

City Commission

Meeting Minutes

February 3, 2026

(APPROVED)

2/3/2026 - Minutes

1. INVOCATION

Commissioner Thompson gave the invocation.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

3. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Hilligoss called the meeting to order at approximately 6:00 p.m. after the invocation and pledge of allegiance.

4. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Keith Thompson, Robin Gibson, Carol Gillespie, Mayor Hilligoss, Daniel Williams

Staff Present: James Slaton, City Manager; Jennifer Nanek, City Clerk; Albert C Galloway, Jr., City Attorney

5. COMMENTS AND PETITIONS

Michael Richards, resident, commended the water department for resolving an issue he had very quickly. He also complimented the appearance of Oakley Park.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

Becky Wynkoop asked to pull item 6.2, 1st Street Project (Park Avenue to Orange Avenue). Mayor Hilligoss pulled the item.

Commissioner Thompson made a motion to approve the rest of the Consent Agenda. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion.

by voice vote:

Commissioner Thompson "YES"

Commissioner Williams "YES"

Commissioner Gillespie "YES"

Deputy Mayor Gibson "YES"

Mayor Hilligoss "YES"

Motion passed 5-0.

6.I. Minutes January 20 & 28, 2026

6.II. 1st Street Project (Park Avenue To Orange Avenue Streetscape) – Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) With Gomez Construction

[Begin Agenda Memo]

SYNOPSIS: The City Commission will consider approving the GMP with Gomez Construction for 1st St. Streetscape between Park Avenue and Orange Avenue.

RECOMMENDATION It is recommended that the City Commission take the following actions:

1. Approve the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) with Gomez Construction for 1st Street Project (Park Avenue to Orange Avenue).
2. Approve budget amendment in the amount of \$433,798.73.
3. Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents on behalf of the City.

BACKGROUND At the October 7, 2025 City Commission Meeting, an On-Call Construction Manager Services Contract was approved with Gomez Construction. Based on their relevant experience and financial proposal, Gomez Construction was recommended for horizontal projects (i.e. streetscapes). The goal of the 1st Street Project is to update and enhance Lake Wales' historic Downtown through revitalization efforts.

As part of the CMAR project, subcontractor bid packages were publicly advertised for 30 days on multiple platforms to multiple subs in the area. One proposal was received each for the Concrete, Electrical, MOT, Pavers, Site and the Striping & Signage packages and two proposals were received for each of the Quality Control and Survey packages. All bidders provided all required forms for these scopes. No bids were received for Hardscape items; however, Gomez received material quotes from the manufacturers.

The mobilization costs for Gomez are \$189,660, which includes the previously agreed upon cost for pre-construction services of \$18,700, the general conditions of \$154,275 and the bonds/insurance of \$16,685. Total mobilization (line item #1) also includes all sub mobilizations.

The Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) for this project is \$1,183,798.73. The City was awarded a U.S. Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Grant in the amount of \$750,000 through Congressman Soto's Office. The difference of \$433,798.73 will be covered by Multi-Modal Impact Fees.

FISCAL IMPACT The fiscal impact is \$433,798.73, which will be paid out of Multi-Modal Impact Fees.

[End Agenda Memo]

Becky Wynkoop, resident, shared concerns about the effect of the work on First and Orange on the businesses on Orange Ave.

Deputy Mayor Gibson made a motion to approve this item. Commissioner Thompson seconded the motion.

by voice vote:

Deputy Mayor Gibson "YES"

Commissioner Thompson "YES"

Commissioner Gillespie "YES"

Commissioner Williams "YES"

Mayor Hilligoss "YES"

Motion passed 5-0.

6.III. Award Of Construction Contract – Lake Wales Memorial Gardens Cemetery Phase 2 Bid No. 26-03
[Begin Agenda Memo]

SYNOPSIS: Staff is recommending approval to award Bid No. 26-03 for the construction of Lake Wales Memorial Gardens Cemetery Phase 2 to Tiger Contracting, LLC in the amount of \$609,428.73.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION Staff recommends the City Commission consider taking the following action:

1. Approve the award of Bid No. 26-03 for the construction of Lake Wales Memorial Gardens Cemetery Phase

2 to Tiger Contracting, LLC in the amount of \$609,428.73. 2. Authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary contract documents on behalf of the City

BACKGROUND In January 2007, the City purchased approximately fifty (50) acres of land located at Hunt Brothers Road and Lake Bella Road for future cemetery expansion. Of that acreage, twenty (20) acres were designated for the Lake Wales Memorial Gardens Cemetery.

The first five (5) acres of the site were designed and constructed and became available for internments in 2015. As burial capacity within Phase 1 continues to be reduced, staff initiated the next phase of expansion to ensure the City remains prepared to meet future interment needs.

Engineering and design services for Phase 2 were previously approved through Master

Consulting Agreement #20-471, Task Order #8 with Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, Inc., in the amount of \$192,950.00, which included design, permitting assistance, bidding support, and construction phase services.

Following completion of the design, the City solicited bids for construction under Bid No. 26-03. A total of six (6) bids were received and evaluated by City staff and Hoyle, Tanner & Associates, Inc. One (1) bid was deemed non-responsive as it addressed irrigation services only. Of the remaining bids, Tiger Contracting, LLC submitted the lowest responsive and responsible bid. The engineer's opinion of probable construction cost was approximately twenty-one percent (21%) higher than Tiger's bid, with pricing differences attributed to local mobilization efficiencies and reduced overhead rather than scope deficiencies. Based on responsiveness, qualifications, bonding capacity, and overall compliance with the bid documents, Hoyle Tanner recommends award of the project to Tiger Contracting, LLC.

OTHER OPTION The City Commission may choose not to proceed with the award; however, delaying construction places the City at risk of not being prepared when the remaining burial spaces within Phase 1 are fully utilized.

FISCAL IMPACT Funding for this project is available within the approved Capital Improvement Program for cemetery expansion. The construction award amount of \$609,428.73 is within available budget allocations.

[End Agenda Memo]

6.IV. Design Services – Kiwanis Park

[Begin Agenda Memo]

SYNOPSIS: The City Commission will consider an agreement with Catalyst Design Group for Design Services for the Kiwanis Park Loop Trail and additional amenities.

RECOMMENDATION It is recommended that the City Commission take the following action(s):

1. Approve the Agreement for Design Services with Catalyst Design Group.
2. Authorize the City Manager to execute the contract on behalf of the City.

BACKGROUND The City applied for and received a grant through the Recreational Trail Program (RTP) for a 12' by 2,400 LF hard service loop trail in Kiwanis Park. This trail will connect the Rails to Trail trail and the Lake Wales Park trail through Kiwanis Park. Catalyst Design Group will be included in the Schematic Site Plan Phase, Public Involvement Phase, Construction Document Phase, and Permitting and Bidding Phase of this project. The agreement with Catalyst Design Group is for providing project design to include the following:

- Schematic Design/Routing of the 12' Trail
- Playground

- One (1) Prefabricated Restroom Building (Leesburg Concrete or equal: specification only; structural engineering by manufacturer and permitting by contractor)
- Three (3) Picnic Pavilions (specification only; structural engineering by manufacturer and permitting by contractor)
- o Site Furnishings Picnic tables
- o Drinking Fountains
- o Hose Bibs (locations coordinated with Civil)
- o Event Power Pedestals (locations coordinated with electrical)
- o Litter receptacles
- o Benches
- o Fencing
- Area Lighting (based upon Crystal Lake Park poles and fixtures: specification only; structural engineering by manufacturer and permitting by contractor)
- Landscape Tree Planting Design (to be installed by City staff)
- Bahia Sod (unirrigated; irrigated by contractor for establishment)
- Irrigation Design for Shade Trees and Turf Adjacent to the Trail and programming (180-degree irrigation to the sides of the trail). The design will be developed in such a manner that it can be expanded upon in the future to meet the City's desires. Catalyst Design Group currently has a continuing services agreement with the City for Landscape Architecture Services. City Staff recommends the approval of the Design Services Agreement with Catalyst Design Group.

OTHER OPTIONS The City Commission may choose not to approve this agreement.

FISCAL IMPACT The costs for these services are \$39,300.

[End Agenda Memo]

6.V. Event Permit Application: Bark On Park March 20 & September 4, 2026

[Begin Agenda Memo]

SYNOPSIS This is a request from the City of Lake Wales Recreation, to host two events downtown called Bark on Park on Fridays March 20 and September 4, 2026. This event will involve closure of Park Avenue from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

RECOMMENDATION Staff recommends

1. That the City Commission approve the permit request to sponsor Bark on Park events on Fridays March 20 and September 4th from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

2. That the City Commission approve the closure of Park Avenue between Scenic HWY and N Market St. 3. Approve the serving of alcohol within the designated boundary.

BACKGROUND The City of Lake Wales is proposing to host a Bark on Park event on two Fridays March 20th and September 4th from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m. The event will feature closing a portion of Park Avenue between Scenic HWY and N. Market Street from 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

OTHER OPTIONS Do not approve the Special Event Permit.

FISCAL IMPACT Unknown.

[End Agenda Memo]

7. OLD BUSINESS

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.I. ORDINANCE 2026-02, Amending Chapter 10, Fire Prevention, Lake Wales Code Of Ordinances – 1st Reading

[Begin Agenda Memo]

SYNOPSIS The amendment will update Section 1 of Chapter 10 to achieve compliance with State Statute.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION It is recommended that the City Commission approve Ordinance 2026-02 after first reading.

BACKGROUND Section 10-1 previously adopted a specific edition of a fire prevention code as the minimum fire safety standard for the City. Pursuant to Florida Statute 633.025 and Florida Administrative Code 69A-60.002, the Florida Fire Prevention Code, as adopted by the State of Florida, is the minimum fire prevention code deemed adopted by each municipality, county, and special district with fire safety responsibilities. To maintain consistency with state law, eliminate conflicts between local and state requirements, and ensure enforceability at the local level, Section 10- 1 must reflect adoption of the same fire prevention code currently adopted and enforced by the State of Florida. Aligning the City's code with the State's adopted code allows for local enforcement and avoids the need for non-compliance matters to be adjudicated solely through the county court system.

OPTIONS None. Approval of Ordinance 2026-02 will bring the City into compliance with Florida Statute.

[End Agenda Memo]

Jennifer Nanek, City Clerk, read **ORDINANCE 2026-02** by title only.

ORDINANCE 2026-02

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING CHAPTER 10, FIRE PREVENTION, LAKE WALES CODE OF ORDINANCES, TO ADOPT STANDARDS OF SEC. 10-1 MINIMUM FIRE SAFETY STANDARDS; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Commissioner Gillespie made a motion to approve ORDINANCE 2026-02 after 1st reading. Commissioner Williams seconded the motion.

by roll call vote:

Commissioner Gillespie "YES"

Commissioner Williams "YES"

Commissioner Thompson "YES"

Deputy Mayor Gibson "YES"

Mayor Hilligoss "YES"

Motion passed 5-0.

9. CITY CLERK

9.I. 2026 Municipal Election & Canvassing Board Information
[Begin Agenda Memo]

2026 MUNICIPAL ELECTION INFORMATION The regular Municipal Election of the City of Lake Wales is Tuesday, April 7, 2026. We will elect a Commissioner for Seat 3 and a Commissioner for Seat 5 for a term of three years beginning May 5, 2026. Members of the City Commission must be registered voters and residents of the City of Lake Wales for at least one year preceding their date of election.

The seat up for election is currently held by the following Commission member:

Seat 3 Keith Thompson

Seat 5 Robin Gibson

The Commissioners elected to Seats 3 and 5 are at-large, but candidates must live within their respective Seats.

The qualifying period for a person to qualify as a candidate is from 12:00 p.m., noon, Monday, February 16 through 12:00 p.m., noon, Friday, February 20. Candidate packets are available in the City Clerk's office beginning 9:00 a.m., Friday, February 6. This packet contains

qualifying papers, nominating petitions, and other necessary information and instructions to qualify as a candidate.

At the end of qualifying the City Clerk must prepare and submit to the Supervisor of Elections Office the approved ballot by 5:00 p.m. A special City Commission meeting has been scheduled for February 20 at 4:00 p.m. for that purpose. The scheduled special meeting date is also listed on the City Commission Calendar located under the City Manager portion of the agenda.

Due to a charter change approved last year we now have run-off elections. If a candidate does not win the majority of votes on April 7th, then there will be a run-off election on May 5th 2026.

The Municipal Election will be held at the Municipal Administration Building, 201 W. Central Ave., Lake Wales and at the Lake Ashton Clubhouse, 4141 Ashton Club Drive, Lake Wales on Tuesday, April 7, 2026, 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. The City Commission will reschedule its first meeting in April from 6:00 p.m., Tuesday, April 7 to 6:00 p.m., Wednesday, April 8. Contact the Supervisor of Elections at 863-534-5888 to request a Vote by Mail Ballot. Voter registration deadline is March 9, 2026.

CANVASSING BOARD INFORMATION While the Supervisor of Elections and the City Clerk may perform many of the tasks necessary to conduct the election, the City Commission serves as the Municipal Canvassing Board and has legal responsibilities related to the conduct of the Municipal Election. It is necessary to review the responsibilities well in advance to prevent calendar conflicts because a quorum must be present at all Canvassing Board meetings.

The following rules apply to all members of the Canvassing Board:

No member can serve if they are a candidate with opposition in the election being canvassed or is actively participating in the campaign or the candidacy of any candidate who has opposition in the election being canvassed. Actively participating means undertaking an intentional effort to demonstrate or generate public support for a candidate beyond merely making a campaign contribution. Refer to DE 8-10; 09-07.

If a lack of a quorum is created on the Canvassing Board due to this rule or any other unavoidable cause, the City Commission may appoint the city manager, city attorney, or resident/s to serve in the absence of that commission member/s to serve on the Canvassing Board to avoid a possible lack of quorum (Sec. 8-26, Lake Wales Code of Ordinances). The City Clerk will prepare an agenda item for the first meeting in March for the City Commission to appoint additional people to serve on the Canvassing Board.

Per Florida Statute, Canvassing Board members are required to attend the following meetings.

Pre-election Logic and Accuracy Testing of Tabulating Equipment (L&A) Tuesday, March 31, 2026; 3:30 p.m. Elections Operations Center, 70 Florida Citrus Blvd. Winter Haven, FL 33880 (behind the Auburndale Speedway). -At least one member of the Canvassing Board must

attend the L&A Testing.

Election Night Canvassing of Ballots Tuesday, April 7, 2026, time to be scheduled by SOE (5:00 p.m. or later) Elections Operations Center, 70 Florida Citrus Blvd. Winter Haven, FL 33880 -A quorum must be present and must remain until all ballots are tabulated.

Certification of Election City of Lake Wales Municipal Administration Building Thursday, April 9, 2026; 5:00 p.m. -A Quorum must be present.

Post-Election Manual Audit Tuesday April 14, 2026 with Time to be determined. Elections Operations Center, 70 Florida Citrus Blvd. Winter Haven, FL 33880 -A quorum must be present.

[End Agenda Memo]

Jennifer Nanek, City Clerk, reviewed this item.

Mayor Hillgoss, Commissioner Williams, Commissioner Gillespie and Deputy Mayor Gibson agreed to serve on the canvassing board.

10. CITY ATTORNEY

Albert Galloway, Jr., City Attorney, said that the land swap previously approved by the Commission for the laundromat will close tomorrow.

11. CITY MANAGER

City Manager James Slaton announced several upcoming events and project updates, headlined by two downtown groundbreakings scheduled for Friday at 10:00 a.m. near the Walesbilt building. While a specific start date for construction is pending a pre-construction meeting, Slaton emphasized that a business continuity plan is a priority. Additionally, the final phase of the Northwest sidewalk project will break ground on Tuesday the 10th at 9:00 a.m. at North 1st and Dorset. Upcoming community events include the "Moonlit Masquerade" on Friday evening and the Ridge League of Cities dinner on the 12th at 6:00 p.m. Finally, Mr. Slaton noted that horticulture staff are closely monitoring recent plantings due to unpredictable weather patterns.

11.I. Commission Meeting Calendar

12. CITY COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Thompson opened his remarks by thanking Mr. Richard, Mike, for sharing his positive experience with the Water Department and expressed satisfaction that the city's infrastructure and staff are serving residents effectively. He also highlighted a recent article regarding the city's acquisition of the Waverly water plant, expressing his enthusiasm for the project and its potential benefits for the community.

Additionally, Commissioner Thompson provided a detailed update from the Polk Regional Water Cooperative (PRWC) regarding a legal challenge against Hillsborough County over water permit capacity from the Alafia River. He explained that Polk County is contesting Hillsborough's claim to the entirety of the available capacity, arguing that since the river originates in both counties, Polk is entitled to a portion. The dispute is currently moving toward mediation. Commissioner Thompson emphasized that securing this alternative water supply is a critical strategy to keep local water bills low by reducing the cost of treatment compared to other sources.

Commissioner Williams commended the Water Department assisting an elderly couple in her congregation. After a scheduled meeting was interrupted by an unexpected illness, the Commissioner personally visited the department to ensure the situation was resolved. She praised the front desk staff for their reassurance and professionalism, noting that the residents are incredibly grateful for the swift resolution that kept their water service secure.

Commissioner Gillespie echoed the positive sentiments regarding the Water Department's service and transitioned into a discussion on upcoming election preparations. On a personal note, the Commissioner expressed her excitement for the upcoming Mardi Gras parade; despite celebrating her 50th wedding anniversary the same day and visiting her husband at a nearby facility, she plans to make an appearance to enjoy the floats and costumes.

Deputy Mayor Gibson announced that he will not be seeking re-election as he transitions from his large family home to a downtown apartment—a move that aligns with his 45-year history as a downtown advocate. While expressing full confidence in the current city administration, he shared deep concern regarding the continuity of the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) during the high-stakes, \$42 million renovation of the historic hotel. Citing the complexity of the project and the strict legal requirements of the Auditor General, Gibson proposed that the Commission exercise its right to appoint two citizen members to the CRA board. He volunteered his services for one of these positions, hoping to provide his decades of expertise to ensure the project's success and financial integrity during this critical three-year window.

13. MAYOR COMMENTS

Mayor Hilligoss inquired about the status of the vacant building ordinance, which Mr. Slaton confirmed would be presented to the Commission shortly. He shared high praise for the Water and Utility Department, recounting a neighbor's compliment regarding the energy and professionalism of the department staff. Finally, he noted the successful representation of the city at the recent Chamber of Commerce First Responders event and remarked on the strong positive momentum currently within the city government.

14. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

Mayor

ATTEST:

City Clerk