



CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, November 04, 2025 * 6:30 PM
MINUTES

Present was:

Mayor – Jason Carson
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:

1. Call to Order and Confirmation of Quorum

Mayor Carson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., and the Clerk confirmed the presence of a quorum.

City Manager Rudometkin, Chief Grimm, Attorney Shaffer, Public Works Director Phil Price, and Clerk Heidi Peacock were also present.

2. Invocation and Pledge to Flag - Commissioner Frank Vertolli, District 1

Comm Vertolli led the invocation and Pledge to the Flag.

3. Presentations - na

4. Public Comments & Announcements

Mayor Carson opened for public comment.

- Cris Whittaker, residing at 5220 Oak Island Rd, addressed safety concerns regarding golf carts operating on the sidewalks along Hoffner Avenue. Noted that the sidewalks were previously safe for pedestrians, joggers, and children, but have become hazardous due to golf carts, especially during school rush hours. He cited incidents of carts weaving around strollers, pets, and walkers, as well as instances in which pedestrians were told to yield to carts.

Mr. Whittaker said he reviewed Ordinances 2011 and 2504, as well as Florida Statute 316.21(3), and highlighted that sidewalks must be at least 8 feet wide for legal golf cart use. Hoffner sidewalks do not meet this requirement, and FDOT has not approved exemptions. Noted confusion in ordinance enforcement, especially near Embassy Drive, where carts must transition to roads but often continue on sidewalks. He emphasized proactive safety measures rather than waiting for accidents to occur. He proposed the following for Council consideration: (1) Restrict golf carts to roadways where appropriate, (2) maintain sidewalks exclusively for pedestrians, runners, and children, and (3) consider banning golf cart use on sidewalks during peak morning hours between 7–9 a.m.

There being no further comments, Mayor Carson closed public comments.

5. Consent Items

- Approval of City Council Meeting Minutes - October 21, 2025

Mayor Carson called for a motion to approve items a and e as presented.

Comm Vertolli moved to approve the consent item as presented.

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

6. Unfinished Business

- Bing Grant Application - Regal Landing Wall Repair

City Manager Rudometkin presented a request from homeowners at Regal Landing for funding for wall repairs through the Bing Grant program. The wall has existing code violations, and the repair project will address these issues and enhance the surrounding area. Although the homeowners are not registered with an HOA, they qualify under the Bing

After further discussion, Commissioner Smith moved to re-advertise the condemnation notice, to provide the homeowner with 30 days to retrieve belongings under supervision, and to proceed with demolition after the 30-day filing date period. Commissioner Partin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously 7:0, specifying that demolition would occur 30 days from the filing of the new notice.

7. New Business

a. Approval of FDLE Drone Replacement Program Financial Assistant Agreement

Chief Grimm reported that the department was awarded a \$25,000 financial-assistance grant for the purchase of an American-made Skydio drone. Corporal Clark, serving as the department's grant manager, secured the funding. The state requires non-Chinese manufactured drones for security reasons. Because the award exceeds \$25,000, the Chief requested Council approval to proceed with the purchase.

Comm Smith moved that the City Council approve the acceptance of the FDLE drone replacement grant and award, and authorized the purchase of the Skydio X10 drone system from Accident Axon Enterprise Incorporated for \$25,000, to be reimbursed in full through the FDLE drone replacement program.

Comm Bobrowski asked if the \$25,000 covers the training. Chief Grimm said that the department already has trained and licensed drone pilots and currently operates a \$5,000 drone with daytime limitations. The new drone will allow thermal and nighttime operations. There is no cost to the City for the purchase. The department will retain the existing drone for additional daytime coverage and operational flexibility.

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

b. Military Activation Pay and Benefits Policy

Chief Grimm reported on research into military pay supplementation for city employees on active-duty orders. Under the proposal, the City would cover the difference between an employee's City salary and their military pay, based on verified military pay statements. This would not increase the Police Department's overall budget, as funds are already allocated per salary line item, and the City also saves on insurance costs while members are on active duty. The program would support recruitment and retention and apply to all City departments. Examples of prior deployments showed varying pay gaps depending on rank and years of service. The Chief noted this approach ensures employees are made whole financially while serving in the military.

Comm Bobrowski asked whether the City's Police Department payroll budget will cover military pay differences without increasing overall costs. The program serves as a recruitment and retention tool. Chief Grimm noted that the program allows the city to subsidize military pay differences for officers without additional net cost, as each officer's salary remains budgeted, making it a cost-neutral recruitment tool. Anytime you're activated, you go on Title 10 wars, and your insurance is 100% covered by the military for six months before and six months after. For family coverage, the only thing that sometimes happens is that officers or soldiers forget to re-enroll in TRICARE Select, and they end up on TRICARE Prime when they get activated. So the city's insurance is canceled.

It's a super win, and it does make us a super friendly military, because this isn't just for the police department. This would cover all the departments here in the city. So now you're bringing in some veterans who know that if they get deployed, they'll be taken care of, they'll be made whole if they have to serve their country.

Comm Bobrowski questioned whether the 240 hours of annual training are mandatory and suggested it should be stipulated as such to avoid optional or unrelated courses. Chief Grimm noted that the 240 hours of yearly training generally cover one weekend per month and two weeks per year, primarily for deployments lasting more than 30 days. Most training is already accounted for in the city's budget, so no additional city expense is expected. Employees must decide whether to participate in extra training, which the military would compensate.

City Manager Rudometkin said this will be included as a supplement to our personnel policy when approved.

After discussion, Comm Lowell moved to approve the proposed military activation pay and benefits policy for formal adoption and implementation. Comm Bobrowski seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 7:0.

c. Bing Grant Application - Belle Isle Pines HOA

City Manager Rudometkin presented the Bing Grant application for Belle Isle Pines. He said the existing bollards on the island are deteriorating and unsecured. The HOA would like to replace them with highly durable, impact-resistant bollards, similar to those used at fire stations.

Allen Haskins, residing at 1832 Winddrift Road and HOA President, explained that Belle Isle Pines is a voluntary HOA with limited funding, maintaining only irrigation and landscaping. The neighborhood entrance island and existing bollards have been repeatedly damaged, and the current bollards were never properly installed. The HOA proposes replacing them with high-impact, custom bollards and plans to manage installation in-house. Funding details are