



CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, March 17, 2026 * 6:30 PM

MINUTES

Present was:

District 1 Commissioner – Frank Vertolli
District 2 Commissioner – Holly Bobrowski
District 3 Commissioner – Karl Shuck
District 4 Commissioner – Bobby Lance
District 5 Commissioner – Beth Lowell
District 6 Commissioner – Stan Smith
District 7 Commissioner – Jim Partin

Absent was:

Mayor – Jason Carson

1. Call to Order and Confirmation of Quorum

Vice Mayor Partin called the Council Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., and the City Clerk, Yolanda Quiceno, confirmed the presence of a quorum. City Manager (CM) Rudometkin, Chief Grimms, Attorney Langley, Public Works Director Phil Price, Finance Director Tracey Richardson, and City Clerk Yolanda Quiceno were also present.

2. Invocation and Pledge to Flag - Commissioner Holly Bobrowski, District 2

Comm Bobrowski led the invocation and Pledge to the Flag.

3. Presentations

Vice Mayor Partin opened for presentations.

a. Police Awards

Chief Grimm presented the following awards

- Supervisor of the Year - Sgt Ferraiuolo
- Distinguished Officer of the Year – K-9 Officer Hernandez
- Chief’s Special Award – Officer Lopez, Officer Mathews, Sgt McCormick, Officer Trendafilov, and Officer Rodriguez.
- Patrol Officer of the Year – Officer Shaffer

Vice Mayor Partin called for a 5-minute recess to allow for family photos.

b. Special Events - Anthony DeViva

Special Events Committee Chairman Tony DeViva provided an update on upcoming events. He thanked new committee members and key sponsors, including Gold Key Roofing, Regal Boats, and Fishback Automotive, for their commitment and partnership. Mr. DeViva outlined the budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year, requesting additional funding to cover event costs and bring more events to the community. He announced upcoming events, including a panel discussion on aging and a paddle out event. He further noted that there are openings on the Committee and welcomed residents to volunteer and apply to be on the Board and be part of the celebrations.

4. Public Comments & Announcements

Vice Mayor Partin opened for public comments and announcements. There being none, Vice Mayor Partin closed public comments.

5. Consent Items

- a. Approval of City Council Meeting Minutes - March 3, 2026
- b. February 2026 Monthly Reports: PD, Finance (<https://cleargov.com/florida/orange/city/belle-isle>), and OC Fire

Comm Shuck moved to approve the consent items as presented

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

6. Unfinished Business

a. Compensation Study Update - Evergreen Solutions LLC

Chief Grimm stated that Stasey Whichel from Evergreen Solutions is available via telephone to answer any questions. He presented a unified step-play plan for city employees and an amendment to the fiscal year 2025-2026 budget for consideration. He noted that, as presented at the March 17 meeting, this item represents the next step following the classification and compensation study. The study provided independent market data and a structured framework for managing employee compensation across the organization. The proposed action establishes a unified, step-based pay plan for all city positions, allowing compensation to progress consistently and predictably rather than through individual adjustments over time. The item also includes the necessary budget amendments to implement these adjustments within the current fiscal year. The fiscal impact for this year is outlined in the agenda materials.

Comm Bobrowski expressed concerns regarding Resolution 26-03, stating that she initially believed the action was to accept the findings of the Evergreen study rather than to implement the new step plan. She sought clarification that approval of the resolution would result in the new step-based pay structure taking effect in April. She noted ongoing concerns about the pace of implementation, indicating that while overall percentages and total costs were provided, she felt additional clarity and detail were still needed. Comm Bobrowski inquired whether a detailed, position-by-position breakdown of salary adjustments, including step increases, would be available prior to final approval. Chief Grimm responded that detailed paygrade and step information for all employees had been presented during the February 17 meeting as part of the initial compensation study.

Comm Lowell noted that Evergreen provided extensive information, which was reviewed and clarified through follow-up discussions with the Chief. While not a finance expert, she felt the remaining questions were addressed and understood that the meeting's purpose was to vote on advancing the matter in line with the fiscal year timeline.

Comm Smith stated that, based on his private sector experience, the City's lack of a structured compensation progression system was a concern. He emphasized that employees should have a clear understanding of their potential career and salary growth over time. While acknowledging the cost associated with implementing such a system, he noted the City has been fortunate to retain dedicated employees despite the absence of a formal structure. He expressed that establishing a clear, predictable pay plan is necessary and timely, and that it is an important step in supporting and retaining staff.

Comm Lance, speaking of 47 years of business experience, expressed support for the proposed compensation plan. He noted that he had discussed the matter with staff and residents, with only minor concerns raised. He highlighted the shift in workforce priorities, noting that while previous generations placed less emphasis on salary and benefits, today's workforce prioritizes compensation. He emphasized the need for the City to remain competitive in attracting and retaining qualified employees. Comm Lance further noted the importance of offering a competitive compensation package to ensure the City can recruit experienced, job-ready candidates in the future, particularly as current staff retire.

Comm Shuck stated that, after reviewing the information provided and discussing the matter with staff, his primary focus was not on the specific numbers but on the stability the plan would provide for employees. He noted that the current system likely created challenges in managing pay consistency among staff and described the proposed plan as a way to standardize and formalize the City's compensation structure.

Comm Vertolli expressed support for implementing a structured plan but questioned why the funding was divided across separate resolutions, with portions allocated from the stormwater fund and the general fund, and sought clarification on the purpose of the funding approach.

Chief Grimm explained that the two resolutions serve different purposes. The first resolution adopts the salary study and establishes a new pay plan. The second resolution amends the current fiscal year budget to allocate the necessary funding, as those funds were not previously budgeted. He clarified that a portion of salary expenses is appropriately funded through the stormwater fund, while the remainder is funded through the general fund, consistent with how certain positions are supported. We're just making sure that it's allocated and listed where we're doing that.

Vice Mayor Partin read a prepared statement from the Mayor expressing support for the proposed pay increases and salary study, contingent upon the implementation of a structured annual performance evaluation system for all employees. The Mayor noted fiscal concerns but emphasized the importance of maintaining competitive wages and addressing compression. He stated that future compensation adjustments, including cost-of-living increases, should be tied to a performance-based system rather than applied automatically. Under this approach, annual increases would be guided by economic indicators such as CPI and inflation, with actual adjustments based on individual employee performance. The Mayor emphasized that this framework would promote accountability, reward high performance, and ensure fiscal responsibility while supporting a culture of excellence and transparency.

Chief Grimm noted that, if the plan is approved, additional policies will need to be developed, including a more structured employee evaluation process. While an evaluation policy currently exists, it has not been effectively tied to merit increases. He indicated that a draft evaluation plan is in place that generally aligns with the Mayor's recommendations. It was also clarified that the Council will retain control over cost-of-living adjustments and overall budget decisions.

Kirk Leff, a resident and Budget Committee member, stated that the Evergreen report was well done and addressed a previously identified lack of a formal compensation structure, particularly for non-uniform employees. He noted that the study reviewed multiple jurisdictions, providing a strong basis for evaluating job roles and compensation. He expressed support for the proposed approach, stating that it is the appropriate path forward and would create a fair and manageable system that rewards high-performing employees.

Vice Mayor Partin asked Evergreen Solutions if they created the job descriptions. Ms. Stacey said they were created based on input from your staff, as well as best practices and very common other descriptions within your area. He asked for clarification on the salaries pulled from the stormwater fund. CM Rudometkin explained that the use of stormwater funds for a portion of salaries is permitted, as it is a separate fund that must cover its own administrative costs. Employees who spend time working on stormwater-related responsibilities have a portion of their salaries allocated to that fund based on the percentage of time dedicated to those duties. Staff noted that this allocation method is standard practice and has been in place since the previous City Manager and the creation of the stormwater fund in 2017.

Vice Mayor Partin shared concerns that some City Hall employees, including long-serving staff, have not received performance reviews prior to the current City Manager, with raises limited to cost-of-living adjustments rather than merit-based increases. While COLA helps offset inflation, it does not recognize years of service or extra effort, such as long hours during budget periods. The City Clerk's dedication was noted, and it was emphasized that merit-based considerations should be incorporated alongside the upcoming compensation study to ensure fair and consistent implementation across all departments, uniformed and non-uniformed.

- b. RESOLUTION NO. 26-03 - A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FLORIDA, APPROVING A UNIFIED STEP PAY PLAN FOR ALL FULL-TIME CITY EMPLOYEE POSITIONS; APPROVING THE ASSIGNMENT OF POSITIONS TO PAY GRADES; APPROVING THE TRANSITION OF EMPLOYEE SALARIES USING THE HYBRID YEAR PARITY METHOD; APPROVING AN ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATION NOT TO EXCEED \$205,000 FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 TO IMPLEMENT THE UNIFIED STEP PAY PLAN; AUTHORIZING THE CITY MANAGER TO IMPLEMENT THE PLAN; PROVIDING FOR IMPLEMENTATION; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

City Manager Rudometkin read Resolution 26-03 by title.

Comm Lance moved to adopt Resolution 26-03 as presented.

Comm Lowell seconded the motion.

Vice Mayor Partin opened for discussion.

Comm Bobrowski expressed support for implementing a step-based pay plan but noted the city currently lacks a policy linking performance evaluations to merit-based raises. Questions were raised about how employee placement within pay grades would be determined, including the use of minimum, midpoint, and maximum steps. Staff provided clarification that the hybrid system places employees in steps based on years of service and position, with entry-level at the minimum, mid-career near the midpoint, and longer-tenured employees approaching the maximum. A rubric was explained for crediting prior experience: for law enforcement, past years counted one-for-one up to a maximum of five years, with a similar system under development for civilian positions.

Vice Mayor Partin asked whether Kirk's statement reflected his personal opinion or the board's position. He noted that Board Member Evertsen indicated that he was not in favor of this move. Mr. Kirk noted that the Board agreed to move forward with Evergreen and representing the committee in presenting this recommendation.

The motion passed by roll call 7:0.

- c. RESOLUTION NO. 26-04 - 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, TO PROVIDE ADDITIONAL APPROPRIATIONS IN THE GENERAL FUND IN THE AMOUNT OF \$81,632 AND IN THE STORMWATER FUND IN THE AMOUNT OF \$9,086, FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE UNIFIED STEP PAY PLAN; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

City Manager Rudometkin read Resolution 26-04 by title.

Comm Lance moved to adopt Resolution 26-03 as presented.

Comm Lowell seconded the motion.

Vice Mayor Partin opened for discussion.

There being no discussion, the motion passed by roll call 7:0.

d. 3904 Arajo Court Condemnation Update

CM Rudometkin reported that the new owner, Bernard, did not pay the \$19,000+ fines by the City Council's previously set deadline. However, Bernard arranged a demolition contract with BAC Trucking and Excavating to demolish the property himself, eliminating city costs. The contract sets a start date of March 31, 2025, and a completion date of April 6, 2026, with the contractor responsible for maintaining the site. The speaker noted that council approval is not required to proceed, as prior authorization allows the demolition to move forward, and opened the discussion for any comments.

Comm Vertolli clarified that the homeowner Bernard is going to tear the house down on his dime. CM Rudometkin said yes, they have not paid the fines, but they have a contract in place, and if this doesn't move forward, the City will move forward with tearing the house down.

Comm Lance clarified that demolition is to proceed under the existing contract, with a target completion date of April 6, 2026. If the work is not finished by that date or an approved timeframe, city staff have permission to begin demolition. Council discussion emphasized contractor accountability, ensuring proper debris management near the canal, and confirming there are currently no rodent or insect issues in the gutted property. CM Rudometkin noted that Legal confirmation was provided that Bernard is the owner and that demolition brings the property into compliance without affecting existing code enforcement funds.

Attorney Langley noted that demolition brings the property into compliance, though existing code enforcement funds tied to the land remain in effect. It was noted that the owner may have opted to fund the demolition instead of paying fines, potentially reducing future obligations. They have no claim of homestead protection. So right now, the liens are foreclosable. The recommendation was to wait until April 7 to confirm completion before taking further action.

Comm Smith expressed frustration, stating that the board was misled and manipulated in the process. They emphasized that legal fees, code enforcement fines, and liens should not be waived, as the city acted in good faith and should seek full recovery. Vice Mayor Partin and Comm Vertolli agreed that the city should not compromise on fees or enforcement, noting that efforts to preserve the house have failed, and raised a question about whether the demolition includes the foundation. CM Rudometkin said, yes, it covers demolition of the principal structure, all accessory structures, foundations, basements, footings, and walls.

Comm Bobrowski said she wants to ensure the City records the necessary liens going forward.

Discussion ensued about the demolition contractor, who is fully capable and committed to completing the work. A contract between the owner and contractor is in place, with proper permits required. The contractor is willing to work directly with the city if the owner does not proceed, potentially saving the city some costs. There were no current issues with rodents or pests in the gutted property. Council members emphasized retaining all city fees and fines, including attorney fees, and discussed placing a lien on the property to ensure obligations are met before any transfer of ownership. Chief provided a memo separating code enforcement fines from attorney fees to track amounts owed. Legal and permitting issues, including Orange County impact fees, were noted but will not impede demolition. Council agreed to monitor progress and reconvene on April 7th if issues arise.

7. New Business

a. Bing Grant Application - Lake Conway Estates

CM Rudometkin presented the Bing grant application for Lake Conway Estates for the lake lot, asphalt overlay with car stops, and striping. They would like to resurface their existing lake lot, install new curb stops, and add new striping. The grant amount requested is \$12,635. The bid they want to go with is \$25,270 with Titan Paving Corporation, the low bid. They are requesting up to 50%, which is \$12,635. In your packet, you have what's left of the Bing grant funds: \$16,443.50. Commissioners discussed contributions from their districts, coordinating amounts from Districts One, Six, Seven, and others, totaling \$10,443.50 so far. It was clarified that Bing grants are up to 50% of the total project cost and that prior projects, including last year's pickleball court, are being tracked to ensure fairness. Commissioners agreed to proceed with the available funds while monitoring remaining allocations.

Comm Lowell asked if the awarded grant funds from her district revert if a project does not proceed. CM Rudometkin confirmed that if a project is not completed within 45 days in the fiscal year, the funds will be returned to the restricted fund balance. Funds are only released upon project completion.

Comm Vertolli expressed concern that associations or residents applying for big grants are billing administrative time, such as gathering prices, at hourly rates. He noted that the money approved should go toward the work itself, not administration, and suggested this be addressed in the big grant application rules.

After discussion, Comm Smith moved to approve the Bing Grant in the amount of 10,443.50 to help with the financial cost of resurfacing the existing lake lot, installing a new car stop, and striping for Lake Conway Estates. The breakdown is as follows: District 1-2,500, District 7-1,000, District 6-2,500, District 4 – 2,000, District 2 – 1,443.50, and the Mayor-1,000 for a total of 10,443.50.

Comm Bobrowski seconded the motion

8. Attorney's Report

Attorney Langley reported that there is a hearing on Thursday in the Quevedo case and on the Motion for Judgment on the pleadings. We will see if we can get the judge comfortable with dismissing the case, and we will update at a future meeting. The case has been pending for some time, with trial dates set for late July; the plaintiff may attempt to push the trial. He further reported that the City received notification from our insurance defense counsel that the long-existing Rodriguez case, involving a person who fell through a hole in the old bank building, has been settled. The insurance company is paying 100% of the claim, the trial is canceled, and city staff will not need to prepare for it.

9. City Manager's Report

a. City Manager's Report and Work Plan

CM Rudometkin announced the upcoming Easter event on April 4th. Regarding Commissioner seats, District 1's seat will be filled by former Commissioner Ed Gold, sworn in at the April 7 meeting. Applications for Districts 6 and 7 are open until Friday, March 20; currently, one applicant has applied for each district (Chris Ollie and Jim Partin). Interviews and possible appointments will be conducted by the Mayor and City Council during the April 21 meeting at 6:30 PM, with applicants required to be present for consideration. CM Rudometkin announced that Commissioners Smith and Vertoli will be attending their last meeting tonight and thanked them for their service.

b. Chief's Report

Chief Grimm, Police Department, and staff thanked Comm Smith and Vertolli for their service, noting Stan will be missed and Frank will still be visited occasionally. A staff luncheon is planned for Tuesday, and the City Clerk will post details.

- The second annual VIP Appreciation Day was successful, with attendance likely close to 100, and thanks were given to Dave Smith, Bobby Lance, other commissioners, Myra Uribe, and Rebecca for their help.

- A water event is planned for March 22; coordination is ongoing with FWC and Orange County, with two dedicated officers guaranteed and a third on a jet ski if needed.
- Officers recently responded to a capsized boat on Lake Jasmine with Orange County units; three of four individuals were rescued, and one child remains missing.

c. Public Works Report

Phil Proce, Public Works director, reported the following,

- **Neila Bridge Lights:** Equipment has arrived; replacement starts tomorrow. Lights are expected to be back on the bridge once completed.
- **Neila Fountain:** Refurbishment scheduled to start March 23 to get the fountain running again.
- **Leaves:** Ongoing issue after recent storm. Orange County street sweepers are assisting; city staff is short-handed this week due to spring break, but efforts will continue next week. JJs has been managing large amounts of debris, staying late to keep up.
- **Conway and Judge Intersection:** Closed starting at 9:00 PM for night work; will reopen by 6:00 AM. The previous midday closure was due to miscommunication; the contractor corrected it promptly after notification.

10. Mayor's Report - na

11. Commissioners' Report

Comm Smith and Comm Vertolli thanked the Mayor, Council, staff, and the residents for the opportunity to serve the community.

The Council members and staff thanked Comm Smith and Comm Vertolli for their support and service to the community. Comm Lance also thanked Mr. Smith and Mr. Vertolli, paraphrasing a quote from Abraham Lincoln: "You can tell the true character of a person when you give them a position of power," doing such a great job, and for both of them being gentlemen with true good character.

Comm Smith discussed volunteering for upcoming PRM board meetings. He noted that the next conference in Lakeland is April 10th and the Port Charlotte conference is June 10-12. He emphasized the importance of attending meetings, voting on items, and overseeing the management of funds and operations.

12. Adjournment

Council thanked Comm Smith and Vertolli for their dedication. There being no further business, the Vice Mayor called for adjournment, unanimously approved at 8:40 pm.