We will be lessening side-yard setbacks, which is technically still a front yard for Mr. Levison's lot.

Commissioner Tijerina asked so we would be relaxing our regulations? She knows this will be something that will have to come before the Commission, but she does not want to make any promises that she cannot sit up on the dais and say that she is going to vote for.

City Manager Brown clarified that Mr. Levison is not the only comment we have received regarding this. Knowing the amount of comments that staff is getting, it is telling us we need to look at our code and adjust.

Commissioner Tijerina said that she will wait for it to come before the Commission.

Community Development Director Julie Womble clarified the code requirements regarding fences and statutory requirements regarding required permits.

Commissioner Tijerina said she would need to see a study and information, because she feels that she is very hesitant right now to sit on the dais and say that she is going to approve a blanket statement that relaxes our code when she feels like many residents talk to the Commission regularly about upholding the restrictiveness that we have. So while she appreciates what Mr. Levison is bringing before the Commission and she understands his plight, she just wants to make sure that the Commission is not giving any kind of implication that we are going to say yes to relaxing regulations until we have seen it come before us.

Mayor Cam said that is correct, that would be the process.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. concurred with Commissioner Tijerina, City Manager Brown, and Mayor Cam - that this would be a legislative process.

Vice Mayor Helms asked what community is Mr. Levison a part of?

Community Development Director Womble said *Enclave at Lake Myrtle*. Unfortunately, not everyone in that community even got a permit with the County, so not everybody did fences to code. Mr. Levison was trying to do the right thing.

Mayor Cam thanked staff and Mr. Levison.

Commissioner Tijerina said that she wanted to be on record that she is not trying to be dismissive about Mr. Levison's particular situation, but whenever we talk about changing the City's overall regulations, she thinks that is a bigger question. She certainly thinks his situation makes sense for different things. She just needs to have all the details before she agrees.

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

1. PUBLIC HEARING – FISCAL YEAR 2026 TAX MILLAGE LEVY & ANNUAL BUDGET

City Manager Brown said the Public Hearing has been advertised in accordance with the Florida Statutes regarding the method of fixing tax millage. This Public Hearing is the first of two (2) required Public Hearings with the second scheduled for September 15, 2026.

Revenues from ad-valorem taxes for Fiscal Year 2027 are estimated at \$12,256,180 and based upon the operating millage rate of 4.2515. The roll back is 4.2500.

The proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2027 is balanced with Total Revenue and Total Expenditures of \$124,566,380. Expenditures include general operating expenses of \$67,825,684, Capital Improvements of \$53,031,230, and Contingency Reserve of \$150,000.

The Fiscal Year 2027 Budget also includes the proposed Five-Year Schedule of Capital Improvements (CIP) for the City's Public Safety, Parks and Recreation, and Public Works Departments. This schedule, which is a

requirement of the City's Comprehensive Plan, assists the City Commission in prioritizing future capital needs throughout the City and is updated annually during the budget process to include a "new fifth year".

Changes to the proposed Budget will be presented by staff during the Public Hearing and before Commission action. There are none at this time, but at the next meeting we will have additional items and some changes that staff will walk through.

The proposed Ordinances were prepared by the Finance Director and reviewed by the City Manager and City Attorney. If approved on first reading, the proposed Ordinances will be presented for second and final reading on September 15, 2026.

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

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

2. ORDINANCE #1853 ADOPTING 2026 TAX MILLAGE LEVY

City Manager Brown said staff recommends approving proposed Ordinance No. 1853 establishing the tax millage levy.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1853 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE, FLORIDA, ESTABLISHING THE TAX LEVY FOR THE YEAR 2026 ON ALL PROPERTY WITHIN THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE AS SHOWN BY THE 2026 ASSESSMENT ROLL: ESTABLISHING THE MILLAGE RATE AT 4.2515, WHICH IS A 0.04% INCREASE OVER THE ROLLED BACK RATE OF 4.2500, AND PROVIDING FOR THE APPLICATION THEREOF; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE**, by title only.

Motion by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve Ordinance #1853 establishing the tax millage levy, as read on first reading by title only. Upon vote, all ayes.

3. ORDINANCE #1854 ADOPTING FISCAL YEAR 2027 ANNUAL BUDGET

City Manager Brown said staff recommends approval of Ordinance No. 1854 adopting the Fiscal Year 2027 Annual Budget.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1854 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027 ANNUAL BUDGET; ADOPTING THE FIVE (5) YEAR SCHEDULE OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS (CIP); AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE**, by title only.

Motion by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Vice Mayor Helms, to approve Ordinance #1854 adopting the Fiscal Year 2027 Annual Budget.

Vice Mayor Helms said just to reiterate what he has said before, he would like to thank City Manager Brown and staff for the lowest millage rate in Polk County for several years in a row, significant investment in public infrastructure, and improving the quality of life for the residents. He appreciates it. He feels very good approving this budget this year. He knows it has been an interesting year. City Manager Brown joined the City in April and jumped right into the fire, so he really appreciates everything staff has done.

Mayor Cam concurred.

Upon vote, all ayes.

4. CONTRACT BETWEEN AUBURNDALE AND POLK COUNTY TO CONSTRUCT FIRE STATION 2

City Manager Brown said planning for a second City of Auburndale fire station began nearly two decades ago as the City designated a portion of land at Berkley Road and Strickland Lane to be used for a future fire station.

Due to growth, both the City of Auburndale and Polk County have recognized a need for emergency fire and rescue services in the north Auburndale area. The contract presented outlines terms for both the City of Auburndale and Polk County to construct a shared, Auburndale-owned fire station. The station will be a four-bay station with a fire engine, water tanker, brush truck, and a Polk County Fire Rescue (PCFR) ambulance. The station will also feature two office areas and an interview area to be utilized by the Auburndale Police Department (APD).

Terms in the contract address financial responsibility for each entity's share. Auburndale will be responsible for its share of a living space that can accommodate up to eight Auburndale Fire Department (AFD) Firefighters, and the County will be responsible for its share of a separate living area that can accommodate up to four PCFR Firefighters and or Emergency Medical Services (EMS) staff. There will also be shared spaces such as a fitness area, training / community room, laundry, and gear storage areas.

Cost estimates for Polk County include \$200,000 towards design and engineering and \$2,145,000 for construction. Auburndale costs estimates include \$300,000 for design and engineering and \$6,765,000 for construction. The total for the entire project is expected not to exceed \$8,910,000. Maintenance and utilities costs of the facility is set to 75% Auburndale share and 25% County share except for in shared and/or common spaces which will be split 50/50.

The contract between the City and the County was written by the City Attorney and the Polk County Attorney's Office and has been reviewed by the City Manager's Office and the Fire Chief. Staff recommends authorizing the Mayor to sign the contract.

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

Motion by Commissioner Levy, seconded by Commissioner Tijerina, to approve the contract between Auburndale and Polk County to construct Fire Station 2, and authorizing the Mayor to sign the contract. Upon vote, all ayes.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:18 p.m.

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

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Brandon Henry', is written over a horizontal line.

Brandon Henry, City Clerk