



CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL
CITY COUNCIL 2ND BUDGET WORKSHOP & COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, September 2, 2025 * 6:30 PM

MINUTES

Present was:

Mayor – Jason Carson
District 1 Commissioner – Frank Vertolli
District 4 Commissioner – Bobby Lance
District 5 Commissioner – Beth Lowell (conf call)
District 6 Commissioner – Stan Smith
District 7 Commissioner – Jim Partin

Absent was:

District 2 Commissioner – Holly Bobrowski
District 3 Commissioner – Karl Shuck

1. Call to Order

Mayor Carson called the meeting to order at 6:42 p.m., and the Clerk confirmed the presence of a quorum. City Manager Rudometkin, Deputy Chief Millis, Attorney Pownall, Public Works Director Phil Price, and City Clerk Yolanda Quiceno were also present.

2. Invocation and Pledge to Flag

Comm Smith gave the Invocation and led the Pledge to the Flag.

Mayor Carson called for a motion to excuse Comm Bobrowski and Comm Shuck from this evening's session.

Comm Partin moved to excuse Comm Bobrowski and Comm Shuck.

Comm Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 5:0.

3. Public Comments & Announcements

Mayor Carson opened for public comment.

- Mariana Reyes, residing at 2801 E Colonial Drive, Orlando, Florida, invited the elected officials to a prayer event called "Pray for Leaders," taking place on September 14th at 6 pm at Encounter Church Orlando, located at 6208 South Orange Avenue, Suite 108, Orlando, FL 32809. The event will focus on praying for elected officials, candidates, first responders, nurses, police, and firefighters. Attendees are encouraged to register at pfolmovement.com. Donations of food, clothing, Bibles, and technology are welcome to support local nonprofits.

There being no further comment, Mayor Carson closed public Comments.

4. Presentations

Mayor Carson opened two public hearings. For the record, the property owner was not in attendance.

a. CE Appeal - 6657 The Landings Drive

Matthew Rabeau, Code Enforcement Office for the City of Belle Isle, presented CE Case numbers CE25-0125 and CE25-0363. CE Officer Rabeau presented a summary of the parking violations in the area. He stated that he observed a vehicle parked illegally in front of a property along a roadway clearly marked with "No Parking" signs. Despite multiple verbal and written warnings, the property owner continued to park in the restricted area. A \$150 citation was issued after initial warnings were ignored. The individual was informed of their right to contest the citation within five days or bring the matter before the City Council regarding the signage. That citation was paid. However, on July 31, the same vehicle was found in the exact location, resulting in a second \$150 citation, which is now being contested. The individual was again advised of proper parking locations but chose not to comply. CE Officer Rabeau noted that the signs have been in place for approximately three years and were petitioned by the surrounding residents due to the traffic and chaos caused by visitors to the adjacent sandbar.

After further discussion, Comm Smith moved to deny the appeal and let the fine stand as issued.

Vice Mayor Partin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 5:0.

b. CE Appeal – 7307 Lake Drive

Matthew Rabeau, Code Enforcement Office for the City of Belle Isle, presented a summary of the violation and stated that a citation was issued on August 10, 2025. CE Officer Rabeau said while patrolling the area, five vehicles were observed parked directly on the grass at a residence previously brought before the City Council for similar issues, including grass parking, grass maintenance, and excessive watercraft trailers. The homeowner was not initially present, so a total of \$750 in citations (\$150 per vehicle) was issued. When the homeowner, Mr. Tran, later arrived, he was informed that due to prior warnings, further violations could not be excused. He claimed he was unaware his guests had parked on the grass, but was reminded that, as the property owner, he is responsible for ensuring all guests comply with city ordinances. He was informed of his right to contest the citations within five days.

Ms. Tian Lynn Tran, homeowner of 7307 Lake Drive, explained that they were not home at the time and that the gathering was a small get-together with friends, some of whom brought additional guests. She stated she was unaware that those guests had parked on the grass and only learned about the violations after the citations were issued. She also mentioned that it had been several years since hosting a gathering and that she attempted to have the vehicles moved once she was made aware, but the citations had already been issued. Mrs. Tran expressed understanding of the ordinance but requested leniency due to the circumstances and the financial burden of the fines.

Mayor Carson shared personal observations regarding property activity near Swan Beach. He noted that the frequent presence of multiple trucks, boat trailers, and boats at the property in question has been consistently visible over the years and is noticeable to others frequenting the area. Mayor Carson recognized the efforts of the city's code enforcement officers and acknowledged that similar violations occur elsewhere due to limited enforcement resources. He expresses his understanding of both the property owner's concerns and those of the surrounding community.

Vice Mayor Partin commented on the property's U-shaped driveway, noting that it appeared large enough to accommodate multiple vehicles. He questioned why additional cars were parked on the grass if the driveway was available. He emphasized that whether the owner knew the visitors or not was not relevant to the issue. Vice Mayor Partin expressed concern over the suggestion that community complaints were motivated by hate, calling that assumption unfortunate. He acknowledged the financial burden of fines but stressed the importance of accountability and that the Council has been fair in the past.

Comm Lance discussed the option of reducing the fine and informing the resident about the City's temporary parking permit process. Residents can request a Residential Event Parking Permit from the City Manager for a \$25 fee. This permit allows temporary parking, including on grass, during events such as parties. The resident must fill out a form, pay the fee, and display the provided passes in vehicle windows. Code Enforcement will then recognize the permit and not issue citations.

After discussion, Comm Lance moved to reduce the fine from \$750 to \$500, calculated at \$50 per vehicle.

Comm Smith seconded the motion, which passed 4:1 with Comm Lowell, nay.

5. Consent Items

A. Approval of the City Council Meeting Minutes – August 19, 2025

B. Approval of Surplus of Admin Office Equipment

Mayor Carson called for a motion to approve the consent items

Comm Vertolli moved to approve items A and B as presented.

Comm Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 5:0.

6. Unfinished Business

a. 3904 Arajo Condemnation Update

City Manager Rudometkin provided an update regarding the property at 3904 Arajo Court. He has had multiple conversations with the property owner, Lizar, who expressed ongoing difficulties addressing the property's condition due to financial and personal challenges, theft of funds, and challenges accessing the property as reasons for delays. She has declined offers to sell the property, stating she would prefer to fix it. He noted that the property owner is also unsure if another party purchased her tax certificate and has been unable to confirm with the tax office. He indicated that Bernard, a community member assisting Lizar, informed him that they plan to stucco and paint the house between September 11–16 and mow the lawn the following week. However, the lawn remains overgrown, and the property continues to show signs of neglect. The house remains cluttered inside, with broken windows, hornet nests, and visible debris. City Manager Rudometkin expressed concerns over the lack of consistent progress, noting the City has the legal authority to proceed with condemnation. He requested direction from the Council on whether to grant another extension or move forward with the condemnation process.

Comm Smith expressed hesitation about moving forward with demolition, noting that once the house is torn down, there is no way to reverse the decision. While he has reservations about the property owner's realistic plan or reliable support,

he acknowledged a small sign of progress when the owner mentioned making mortgage payments. Comm Smith supported granting a two-week extension as a final opportunity.

Comm Lance expressed frustration with repeated 30-day extensions over the past few months. While not in favor of immediate demolition, Comm Lance supported allowing time to complete the planned stucco, painting, and lawn maintenance. He suggested prioritizing home repairs over concerns about back taxes and encouraged exploring possibilities from local church members present to help maintain the property.

Comm Vertolli noted it has been nearly a year since the demolition order was issued in October and expressed concern for the impact on neighboring residents. He emphasized the need for fairness and consistency, stating that allowing further delays could set a precedent for others. Comm Vertolli said he is sympathetic to Lizer's financial hardships; however, the tax status is public information and can easily be verified. Comm Vertolli said he would like to set a date for repairs, and if it's not done, then the house will be demolished if we don't see significant progress.

Comm Lowell asked the City Manager whether the property owner provided a specific dollar amount for the assistance they plan to receive. She expressed concern about the lack of clear financial details and questioned whether continuing to delay action might give the property owner false hope. Comm Lowell emphasized the need for a concrete plan with a defined budget to understand what repairs can realistically be completed. City Manager Rudometkin stated that the property owner had not shared the total cost of repairs or the amount they would collect.

Comm Lowell again raised concerns about potential liability if volunteers enter the condemned property and get injured. She also noted that delaying demolition could lead to increased costs over time.

Attorney Pownall said there may be potential liability concerns, noting that while the homeowner is likely responsible, the City could still be exposed to risk since it condemned the property but does not own it. Council emphasized the importance of determining whether liability insurance is in place and current for the property and suggested the City should be listed as an additional insured party if involved.

After discussion, Vice Mayor Partin made a motion to extend the discussion to October 7th to allow the progress as discussed and decide at that time.

Comm Smith seconded the motion, which passed 4:1 with Comm Vertolli, nay.

7. New Business

a. JJs Waste & Recycling Increase Request

City Manager Rudometkin provided an overview of JJ's Waste & Recycling's request for a rate increase due to higher landfill tipping fees from Orange County. Per the contract, any fee modification requests must be submitted by July 1 each year. JJ's submitted their request in **mid-August**, missing the deadline by over a month. He said JJ's explained they were unaware of the increase until after the deadline because Orange County notified them late. They initially requested a 12% increase but later discussed possibly 3% or 8%. The City Manager informed them that the budget is already finalized, and that the contractor should be present to explain the request directly to Council. Since the representative was unable to attend, the Council was asked to decide whether to honor the late request or wait until next year.

Vice Mayor Partin referenced the August 8, 2023, letter from Orange County indicating that landfill rate increases were approved at that time, with the next adjustment not scheduled until October 1, 2025. The member noted that JJ's Waste should have been aware of the increase well before the July 1 contract deadline and reiterated that the City had previously asked to be notified by that date, which was also added to the new contract. Due to the missed deadline and the finalized budget, he expressed that he would not be in favor of the request.

Comm Smith recalled that during contract extension talks, JJ's asked to move the notice deadline from April to July so they could better assess rate changes, and the City agreed. The speaker added that if JJ's knew about the increase seven months ago, they should have informed the City sooner.

Comm Vertolli said that if JJs provided an exact dollar amount of the increase, not just percentages. The increases were given as percentages per ton, which made it hard to understand the total cost impact. There was confusion about whether tipping fees differ between garbage and recycling. City Council discussed that fees vary by type; residential and commercial landfill fees differ, with a 3% increase for residential and an 8% total increase. Council discussed receiving a report on the average tonnage by month to see how much we are actually paying, as well as for budgeting purposes, and a summary breakdown of the fees vs percentages.

b. Credit Card Policy

City Manager Rudometkin presented and reviewed options for the City's credit card program to determine if a better rewards system was available. After researching other programs and speaking with the City's bank, it was determined that the City does not meet the spending requirements for higher-tier cards. An alternative procurement card used by other cities was considered, but it offers no rewards. The City earns reward points on its existing credit cards, which can be redeemed for

Amazon gift cards—commonly used for purchasing City supplies. He recommends keeping the current cards and adopting a formal policy to use reward points specifically for Amazon gift cards to support operational purchases. The current point balance can be redeemed for approximately \$1,000 in Amazon credit, and ongoing points can be used in a similar manner.

Council discussed credit card options for the City. Research has shown that municipal credit cards offering cashback or rewards are limited, except through large banks, which participate in the state's P-card program. P-cards offer detailed tracking, but they do not provide cash back or rewards. Council agreed that using a card for purchases without fees is best, as it earns points and offers more flexibility than store-specific cards, like Home Depot. Concerns were raised regarding fees, tracking, and limitations due to the City's status as a municipality. It was clarified that the current card earns rewards, and the goal is to maximize benefits without incurring additional costs.

After discussion, the Council discussed the recommendation to keep the current credit cards and use reward points for Amazon gift cards. They requested that staff draft a formal policy for review, including:

- Automatically applying earned cards to the City's Amazon account.
- Using the rewards to offset City expenses.
- Including specific examples of acceptable uses (e.g., office supplies, event needs) for transparency.
- Ensuring the rewards usage is tracked and reported as part of monthly finance reports.

Vice Mayor Partin moved to table the decision for 60 days to allow for further research and development of a clearer policy and usage plan.

Comm Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 5:0.

c. K9 Donation Approval

DC Millis presented the canine donation program for approval and discussion. He said the goal is to receive authorization to accept future donations from a fundraising initiative supporting the police department's K-9 unit. The program was introduced by the Police Chief, who partnered with a company that helps law enforcement raise funds through items like calendars and magnets. While the exact amounts of donations are currently unknown, this request is to authorize accepting those donations when they come in. There was some initial confusion around the program's launch, including concerns about legitimacy when someone brought in a donation check. Chief Grimm later confirmed that the program is legitimate, and the fundraising group has worked successfully with other departments. DC Millis stated that the agency will also follow the donation policy and submit the completed donation forms for the file.

After discussion, Vice Mayor Partin I moved to approve the acceptance of a future donation from law enforcement partners in support of the Belle Isle Police Department canine program, with the understanding that the total donation amount will be reported to the council upon the fundraiser's conclusion.

Comm Smith seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 5:0.

8. Attorney's Report -na

9. City Manager's Report

a. City Manager's Report

City Manager Rudometkin provided the City Manager Work Plan and spoke on the following items;

- Upcoming Budget Hearings scheduled for September 16 and September 30. The first will set the tentative millage; the second will include final approval of the budget, millage, and fee schedule.
- KPMG has requested additional documentation beyond what was initially provided. Staff is working with them to clarify and resolve the requests to discuss the next steps.
- Governor DeSantis is exploring eliminating or reforming property taxes. No replacement revenue source has been identified. This could significantly impact small municipalities like Belle Isle. Council was urged to review the articles sent and monitor developments. The issue may be on the November 2026 ballot and could affect FY 2027 budget planning.
- Schedule a date to meet with the current lobbyist sometime in October to evaluate performance and determine whether to renew, re-bid, or consider other options like hiring a grant writer. Council expressed a desire to review the actual outcomes from lobbyist efforts over the last 4 years, especially what funds were secured. Emphasis was placed on efficiency and value in how the city spends lobbying dollars moving forward.
- Council discussed receiving quarterly reports from the Lobbyists. CM Rudometkin reminded the council that lobbyist communications go through city staff due to Sunshine Law restrictions.

- Additional forms and corrections were submitted for the Sol Grant project, including past quarterly reports and contractor documentation. He is working through each request and is confident the city will receive reimbursement, but the process is slow and complex.

b. Chief's Report

Deputy Chief Millis reported that the weekend was relatively quiet. A few anonymous calls were made about loud music, but no major incidents were reported. He shared resident concerns regarding school dismissal hours near the new boat dock area, as well as parents parking on a nearby dirt road during school pickup times. He said that the Police were present during the first few weeks of school to educate parents and discourage parking in that area. However, residents report that parents are returning to park there now that officers are no longer regularly present. Officers will look into whether the road is private and evaluate enforcement options. There are posted "No Parking" signs, but issues like standing vs. parking need to be clarified. The school has asked that if problems persist with specific vehicles or drivers, their license plates should be reported so the school can address them internally. The department will continue monitoring the situation and consider additional actions if needed.

c. Public Works Report

Phil Price reported that Duke Energy is currently trimming trees near power lines as part of their storm hardening efforts. The city is also doing its own canopy trimming in select areas, but work near power lines is Duke's responsibility. Public Works continues mowing and regular city maintenance, despite the extreme heat. He spoke briefly about sidewalk damage from construction sites, noting that staff are monitoring damage caused by contractors and ensuring repairs are made before projects are completed. Some issues are hard to address immediately if work is ongoing, but contractors are expected to fix any damage. Staff are also monitoring for damage caused by septic or concrete trucks, though this is more challenging since septic work is permitted through the Health Department.

10. Mayor's Report

Mayor Carson shared that he hoped everyone had a safe and enjoyable long weekend. He acknowledged ongoing concerns about school-related traffic and parking issues, noting that the City and Police Department are actively working with the school to address them. Mayor Carson emphasized the challenges due to limited control over parent behavior. He expressed appreciation for efforts to keep students safe in the heat and assured residents that the City is doing its best to improve the situation, even though immediate solutions are limited.

11. Commissioners' Report

- Comm Smith inquired about E-Bikes' safety following an incident involving a child riding in the street. Council discussed the current local ordinance regulating e-bikes. Attorney Pownal noted that neither the City of Belle Isle nor Orange County currently has e-bike regulations in place, and state law treats e-bikes similarly to bicycles unless they exceed certain speeds. However, Senate Bill 462, which went into effect on July 1, allows local governments to establish age requirements, require government-issued IDs for riders, and offer safety training. Council agreed that staff and legal counsel should explore options for creating an ordinance or amending the City code to address the safe use of e-bikes/scooters.
- Council thanked the staff for their continued service.

12. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mayor Carson called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, which passed unanimously at 8:25 pm.