

# CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

321 WALNUT STREET, GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA  
TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2025 – 6:00 PM



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## MINUTES

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

Roll Call

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Steven Kelley, Vice Mayor Thomas Smith, Council Member Connie Butler, Council Member Ed Gaw, Council Member Matt Johnson

**STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:** L.J. Arnold, III, City Attorney, Steve Kennedy, City Manager, Mike Null, Assistant City Manager, Kimberly Thomas, Executive Assistant

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

1. Felicia Hampshire 508 Franklin St. thanks everyone who attended the Women in History celebration and speaks about some upcoming events that will come to the Council for approval and the Soul Food Festival.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

1. First Reading of Ordinance No. O-03-2025 amending the Future Land Use for parcel 017678-000-00 located in the 600 block of N Pine Ave:  
From: Neighborhood To: Public *Michael Daniels*

City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-03-2025 by title.

Development Services Director Michael Daniels presents and advises his presentation is for items 1 and 2.

Mayor Kelley opens the public hearing.

Felicia Hampshire 508 Franklin St. asks if this the same property that John Sanders is building on? Or is it just vacant property that hasn't been used?

Mayor Kelley advises Mr. Sanders's building is a street over from this property.

Ms. Hampshire asks what institutional refers to.

Mr. Daniels advises the property will be for governmental type uses.

Following no further public comments, Mayor Kelley closes the public hearing.

Council Member Gaw advises he has seen talk of St. John's County revising its tree-cutting practices with two main goals: reducing the time between clear-cutting a lot and starting development, and preserving natural vegetation buffers, including significant trees, particularly along public-facing or adjacent borders. The focus is on maintaining existing tree lines, especially for lots with interior access, to minimize environmental impact.

Mr. Daniels advises if you look in the area, there is a natural tree buffer along Pine, which is expected to be preserved, pending details from the site development plan. Developers are required to meet large tree preservation standards, aiming to save high-quality trees on the site.

Council Member Butler asks if there is a tree buffer to the property south of the proposed site?

Mr. Daniels advises there is also a lot to the south that is zoned RPO that is undeveloped and there is a lot in the corridor that is developed. There is a mix of residential and office zoning in the area.

Caed Risinger, Real Estate Manager for Clay County speaks to the Council concerning the property.

Council Member Gaw asks Mr. Risinger about any regulations along the lines about expanding significant vegetation on the lots?

Mr. Risinger advises there would be discussion at Planning and Zoning about vegetative barriers and buffers, but he doesn't know how it compares with the new requirements that they're discussing in St. John's County.

Mr. Risinger advises the team was at the property discussing the topic of assessing which trees they might have to keep and which trees they might consider having to part with.

Vice Mayor Smith advises there is concern about the dwindling number of lots and green spaces, particularly for a lot across from a park. He strongly opposes clear-cutting and advocates for preserving the area by avoiding such practices.

Mr. Rising advises the discussion that was had indicates a preference for selective clearing rather than clear-cutting, aiming to open up some space while preserving many trees. This approach is under active consideration.

Mayor Kelley expressed concern about the gradual loss of green space due to development on a small lot. He spoke about the inefficiencies in the proposed development, particularly regarding parking, as tree preservation requirements may limit parking space. He would like to see a strategic plan for the county to clarify the vision and priorities.

Mr. Risinger advises there is a general shortage of parking in Green Cove, especially during events or increased activity at the courthouse, which places additional demand on parking lots near the site in question.

**Motion to approve first reading of Ordinance O-03-2025, to amend the future land use of Parcel ID 017678-000-00 from Neighborhood to Public for form and legality.**

Motion made by Council Member Johnson, Seconded by Council Member Butler.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

2. First Reading of Ordinance O-04-2025 amending the zoning for parcel 017678-000-00 located in the 600 block of N Pine Ave: From: Residential Professional Office (RPO) To: Institutional (INS) **Michael Daniels**

City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-04-2025 by title.

Development Services Director Michael Daniels advises his presentation was for items 1 and 2 and staff recommends approval.

Mayor Kelley opens the public hearing.

Following no public comments, Mayor Kelley closes the public hearing.

Council Member Gaw speaks about the Development Services Building and there being a wall put in for a buffer and questions a buffer being needed for this item.

Mr. Daniels advises there's a natural tree buffer going up. There will be a row of trees and there is green space between the edge of the parking area and Pine Avenue. He advises that a buffer will be part of the site plan.

Council Member Gaw asks if there has been any conversations about a wall.

Mr. Daniels advises the wall requirement, part of the TCC zoning district, does not apply to an institutional-zoned site. This is a zoning change and any details on buffer areas and tree preservation will be addressed when a site plan is submitted.

Mayor Kelley advises the site has a natural, though unintentional and overgrown, buffer that effectively screens it. He suggests that before the second reading, the county should provide testimony on its plans.

Council Member Butler is concerned about the gradual loss of land due to incremental development as the county grows. She acknowledged the need for growth but stressed the importance of balance. She agrees with Mayor Kelley on having county representatives clarify their intentions and future plans.

Mayor Kelley speaks about the need for a comprehensive strategic plan to oversee the county's growth and property use, integrating plans from various county government branches. There is a challenge in expanding county services within Green Cove Springs' city limits, including administrative, public services, maintenance, and education, due to limited space.

**Motion to approve first reading of Ordinance O-04-2025, to amend the zoning of Parcel ID 017678-000- 00 from RPO to Institutional for form and legality.**

Motion made by Council Member Butler, Seconded by Vice Mayor Smith.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

### **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 Gaw pulled item 7.

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda items 3 through 13 minus 7.**

Motion made by Council Member Johnson, Seconded by Council Member Butler.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

3. City Council approval of the Water Conservation Month Proclamation. *Erin West*
4. City Council approval of the Sawcross (Tender Contractor) Pay Request #10, in the amount of \$309,937.50, and authorization for the mayor to execute Disbursement Request # 25 (to follow), for construction of the Harbor Road Advanced Wastewater Treatment Facility (HRAWWTF), as part of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), State Revolving Fund (SRF), Harbor Road Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) Expansion, Phase 2, SRF Agreement No. WW1000420. *Scott Schultz*
5. City Council approval to surplus Public Safety Vehicle # 139, a 2009 Chevrolet Impala that has outlived its useful life. *Scott Schultz*

6. City Council approval of the modification of Sawcross (Tender Contractor) Change Order #2 (approved 3/4/2025), which becomes SRF Project Contract Modification #4 in order to include the cost in the SRF loan, in the modified amount of \$64,411.13 (originally \$30,578.23) for sludge processing improvements, modified motor thermal protection systems and enhanced electrical protection for variable frequency drives, for the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), State Revolving Fund (SRF), Harbor Road Water Reclamation Facility (WRF) Expansion, Phase 2, SRF Agreement No. WW1000420. **Scott Schultz**
7. City Council approval of Amendment #1 to the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP), State Revolving Fund (SRF), Loan Agreement DW100440 for the design and permitting of improvements to the water systems at the Reynolds and Harbor Road Water Treatment Plants, and the Magnolia Point Reclaimed Water System. **Scott Schultz**

Council Member Gaw speaks on recent legal actions and council discussions about special assessments, particularly focusing on water system upgrades in the Reynolds Park area, which has significant public utility needs. He proposes that we conduct a utility-wide assessment, starting with a spreadsheet to outline immediate requirements and costs for Reynolds Park to meet code compliance. This strategic approach would help avoid ongoing, piecemeal upgrades funded through general or utility funds. Mr. Gaw advocates for a compressed, five-year strategic plan, to prioritize necessary improvements, ensure service delivery, and avoid future liabilities or unfulfilled city commitments.

Assistant Water Utilities Director Scott Shultz advises the Reynolds Water Treatment Plant supplies about 30% of its water to Reynolds, but it is part of an interconnected water system with other plants, permitted as a single system. Mr. Schultz speaks about the incident involving a contractor for the Shands Bridge breaking an 80-year-old water main and highlighted the aging infrastructure issues. The aging system, inherited through an interlocal agreement, requires inevitable investment, regardless of specific attribution.

Electric Director Andy Yeager advises the city is planning an express feeder line through the Rookery to serve future development, including the Rookery and the south end of town, specifically Reynolds Park. Currently, minimal maintenance is done in the area due to indecision or lack of progress on development. Mr. Yeager advises budgeted funds for future projects are tracked and deferred until development moves forward.

Council Member Gaw advises big capital projects will be put on hold while the city makes significant improvements to bring the 80-year-old water system up to speed and add value to that area.

Mr. Schultz advises the improvements discussed are specific to the water treatment plant, focusing on design and permitting to make it "shovel ready" for future implementation. These upgrades primarily benefit the entire water system, not just the plant or distribution lines.

Mayor Kelley speaks about concerns on proceeding with improvements in the Reynolds area without a clear plan, balancing the obligation to ensure health and safety with avoiding premature overhauls.

City Attorney Arnold speaks about special assessments. He advises the assessments are linked to growth and whether they benefit specific property owners. He suggests revisiting this topic soon to align current and potential actions, adopting a proactive approach to stay ahead of growth.

Development Services Director Michael Daniels advises initial discussions and documents outlining character areas (similar to but more detailed than the COP plan) were halted due to a lawsuit related to a runway. With the lawsuit resolved, discussions have resumed, including

meetings with the property's planner to address infrastructure, roadway alignments, and trail alignments.

Council Member Gaw expresses concern that the property in question has been historically under-assessed and lacks a catalyst for development. Mr. Gaw advises the decision to pull agenda item number seven was to prevent making significant capital improvements that primarily benefit property owners, at the expense of Green Cove citizens.

**Motion to approve Consent Agenda item 7.**

Motion made by Council Member Johnson, Seconded by Council Member Butler.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

8. City Council approval of the National Public Safety Telecommunicators Week Proclamation. *Erin West*
9. City Council approval of executing a grant agreement for Gustafson Regional Park in the amount of \$400,000.00. *Greg Bauer*
10. City Council review and approval of a temporary street closure for a portion of Walnut Street abutting School Board property for the BOCC and Vietnam Veterans TAPS Monument Committee Annual Vietnam Veterans Ceremony. *Michael Daniels*
11. City Council approval of Minutes. *Erin West*  
Regular Session: 1/21/2025, 2/4/2025, 2/18/2025
12. City Council approval of purchase order to Inline Lawn and Fence in the amount of \$40,935.00 to install perimeter fencing at the Police Department. *Shawn Hines*
13. City Council approval of payment for the Thomas Hogan Gym, gym floor replacement in the amount of \$183,279.00 to Impact Sports Surfaces Inc., based on Sourcewell contract #031022. *Greg Bauer*

**COUNCIL BUSINESS**

14. City Manager & City Attorney Reports / Correspondence  
The City Manager and City Attorney made comments regarding various city activities, events, operations, and projects.

City Manager Steve Kennedy speaks about the ICE MOU agreement. He advises it has been to the City Attorney for his review and wanted to bring it back to Council to address any communication gaps and propose approving it as an emergency to cover all parties involved with the ICE agreement. Mr. Kennedy reminds the Council that, regardless of political views on the negotiation, non-participation risks losing state funding.

City Attorney Arnold advises he reviewed the agreement and there were only minor changes.

**Emergency motion to approve the revised wording on the ICE Immigration Control MOU.**

Motion made by Vice Mayor Smith, Seconded by Council Member Johnson.

Voting Yea: Mayor Kelley, Vice Mayor Smith, Council Member Butler, Council Member Gaw, Council Member Johnson

15. City Council Reports / Correspondence

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

Adjournment

There being no further business to come before the City Council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:27 p.m.

CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

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Steven R. Kelley, Mayor

Attest:

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Erin West, City Clerk