



CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, February 17, 2026 * 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 (conf call)
District 5 Commissioner – Beth Lowell (conf call)
District 6 Commissioner – Stan Smith
District 7 Commissioner – Jim Partin

Absent was:

1. **Call to Order and Confirmation of Quorum**

Mayor Carson called the Executive Session to order at 5:30 p.m. for the Executive session.

2. **Invocation and Pledge to Flag** - Commissioner Jim Partin, District Comm Partin led the invocation and Pledge to the Flag.

3. **Business – Executive Session Case No. 2025-CA-000848-O**

4. **Reopen Public Meeting for Termination of Executive Session**

5. **City Council Meeting**

Mayor Carson called the City Council meeting to order, and the City Clerk, Yolanda Quiceno, confirmed the presence of a quorum. City Manager (CM) Rudometkin, Chief Grimm, Attorney Langley, Public Works Director Phil Price, Finance Director Tracey Richardson, and City Clerk Yolanda Quiceno were also present.

Attorney Langley stated that, based on the meeting, he is not requesting any action from the Council at this time.

6. **Presentations**

Mayor Carson opened for presentations.

CM Rudometkin announced that the Council approved the compensation class study and that it commenced on October 1, 2026. He has tasked Chief Grimm and Tracy Richardson to work with our third-party vendor. Britt, for being here, Evergreen solutions for this comp study. Chief Grimm introduced Britt Gamble, Project Manager from Evergreen Solutions.

Ms. Gamble presented the Compensation Study and noted that the City of Belle Isle, in alignment with its commitment to attracting and retaining a high-quality workforce, identified the need to update its compensation and classification system for employees. The goal of this initiative was to ensure that the City's systems reflect current best practices, promote equitable pay, and remain competitive within the broader labor market. Ms. Gamble presented the Study Goals, Project Phases, Internal/External Interviews, and Recommendations.

Ms. Gamble presented the following recommendations for consideration:

1. Maintain the current classification structure; update titles that do not reflect the full scope and/or responsibility of the position
2. Conduct annual reviews and updates of job descriptions and Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) exemption statuses to ensure continued alignment with duties and responsibilities
3. Adopt a market-competitive, unified step-based pay plan for all City employees, including sworn officers
4. Slot all positions into the pay plan based on internal and external equity
5. Transition employee salaries into the new pay plan using a method that alleviates compression and aligns with the City's fiscal capacity
6. Conduct small-scale salary surveys as needed to assess the market competitiveness of hard-to-fill classifications with retention issues and adjust pay grade assignments if necessary
7. Conduct a comprehensive classification and compensation study every three to five years
8. Adopt a formal, written compensation philosophy supported by a structured rubric for evaluating relevant experience
9. Review and revise policies and practices for moving employees' salaries through the pay plans, including procedures for determining salaries of newly hired employees and employees who have been promoted, demoted, or transferred to a different classification

Q: Comm Lowell asked about the underlying raw data used to develop this information. She asked if the consultant could explain how they arrived at the raw data and how the data was collected, matched, and aggregated to generate the averages and percentiles presented.

A: Ms. Gamble gave examples and said they matched positions based on duties, aiming for a 75–80% overlap to ensure a valid comparison. The data is aggregated and analyzed to produce averages and percentiles, both adjusted and unadjusted for the cost of living.

Q: Comm Lowell asked if she would be able to provide, out of the 20 cities used, how many of them are comparable to the City of Belle Isle.

A: Ms. Gamble said she can get the research and provide an answer to the staff to relay to the Council. Discussion ensued between similar cities, staff, and titles.

Q: Comm Bobrowski said she doesn't see how you can say our public works director should be paid the same as a public works director in a city of 68,000. Comm Bobrowski said the City of Edgewood could have been used since it is actually smaller than Belle Isle.

A: Ms. Gamble said we matched positions based on duties, not titles. For example, a Public Works Director here may perform the same scope of work as a supervisor in a larger city. Our comparisons are based on the actual responsibilities of the role, not the job title.

Q: Comm Partin asked how they look at benefits from 401K and health plans compared to other cities. He also asked if the benefits were included in the report.

A: Ms. Gamble said they conducted a comprehensive benefits survey comparing the city's offerings, health plans, retirement contributions, PTO, holidays, etc., to market averages. The results help the city evaluate and balance benefits for current and future employees, considering workforce demographics and succession planning. CM Rudometkin stated that the study was for classification and compensation, and benefits were not part of the study.

Q: Comm Lance noted that, based on his 47 years in the workforce, older generations valued benefits and time off more, while today's workforce prioritizes pay above all else.

A: Ms. Gamble explained that older employees value benefits for retirement security, while younger workers prioritize pay and often job-hop for raises. She emphasized that a transparent pay and step plan helps employees plan for retirement and ensures budget stability, and that paying competitive salaries retains experienced staff, reduces training costs, and avoids costly mistakes.

There being no further questions, Mayor Carson closed the presentation session.

Chief Grimm said being the largest department in the city with 23 employees over there, 23 officers, 26 employees total, his presentation is more from the heart. He stated that the salary study is not about a single department. The salary study is citywide, not department-specific, and was requested by the Budget Committee. It addresses current employee compensation and future planning, noting that the last study, conducted in 2016, left the city behind market rates. The proposed plan would phase in adjustments: an initial increase around April to align with market pay, followed by annual pay grade increases in October. This approach allows for predictable budgeting, supports succession planning, and helps attract and retain experienced staff for critical city roles. The study ensures salaries remain competitive, benefiting both employees and the long-term operation of city services.

CM Rudometkin recommended moving forward with the proposed approach from the classification and compensation group and drew the Council's attention to the related agenda items.

Comm Vertolli asked whether the Council approves the recommendation, what will dictate that rate next year, and what if the City comes upon hard times in two years. Chief Grimm explained that each pay grade includes a step program that continues annually, with periodic market reviews every 3–5 years to ensure alignment with other cities. The approach reflects lessons from the previous plan, adjusting salaries to market trends while recognizing that non-police positions generally grow more slowly. Chief Grimm noted that, similar to the police plan, the Council retains discretion to freeze step increases during difficult financial periods, and employees understand that adjustments such as COLAs or step increases may be reduced or delayed, with the possibility of catching up once conditions improve.

Attorney Langley said the Council can put language in the approval document that accounts for the fact that every year you have a budget, and you're approving the maximum pay that you're paying everyone, you just make sure that you approve the start plan with that language that accommodates freezing and annual discretionary budget appropriations.

Comm Partin asked for clarification on what the Council would be voting on and asked what it would cost the City. Chief Grimm explained that while exact costs cannot be guaranteed, they will work with the Finance Department to provide the best forecast for the city. The presentation was intended to gather Council feedback to guide the project, with updated information expected by the 17th of next month.

Comm Lowell moved to accept the classification compensation study findings and direct staff to prepare a phase compensation alignment plan that adjusts positions to market and transitions all future step adjustments to a uniform October 1 cycle with fiscal projections to be presented on March 17, for Council action. Seconded by Comm Lance.

Comm Smith asked whether the Budget Committee has or will review all of this prior to the March 17th meeting. CM Rudometkin stated that this would only be done if the Council directs the staff to do so. He noted that the Budget Committee would see it in the budget as part of the new fiscal year's review.

Mayor Carson noted that the step plan provides standardized increases rather than individual performance-based adjustments, effectively incorporating cost-of-living considerations into a predictable, forecastable labor and expenditure plan.

After further discussion, the motion passed unanimously.

7. Public Comments & Announcements

Mayor Carson opened for public comments and announcements.

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

8. Consent Items

- a. Approval of the City Council Meeting Minutes – February 3, 2026
- b. January 2026 Monthly Reports

Comm Smith moved to approve the consent items as presented.

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

9. Unfinished Business

- a. Review Lancaster House lease with Pioneer Days

CM Rudometkin directed Council to page 148 regarding the Lancaster lease and fence requirements. He stated that he met with representatives from Lancaster and CCA to discuss the timing and design of the fence installation. CCA agreed that the existing chain link fence may remain during exterior rehabilitation, with the required six-foot steel perimeter fence to be installed no later than December 2026, or before the CCA gym opens, whichever occurs first. CCA declined to amend the previously approved requirement for fencing on all four sides, despite Lancaster's interest in installing a white picket fence on two sides. The draft lease reflects the Council-approved amendment requiring a six-foot steel fence consistent with CCA's existing fencing. The draft will be sent to Lancaster for review, and any further requests or changes will be returned to Council for consideration.

Comm Lance asked if the City Manager would be able to instruct Mr. Morgan to try to lobby to get the change approved by the CCA Board. He added that putting a six-foot-high fence around a historical building is going to make it look more like a prison than a nice home from the 1800s. CM Rudometkin stated that staff would not instruct the lessee to lobby CCA but advised that any request for changes, including potential cost sharing for the fence, would need to be addressed directly with CCA. Staff presented the draft lease language reflecting the approved fence requirements and noted that this version will be provided to the lessee.

Comm Partin noted that Comm Lance may be too close to this project and does not believe he should speak to Mr. Morgan regarding this issue on behalf of the Council unless the Council gives permission to do so. If Mr. Morgan has any questions, he should contact the City Manager. Comm Partin said there should be no more stumbling blocks in the way of completing this project. The Council agreed long ago that this was the plan. CM Rudometkin noted that the issue is the cost of the fence, noting the lessee has indicated they do not have the funds. The City will not pay for the fence, as previously established. Staff met with CCA in an effort to assist, but the existing agreement remains in place.

10. New Business

- a. Consideration for Appointment to Special Events Board – Sandy Hartley
- b. Consideration for Appointment to Special Events Board – Joan Johnston

CM Rudometkin welcomed and introduced the two applicants.

Comm Lowell moved to appoint Sandy Hartley and Joan Johnston to the Special Events Committee.

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

- a. Sponsorship for Servants Heart Against Hunger 5K

CM Rudometkin presented the sponsorship for Servants Heart Against Hunger 5K.

After discussion, Comm Bobrowski moved to sponsor the Servants Hearts 5k Against Hunger at the Silver level for \$1,000, seconded by Comm Lowell. Motion passed unanimously 7:0.

11. Attorney's Report

Attorney Langley reported that following Council's approval in January to initiate dispute resolution with Orange County regarding maintenance jurisdiction of a portion of Jetport Drive, the County requested additional time to evaluate the matter. On February 12, the City received a letter from Orange County stating they will agree to maintain Jetport Drive at this time, although they maintain their position on the underlying issue. The County has requested confirmation that the City will withdraw from the dispute resolution process. The City is seeking additional clarification and documentation to solidify that the maintenance responsibility is formalized before taking further action.

CM Rudometkin noted that while Orange County will maintain Jetport Drive, maps and 311 records still show City ownership, which could create future confusion. The City is seeking clarification and formal documentation to ensure long-term maintenance responsibility and prevent the issue from reverting to the City. The outcome is viewed positively, even if only the current letter is provided.

12. City Manager's Report

a. City Manager's Report and Work Plan

CM Rudometkin gave an update on the following:

- 3904 Arajo Court – CM Rudometkin reported that Mr. Bernard was sent a memo requiring payment of fees and fines by March 4; if unpaid, demolition will proceed without further Council approval. Any extension to build the house will require proof of payment and Council consideration.
- The Class and Compensation study will return to the agenda on March 17.
- RFPs are scheduled to go out in March, with results to follow.
- Sol Avenue reimbursement: DEP will accept a compliance letter from staff confirming contractor compliance. Once received, staff will finalize and submit the reimbursement package. Outstanding funds from past projects (approx. \$140,000) are expected soon, though timing remains uncertain due to the complexity and delays of prior reimbursements.

b. Chief's Report

Chief Grimm announced that the Arbor Day event was a success and a great opportunity to showcase vendors. The Agency is working on producing a dashboard flyer showing up-to-date stats at a later date.

c. Public Works Report

Phil Price, the Public Works Director, reported the following,

- Hoffner Avenue delineators: Orange County will extend the concrete barrier farther west to address issues near Wawa. Timeline pending; additional signage may be added.
- Conway Road/Isle Vista turn lanes: Staff reached out to the City of Orlando for potential delineators; follow-up expected next week.
- Dog park benches: Plans underway to install benches inside the fenced area; potential donations being explored.
- Jetport Drive: Ongoing review and coordination.
- Conway Lakes subdivision: Interior work nearly complete; paving and concrete aprons scheduled next week. Pipe near the church is storage/bypass; project expected to finish in 2–3 weeks.
- Sod installation: Dormant Bahia sod has been laid; it will recover with rain and warmer temperatures.

13. Mayor's Report

Mayor Carson thanked the staff for their work on the compensation study and city operations. Praised staff for courteous service and responsiveness, including Public Works and administrative teams. Mayor Carson requested that all meeting audio and video, including older P&Z meetings, be made accessible on the city website to promote transparency. He briefly noted the success of recent city events.

14. Commissioners' Report

The Mayor and Council expressed appreciation to City staff, including Public Works and the Police Department, for their continued efforts.

Comm Vertolli expressed his frustration with the streaming of Council meetings and said it must be addressed. The City Clerk noted that no video will be available; the audio will be posted on the website in the morning. CM Rudometkin provided an update on the new fiber optic installation and future streaming on YouTube.

Comm Lance reminded everyone to attend the Pioneer Day Festival at Cypress Grove Park on Saturday and Sunday – there's plenty to do for children and families.

Comm Smith stated that a resident contacted him about a neighbor dropping bags of dog poop and his waste containers, and was afraid that it would prevent JJ's from picking them up because they were now contaminated. He said he would like to know if it can be addressed by the staff.

15. Adjournment

There being no further business, the Mayor called for adjournment, unanimously approved at 8:40 pm.