

EXhibit C

Testimony Before Lake Park, FL Commission 4/15/2026

Public Comment on the Establishment of a Resident Committee on the Preparation of the Town Budget

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Good evening Mayor and Commissioners,

I'm here tonight to ask you to take a meaningful step toward strengthening public trust and improving our budgeting process: to establish a **Resident-Centered Budget Development Committee** for the next fiscal year. You have been privy to a few emails this week between Barbara Gould and me that concluded with her suggestion to request such a Committee, established by you. This idea was considered last year.

Right now, our budget process technically allows for public input—but it doesn't truly invite public *engagement*. Residents can speak at Commission workshops, yes. But those moments are one-directional. They don't allow dialogue, questions, or collaboration. By the time most people understand the budget, key decisions are already effectively made.

THE BUDGET PROCESS STARTED BACK ON FEBRUARY 24TH. THERE HAVE BEEN 15 BUDGET ACTIONS FROM THEN UNTIL TODAY. THERE ARE APPROXIMATELY 45 MORE TO COME TOTALLING 60 TIME-SENSITIVE EVENTS. THE FIRST PUBLIC HEARING IS TO BE HELD ON SEPTEMBER 8TH, THE 52ND EVENT ITEM. THE SECOND AND FINAL PUBLIC HEARING IS SEPTEMBER 16TH, THE 55TH EVENT ITEM. FINALLY, THE BUDGET WILL BE POSTED ON THE TOWN WEBSITE "ASAP AFTER SEPTEMBER 22ND"

A resident-centered committee would change that.

This wouldn't replace your authority—it would enhance it. A diverse group of residents, meeting early in the budget cycle, could work alongside staff to better understand priorities, tradeoffs, and constraints. In turn, you would gain more informed feedback, fewer last-minute objections, and a stronger sense of community buy-in.

Just as importantly, it would make government more accessible. Budgeting shouldn't feel like something that happens **to** residents, it should feel like something built **with** them.

Other communities have found that when residents are brought into the process early and meaningfully, the result is not chaos—it's clarity. People become more realistic, not less. They see the full picture.

As you promote transparency, accountability, and civic engagement, this is a natural next step.

I urge you to direct staff to create a framework for a Resident-Centered Budget Development Committee in time for the next fiscal year.

Thank you for your time and your service.