

# CITY OF LABELLE



## MINUTES

### **Regular Commission Meeting**

Thursday, March 12, 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 5:36 PM.

### 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. 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 February Check Register

#### B. Approval of Minutes:

February 5, 2026 City Commission Special Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2026 Local Planning Agency Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2026 City Commission Meeting Minutes

#### C. Approval of Staff Reports:

-HCSO- Lt. Allen Hudson

-Fire Department- Chief Brent Stevens

-Building Department- Mark Lynch

-Code Enforcement- Zane Mungillo

**Motion made by Commissioner Spratt Consent Agenda Items pulling Item E: ITB 2026-01 for discussion, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

- E. ITB 2026-01 LaBelle Fire Department – Hardening and Addition

**Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve Item E: ITB 2026-01 LaBelle Fire Department - Hardening and Addition, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed 4-1.**

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

**Voting Nay: Commissioner Vargas**

*City Commission presented Chief Brent Stevens with the Florida Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year Certificate.*

***City Commission Meeting Recessed at 5:45 PM.***

***City Commission Meeting Reconvened at 6:13 PM.***

## 6. Presentations

- A. 2025 Financial Statement - Daniel Anderson, Partner, Mauldin & Jenkins, LLC

*Daniel Anderson (Mauldin & Jenkins, LLC) gave a brief explanation of the City of LaBelle's 2025 Financial Statement and the Auditor's Discussion and Analysis Financial and Compliance Audit Summary.*

- B. Bridge Funding - PFM Financial Advisors LLC

City Attorney Derek Rooney presented an update on the bridge funding for utility improvements. The city had issued an RFP for letter of credit services for \$20 million to help with interim financing while waiting for grant reimbursements. First Bank and United Community Bank responded, with First Bank initially having the best terms.

However, during negotiations, First Bank requested language changes that would potentially conflict with existing USDA loan agreements. The city's bond counsel recommended keeping the same revenue pledge language as USDA to avoid complications, but First Bank wanted additional assurances that appeared to give them more than a secondary position.

**Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to reconsider Consent Agenda Items and pull Item F: Resolution 2026-07, Seconded by Commissioner Spratt. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

**Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve the remaining Consent Agenda Items and table Item F: Resolution 2026-07, Seconded by Commissioner Spratt. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

**Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to approve both First Bank and United Community Bank from the RFP with First Bank in first position, and if negotiations cannot be concluded with First Bank, to move immediately to United Community Bank, Seconded by Commissioner Spratt. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

**C. LifeLink Proclamation**

*Mayor Wilkins read a proclamation declaring April 2026 as Donate Life Month, recognizing LifeLink of Florida's mission to honor donors and save lives through organ and tissue donation. The proclamation noted that over 105,000 people are on the national waiting list for organ transplantation, with over 5,500 in Florida.*

**D. Irish American Heritage Proclamation**

*Mayor Wilkins read a proclamation declaring March 2026 as Irish American Heritage Month, acknowledging the significant contributions of Irish Americans to the nation's founding and ongoing development. The proclamation noted that five signers of the Declaration of Independence were of Irish descent, and 22 presidents have proclaimed their Irish American heritage.*

**Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to reconsider Consent Agenda Items and pull Item D: Resolution Zambelli Fireworks Proposal & Agreement, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**  
**Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland**

**5D. Zambelli Fireworks Proposal & Agreement**

**Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve renegotiating the fireworks contract for no more than \$25,000, with the mayor authorized to sign if the cost could be reduced to that amount, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed 4-1.**  
**Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Holland**  
**Voting Nay: Commissioner Vargas**

**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)*

**A. 277 E Hickpochee Ave - Tree Removal Permit Application #1825**

**Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve 277 E Hickpochee Avenue - Tree Removal Permit Application #1825 along with the replanting and payment in lieu of for 101 inches, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**  
**Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland**

**B. SR 80/Captain Hendry Tree Removal Permit Application**

**Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve SR 80/Captain Hendry Tree Removal Permit Application including the \$48,600 payment in lieu of and the planning of required inches, with encouragement to be creative in preserving trees where possible, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed 4-1.**

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

C. Mavis Tire - Architectural Review

Patty Kulak presented an architectural review for Mavis Tire, located on an outparcel of the Racetrack development. The review was required under conditions of approval that specify any new structures must conform to "old Florida vernacular" architecture.

Stacy Bridenbach from Bohler Engineering presented the prototypical building design, acknowledging it needed modifications to meet the city's architectural requirements. The design featured awnings over entryways and minimal architectural details.

Commissioners suggested various improvements including more pronounced overhangs, additional architectural features, shutters, and enhanced articulation. They emphasized the need for the building to reflect the old Florida vernacular style while accommodating the functional requirements of a tire service facility.

The applicant requested to continue the item to next month to develop new renderings incorporating the commission's feedback.

D. Swing Into Spring Special Event Permit Application #1798

**Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve Swing Into Spring Special Event Permit Application #1798, Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**  
**Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland**

***Five (5) Minutes Recess at 7:27PM***

***Meeting Reconvened at 7:32PM***

8. ***Public Hearings and/or Ordinances***

- A. ORDINANCE 2026-08 (*second reading*) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA, AMENDING ORDINANCE 2020-13 FOR THE LABELLE RIVERSIDE PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT LOCATED IMMEDIATELY SOUTH OF COWBOY WAY AND ¼ MILE EAST OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. BLVD; AMENDING THE CONDITIONS OF APPROVAL; PROVIDING FOR INTENT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Derek Rooney read Ordinance 2026-08 Title into the record and sworn-in everyone speaking on Ordinance 2026-08.

Patty Kulak gave a brief explanation of Ordinance 2026-08.

***Public Hearing Opened***

*The following comment not in-favor: Rosa Marroquin, Karaa Rivas, Angela H. Rivas, and Martha Hernandez.*

***Public Hearing Closed***

**Motion made by Commissioner Holland to continue the Ordinance 2026-08 with re-advertising and neighborhood notification to allow the applicant time to work with staff on addressing concerns, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

7E. Addition School Zone

**Motion made by Mayor Wilkins to approve establishing an official school zone on JC Lyons Drive, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

7F. Grant Funded GIS Mapping

**Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve the GIS mapping subject to attorney review of grant conditions, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

9. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

*(Limited to 3 minutes per person)*

Susan Watts, representing the landholders of Brian and James Paul properties, requested a reduction in the PUD submittal fee for their 3,200-acre "Sola Vie" development from \$116,190 to a more reasonable amount. She provided research showing similar cities charge significantly less for comparable projects.

**Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve reducing the fee to \$68,000 as a deposit against actual costs, with any unused funds to be refunded, Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

**Tortilla Factory Sewer Line Upsizing:** Superintendent Mitchell Wills requested approval to upsize a sewer line being installed by the Tortilla Factory from 4-inch to 6-inch at an additional cost of \$172,000, which would avoid much higher costs later when the area develops. Finance Director Lily Davenport confirmed ARPA funds were available.

**Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve using ARPA funds to upgrade the line from 4-inch to 6-inch, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

**Contract Amendment:** Mayor Wilkins advised L0061 Agreement Amendment No.1 needs approval for additional time to complete a grant-funded project.

**Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to approve L0061 Agreement Amendment No.1, Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

**Museum Pest Control:** After discussion about the museum's financial management and accountability, the commission approved allowing the museum to reallocate their employee funding for pest control treatment, with the requirement that a historian verify the safety of the treatment for historical artifacts.

**Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to approve allowing the city's donation to be used for museum operations as deemed appropriate by their board, including pest control, with historian approval for safety of artifacts, Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

10. City Related Business by Commissioners

11. Adjournment

**Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to adjourn meeting, Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.**

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

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Wilkins adjourned the meeting at 9:15 PM.

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Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor

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ATTEST: Tijauna Warner, MPA, MMC, City Clerk