

CITY OF LABELLE



MINUTES

Regular Commission Meeting
Thursday, April 09, 2026, at 5:30 PM

LaBelle Commission Chambers
481 West Hickpochee Ave
LaBelle, FL 33975

CITY COMMISSION:

Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor
Kevin Holland, Commissioner
Jackie Ratica, Commissioner
Bobbie Spratt, Commissioner
Hugo Vargas, Commissioner

ADMINISTRATION:

Tijauna Warner, MPA, MMC, Deputy City Clerk
Derek Rooney, Esq., City Attorney
Mitchell Wills, Superintendent PW

Minutes

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkins at 5:31 p.m.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT

Mayor Julie C. Wilkins
Vice Mayor Jackie Ratica
Commissioner Bobbie Spratt
Commissioner Hugo Vargas
Commissioner Kevin Holland
City Attorney Derek Rooney
Deputy City Clerk Tijauna Warner

3. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation by Commissioner Holland and Pledge of Allegiance lead by Vice Mayor Ratica.

4. Additions of Emergency Basis From Mayor, Deletions and Approval of Agenda Items

None.

5. Presentations

A. Arbor Day Proclamation

Commissioner Holland presented and read the Arbor Day Proclamation into the record.

6. Consent Agenda Items for Consideration

(Any commissioner or citizen may request to have an item removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda for further discussion.)

A. Approval of March Check Register

B. Approval of Staff Reports:

-HCSO- Lt. Allen Hudson

-Fire Department- Chief Brent Stevens

-Building Department- Mark Lynch

-Code Enforcement- Zane Mungillo

-Woodard & Curran- Justin deMello

C. WWTP MASTER LIFT STATION REPAIRS

D. RESOLUTION 2026-07 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE BY THE CITY OF NOT EXCEEDING \$20,000,000 IN PRINCIPAL AMOUNT OF ITS WATER AND SEWER REVOLVING CREDIT BOND, SERIES 2026, TO FINANCE THE COST OF THE ACQUISITION, CONSTRUCTION AND EQUIPPING OF IMPROVEMENTS TO THE CITY'S WATER AND SEWER SYSTEM; PLEDGING THE NET REVENUES OF SAID SYSTEM TO PAY THE SERIES 2026 BOND; AUTHORIZING THE AWARD OF THE SALE OF THE SERIES 2026 BOND UPON COMPLIANCE WITH CERTAIN PARAMETERS; AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF THE FORM OF ATTACHED REVOLVING CREDIT AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY AND THE PURCHASER OF THE SERIES 2026 BOND; PROVIDING FOR REPEAL OF INCONSISTENT PROVISIONS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

E. Four Waters Engineering Contract

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve Consent Items pulling Item B: Woodard & Curran Staff Report, Seconded by Commissioner Spratt. Mayor Julie called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

7. **Non-Public Hearing Items for Consideration**

(Limited to 15 minutes per item: 3-5 minutes optional presentation time with the remaining time for discussion by the Commission)

Woodard & Curran Staff Report:

Commissioner Vargas raised concerns about the water loss percentages shown in the water production and distribution table, which ranged from 6.37% to as high as 53%. He explained these numbers are reported to the South Water Management District and could affect the city's water allocation permits if they appear excessive.

Salvador Mora from Woodard & Curran explained that much of the water loss is due to calibration issues with meters and inconsistent reporting from utility billing. He noted there's little accountability for water used by the fire department and for line flushing. Mayor Wilkins suggested setting up a meeting between Mora, the utility billing department, and a supervisor to resolve the discrepancies.

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve Woodard & Curran Staff Report, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Julie called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

A. Mavis Tires - Architectural Review

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve Marvis Tire - Architectural Review, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Julie called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

- B. LDRC Increase Funding Request

This item was deferred and will return next month.

- C. LDRC Certified Local Government Program

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve Resolution 20226-08 LDRC Certified Local Government Program, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Julie called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

- D. LDRC Captain Hendry House Project

Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to approve Resolution 2026-09 LDRC Captain Hendry House Project, Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Julie called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

- E. Animal Control - Linda Phillips

Linda Phillips addressed the commission regarding accountability, transparency, and humane practices at LaBelle Animal Control. She raised concerns about euthanasia rates, documentation practices, compliance with Florida Statute 828.15 regarding posting stray animals within 48 hours, and conditions at the facility. Phillips questioned the review process for euthanasia decisions and requested proper documentation, behavioral assessments, and investigation into drug use and transfers.

Public comments were provided by the following:

Rhonda Bilut commended Animal Control for their work and the commission's support.

Lisa Lashley praised the shelter's efforts to place dogs but expressed concern about heartworm testing, noting that four dogs since December had tested positive for heartworm after adoption, leaving adopters with expensive treatment costs or the choice to return the animals.

Teri Armstrong shared her personal experience adopting a dog that later tested positive for heartworm, requiring expensive treatment that resulted in the dog's death after complications from spaying while heartworm positive. She advocated for mandatory heartworm testing before adoption.

Lorrie Johns praised Doug Morgan and the shelter staff.

Sherri Walker called for better collaboration between all parties.

Colleen Fisher praised animal control and offered her expertise in animal rescue and grant writing. A discussion ensued.

Commissioner Vargas excused himself due to family emergency.

8. Public Hearings and/or Ordinances

- A. ORDINANCE 2025-09 (*first reading*) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA, AMENDING ORDINANCE 2020-04 FOR A PROPERTY KNOWN AS KMJ INVESTMENTS PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT, A 2+/--ACRE PROPERTY LOCATED IMMEDIATELY NORTH OF STATE ROAD 80, APPROXIMATELY ¼ MILE EAST OF HUGGETTS ROAD INTO THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA; AMENDING THE CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL; PROVIDING FOR INTENT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

City Attorney Derek Rooney read Ordinance 2025-09 title into the record.

Patty Kulak gave a brief explanation of Ordinance 2025-09.

Public Hearing Opened

Comments received by the following individuals:

Bob Burns stated that while his community spent considerable time on the original approval, they have no objection to the extension if the wall and stormwater management requirements remain in place.

Public Hearing Closed

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve Ordinance 2025-09, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Holland

- B. ORDINANCE 2026-07 (*first reading*) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA; AMENDING CHAPTER 4, ARTICLE V, SECTION 4-82 OF THE CITY OF LABELLE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE, AMENDING USES REQUIRING SPECIAL EXCEPTION APPROVAL IN THE STATE ROAD 80 OVERLAY DISTRICT; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

City Attorney Derek Rooney read Ordinance 2026-07 title into the record.

Patty Kulak gave a brief explanation of Ordinance 2026-07.

Public Hearing Opened

No Comments.

Public Hearing Closed

Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to approve Ordinance 2026-07, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Julie called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Holland

9. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

(Limited to 3 minutes per person)

No speakers.

10. City Related Business by Commissioners

Superintendent Mitchell Wills presented emergency bid items for the commission to approve.

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve the M&S Spray Foam Insulation bid for \$17,159 for City Hall and Civic Center insulation., Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Julie called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Holland

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve accepting the lowest bid for animal control kennels, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Julie called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Holland

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve accepting the Paint Authority bid of \$3,500 for City Hall brick cleaning and sealing, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Julie called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Holland

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve accepting the lowest bid for sidewalk replacement around Barron Park, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Julie called for the question. Motion passed 3-0.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Holland

Voting Abstaining: Vice Mayor Ratica

Commissioner Spratt raised concerns about ongoing flooding at Moss Landing, where recent rains resulted in standing water in four homes. She requested the commission consider renting a pump to provide relief while negotiations continue with the property owners. Public Works Superintendent Mitchell Wills explained that a six-inch pump rental would cost approximately \$2,800 monthly and that the property owners have been collaborating with engineers but face delays due to pipe ownership issues.

City Attorney Derek Rooney noted concerns about the city providing services for a private for-profit property without compensation but agreed emergency assistance could be justified. Wells will contact the property owners about potential cost reimbursement.

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve the rental of a pump for Moss Landing for one month, with staff attempting to negotiate reimbursement from the property owners, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Julie called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Holland

Mayor Wilkins - 16th Annual Call of the Wild Earth Week April 20-23, 2026

Mayor Wilkins announced that three commissioners are up for reelection in the August primary and reminded everyone of the Call of the Wild Earth Week celebration scheduled for April 20-23 at Captain Hendry House. She thanked all participants in the centennial celebration and expressed interest in partnering with churches for regular senior social events.

11. Adjournment

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to adjourn the meeting, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Julie called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Holland

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Wilkins adjourned the meeting at 7:40 PM.

Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor

ATTEST: Tijauna Warner, MPA, MMC, City Clerk