



## CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL CITY COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP & COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, August 5, 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

Mayor Carson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., and the Clerk confirmed the presence of a quorum. Acting City Manager Travis Grimm, DC Millis, Public Works Director Phil Price, and City Clerk Yolanda Quiceno were also present.

#### 2. Budget Discussion FY 2025-2026

Mayor Carson opened the Budget presentation and discussion.

Acting City Manager Grimm opens the floor for Council questions and discussions on the budget, noting the council's low millage rate over the past 15 years. He explains the significant increase in fire costs over the past two years of 42%, projecting a further increase in the upcoming year. Comm Lance inquired about the historical percentage increase in fire costs. Acting CM Grimm said he does not have that information at the moment, but it will be provided later.

Comm Partin said he received some resident concerns on the 4% COLA, comparing it to the federal cost of living standard, and seeking clarification on its purpose. Acting CM Grimm noted that with the 19% increase in health insurance, the employees may see less. Finance Director Richardson explains the CPI (Consumer Price Index) for the current year, which is 2.7%, and the rationale behind the 4% COLA, highlighting the need to catch up with inflation and the deficit from previous increases since 2021. She further noted that the concerns about the lack of merit raises over the past few years, noting that there have been no reviews or recognition for exceptional performance.

Acting CM Grimm discusses the total increase for the 4% COLA, excluding law enforcement and sworn officers in the Pay Plan, amounting to \$56,396. Comm Lance mentions the negotiated agreement with the county by the previous city manager to pay 92% of the fire increase, not 100%. He confirms that the city has been deficit spending over the past few years, budgeting more than its revenues, and depleting its reserves. Finance Director Richardson said in the last two years, there has been a deficit because the revenues have not kept up. Receiving the ARPA Funds was helpful to the City's budgeting of projects.

Comm Vertolli shared concerns about the city's projected fund balance and the public's perception of the reserves, suggesting a lower target of 20% of reserves instead of the recommended 25%. If the reserves are met the following year, then the City can consider lowering the ad non valorem.

Comm Partin spoke briefly on the CIP, noting that the amounts listed for various projects are based on educated guesses rather than firm bids. Comm Partin said many of the items listed on the CIP Plan are a "wish list" unless matching funds are allocated. He said, for instance, details on the HVAC replacement costs, explaining the need for a quote from the industry to ensure accurate budgeting. In the future, he is proposing that the staff establish a process and supporting materials for new line items for Council approval. Comm Lowell said there are three units at City Hall, and the total cost is to replace two units. Public Works Director Price confirmed that City Hall has three units, and the total costs were approximately the amount discussed, plus 10% incidentals, with an HVAC technician. Public Works Director Price said quotes are only good for a limited time, and it would not have been the best use of resources because the cost may go up once we are ready to move forward. Discussion ensued on paving costs and the paving plan process.

Comm Bobrowski spoke briefly on adding new staff to the budget and asked if the PW Department would be able to function without additional staff. PW Director Price discussed the challenges of maintaining city services with a limited public works staff, emphasizing the need for extra personnel to cover vacations and non-scheduled tasks.

Comm Bobrowski spoke about the cost-effectiveness of possibly outsourcing park maintenance to a landscaping company. PW Director Price said outsourcing the service would not provide the same quality of service, which was why we started to service our

parks in-house. He highlights the importance of retaining experienced employees to maintain high service standards, despite the additional costs.

Acting City Manager presented the budget calendar and reviewed the upcoming budget meeting dates and the adoption of the final millage rate.

Comm Bobrowski asked the following for clarification and proposed cost-saving measures. She recommended lowering the COLA to 3% to alleviate the burden on residents, noting that many are on fixed incomes, reducing holiday pay, reducing the crossing guard increase from .75 to .50 an hour, and aligning election costs with Orange County. Acting CM Grimm explains that the \$800,000 increase in fire costs over two years is the primary driver of the budget, and the city needs to recoup the lost funds through significant measures rather than small cuts. Comm Bobrowski said that with small cuts, we may be able to approve a smaller increase than 0.5. Comm Bobrowski noted that she would like to know if it is possible to include the Fire fees collected as a straight non-ad valorem fee, so it can show that the increase is from the County. Acting CM Grimm said that anything less would still not cover the fire increase, and regardless of how it is collected, the City residents will still be paying the Fire fee of \$2.9m.

Comm Bobrowski asked for clarification on 513-professional services and planning services line items. Finance Director Richardson said the fees are for operational systems, Edmunds (Accounting), Laserfiche (Documents), and Simplifile.

Public Works Director Price stated that he has decreased his budget 27% to offset the fire increases. The most significant increase is in the CIP. The Budget Committee reviewed the budget with many questions and approved the proposed budget 6:1.

Mayor Carson opened for Citizen comments. Rick Miller stated that disabled veterans are exempt from property taxes; however, they are required to pay service fees (trash, water, and ad valorem fees). He cautioned the Council about decisions moving forward.

Council discussed staff retention, longevity, and the importance of continued services. Council noted that the city's current budget is conservative, especially for traffic fines and red-light camera revenue, which could exceed projected amounts. Council indicated that it has been a disservice to the residents not to have increased the millage in the past 15 years. After discussion, they noted the importance of educating the public about the budget and the need for a millage increase to maintain city services, as well as the reasons behind it.

### **3. Adjournment of Budget Workshop**

There being no further business, Mayor Carson called for a motion to adjourn the Budget Workshop, which passed unanimously at 7:08 pm.

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### **1. Call to Order**

Mayor Carson called the meeting to order at 7:10 p.m., and the Clerk confirmed the presence of a quorum.

Acting City Manager Travis Grimm, Attorney Pownall, DC Millis, Public Works Director Phil Price, and City Clerk Yolanda Quiceno were also present.

### **2. Invocation and Pledge to Flag**

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

### **3. Public Comments & Announcements - na**

### **4. Presentations - na**

### **5. Consent Items**

A. Approval of the City Council Meeting Minutes - July 15, 2025

B. Approval of the City Council Meeting Minutes - July 29, 2025

C. PD Request for Surplus of Damaged Equipment

**Mayor Carson called for a motion to approve the consent items**

**Comm Lowell requested to pull item B for discussion.**

**Comm Partin moved to approve items A and C as presented.**

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

Comm Lowell corrected the minutes as follows,

Page 21 reads, "City Clerk confirmed that the budget workshop and Council meeting are scheduled for ~~Monday~~, August 5<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 6:00 PM."

Should read, "City Clerk confirmed that the budget workshop and Council meeting are scheduled for Tuesday, August 5<sup>th</sup>, beginning at 6:00 PM."

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

**6. Unfinished Business - na**

**7. New Business**

- a. **RESOLUTION NO. 25-08 - A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE BUDGET FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING OCTOBER 1, 2024, AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2025, PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Acting City Manager Grimm read Resolution 25-08 by Title.

**Comm Smith moved to adopt Resolution 25-08 as presented.**

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

- a. **Review and Approval of Daetwyler Shore Bing Grant**

Acting City Manager Grimm presented the Daetwyler Shore Bing Grant and provided details on the available funds and the three quotes received for the project.

Ms. Dodson, residing at 3114 Trentwood Blvd, spoke to the grant presentation and said the playground will create a safe environment for all residents to gather.

**After discussion, Comm Lance moved to approve the Bing Grant in the amount of 8,658.00 with (District 4-\$7,500 and Mayor-\$1,158). Comm Lowell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 7:0.**

**8. Attorney's Report - na**

**9. City Manager's Report**

- a. **City Manager's Report**

Acting City Manager Grimm provided the City Manager Work Plan. He noted that the City Manager is away taking care of a personal matter.

- b. **Chief's Report**

DC Chief Millis provided and reported that the Stats will be presented at the next meeting. He noted the following,

- Upcoming school year and the challenges expected in the first few weeks due to traffic.
- Staggered start and pick up times, and a new side street near the football field will be used for parent drop-offs to reduce congestion on city streets.
- The new SRO office at the school will house additional resources like tactical shields and long guns, improving response times.
- Implemented state-mandated new policy for resource availability at schools, and the equipment is now stored in a biometric safe accessible only to SROs.

- c. **Public Works Report**

Phil Price reported the following,

- Provided a brief update on Public Works activities, including mowing, sidewalk repair, and canopy trimming.

**10. Mayor's Report**

Mayor Carson said he appreciates the work of Public Works and mentioned the positive impact of younger families moving into the community. He highlighted the importance of maintaining a level-headed approach during discussions, especially during budget workshops. He thanked the Public Works team for their efforts and mentioned the importance of their work, which often goes unnoticed.

**11. Commissioners' Report**

- Commissioner Vertolli suggested consulting a lawyer to explore the possibility of Orange County billing residents directly for the fire tax. He also proposes contacting candidates for Orange County Mayor to speak at city meetings before the election.
- Comm Bobrowski inquired about the city's credit card policy and the possibility of switching to a cashback option. Discussion includes the potential benefits of an Amazon card for cashback on city purchases. Finance Director Richardson explained that research was conducted on credit card options, and the city is considering a cashback option because of the current rewards-based card's issues.
- Comm Lance asked about the installation of a new speed limit sign on Via Flora. PW Director Price said that the sign has not been installed yet.

**12. Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mayor Carson called for a motion to adjourn the meeting, which passed unanimously at 8:00 pm.