

CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

321 WALNUT STREET, GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 04, 2025 – 6:00 PM



MINUTES

Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag - **Chaplain Marshall MacClellan, GCSPD**

Roll Call

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor Matt Johnson, Vice Mayor Ed Gaw (via Teams), Council Member Glee Glisson, Council Member Cheryl Starnes, Council Member Darren Stutts

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: L.J. Arnold, III, City Attorney, Steve Kennedy, City Manager, Mike Null, Assistant City Manager, Erin West, City Clerk

Mayor to call on members of the audience wishing to address the Council on matters not on the Agenda.

1. Alan Stevenson 3691 Winged Foot Cir. GCS advised he was disturbed by excessive noise from a festival at Vera Francis Park and while it exceeded normal noise limits, the event had been granted a special exception. He advised he did not support the decision and asked for consideration of the impact on nearby residents.
2. Christina Bonner 814 Cove St. GCS advised she was having difficulties communicating with City staff and spoke about her concern over a phone call from City personnel based on a misunderstanding about legal representation and denied hiring an attorney.
3. Diane Whiteman 723 N. Magnolia Ave. GCS advised residents to attend Council meetings and not rely on inaccurate online information, disputed claims of financial mismanagement, and expressed support for the City Council, City Manager, and staff.

Mayor Johnson advised that Ms. Wang had submitted her resignation and thanked her for her professionalism, financial expertise, and leadership. He recognized the hard work and dedication of Mr. Kennedy and Mr. Null, stating his confidence in Mr. Null as the interim City Manager.

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

1. Commander Promotion **Chief Hines**
Sergeant Austin Graham
Chief Hines speaks and swears in Sergeant Graham.

PRESENTATIONS

2. FMPA - November 2025 **Bob Page**
Mr. Page presents the November report and advised he would be unable to attend the FMPA meeting on December 13th. He requested that Council appoint an alternate representative to attend virtually.
Vice Mayor Gaw advised he would be willing to step in as the alternate if Council approved.

Emergency motion that Mr. Gaw be the alternate for the meeting in December for FMPA.

Motion made by Council Member Starnes, Seconded by Council Member Glisson.

Voting Yea: Mayor Johnson, Vice Mayor Gaw, Council Member Glisson, Council Member Starnes, Council Member Stutts

Assistant City Manager Mike Null recognized the City's Electric Department for receiving the Florida Municipal Electric Association's Building Strong Communities Award, which honors utilities that provide exceptional community involvement beyond daily operations. The department was commended for its participation in community events, including holiday decorations, parades, Riverfest, City Christmas tree lighting, and educational outreach through Florida City Government Week and local school and county events.

CONSENT AGENDA

All matters under the consent agenda are considered to be routine by the city council and will be enacted by one motion in the form listed below. There will be no separate discussion on these items. If discussion is desired, that item will be removed from the consent agenda and will be considered separately. Backup documentation and staff recommendations have been previously submitted to the city council on these items.

Council Member Glisson pulled item 5

Motion to approve Consent Agenda 3 through 11 minus 5.

Motion made by Council Member Stutts, Seconded by Council Member Starnes.

Voting Yea: Mayor Johnson, Vice Mayor Gaw, Council Member Glisson, Council Member Starnes, Council Member Stutts

3. City Council approval of the following 2026 Food Truck Friday dates. **Kimberly Thomas**
March 6th, April 4th, May 1st, June 5th, July 3rd, August 7th, September 4th, October 2nd, November 6th.
4. City Council approval of Minutes. **Erin West**
Special Sessions: 9/3/2025 and 9/11/2025
5. City Council approval of Resolution No. R-29-2025, urging the Florida state legislature to enact legislation to provide a public records exemption for municipal clerks and employees who perform municipal elections work or have any part in code enforcement functions of a city. **Erin West**

Council Member Glisson advised she spoke to City Clerk Erin West about this item and would like her to give some information on this item.

Ms. West advised this item relates to proposed state legislation initiated by the Florida Association of City Clerks to address safety concerns for clerks who administer elections due to some clerks having faced threats and harassment. Legislation was filed last year but was not passed so it has been refiled this year. She advised that adoption of the resolution would formally express the City's support.

Motion to approve Consent Agenda item 5.

Motion made by Council Member Glisson, Seconded by Council Member Stutts.

Voting Yea: Mayor Johnson, Vice Mayor Gaw, Council Member Glisson, Council Member Starnes, Council Member Stutts

6. City Council acceptance of the water and sewer utilities for Rookery Phase 2A. *Scott Schultz*
7. City Council appointment of Mr. Michael D. Null as Interim City Manager effective November 15, 2025. *Dee Jones*
8. City Council approval of the Veterans Day Proclamation. *Erin West*
9. City Council approval of a task order for Gustafson Regional Park trail design to Toco Engineering, A Baxter & Woodman Company in the amount of \$54,000.00. *Greg Bauer*
10. City Council approval of invoice # 107616 in the amount of \$56,500.51 to Accurate Power & Technology for installation of the upgraded generator at City Hall. *Scott Schultz*
11. City Council approval to accept the COPS grant award and authorize the Chief of Police to sign on behalf of the City as the Authorized Representative. *Chief Hines*

COUNCIL BUSINESS

12. Lien Reduction Request – 1104 Center Street *Christopher Coppola*

Code Enforcement Officer Chris Coppola presented a lien reduction request for the property, outlining the history of the code violation related to an unpermitted fence. The violation was first cited in November 2022, with a compliance deadline of February 1, 2023, after which daily fines of \$25 accrued due to noncompliance. Despite multiple notices and hearings, the required permit was not obtained until May 15, 2025, at which time fines were stopped, totaling \$21,043.50. A lien was imposed by the Special Magistrate on March 19, 2025 and recorded the same day. He advised estimated administrative costs of approximately \$377.15 and that ownership changed in name only, with the same management and address throughout the case. Mr. Coppola advised notice had been properly provided since 2022 and recommended denial of the lien reduction request due to the prolonged noncompliance.

Caleb Braddock a representative of Progress Residential, addressed the lien reduction request and advised he could not explain why the violation was not resolved previously but the company is committed to improving municipal compliance. He advised that Progress Residential has established a dedicated department to work directly with cities to address issues promptly and apologized for the situation.

Council discussed the lien reduction request, with staff advising no recommendation for reduction and leaving the decision to Council. Council Members debated appropriate penalty amounts, weighing fairness, prolonged noncompliance, and support for code enforcement. Consensus leaned toward a reduced lien that still reflects accountability and recovery of City costs.

Joe Sobotta 212 North St. GCS advised that fence ordinances are common and shared a personal code enforcement experience, questioning why the City allowed the violation to continue from 2022 to 2025. He spoke about the need for timely and consistent enforcement, fair treatment of all property owners, and support for maintaining a fence ordinance.

Building Official John Cioffi explained that code enforcement acts at Council's direction and that the City's magistrate process is generally lenient, providing ample time for compliance. He

advised that in this case the City did not fail to act, but rather received no response from the property owner, resulting in prolonged noncompliance and higher accumulated fines.

Council identified three potential lien reduction amounts for consideration, and Vice Mayor Gaw suggested proceeding with the amount proposed by Councilwoman Starnes as the most defensible option.

Motion for a lien reduction to \$10,000.

Motion made by Council Member Starnes, Seconded by Council Member Glisson.

City Attorney Arnold recommended conditioning any lien reduction on payment within a set timeframe, with the lien reverting to the original amount if unpaid, advising this approach has been effective and that foreclosure would otherwise be the City's remaining option.

Council discussion followed about a reasonable amount of time.

Amended motion to add a 60 day pay time to the city in the amount \$10,000 or it will revert back to the original amount of \$21,043.50.

Motion made by Council Member Starnes, Seconded by Council Member Glisson.

Voting Yea: Mayor Johnson, Vice Mayor Gaw, Council Member Glisson, Council Member Starnes

Voting Nay: Council Member Stutts

13. City Manager & City Attorney Reports / Correspondence

The City Manager and City Attorney made comments regarding various city activities, events, operations, and projects.

14. City Council Reports / Correspondence

The City Council made comments regarding various city activities, events, operations, and projects.

Vice Mayor Gaw requested that staff place on the next agenda a discussion of Charter residency requirements for the City Manager and City Attorney, speaking about recruitment challenges and other cities that allow Council to waive residency requirements, as well as potential changes to allow the City Attorney or City Clerk to administer oaths of office.

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

Daniel M. Johnson, Mayor

Attest:

Erin West, City Clerk