CITY OF MOUNT DORA, FLORIDA
CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION
MEETING MINUTES
March 18, 2025. 6:00 p.m.
Mount Dora City Hall
510 North Baker Street, Mount Dora, Florida 32757

CALL TO ORDER

Having been duly advertised as required by law, Mayor James L. Homich called the Regular Session of City Council to order at 6:00 p.m. in the Mount Dora City Hall Council Chamber.

MOMENT OF SILENCE & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

A moment of silence and Pledge of Allegiance were led by Mayor Homich.

ROLL CALL

Members Present	Also Present
James Homich, Mayor	Vince Sandersfeld, City Manager
John Cataldo, Vice-Mayor	Patrick Brackins, City Attorney
Cal Rolfson, District 2	Jeanann Hand, City Clerk
Dennis Dawson, District 3	
Marc Crail, District 4	
Nate Walker, District 5	
Doug Bryant, At Large	

PRESENTATIONS

1. Approval to Support the Nomination of Mabel Norris Reese to the Florida Women's Hall of Fame

Library Director Cathy Lunday explained the action being requested of Council. Ms. Reese's granddaughter and great-granddaughter were present.

MOTION BY COUNCILMEMBER ROLFSON TO APPROVE COUNCIL'S SUPPORT FOR MABEL NORRIS REESE'S NOMINATION TO THE FLORIDA WOMEN'S HALL OF FAME; COUNCILMEMBER DAWSON SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION PASSED WITH A UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

2. Proclamation Recognizing Earth Day 2025

Mayor Homich announced this proclamation will be moved to April 1st.

3. Proclamation Recognizing the Mount Dora Yacht Club 72nd Annual Sailing Regatta

Mayor Homich read the proclamation into the record.

Edie Robinson was present to represent the Regatta and presented Mayor Homich with the event's official poster and a shirt commemorating the event.

4. National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Stormwater Program

Public Works Director George Marek presented information about the City's Stormwater Program National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) Compliance.

Mr. Marek provided information on the NPDES, describing its purpose. He spoke about the requirements that should be met by the City, and the City's actions to fulfill those requirements.

Mr. Marek described the ways certain City Public Works projects are related to stormwater. He provided information on draining/flooding issues in the Northeast and other areas throughout the City. He presented Council with a recommended action plan.

Mr. Marek's presentation is attached to the minutes as Exhibit A.

Mr. Marek announced the workshop taking place the following night. He thanked the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) for the renewal process for the permit.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mayor Homich opened public comment.

Joe Lewis, 148 Charles Avenue, spoke about the strategic plan update. He asked for an update from Council about where the process is at this time. Mayor Homich intends an April workshop for budgeting.

Mr. Sandersfeld provided updated information about the five initiatives and the goals beneath them. He provided information on the actions staff has taken to move forward with the updating Strategic Plan.

Mayor Homich closed public comment.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION BY COUNCILMEMBER ROLFSON TO APPROVE THE AGENDA INCLUDING THE CONSENT AGENDA AND EXCLUDING THE EARTH DAY PROCLAMATION; VICE-MAYOR CATALDO SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION PASSED WITH A UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. Approval of City of Mount Dora Purchasing Policy Waiver for the Southloch Condos Community Development Electric Utility Infrastructure.

2. Approval of the Purchase of Replacement Host Servers

3. Approval of Mediated Settlement Agreement

4. Request Approval of Meeting Minutes: January 7, 2025 City Council Regular Session

ACTION ITEMS

1. Approval of Task Authorizations with Faden Builders, Inc. for the 5th Avenue & Donnelly Street

Information Kiosk

Economic Development and Public Information Director Misty Sommer provided information on the hardware and software elements of the kiosk. The design had been approved by the Historic Preservation Board. The project had been approved by the CRA Advisory Committee. The broadened scope for the project brought in a vendor saving over several hundred thousand dollars.

Faden Builders will perform the initial data entry, but City staff will be responsible for this task after setup. Merchants and historic sites will be included in the kiosk location maps, as will parking locations. Everything within the CRA will be featured. There will be two 55-inch screens.

Council discussed the benefits and drawbacks of various location choices for the electronic screens. Electronic screens facing Donnelly Street may be distracting and confuse the public regarding the City's sign code as it applies to electronic signage. Placing the electronic screens at points not immediately visible to passersby may provide less opportunity for the awareness of their existence. The side of the kiosk without electronic screens will contain traditionally printed material. Council was glad to see this project moved forward after many years of planning. The use of a touch-screen and of an integrated app were discussed.

Council and staff discussed the maintenance fees, which will decrease slightly after the first year. Public use will provide opportunity feedback to adjust the initial implementation.

Council and staff discussed allowances for certain electronic signs throughout the City. They discussed methods to indicate electronic screens exist on the kiosk when not immediately visible.

Council and staff further discussed the pros and cons of electronic screens facing Donnelly Street.

MOTION BY COUNCILMEMBER ROLFSON TO DEFER APPROVAL OF THE KIOSK TASK AUTHORIZATION WITH FADEN FOR THE INFORMATION KIOSK UNTIL THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING TO GIVE THE CITY MANAGER AND THE CITY ATTORNEY THE TIME TO MAKE ANY CHANGES, IF NECESSARY; VICE-MAYOR CATALDO SECONDED THE MOTION.

Mayor Homich opened public comment.

Rachel O' Ryan, President of Mount Dora Chamber of Commerce, 341 Alexander Street, spoke about downtown businesses that wanted electronic signs but were told they were not allowed.

Rose Poth, Mount Dora, stated she is against electronic screens.

Mayor Homich closed public comment.

MOTION PASSED WITH A UNANIMOUS VOICE VOTE.

<u>PUBLIC HEARINGS - RESOLUTIONS/ORDINANCES</u>

1. Request approval Final Reading of **Ordinance No. 2024-20** Northeast CRA Plan Update and Boundary Modification

Mr. Brackins read Ordinance No. 2024-20 by title only.

ORDINANCE NO. 2024-20

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MOUNT DORA, FLORIDA, RELATED TO THE NORTHEAST COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY; PROVIDING FOR LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT; PROVIDING FOR THE MODIFICATION OF THE BOUNDARY OF THE AGENCY AND ADOPT AN AMENDED REDEVELOPMENT PLAN ENTITLED THE NORTHEAST COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT PLAN OF 2024; PROVIDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS; PROVIDING A SAVINGS PROVISION; PROVIDING FOR NON-CODIFICATION AND SCRIVENER'S ERRORS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

CRA Manager Adam Sumner spoke about the process leading up to this final reading, and about the benefits of the boundary modification for the City and the County.

Mr. Sumner recommended adoption of this ordinance and approval of the interlocal that will be presented to Council on April 1st.

Chris Brown of Redevelopment Management Associates (RMA) spoke about the Finding of Necessity study being conclusive that there is slum and blight in the area to be added, according to standards set forth in Fla Stat. 163.340. RMA's study found that the expansion area meets two of the three conditions necessary to be considered a slum. The statutory minimum is one of the three. The two slum conditions found in the area are inadequate open space and the existence of conditions that threaten the life of persons or property. He spoke about the statutory requirements for defining an area as blighted, and told those present that the area in question satisfies six of the conditions for this determination. The statutory minimum is two of the 15 criteria. The blight conditions found in the expansion area are inadequate street layout, parking facilities, roadways, bridges, or public transportation facilities; falling property value; inadequate size, accessibility or usefulness of lots; inadequate and outdated building patterns; deterioration; and unsanitary or unsafe conditions. Mr. Brown provided a photo of an unsafe structure. The photo is attached to the minutes as Exhibit B. Mr. Brown stated slum and blight conditions were met without a doubt.

Mr. Brackins delivered remarks, and reminded those present that is a legislative hearing. He reviewed the steps leading to this item, referring to the City's adoption of Resolution 2024-09, which adopted the findings of the RMA's Finding of Necessity Study that found the existence of slum and blight conditions in the Study Area pursuant to Fla. Stat. 163.340(7) and (8). Mr. Brackins entered executed Resolution 2024-09 and its exhibits into the record. Those documents are attached to the minutes as Exhibit C.

Mr. Brackins provided to Council copies of a letter from the County hand-delivered on the date of this meeting (March 18, 2025) voicing disagreement with RMA's findings of slum and blight. An October 8, 2024 letter from the County disagreeing with the RMA study conclusion was delivered to the City prior to the first reading of Ordinance No. 2024-20. The October 8, 2024 letter was forwarded to RMA. Both letters from the County were entered into the record and are attached to the minutes as Exhibit D.

RMA's December 13, 2024 letter to the City responding to the County's October 8th letter was entered into the record and attached to the minutes as Exhibit E.

If the ordinance is adopted tonight, it would become effective upon passage.

Mr. Brackins commented on the cooperation between the County and the City throughout this process since the first reading. The City has an agreement that seems as though it will work well for both parties.

Mr. Brackins reminded those present that this is a legislative hearing, and spoke about the standard for legislative hearings. He explained that the City's decision will be upheld so long as it is "fairly debatable."

If the City adopts the ordinance tonight, it would be effective upon passage, and the next step would be to bring an interlocal agreement about the use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) funds. Adoption tonight would also approve the Northeast CRA Plan modification.

Lake County Attorney Melanie Marsh stated that at the request of the Lake County Board of County Commissioners, she was present to preserve County's right to put their objections on the record in the event an interlocal is not agreed upon and the County chooses to appeal this decision or take other legal action. She spoke about the City and County's negotiations regarding TIF revenue splits. Ms. Marsh mentioned the proposition for the expansion was brought to the City by a developer, and suggested revenue from the expansion would not be used by the City to correct the slum and blight conditions. The County disagreed with the City's and RMA's decisions regarding slum and blight in the expansion area. She recounted the history of the County and City's experiences with this property. She said that the County's approval of site plans for the development in the area indicate that site has been cleared of slum or blight conditions. She stated that declaring the area as a slum and blighted would discourage developers. She suggested the roundabout would solve concerns about inadequate road networks. She mentioned the state's history of expanding CRA boundaries for financial benefit, suggesting this decision could divert public funds that could be better used elsewhere. She requested that the City not approve the expansion.

Council and staff discussed the matter. Mayor Homich stated the City considered this expansion 20 years ago. He spoke about trust in the County. Mr. Sumner mentioned the change in the property's ownership and the ensuing change of use of the land being the impetus for the City's actions at this time.

Mayor Homich opened public comment. No one spoke. Mayor Homich closed public comment.

Council and staff discussed intergovernmental resolution dispute actions and proposed percentages of Municipal Service Taxing Unit (MSTU) and TIF distribution between the City and the County. They spoke about working toward a satisfactory partnership with the County in this endeavor.

MOTION BY COUNCILMEMBER ROLFSON TO APPROVE THE FINAL READING AND ADOPTION OF ORDINANCE NO. 2024-20 NORTHEAST CRA PLAN UPDATE AND BOUNDARY MODIFICATION; COUNCILMEMBER WALKER SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION PASSED WITH A 7-0 ROLL CALL VOTE.

YES ***Rolfson***
Walker
Dawson
Cataldo
Homich
Bryant

Crail

NO None

2. Request approval of First Reading of **Ordinance No. 2025-06** Amending the Mount Dora Code of Ordinances General Provisions to add the Definition of "In Absentia"

Mr. Brackins read Ordinance No. 2025-06 by title only.

ORDINANCE NO. 2025-06

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF MOUNT DORA, FLORIDA AMENDING CHAPTER 1, GENERAL PROVISIONS, SECTION 1-2, DEFINITIONS AND RULES OF CONSTRUCTION, OF THE MOUNT DORA CODE OF ORDINANCES, TO PROVIDE A DEFINITION OF THE TERM "IN ABSENTIA"; PROVIDING FOR LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT; PROVIDING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION AND SCRIVENER'S ERRORS; PROVIDING A SAVINGS CLAUSE; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mr. Sandersfeld spoke about what led up to the presentation. As directed by the City Council, the matter of "in absentia" has been proposed as a definition in the General Provisions Chapter of the Mount Dora Code of Ordinances. "In absentia," a legal term, is Latin for "in the absence" or "while absent." The proposed ordinance provides a clear definition for the allowance of either City Council or an appointed board members attendance not be physically present, and appear via virtual communication technology.

Mr. Brackins told those present the ordinance was written to give meaning to language of "in absentia," attempting to account for all possibilities.

The ordinance states that "in absentia" would mean not physically present, not able to be counted for a quorum, not able to participate in the meeting and counted as absent from the public meeting. It would not refer to a member not physically present and not counted for a quorum, but present through virtual communications technology and able to participate as if they were physically present and counted as in attendance at the meeting.

Council and staff discussed various scenarios in which a clear definition and understanding of "in absentia" would be necessary. Council has the authority to decide whether a circumstance may be considered extraordinary and/or exceptional.

Mayor Homich opened public comment. No one spoke. Mayor Homich closed public comment.

MOTION BY COUNCILMEMBER WALKER TO APPROVE THE FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE 2025-06, AMENDING THE MOUNT DORA CODE OF ORDINANCES GENERAL PROVISIONS TO ADD THE DEFINITION OF "IN ABSENTIA;" VICE-MAYOR CATALDO SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION PASSED WITH A 7-0 ROLL CALL VOTE.

YES Walker
Cataldo
Homich
Bryant

Dawson
Crail
Rolfson
NO None

3. Request Adoption of **Resolution No. 2025-10**, pertaining to the Federal Grant Application for the Wekiva Trail Extension

Mr. Brackins read Resolution No. 2025-10 by title only.

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-10

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF MOUNT DORA, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO THE 2025 FEDERAL GRANT FOR THE WEKIVA TRAIL EXTENSION PROJECT (SEGMENT 1 AND SEGMENT 5); PROVIDING FOR LEGISLATIVE FINDINGS AND INTENT; PROVIDING FOR COMMITMENT TO SHARE IN FEES AND EXPENSES; PROVIDING FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIONS; PROVIDING A SAVINGS CLAUSE; PROVIDING FOR SCRIVENER'S ERRORS; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Director of Economic Development and Public Information Misty Sommer presented information to Council about the item. At the January 7th meeting, Council approved Resolution No. 2025-01, endorsing Lake County and partnering with the City of Tavares to submit a $25M RAISE grant application for the Wekiva Trail Extension Segments 1 and 5. The Department of Transportation has since rebranded the program as the Better Utilizing Investments to Leverage Development (BUILD) grant. Proposed Resolution No. 2025-10 reflects that the County and Cities are pursuing funding through the BUILD grant, formerly known as the RAISE and TIGER grants.

Later that week, the City would be hosting state and federal delegates to lobby for the grant.

Mayor Homich opened public comment. No one spoke. Mayor Homich closed public comment.

Council and staff discussed the splitting of funds for the grant. The County paid the consultant assisting with the grant. The City will reimburse the County. No additional funds will be spent in relation to the rebranding.

MOTION BY COUNCILMEMBER CRAIL TO ADOPT RESOLUTION NO. 2025-10, PERTAINING TO THE FEDERAL GRANT APPLICATION FOR THE WEKIVA TRAIL EXTENSION; VICE-MAYOR CATALDO SECONDED THE MOTION. MOTION PASSED WITH A 7-0 ROLL CALL VOTE.

YES Walker
Cataldo
Homich
Bryant
Dawson
Crail
Rolfson
NO None

PRIORITY PROJECT UPDATES

1. Odor Issues

Mr. Sandersfeld spoke about the most recent activities related to this topic. At Council's direction, Halff Engineering was hired to conduct the odor study using their subcontractor. Staff will provide more information on the timeline for this process as it becomes available. An interlocal agreement for cost-sharing between the City and the County for the odor study will be on the April1st consent agenda for Council's approval.

2. Parking Downtown Improvements

Mr. Sumner provided updates on the parking lot restriping and bollards for the Main Street Leasing agreement. Amendments to the Land Development Code are upcoming to allow for the gravel lot. A procurement team sought a paid parking vendor for a piggyback, but none were found that meet the CRA requirement. The schedule for the wall replacement at the United Methodist Church (UMC) parking lot delayed due to related work that needs to take place at the neighboring structure's air conditioning unit.

Staff is working with CPH on a cost analysis study for converting Alexander Street to one-way. CPH has scans of the City's streetscape from a prior project.

Lights are being added to the path along Fifth Avenue between Baker and the UMC parking lot.

Staff is working on improving wayfinding and lot signage, especially as it relates to parking.

Mayor Homich opened public comment.

Rachel O' Ryan, 341 Alexander, requested the City communicate well with the downtown merchants when considering paid parking, parking time limits, and other parking solutions.

Mayor Homich closed public comment.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. FY 25-26 Budget Calendar Discussion

Budget Officer Matthew Dodson presented proposed Budget Workshop dates to Council. Mr. Sandersfeld solicited feedback. The mid-year budget amendment resolution will be presented in April. Staff will be putting together department operational budgets.

The City Clerk will send calendar invitations for the workshops.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Sandersfeld spoke about the City's lobbyists and upcoming legislative decisions.

Mr. Sandersfeld spoke about recent storm damage to the Fourth Avenue docks. Repair must be considered during budget season.

Police Chief Michael Gibson spoke about the City's recent victory at a Law Enforcement Chili Cookoff Mr. Sandersfeld was presented with a plaque for his winning contribution.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

No report.

COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

Councilmember Rolfson spoke about his upcoming attendance at the Florida League of Cities (FLC) Legislative Action Days. He mentioned the reassuring presence of law enforcement and public safety offices at recent festivals

Mayor James Homich spoke about County decisions related to development, and conflicts with his vision for Mount Dora.

Councilmember Dawson spoke about the City's meetings with the County on these matters over the past several years before Mayor Homich was in office.

Councilmember Walker noted the City has no say in a recent decision regarding a development in the former Long & Scott Farms location.

Mayor Homich announced he received a letter from members of the community commenting positively about the Donnelly temporary sidewalk.

Councilmember Crail spoke about the effectiveness of cooperation. He commented favorably on the recent arts and craft show.

Councilmember Dennis Dawson mentioned his upcoming attendance at Legislative Action Days.

Councilmember Bryant spoke about upcoming legislative decisions and the importance of succinct messaging when contacting those in office. He complimented the directional signage during the recent festival.

Vice-mayor Cataldo commented favorably on the festival. He spoke about not being sedentary in the City's approach to economic development.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business for discussion, the meeting adjourned at approximately 8:41 p.m.

JAMES HOMICH, MAYOR
City of Mount Dora

JEANANN HAND, CITY CLERK