

FRUITLAND PARK CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP
MEETING MINUTES
August 5, 2025

A workshop meeting of the Fruitland Park City Commission was held at 506 W. Berckman Street, Fruitland Park, Florida 34731 on Monday, August 5, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

Members Present: Mayor Chris Cheshire, Vice Mayor Patrick DeGrave, Commissioner Joseph Cosenza, III and Commissioner Michael Raysin

Members Absent: Commissioners Martina Williams.

Also Present: City Manager Karen Manila, Attorney Anita Geraci-Carver, Finance Director Gary Bachmann; Interim Police Chief Henry Rains; Public Works Director Robb Dicus; Parks and Recreation Director Michelle Yoder; Children's Librarian Barbara Fields, Interim Community Development Director Michael "Mike" Rankin, LPG Urban Regional Planners Inc. (consultant retained by the city); Administrative Supervisor Sharon Williams, Permit Technician Brenda Sigala, Community Development Department; and City Clerk Gwen Johns.

1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Cheshire called the meeting to order, and Interim Police Chief Rains led in the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag.

2. ROLL CALL

Mayor Cheshire requested that Ms. Johns call the roll and a quorum was present.

3. FY 2025-26 PROPOSED BUDGET

Ms. Manila advised the commission that the bottom line had changed slightly due to where the additions were reflected. The October 1, 2025 salary adjustment for police sworn personnel dropped to 118 from 171. She noted the market pay adjustments increased slightly due to the change.

Mr. Bachmann reviewed the proposed FY 2025-26 budget with the city commission as follows:

Mr. Bachmann summarized the memorandum and letters, highlighting differences in the budget. He stated that under personnel expenses, the FRS increased the City's requirement for match. Each employee contributes 3% and the city matches regular employees at 14.03%, an increase from 13.63%. The law enforcement officers increased to 35.19%, an increase from 32.079%. The City Manager contribution decreased from 34.52% to 33.42%.

All health insurance benefits paid by the city, on behalf of employees, are projected to increase approximately 6%. This includes the life insurance premiums and dental premiums which are expected to experience a 5% increase.

Mr. Bachman discussed revenue items, stating that ad valorem tax makes up approximately 30-33% of the revenue budget. The City's value of assets has increased to \$1.172 billion, an increase from 1.10 billion over last year, approximately 6% increase. The City has experienced a 4% increase in solid waste and fire assessment for The Villages has a substantial increase in the upcoming fiscal year.

Ms. Manila prepared a summary for each department, setting forth the variances over or under the previous year, and explanations for the variances.

John Klein, Human Resources Director, presented details related to considerations for employee benefits and compensation packages. He stated that the goal was employee retention. He reviewed key elements of a good employee retention plan. He discussed a recent employee survey which was conducted and noted there had been an 80% positive return on the survey questions.

Mr. Klein explained the definitions of COLA (Cost of Living Adjustment) and MERIT salary increases and how those would impact the budget in the coming fiscal year. He stated that a 3% COLA is being proposed for employees. In addition, there would be opportunity for employees to earn a MERIT increase of up to 2%, based on performance. He noted that the law enforcement department is different from general employees since they are part of a step program. Mr. Klein explained the step program for law enforcement personnel.

Mr. Klein stated that the pay ranges for employees have been redesigned and updated. He stated that a proposal had been prepared to narrow the ranges to a 40% width, providing for consistency among the salary ranges. He stated that public works and parks maintenance would be based on an open design; anniversary-based salary increases rather than a step design program.

Mr. Klein presented details of the proposed step program for law enforcement personnel. He stated that officers are budgeted for a 5% step increase on October 1, 2025. He talked about market increases, noting that the market isn't as cyclic as anniversary date increases. He also stated that staff had prepared two recommendations with regard to market increases, one is to adjust salaries according to the new pay ranges and the other is to allocate contingency funds for the City Manager to use during the fiscal year as market conditions change.

Mr. Klein referred to law enforcement officer salaries, in comparison to other jurisdictions, stating that the City of Fruitland Park is significantly lower than other local law enforcement agencies. Therefore, staff has proposed a movement of the salary ranges to increase the starting wage to \$55,500 with a second salary increase in April 2026, raising the starting wage to \$58,000. Last year, the starting salary was \$47,000 and it was adjusted up to \$52,000.

Vice Mayor DeGrave expressed concern that on the proposed path, eventually the City would not be able to afford to keep up with the steadily increasing starting wage. Mr. Klein

acknowledged Vice Mayor DeGrave's concern and noted that staff had been looking at everything an employee considers when making a decision on where they want to be employed. He noted some measures that were being taken to ensure a healthy and positive work environment with good benefits in addition to salary. He said that salaries are not the only retention factor considered by potential employees.

Interim Police Chief Rains discussed the compensation packages for police officers, and noted that public safety is routinely one of the highest expenses for local government. He said that the City had been successful in retaining law enforcement personnel.

Mr. Klein discussed the health insurance plans and the expense associated with them. He noted that the City is doing a good job with health benefits, only looking at a 5.26% increase. He shared the current rates and proposed rates. He said that because of the size of the benefits plan, wellness would be a focal point in the future.

Mr. Klein stated that Principal had proposed a renewal rate with a 6.8% increase. Staff has been considering a recommendation to move to Mutual of Omaha. They have offered a differential rate with no increase. He explained the differences. He said the vision plan is 100% paid by employees and staff is also considering a transition to Mutual of Omaha with no price increase to employees. With regard to life insurance, Mutual of Omaha is being considered since bundling the services would decrease overall costs to the City.

Mr. Klein discussed the sick leave policy and a proposal to provide short-term disability as an employee benefit. He noted that revisions were being made to the personnel policy, and that document would be presented to the City Commission for consideration sometime in the future.

General Fund Revenues

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked if FDOT had increased for maintenance of the medians. Ms. Manila said yes.

Legislative

No questions or comments.

Executive

Noted the elimination of the Deputy City Clerk position.

Finance

Ms. Manila noted that contingency had been moved from the Finance Budget. She also noted addition of a part-time accountant. Mr. Bachmann explained what that position would be responsible for doing.

Other General Government

Ms. Manila stated that an additional request would be to upgrade a part-time custodian to full-time. She also noted that a part-time IT analysis may be added to assist with desktop phones, software installations, redesign of a new city website, as well as other tasks as deemed necessary. She noted that hiring this part-time position would offset the expense of MMD Computers.

Law Enforcement

Ms. Manila discussed the normal step adjustments that are already in the budget. She said the additional range movement of the steps on October 1 and April 1 are not in the budget. She noted there is also a request for additional budget for utilities in the new Public Safety Building. She said Lake County Fire would be asked to pay a pro rata share of the utilities, as is set forth in the Interlocal Agreement. Ms. Manila also noted that a new school crossing guard position as being requested.

Ms. Manila stated that \$19,800 is included in the budget for a consultant to assist with accreditation of the police department. Vice Mayor DeGrave wondered how long it would take to obtain the accreditation. He also noted that this would be a multi-year investment with ongoing expenses once the accreditation is received. Interim Police Chief Rains said this accreditation makes the department eligible for more grant funding. It also gives the agency the ability to advertise that policies and practices are among the best in the nation.

Fire

There were no questions or comments.

Building & Zoning

Mayor Cheshire noted that the fees collected support the Building and Zoning Department. Ms. Manila noted that there was a request for a new Permit Technician, which would be a net neutral position.

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked about the funding of an Community Development Director for half of the year. Ms. Manila said the Interim Director is running a business in addition to working for the City, but it would be helpful to have an in-house director. She said the intention is to have a full-time Community Development Director.

Solid Waste

There were no questions or comments.

Stormwater

There were no questions or comments.

Roads and Streets

Ms. Manila noted that at the end of each year, if there are revenues over expenditures those funds are allocated to the sinking fund for future road projects. She said there was also a request to add two Roads and Streets Worker I positions. Mr. Dicus, Public Works Director, further explained the need for two additional positions.

Library

There were no questions or comments.

Swimming Pool

Ms. Manila noted two projects, painting and resurfacing the pool deck and replacing the two top rows of tile in the pool.

Recreation

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked about the splash pad. Ms. Yoder said staff has a price and plans to move forward pending a site visit from the vendor. She said CRA funding has been set aside and there will be a contractor for the splash pad and a separate contractor for the restrooms and pavilion. Ms. Geraci-Carver, Attorney, stated that she would work with staff to ensure the project follows required procurement procedures.

Ms. Manila said there were two requests in this budget, one is for the addition of a part-time events coordinator and adding two-and-a-half day camp workers, seasonal positions. She noted the cost of the seasonal positions would be offset by the revenues collected.

General Fund Transfers

There were no questions or comments.

Redevelopment Revenues

Ms. Manila discussed the redevelopment expenditures. She said there are several proposals for enhancing the aesthetics around City Hall. She said improvement would include landscaping and resurfacing parking lots. She also wants to get the oxidation repaired on the roof of City Hall, but that will have to be placed in a different budget.

She provided details of the budget inclusions for which CRA funds will be used in the upcoming fiscal year.

Vice Mayor DeGrave mentioned the 466A project. He asked what CRA would pay for out of that project and Ms. Manila said landscaping, utility lines and other beautification projects, ideally.

Mr. Bachmann noted that every year the City has budgeted \$300,000 for the CR466A project. He said Lake County stopped the project during COVID, and at this time, the project will be more expensive but with the budgeted funds, the entire CR466A project should get completed. Vice Mayor DeGrave felt that the extensions should be a utility expense rather than CRA.

Ms. Manila stated that staff could look at moving some of the expenses over to Capital Projects.

Capital Project Revenues

Ms. Manila said the revenue projection for next year is lower than the current year. Mr. Bachmann said it was population based, as well as based on the actuals over the last couple of years. He noted there had been a downward trend and he has not been able to get an answer as to why.

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked about the \$426,000 for road resurfacing. Mr. Dicus talked about the areas that would be addressed, and he explained the process of micro surfacing, which may be used for some portions of the resurfacing project.

Capital Expenditure Projects

There was no discussion.

Capital Transfers

There was no discussion.

Utility Revenues

There was no discussion.

Water

Ms. Manila stated that the budget includes an upgrade to meters to allow for wireless meter reading. She stated that as an addition to the budget, a position is being budgeted for a Water Service Worker I, their main focus going into their position would be to move forward with upgrading the meters. A route would be done each year over a three-year period. Mr. Dicus further explained what changing the meter reading process would entail.

Sewer

Ms. Manila noted that there is a request in the budget to upgrade a Service Worker II to a Lift Station Technician. Mr. Dicus explained why this position upgrade was being requested. He hopes to find someone who has experience and can assist in the cross training

of other employees. He also mentioned that the upgrade of position would be very helpful in retaining someone who has experience.

Ms. Manila stated that the entire budget had been reviewed. She referenced the general fund, where she explained the proposed budget additions. She asked the City Commissioners for direction with regard to the budget additions.

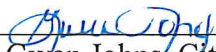
Proposed Budget Additions:

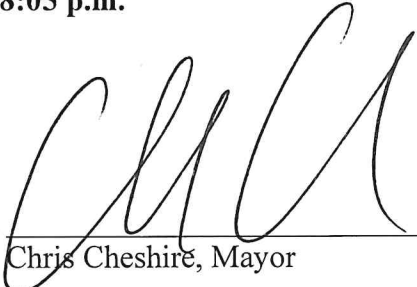
Utility costs for new Public Safety building (10 months) – \$78,560	Supported
Permit Technician I (F/T) Expense offset by Development Revenue - \$43,866	Supported
Custodian (F/T) (upgrade from P/T) - \$22,778	Supported
Roads & Streets Worker I (2) (F/T) - \$98,098	Supported
Accountant (P/T) - \$37,239	Supported
IT Analyst (P/T) - \$58,704	Supported
School Crossing Guard (P/T) - \$8565	Supported
Events Coordinator (P/T) - \$46,620 w/ benefits	Supported – NO BENEFITS
Day Camp Workers (2.5) (Seasonal) Expense offset by Revenue- \$12,918	Supported
Short-Term Disability - \$53,573	Supported
Market Pay Adjustments - \$118,285	Supported
10/1 Police Sworn Step Adjustment - \$83,025	Requested additional information
4/1 Police Sworn Step Adjustment - \$50,000	Requested additional information
Market Salary Adjustment Contingency - \$50,000	Supported

Mayor Cheshire asked that staff make sure there is enough money budgeted to accommodate the step program for law enforcement. Ms. Geraci-Carver noted that there would be another opportunity to discuss the budget prior to the first budget public hearing on September 11, 2025. Ms. Manila also offered one on one meetings with the commissioners.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at approximately 8:05 p.m.

Signed 
Gwen Johns, City Clerk

Signed 
Chris Cheshire, Mayor