



CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Wednesday, September 9, 2026 * 6:30 PM
MINUTES

Present was:

Mayor – Jason Carson
District 1 Commissioner – Ed Gold
District 2 Commissioner – Holly Bobrowski
District 3 Commissioner – Karl Shuck
District 4 Commissioner – Bobby Lance
District 5 Commissioner – Beth Lowell
District 6 Commissioner – Christopher Oller
District 7 Commissioner – Jim Partin (conf call)

Absent was:

1. Call to Order and Confirmation of Quorum

Mayor Carson called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm, and the Clerk confirmed quorum.

City Manager Rick Rudometkin, Chief Grimm, Public Works Director Phil Price, Finance Director Tracey Richardson, Maureen McKuhen, Compliance Officer, and Clerk Lizary Simons were also present.

2. Invocation and Pledge to the Flag - Comm Oller, District 6, led the invocation and Pledge to the Flag.

3. First Public Budget Hearing FY 2026/2027

Mayor Carson opened the First Public Budget Hearing FY 2026/2027.

The City Manager presented a PowerPoint and an overview of Version 4 of the proposed FY 2026–2027 Budget during the first required public budget hearing. He reviewed the proposed 4.9999 millage rate, compared with the current rate of 4.7845 and rollback rate of 4.6449. The proposed rate is 7.64% above the rollback rate, primarily to offset increased contracted fire protection costs from Orange County.

The General Fund includes approximately \$11 million in revenues and \$12 million in expenditures, with a projected ending fund balance of approximately \$2.76 million, or 25.4% in reserves. Key budget changes included a reduced COLA, crossing guard adjustments, position and account reclassifications, transfer of Code Enforcement to Administration as Code Compliance, \$100,000 for studies, removal of Flock camera funding, and various Public Works capital and lease adjustments. Public safety remains the City's largest expenditure at approximately \$7.8 million. CM Rudometkin noted that fire protection costs have increased from approximately \$1.7 million to nearly \$3.1 million over six years. He also reported that the City is paying off a previously refinanced bond this month, leaving one remaining debt service obligation associated with the Bank of America building. Regarding Hurricane Ian expenses, FDEM forwarded the City's submitted package to FEMA for review, and the matter will be returned to Council once FEMA issues its determination.

The City Manager reviewed the five-year Capital Improvement Plan, explaining that it is a planning document containing funded, grant-funded, and unfunded projects. He highlighted stormwater projects, including swales, inlet trash baskets, and pump station rehabilitation. He discussed recent flooding following a storm that produced approximately five to six inches of rain in a short period and explained that filled-in swales, limited drainage routes, and the City's relatively flat terrain contribute to drainage problems. Staff is evaluating both smaller improvements and larger long-term stormwater projects. He also explained that the City currently receives about \$460,000 annually in stormwater revenue and may need additional revenue to undertake larger projects or support future bonding. Council will hold a future workshop to discuss priorities such as roads, stormwater improvements, and other major capital needs. The second budget hearing was scheduled for September 23 at 6:30 p.m., when Council will consider the budget and millage for final approval.

The City Manager provided the required information prior to consideration of the millage resolution. He stated that the City of Belle Isle is the taxing authority, the rollback rate is 4.6449 mills, and the proposed millage rate of 4.9999 mills represents a 7.64%

increase over the rollback rate. He explained that the millage and budget resolutions must be adopted separately. At the second budget hearing on September 23, Council will consider the same two resolutions along with a separate resolution adopting the Capital Improvement Program (CIP).

Comm Bobrowski asked, before moving forward to Item 3(d), when the Council will be able to comment on the budget. Council discussed the proposed 4.9999 millage rate, and Comm Bobrowski requested clarification regarding applying the 4.6449 rollback rate. CM Rudometkin explained that the rollback rate is the revenue-neutral rate that would generate approximately the same property tax revenue as the prior year, accounting for increases in property values. Council previously established the proposed 4.9999 rate as the maximum rate, and it could be reduced. Comm Bobrowski expressed concern with increasing the millage to 4.9999 and suggested considering alternatives, including temporarily absorbing some costs through reserves and exploring a separate fire protection assessment in the future. She discussed potentially basing such an assessment on property or building characteristics and expressed interest in ensuring that any millage increase associated with fire protection could later be reduced if a separate assessment were implemented.

CM Rudometkin clarified that the proposed increase was intended to address the continuing rise in Orange County fire protection costs, not anticipated property-tax changes. He said fire costs have increased by about \$1.2 million over five years. The prior millage increase generated approximately \$425,000 toward those costs, while the additional proposed increase would generate approximately \$248,000, leaving the City to continue absorbing a portion of the overall increase. He further explained that developing a separate fire assessment would require a study and could take approximately a year. He explained that if Council ultimately establishes a separate non-ad valorem fire assessment, the millage would need to be adjusted so residents are not charged twice for the same fire protection costs, and Council would continue to establish the millage annually.

In response to a question about adopting the rollback rate, CM Rudometkin stated that the budget could be adjusted by using unrestricted fund balance to cover the approximately \$248,000 difference, which would reduce the City's projected reserve percentage. He noted that staff is also working with other municipalities and Orange County regarding the method used to calculate the City's fire protection costs.

Approval of Resolution 26-09 - A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF BELLE ISLE OF ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE TENTATIVE MILLAGE RATE FOR THE LEVYING OF AD VALOREM TAXES FOR THE CITY OF BELLE ISLE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2026, AND ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2027; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Before any further discussion, Mayor Carson called for a motion to adopt Resolution 26-09.

Attorney Langley read Resolution 26-09 by title.

Comm Shuck moved to adopt Resolution 26-09 as written.

Comm Lance seconded the motion for discussion.

Council considered Resolution 26-09, initially presented with a proposed millage rate of 4.9999 mills, which was 7.64% above the rollback rate of 4.6449 mills. During discussion, Council considered whether to increase the millage, maintain the current 4.7845 rate, or adopt the rollback rate. Several members expressed support for maintaining the current rate while continuing to explore a separate non-ad valorem assessment for fire protection.

Following discussion, the motion to approve Resolution 26-09 with the 4.9999 millage rate failed by a 2-5 roll-call vote, with Comm Gold, Comm Bobrowski, Comm Lowell, Comm Oller, and Comm Partin nay.

Council then considered a motion to approve Resolution 26-09 using the current 4.7845 millage rate for FY 2026-2027. CM Rudometkin advised that maintaining the current rate would reduce projected General Fund revenue by approximately \$248,000, resulting in a revised ending fund balance of approximately \$2.516 million and an estimated reserve level of 23.7%, compared with the previously projected 25.4%. Council members indicated that the revised reserve level remained acceptable. Council also discussed the process for potentially establishing a non-ad valorem fire assessment. The City Attorney explained that it would not require a citywide vote but would require Council direction, a consultant-performed rate study, multiple Council actions and public hearings, and completion of the process before the end of the following summer for implementation in the next fiscal year. Staff confirmed that the 4.7845 millage rate would be approximately 3.01% above the rollback rate.

Following discussion, Comm. Bobrowski moved to adopt Resolution 26-09 with a millage rate of 4.7845 mills. Comm. Partin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously upon roll call.

Staff stated that the budget documents would be revised to reflect the approved tentative millage rate for the final budget hearing.

Mayor Carson called for a 5-minute recess.
The meeting resumed at 7:37 pm.

Approval of Resolution 26-10 - A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF BELLE ISLE OF ORANGE COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE TENTATIVE BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF BELLE ISLE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2026, AND ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2027; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Comm Gold moved to approve Resolution 26-10, A Resolution of the City of Belle Isle of Orange County, Florida, adopting the tentative budget for the City of Belle Isle for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2026, and ending on September 30, 2027, providing for an effective date. Whereas the proposed budget for the City of Belle Isle for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2026, and ending September 30th, 2027, provides for the total appropriations and reserves of \$15,429,071, as set forth in Attachment FY 2627, proposed budget B 4.090326, including any amendments adopted by the City Council at the public hearing held on September 9, 2026. Comm. Partin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously by roll call.

4. Public Comments & Announcements

Mayor Carson opened the floor for public comments and announcements. There being none, he closed public comments.

5. Presentations - na

6. Consent Items.

- a. Approval of City Council Workshop Minutes – August 4, 2026
- b. Approval of City Council Meeting Minutes – August 4, 2026
- c. Approval of OC Interlocal For Cost Sharing of Aerial Photography Acquisition FY 2026/2027
- d. Approval of OC Interlocal Non-Ad Assessment Agreement FY 2026/2027
- e. July 2026 Monthly Reports: PD, Finance (<https://cleargov.com/florida/orange/city/belle-isle>), Code Enforcement and OC Fire

Comm Lance moved to approve the consent items as presented

Comm Partin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, 7:0.

7. Unfinished Business

- a. **RESOLUTION NO. 26-12 - A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FLORIDA, CORRECTING THE AMOUNT OF CONTRABAND FORFEITURE PROCEEDS PREVIOUSLY AUTHORIZED FOR DEPOSIT INTO THE LAW ENFORCEMENT TRUST FUND; AMENDING RESOLUTION 26-07 TO REFLECT THE CORRECT AMOUNT; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Mayor Carson read Ordinance 26-12 by Title.

Mayor Carson opened for Council discussion.

Chief Grimm explained that a clerical error was identified in the original resolution, which incorrectly listed the amount as \$44,754. The correct amount received was \$4,500, which the City's financial reporting accurately reflected. He clarified that the correction does not otherwise affect the fund. A new resolution will be brought forward at the beginning of the year identifying how the funds will be spent and the amount to be donated to charity.

There being no discussion, Comm Partin moved to approve Resolution Number 26-12, correcting the amount of forfeiture proceeds previously authorized for deposit into the law enforcement trust fund from 20,754 to 20,500, and amending Resolution Number 26-07 to reflect the corrected amount.

Comm Lance seconded the motion, which passed unanimously upon roll call 7:0.

8. New Business

- a. Approval of Resolution 26-11 - A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2025, AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2026, PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

CM Rudometkin read Ordinance 26-11 by Title.
Mayor Carson opened for Council discussion.

Comm Bobrowski moved to approve Resolution Number 26-11, amending the budget for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2025, and ending September 30th, 2026, providing for an effective date. Seconded by Comm Oller, which was unanimously approved by roll call.

- b. Annual Red-Light Camera Report – Chief Grimm

Chief Grimm presented the annual Red Light Camera Program survey, as required by state statute, and reported that the City issued 8,834 Notices of Violation during the reporting period. Four notices were contested; all four were upheld, and none were dismissed. A total of 2,491 notices resulted in Uniform Traffic Citations, while 6,147 notices were paid. Total program revenue collected was \$980,402, of which \$524,477 was remitted to the State, and \$470,175 was retained by the City. Chief Grimm explained that motorists initially receive a Notice of Violation and are provided additional notice before an unpaid violation progresses to a Uniform Traffic Citation. Once elevated, additional consequences and court-related costs may apply. The Chief noted that the City offers a plea option through County Court that can reduce the citation amount back to the original violation amount, although additional court costs may still apply.

Council discussed the financial distribution of red-light camera revenues. Staff clarified that the amount remitted to the State is established by statute and remains consistent unless statutory requirements change. The City's vendor costs have also remained consistent, with the City paying approximately \$336,000 annually to the red-light camera vendor. Council was advised that the annual report requires Council to determine whether to continue the Red-Light Camera Program.

Comm Lowell moved to acknowledge the City Council's review of the 2025 2026 annual red-light camera report, and to continue the city's red-light camera program in its current form, pursuant to section 316.0083, Florida Statutes. Comm Lance seconded the motion, which passed unanimously, 7:0

- c. Police Chief Statement Regarding Pubic Safety Technology, LPRs and Surveillance Cameras – Chief Grimm

Chief Grimm addressed the status of the City's Flock license plate reader (LPR) system following recent State direction concerning the technology on state roads. He said the City would maintain its current position and allow the State to determine future requirements for LPR technology before taking further action. He emphasized that the Police Department would not expend taxpayer funds challenging the issue while the State is still determining its requirements. In the meantime, the Department will continue using other technology and law-enforcement techniques to maintain public safety. Chief Grimm stated that the Flock system could be reactivated at Council's direction. Council discussed the value of the cameras as a force multiplier and expressed interest in potentially using the system in the future with certain features, such as networking or license-plate-reading capabilities, modified or disabled if necessary to address privacy or State requirements. The Council supported waiting for additional State guidance before making further changes. Council members also emphasized the importance of communicating proactively with residents regarding future decisions involving the cameras and addressing public questions and concerns before misinformation develops or unnecessary public-records requests are generated.

9. Attorney's Report - NA

10. City Manager's Report

a. City Manager's Report & Work Plan

CM Rudometkin provided an update on Hurricane Ian/FEMA reimbursement and the Venetian Canal matter. Regarding Hurricane Ian, he said the City is still awaiting FEMA's response and will update Council once FEMA makes its determination. Regarding the Venetian Canal, CM Rudometkin reported receiving an email from Orange County Manager Byron Brooks, advising that the matter remains under review by the County Attorney's Office. He indicated that he hoped to have additional information by the end of the week. Once the County provides its response, he will distribute the information to Council and place the matter on the agenda for the second Council meeting in September for further discussion.

b. Chief's Report

Chief Grimm reported that school traffic is settling into its normal pattern after the first several weeks of the school year. He noted that the upcoming monthly report will reflect a heavier month for traffic crashes, which he attributed in part to the increased number of vehicles on the road now that school is back in session. He also said staff continues to receive occasional concerns about traffic patterns and vehicles blocking residential areas as drivers look for alternate routes. Chief Grimm discussed a recent traffic study on Seminole Avenue. Over a two-week period, approximately 24,000 vehicles traveled the roadway in both directions. The average speed was approximately 29 mph in the 25-mph zone. He said traffic volume appeared to be a greater concern than widespread speeding. He noted that Belle Isle experiences substantial cut-through traffic because of its location and the number of motorists traveling east and west through the City. Council expressed interest in comparing the data with future traffic counts, including potentially conducting another study during the summer.

Council also discussed traffic on Hoffner Avenue. Chief Grimm stated that speed-monitoring data generally shows about 1% of motorists speeding, and that concerns on Hoffner are often related more to careless or reckless driving than to overall average speeds.

Comm Bobrowski asked about previously discussed grant-writing training for City staff. Chief Grimm stated that the item is expected to return after the beginning of the new fiscal year and clarified that the opportunity would be offered citywide to eligible employees, rather than being limited to a Police Department employee, with additional compensation contemplated for the employee assuming those responsibilities.

Comm Lance also briefly revisited concerns about traffic signals and traffic patterns near the school and Orange Avenue, including difficulties accessing Wallace Street during school arrival and dismissal periods. Chief Grimm referenced the previous traffic consultant's assessment that an additional signal in close proximity to the existing signals was unlikely to be supported and noted that alternative routes remain available. Comm Lance expressed concern regarding safety and access during peak school traffic periods.

c. Public Works Report

Phil Price, Public Works Director, provided an update regarding the significant rain event approximately a week and a half earlier, during which the City received more than five inches of rain in less than 45 minutes. He reported that the City's stormwater system performed well overall. Although several areas experienced temporary high water, most standing water drained within about 30 to 45 minutes after the rainfall subsided. Staff identified a few areas for additional review. He noted that inspections following the storm found trash can lids blocking two stormwater inlets, restricting water flow. He explained that trash can lids and bags are common items carried by heavy rainfall into storm drains and encouraged residents to report missing lids, as they may have entered nearby drainage inlets.

Council members acknowledged that some streets experienced significant temporary flooding during the intense rainfall but also noted improvements in how quickly water now drains from historically affected areas. Mr. Price emphasized that an extreme volume of rainfall in such a short period will temporarily overwhelm even a properly functioning drainage system, but overall, the City's system performed well, and the accumulated water receded relatively quickly.

11. Mayor's Report

Mayor Carson and the Council thanked Public Works, City Administration, Finance, and the Police Department for their continued work, including park maintenance, the budget process, and public safety.

Mayor Carson reported that he has been communicating with mayors from other municipalities regarding increasing fire and rescue costs and has also been reviewing fire call data provided by the Police Chief. He said he intends to continue discussions about the methodology used to calculate each municipality's share of fire protection expenses, particularly the relationship between increased property values and increased fire costs. He cited another municipality as an example of experiencing a substantial increase in fire expenses over approximately five years. Mayor Carson emphasized that the City is actively pursuing discussions with other jurisdictions rather than waiting for the issue to be resolved on its own. He also reported ongoing efforts related to stormwater improvements and funding opportunities. He has been speaking with individuals who may help the City identify grants and other funding sources for needed drainage projects. He noted that the recent heavy rainfall demonstrated areas needing additional attention and emphasized that stormwater improvements are important to the community and resident safety.

12. Commissioners' Report

Council thanked staff, the Police Department, and Public Works for their continued support.

Comm Bobrowski commented on the recent heavy rainfall, noting that approximately five inches of rain in a short period caused significant water flow through their property. Despite having three French drains and a rear garage door to allow drainage, water entered and flowed through the garage, reaching approximately eight inches at one point. She noted that, due to repeated paving of Hoffner Avenue over the years, portions of the roadway are now higher than some surrounding residential properties, contributing to drainage challenges during extreme rainfall events.

Comm Lance reported that their property on Trentwood also experienced water intrusion during the recent heavy rainfall, with approximately a couple of inches entering the garage. They noted that similar flooding occurs approximately once or twice a year due in part to the area's older drainage system. He explained that stormwater typically flows between neighboring properties toward the lagoon and that another drainage area directs water toward a retention pond. However, during an extreme event of five to six inches of rain in a short period, the ground cannot absorb the water quickly enough, and the existing drainage system has limited capacity to manage the volume.

Comm Lowell thanked the Marine Patrol and Police Department for their presence and enforcement efforts over the Labor Day holiday, noting that activity on the lakes appeared relatively uneventful. The Council member stated that conditions on the lakes have progressively improved over the past several years and attributed some of that improvement to continued marine enforcement. She raised potential safety concerns with the ski course on the South Lake. Several course buoys were reportedly submerged below the waterline, creating a potential hazard to boat propellers. CM Rudometkin said they would contact the individual believed responsible for the ski course to determine who maintains the buoys and would follow up by email.

13. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mayor Carson called for a motion to adjourn, which was unanimously approved at 8:16 pm.