

CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS CITY COUNCIL REGULAR SESSION

321 WALNUT STREET, GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 07, 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, Council Member Glee Glisson, Council Member Darren Stutts

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Cheryl Starnes

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. Rick Ott 1110 St. Johns Ave. GCS advised an 8-foot wall built by the Springs Church, was supposed to be screened by trees along the street. About 40 trees were initially staged, but around 12 were removed after the city reportedly rejected placing them in the right-of-way, leaving half the block without landscaping. He asked for clarification on the plan for this area.

City Manager Steve Kennedy advised there is still cleanup and finishing work needed along the wall, including re-sodding. The wall was shifted at the church's request, and when the fence line was kept straight, some trees ended up on the street side instead of inside the wall.

2. Jeff Short 1212 Travers Rd. GCS advised he is withdrawing his proposal for the fun park due to the city's financial situation and no longer wishes to request funding or management support. He would still want to move forward independently and planned to submit a site plan and seek an event permit as soon as possible.
3. Felicia Hampshire 508 Franklin St. GCS thanked the Mayor, Council, and city departments for making the 24th Annual Soul Food and Music Festival a success. She spoke about the strong community participation, children's performances, medical support for over 100 attendees, and a safe, enjoyable event.

PRESENTATIONS

1. FMPA - October 2025 **Bob Page**
Mr. Page presented the October report.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

2. Second and Final Reading of Ordinance O-13-2025 and transmittal to Florida Commerce for Amendments to the Public Facilities Element and Conservation Element of the Comprehensive Plan by adopting the updated Water Supply Facilities Work Plan, 2025-2045 by reference. **Lisa Walsh**
City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-13-2025 by title.

Development Services Director Lisa Walsh reviewed the city's updated Water Supply Facility Work Plan, required to align with regional water management plans. Population is projected to reach about 11,000 by 2045, with enough permitted water allocation to meet future demand. Key capital projects include upgrades to the Harper Road and Reynolds water treatment plants and a future reclaimed water extension.

Mayor Johnson opened the public hearing.

Following no comments, Mayor Johnson closed the public hearing.

Motion to approve for Second and Final reading of Ordinance No. O-13-2025 and approve final transmittal to the Florida Commerce to amend the Public Facility and Conservation Elements in the Comprehensive Plan to adopt the updated 2025-2045 Water Supply Plan by reference.

Motion made by Vice Mayor Gaw, Seconded by Council Member Stutts.

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

3. Second and Final reading Ordinance O-09-2025 regarding a future land use map amendment for property located on Cooks Lane for parcel 016562-000-00. *Lisa Walsh*

Future Land Use Amendment From: Mixed-Use To: Industrial

City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-09-2025 by title.

Development Services Director Lisa Walsh advised this is the second and final reading on a request to change a parcel's future land use from mixed-use to industrial, add a site-specific text amendment, and rezone it from R3 to M1.

Mayor Johnson opened the public hearing.

Janis Fleet with Fleet & Associates 11557 Hidden Harbor Way Jacksonville advised she supports the staff recommendation and the development will have access exclusively via Cook's Lane onto Energy Cove Court.

Joe Sobotta 212 North St. GCS asked whether the City of Green Cove recoups any staff time, planning costs, or other expenses when developers cancel approved projects.

Following no further comments, Mayor Johnson closed the public hearing.

Council discussion followed concerning the project.

Motion to approve the second and final reading of Ordinance No. O-09-2025 to amend the future land use designation from mixed as used to industrial for approximately 5.08 acres for parcel number 016562-00-00-00.

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

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

4. Second and Final reading of Ordinance O-10-2025 regarding a Small-Scale Future Land Use Text Amendment for property located on Cooks Ln for approximately 5.08 acres of parcel #016562-000-00. *Lisa Walsh*

City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-10-2025 by title.

Development Services Director Lisa Walsh advised this is the second ordinance that was discussed earlier.

Mayor Johnson opened the public hearing.

Janis Fleet with Fleet & Associates 11557 Hidden Harbor Way Jacksonville addressed transportation concerns, explaining that the proposed industrial land use would generate fewer daily and peak trips than residential development. Additionally, the development aims to create local jobs.

Van Royal 3688 LaCosta Ct. GCS advised the industrial development is a win-win, generating fewer trips than residential, creating local jobs, and providing significant tax revenue. He advised city impact fees can fund infrastructure improvements, and the project benefits traffic flow, finances, and community planning.

Vice Mayor Gaw advised that while individual projects may seem manageable for traffic, cumulative development in the area creates significant congestion on limited roadways. He spoke about the need for proactive measures to traffic impacts from both current and future developments.

Council Member Stutts agreed that residential development generates the most traffic but supported new businesses, which create local jobs and broaden the tax base.

Following no further comments, Mayor Johnson closed the public hearing.

Motion to approve the second final reading of Ordinance No. O-10-2025 relating to the future land use uh our future land use map from the set forth and Ordinance No. O-09-2025 for approximately 5.8 acres for parcel number 016562-00-00.

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

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

5. Second and Final reading of Ordinance O-11-2025 regarding a zoning amendment for property located on Cooks Lane for parcel 016562-000-00. *Lisa Walsh*

Zoning Amendment From: R-3, Residential High Density To: M-1, Light Industrial
City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-11-2025 by title

Development Services Director Lisa Walsh advised this is the third ordinance that was discussed earlier.

Mayor Johnson opened the public hearing.

Following no comments, Mayor Johnson closed the public hearing.

Motion to approve on the second final reading of Ordinance No. O-11-25 to amend the zoning of parcel ID 016502-000-00 from R3 residential high density to M-1 light industrial.

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

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

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 Stutts pulled items 6, 10, and 12 and Council Member Glisson pulled item 14.

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda for the regular and supplemental agendas minus 6, 10, 12, and 14.

Motion made by Council Member Stutts, Seconded by Vice Mayor Gaw.

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

6. City Council approval of the purchase of 38 Glock 45 handguns and 38 security holsters from GT, the departments single source vendor for Glock manufactured weapons. **Chief Hines**
Council Member Stutts asked Chief Hines about partnering with Clay County Sheriff's office on the purchase of handguns.

Chief Hines explained that law enforcement agencies, likely purchase their firearms through Glock's law-enforcement "Blue Line" discount program, which provides reduced pricing regardless of quantity.

Motion to approve Consent Agenda items 6, 12, and 14.

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

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

7. City Council approval of the Interlocal Agreement with Clay County for Building Inspection and Plan Review Services for the County to provide backup services when the City's Building Official is out of the office. **John Cioffi**
8. City Council approval and implementing the contracts with Enterprise Fleet Management and approval to order the one Ford F-250 with utility body and one medium size crew cab truck. **Greg Bauer**
9. City Council approval of the Florida City Government Week Proclamation. **Erin West**
10. City Council approval of an engagement letter to retain the services of stormwater litigation expert attorney Gregory T. Stewart with Nabors, Giblin & Nickerson pursuant to the September 23, 2025, engagement letter which is attached hereto. **L.J. Arnold, III**
Council Member Stutts advised when this item was brought up at a previous meeting a cap on the cost was mentioned and he would like to put a cap on the cost. He advised he was thinking \$10,000.

City Attorney Arnold advised that an engagement letter can be approved with a condition requiring council approval if legal fees exceed a set amount (e.g., \$10,000).

Motion to approve Consent Agenda item 10 not to exceed \$10,000.

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

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

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11. City Council review and approval of Trunk or Treat Major Special Event and temporary street closure of Melrose Avenue sponsored by the Green Cove Springs Police Department. **Lisa Walsh**
12. City Council approval of Resolution No. R-16-2025 adopting the 2025/26 CRA Budget. **Lisa Walsh**
Council Member Stutts advised he reviewed the reports but found them difficult to understand and time-consuming. He asked for a brief explanation about what the reports actually entail.
City Manager Steve Kennedy advised the CRA (Community Redevelopment Agency) funds improvements in a designated area, overseen by a five-member board (two city, two county, one voted by the four). Projects can include housing, landscaping, or other enhancements. The CRA budget increases annually through tax increments, and recent projects included landscaping and historic hotel markers.
Motion to approve Consent Agenda items 6, 12, and 14.
Motion made by Council Member Stutts, Seconded by Council Member Glisson.
Voting Yea: Mayor Johnson, Vice Mayor Gaw, Council Member Glisson, Council Member Stutts
13. City Council award of Bid 2025-06 to supply a 230 kV Circuit Switcher in the amount of \$295,000.00. **Andy Yeager**
14. City Council approval of Resolution No. R-26-2025, authorizing the City of Green Cove Springs Staff to enter into an Agreement with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection to receive Grant Funds related to the Green Cove Springs St. Johns River Trail Phase I. **Steve Kennedy**
Council Member Glisson asked City Manager Steve Kennedy if this was a matching grant.
Mr. Kennedy advised the city has received legislative funding of \$475,000, but formal steps are required to access it. This includes a resolution from the governing body authorizing the city to proceed. Once approved, the city provides additional information, receives an agreement, and completes the project.
Motion to approve Consent Agenda items 6, 12, and 14.
Motion made by Council Member Stutts, Seconded by Council Member Glisson.
Voting Yea: Mayor Johnson, Vice Mayor Gaw, Council Member Glisson, Council Member Stutts
15. City Council approval of Resolution R-27-2025, adopting the Clay County Preliminary Flood Risk Adaptation Plan. **Mike Null**
16. City Council approval of the VIA - General Federation of Women's Clubs International Day of Service Proclamation request. **Erin West**
17. City Council approval of Renewal and Amendment 1 to the Interlocal Agreement with Clay County for Grant Writing and Research Assistance. **Mike Null**
18. City Council approval and authorization for the City Manager to sign the Multijurisdictional Drug Task Force MOU. **Shawn Hines**

COUNCIL BUSINESS

19. City Council approval of Nominee for Planning & Zoning Board Seat 1. ***Erin West***
City Clerk Erin West advised that Vice Mayor Gaw is nominating Brian Cook for seat 1.
Motion to appoint Brian Cook 850 St. John's Avenue to the Planning and Zoning Board.
Motion made by Vice Mayor Gaw, Seconded by Council Member Glisson.
Voting Yea: Mayor Johnson, Vice Mayor Gaw, Council Member Glisson, Council Member Stutts
20. First Reading of Ordinance O-18-2025, dealing with illegal connections to the city water utility by amending City Code section 90-278. ***Mike Null***
City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-18-2025 by title.
Assistant City Manager Mike Null advised this ordinance establishes penalties for tampering with water meters or stealing water. Offenders are assessed a \$200 fee plus a reconnection fee (\$100, or \$500 if the meter is damaged), similar to existing penalties for electricity theft.
Motion to adopt the first reading of Ordinance No. O-18-2025 dealing with illegal connection to the city water utility by amending city code section 90-278. Establishing the City Council meeting October 21st for the second and final reading of Ordinance No. O-18-2025.
Motion made by Vice Mayor Gaw, Seconded by Council Member Glisson.
Voting Yea: Mayor Johnson, Vice Mayor Gaw, Council Member Glisson, Council Member Stutts
21. First reading of Ordinance No. O-19-2025, authorizing the City to lease a portion of City Hall to the Clay County Economic Development Corporation. ***L.J. Arnold, III***
City Attorney Arnold reads Ordinance No. O-19-2025 by title and advised the ordinance provides a clear, standalone authorization for leasing city property, rather than relying on a previous ordinance. It ensures compliance with the city charter and applies specifically to the upstairs space.
Motion to approve on first reading of Ordinance No. O-19-2025, authorizing the City to lease a portion of City Hall to the Clay County Economic Development Corporation.
Motion made by Vice Mayor Gaw, Seconded by Council Member Stutts.
Voting Yea: Mayor Johnson, Vice Mayor Gaw, Council Member Glisson, Council Member Stutts
22. City Council Discussion about Code Enforcement
Council Member Stutts suggested the city adopt a reactive code enforcement approach like the county, responding only to formal complaints rather than proactively seeking violations. He spoke of his concern that past proactive enforcement sometimes harassed residents, comparing it to HOA-style oversight, and spoke about the need to focus on genuine compliance issues.
Mayor Johnson advised that while counties tend to be more reactive, the city's current code enforcement officer has received positive feedback for proactively helping the community meet standards.
Daniel Vallencourt 326 Walnut St. GCS advised that code enforcement is about ensuring properties meet standards, not being proactive or reactive. He spoke about poorly maintained

commercial properties and abandoned buildings, advising these deter investment and contribute to issues like homelessness. He spoke about the goal of maintaining a clean, attractive city.

Steven Kelley 101 Park St. GCS supported proactive code enforcement, especially for commercial properties and building permits, citing neglected properties and unsafe renovations as concerns. He also supported proactive residential enforcement, advising that residents should be able to report issues affecting their property enjoyment without fear of retaliation. He spoke about current efforts being more reasonable and community focused.

Code Enforcement Officer Chris Coppola advised that while some properties are untidy, issues aren't severe. He successfully gets compliance from residents without needing formal complaints or magistrate action, often handling matters proactively because many residents wish to report issues anonymously.

Chief Building Official John Cioffi advised the city operates differently from a county due to its small size (10.27 sq miles vs. 644). The current approach is educational rather than punitive, focusing on communication and helping property owners comply. Overzealous enforcement is a thing of the past, and the city now resolves most issues without magistrate involvement. This proactive, hands-on approach protects investments, reduces crime, and maintains property values, with positive feedback from residents and business owners.

Van Royal 3688 LaCosta Ct. GCS advised 30 years ago, the city's core was in poor condition, with abandoned lots, buildings, and safety issues. The city council decided to enforce rules to improve quality of life. This approach has led to significant progress, including new homes and rising property values. Maintaining safety and quality of life remains key, and the current code enforcement approach under Chris is effective, balancing proactive enforcement with community guidance.

Diane Whiteman 723 N. Magnolia Ave. GCS advised she has lived in the area for 17 years and is concerned about neglected properties nearby. These properties are damaged, overgrown, and pose safety risks, including potential fire hazards. The neglect not only threatens safety but also depresses property values.

Joe Sobotta 212 North St. GCS advised his own property needs work, but the city also has responsibility for maintenance, particularly on areas from the sidewalk to the street. He spoke about dead or unsightly plants in public areas and encouraged the city to address these issues, just as residents and businesses are expected to maintain their properties. He supports following proper channels to request action and advocate for balanced, non-aggressive enforcement, stressing that living in a city comes with rules.

Council discussion followed.

23. City Manager & City Attorney Reports / Correspondence

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

Assistant City Manager Mike Null advised HLN investments of the LJV property need a city letter acknowledging proposed work on the rail line crossing the property to satisfy St. John's River Water Management District permit requirements. The work includes reconstructing the rail and installing a few water and stormwater utility pipes beneath it.

Emergency motion the City of Green Cove Springs is aware of the proposed work on city parcel number 3806-2601-7070-000-000 located. HLM investments property parcel number 3806-26-016-451-003-00. And this work involves modifying or approving the railroad lead for rails without any plan for proposed work.

Motion made by Vice Mayor Gaw, Seconded by Council Member Glisson.

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

24. 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 8:50 p.m.

CITY OF GREEN COVE SPRINGS, FLORIDA

Daniel M. Johnson, Mayor

Attest:

Erin West, City Clerk