**FRUITLAND PARK CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP**
**MEETING MINUTES**
**August 4, 2026**

A budget workshop meeting of the Fruitland Park City Commission was held at 506 W. Berckman Street, Fruitland Park, Florida 34731 on Monday, August 4, 2026, at 6:04 p.m.

**Members Present**: Mayor Chris Cheshire, Vice Mayor Patrick DeGrave, Commissioner Albert Goldberg, Commissioner Martina Williams, and Commissioner Michael Raysin

**Also Present**: City Manager Karen Manila, Attorney Anita Geraci-Carver, Finance Director Kim Gehrke; Police Chief Henry Rains; Public Works Director Robb Dicus; Community Services Director Barbara Fields, Administrative Supervisor Sharon Williams, Permit Technician Kelli Fielder, Community Development Department; and City Clerk Gwen Johns.

Attendance: 20

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
Mayor Cheshire called the meeting to order, and 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 2026-27 PROPOSED BUDGET**

Karen Manila provided an overview of revenues and expenses for all four funds.

**General Fund Revenues**

Ms. Manila stated ad valorem taxes are budgeted at $4.6 million, an increase in collections of 6.2%. Of that, $662,000 would be transferred to the Community Redevelopment Agency. This year, there was a $73.5 million increase in property assessed values but $47 million, or 65% of that was new properties being added to the tax rolls.

Lake County Fire will be reimbursing the city for utility costs associated with their occupancy of the new Public Safety Facility.

Fire assessment with The Villages is zero, due to Lake County taking over administration of the fire assessment.

Solid Waste Disposal looks like it went up significantly. However, it is not a considerable increase but rather a rightsizing of the revenue, not a significant increase since the current budget understated the total.

Under law enforcement funds, there is a $100k grant reflected, it will be from the Department of Transportation and will allow $80,000 for overtime and $20,000 for equipment. The expenses are reflected in the Police Dept budget.

Under revenues there are a number of transfers which accounts for the reserve that has been allocated for road work in the Villages. Transfer in storm water balance to pay for storm drainage projects. Building permit fee transfers are reflected in the budget every year. There is also some funding allocated for proposed upgrades at the cemetery.

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked what the balance would be after the $750,000 is transferred and Ms. Manila said around $750,000-$800,000 ending balance for future paving.

**Legislative**

Ms. Manila said P&Z stipends were removed from the legislative budget. No other questions or comments.

Commissioner Williams asked how the Magistrate would be funded now that it has replaced the P&Z Board. Ms. Manila said that funding would come from development fees and is budgeted within the Building & Zoning Department.

**Executive**

Ms. Manila reviewed changes to the Executive budget, including a one-week reduction in SML, Inc. consulting services. There were also reductions in professional books and supplies. Ms. Manila explained the reduction in salaries and benefits reflects a change in how the City Manager's salary is allocated among departments rather than an actual cost reduction.

**Finance**

Ms. Manila reviewed the budget changes, noting that the reduction is primarily due to the elimination of a contingency that is not planned for the upcoming fiscal year. Personnel costs include a 3% cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) and a 1% market increase for all departments. She also noted a reduction in personnel costs because the Deputy Finance Director position was budgeted at an entry-level salary, and the City will likely hire an accountant instead of a Deputy Finance Director.

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked whether the budget included a specific contingency. Ms. Manila stated that there is no specific contingency in the General Fund.

Vice Mayor DeGrave noted that previous budgets included a contingency that provided the City Manager with flexibility to address unforeseen expenses. Ms. Manila explained that projected revenues were not sufficient to fund a contingency. She noted that if the City Commission made reductions in the budget, that money would be allocated for contingency.

**Legal**

Ms. Manila noted a slight increase for the labor attorney.

**Other General Government**

Ms. Manila stated that the IT Analyst position has been eliminated from this budget. She noted that MMD is responsive and services the city well. Commissioner Williams asked about the MMD Scope of Service. Ms. Manila responded that they do pretty much anything, noting they manage email, new equipment, network security, CJIS for the Police Department and other tasks, as necessary.

There are some facility repairs and maintenance included in the budget. City Hall needs an upgraded door access system.

Ms. Manila noted that college tuition reimbursement has been increased for the upcoming fiscal year.

Ms. Manila noted a slight increase in costs associated with insurance.

**Law Enforcement**

Ms. Manila stated that much of the increase is due to salary and benefits.

Police Chief Henry Rains explained the increase in costs for the building. Mayor Cheshire made sure a punch list would be addressed before March (warranty).

Chief Rains explained the fuel increase which is a direct result of the economic climate.

Chief Rains noted the step program remains in place, allowing for 5% pay increases across the board. There is a vacant position that was a Sargeant, and it is being left in the budget and will be a road patrol officer when and if it is filled.

Chief Rains said the increase in veterinary services is due to the addition of a 3$^{rd}$ K9.

Chief Rains stated that funds have been budgeted for evidence destruction in the amount of $800, and logistically the Police Department may be able to do a single purge. Pad Tracks is a new evidence management software that will allow the Police Department to track the shipment of evidence and maintain an inventory of all evidence.

There are three copiers and printers in the new building.

Chief Rains mentioned the FLOCK camera expense of $15,000 annually.

Chief Rains explained that a Spillman hosting invoice was received that was 3 years behind. Fruitland Park owes Lake County two more payments at this time.

Star Chase is the Police Department's GPS system and is a contractual service.

Lake County does owe the city money for utility expenses. Chief Rains is hopeful that revenue will be generated by the county paying their share of expenses, as well as back pay.

Equipment purchases include several additions. The Police Department currently operates a drone unit, and the drone cameras must be contracted through Axon, consistent with the Department's body-worn and in-car camera systems. The budget also includes a laptop. The current Axon contract covers body-worn and in-car cameras for 24 officers; if staffing increases, additional funding will be included in the budget.

Officer Meyer demonstrated equipment needed for situations requiring entry.

The vendor was changed from Coban to All World.

Mayor Cheshire asked about recent Summit service outages, noting that when service is interrupted, the City loses phone service and access to hosted software programs. He stated that redundant service for City Hall and the Police Department has been discussed. Vice Mayor DeGrave emphasized that redundancy should be a priority.

**Fire**

The City does not have its own Fire Department.

**Building & Zoning**

Ms. Manila noted a substantial decrease in expenses related to development activity and the use of consultants. She explained that development activity is expected to slow because there are fewer upcoming projects.

Vice Mayor DeGrave noted that if development activity increases, the Building & Zoning Department is supported by development-related revenues, with increased activity generating both additional revenues and corresponding expenses.

**Solid Waste**

Ms. Manila stated that the changes under Solid Waste fund will be used to right-size the budget and account for anticipated CPI adjustments.

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked where the City was with the Waste Management contract. He suggested noting the expiration date of the contract with Waste Management.

**Stormwater**

Ms. Manila stated that recent storm events have identified drainage issues requiring attention, including significant flooding from the unimproved portion of Sunset Way, which is located on a hill. Mr. Dicus further discussed the drainage concerns along Sunset Way and presented potential solutions.

**Roads and Streets**

Ms. Manila noted a budget increase for a project to begin micro surfacing several roads in The Villages. Mr. Dicus stated that funding had been budgeted for micro paving; however, a recent project produced mixed results. He noted that traditional paving would be significantly more expensive. Vice Mayor DeGrave asked about the differences between overlays, micro paving, and milling.

Vice Mayor DeGrave wondered about the installation of street signs in The Villages and when installation would begin. Mr. Dicus stated that it may be possible to get started during the month of August.

**Library**

Ms. Manila noted there was a reduction between proposed and adopted budgets. There were some personnel changes, which Ms. Manila reviewed. She noted that the Library Director position was eliminated, and fifty percent of the Community Services Director was added to the budget. In addition, with changes to the café a part-time Library Aide was eliminated.

Mayor Cheshire thought too much money was being spent to operate the café. He noted the city was not getting any financial benefit from the café. He had some suggestions for changing the way the café operates, or elimination of the café.

Ms. Fields said staff had been working to rebrand the café and she has evaluated the space for more efficient use in the future.

Mayor Cheshire asked that Ms. Manila and Ms. Fields to work together to bring a revised budget plan back to the City Commission with regard to the café.

Vice Mayor DeGrave stated that he had heard mixed reviews regarding the café. He noted that when the building was constructed, the space was intended for a contracted food service provider and that, when previously operated by the City, the café served as a destination. He emphasized that if the café were reopened, it would need to be done properly. Ms. Fields stated that proper operation would require improvements such as grease traps and cooking ventilation, estimated at $50,000 to $80,000.

Mayor Cheshire stated that recreational programming should be operated in a financially responsible manner, with programs generating sufficient revenue to cover their costs. He added that the café space may be better utilized for additional programming.

**Swimming Pool**

Ms. Manila noted a slight decrease in the proposed pool budget and stated that staff was questioning whether year-around operation was necessary. Ms. Fields stated she could provide usage statistics for review and discussed potential changes in the programming and operating hours for the pool.

Mayor Cheshire stated that changes to pool operations should be considered and requested that Ms. Manila present some different ideas for pool operations at the next budget meeting. Ms. Fields noted the costs associated with pool chemicals and the need to evaluate lifeguard hours. Vice Mayor DeGrave agreed that pool operations should be reevaluated to maximize usage while minimizing losses.

**Parks Maintenance**

Ms. Manila reviewed the budget reductions, noting that most were related to facility repairs. She also stated that the Kubota tractor previously included in the budget had been moved to Capital Projects.

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked about pest control expenses, and Ms. Fields noted there is someone on staff who can provide pest control for less cost.

**Recreation**

Ms. Manila stated that the proposed Recreation budget is $193,000 less than the current year's adopted budget, primarily because the current budget includes a soccer field grant project that will not carry forward into the next fiscal year. She also noted that the Recreation Director position has been eliminated, 50% of the Community Services Director's salary has been allocated to Recreation, and a portion of a Recreation Aide position has been eliminated.

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked about the splash pad project. Ms. Manila stated that the project is currently on hold. Vice Mayor DeGrave agreed that it should remain on hold until future revenue sources are better known.

**General Fund Transfers**

There was no discussion.

**Redevelopment Revenues**

Ms. Manila reviewed the CRA revenue and expenditure projections. She explained that CRA revenues are generated from increases in property values within the CRA boundaries and may only be spent within the CRA area. Approximately $2.3 million is included in the proposed budget.

Funding includes increased abatement costs with a greater emphasis on Code Enforcement, refurbishment of four "Welcome to Fruitland Park" signs, a new welcome sign on County Road 468, road resurfacing and repaving within the CRA, improvements to Veterans Park, basketball court resurfacing, and skatepark improvements.

Funding included in the current budget for Olive Park will be encumbered as discussions and design work continue. Staff has met with the Bell family, and Ms. Fields noted that an eight-year-old resident is participating in the process to learn how a park is developed.

Vice Mayor DeGrave asked whether the $1.8 million estimate for improvements along County Road 466A remained accurate. Ms. Manila stated that she anticipated the cost would increase. Mr. Dicus noted that Halff Engineering prepared the current estimate approximately two months ago. Vice Mayor DeGrave asked what improvements were proposed for the skatepark, and Ms. Fields responded that the park is utilized on a regular basis and needs to be resurfaced.

**Capital Project Revenues**

Ms. Manila provided an overview of the proposed budget.

Mr. Dicus discussed challenges with locating portions of the City's underground infrastructure and explained that the proposed equipment would assist staff in locating underground pipes and utility lines.

**Capital Expenditure Projects**

There was no discussion.

**Capital Transfers**

There was no discussion.

**Utility Revenues**

Ms. Manila provided an overview of the proposed budget, noting a 3% increase in water and sewer fees.

Ms. Manila stated that the consultant is awaiting information from staff to continue the impact fee review. Vice Mayor DeGrave emphasized that completing the review is a priority, noting that impact fees will be important in funding growth-related expenses.

**Water**

**Sewer**

Vice Mayor DeGrave commended Ms. Manila and staff on a job well done on presenting a balanced budget.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

**The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:31 p.m.**

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| Signed ___________________________ | Signed _______________________________ |
| Gwen Johns, City Clerk | Chris Cheshire, Mayor |