**MINUTES**

**BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS**
**REGULAR WORKSHOP MEETING**
**OCTOBER 28, 2026**
**2:00 P.M.**

The City of Madeira Beach Board of Commissioners held a regular workshop meeting at 2:00 p.m. on October 28, 2026, in the Patricia Shontz Commission Chambers at City Hall, located at 300 Municipal Drive, Madeira Beach, Florida.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayor
Eddie McGeehen, Vice Mayor/Commissioner District 3
David Tagliarini, Commissioner District 1
Charles "Chuck" Dillon, Commissioner District 2
Housh Ghovaee, Commissioner District 4

**MEMBERS ABSENT:**

**CHARTER OFFICERS PRESENT:** Michael Helfrich, City Manager
Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk
Thomas Trask, City Attorney
Andrew Laflin, Finance Director Consultant

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Brooks called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m.

## 2. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Clara VanBlargan called the roll. All were present.

## 3. PUBLIC COMMENT

There were no public comments.

## 4. PROCLAMATION

### A. World Acts of Kindness Day; November 13, 2026

Mayor Brooks read a proclamation proclaiming November 13, 2026, as World Acts of Kindness Day.

## 5. PRESENTATION

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### A. Civil Service Commission Report – Chair Jerry Cantrell

Civil Service Commission Chair Jerry Cantrell presented the Civil Service Commission annual report.

## 6. BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

### A. City of Kindness Designation ("Draft" Resolution 2026-12)

The City Clerk said the Mayor introduced the idea. She prepared the resolution, which the City Attorney reviewed. It designates Madeira Beach a City of Kindness and commits the City to fostering a culture of compassion, empathy, and community engagement. The Clerk noted that the annual World Acts of Kindness Day proclamation, which the Mayor had read earlier in the meeting, would continue each year.

### B. Random Acts of Kindness Proclamation (Annually)

The City Clerk explained that the designation includes two annual proclamations: the November proclamation for World Acts of Kindness Day, read at the start of the meeting, and this one for Random Acts of Kindness Week. The second would be returned for the Mayor to read into the record on February 10, 2027. If that date changes, the Clerk will adjust the proclamation. That week would give the City an opportunity to carry out special acts of kindness. There are many good ideas. She will ensure both proclamations are issued each year. Mayor Brooks said she loved it.

### C. Purple Heart City Designation ("Draft" Resolution 2026-13)

The City Clerk presented the draft resolution, which originated with the commissioners. It would designate and proclaim Madeira Beach a Purple Heart City and recognize August 7 of each year as Purple Heart Day in the City. She explained that this is the formal action the Commission would take at its next meeting to make the designation, similar to the Kindness designation, and that the City had already issued the Purple Heart Day proclamation for this year and would do so annually.

Mayor Brooks said there are specific requirements that must be met before a sign designating the City as a Purple Heart City can be placed at the City entrance, and that this resolution is one of those requirements. The City Clerk said both resolutions provide for an implementation procedure that the Commission can develop, listing everything the Commission wishes the City Manager to carry out for each designation.

Commissioner asked whether they need to determine how many signs will be placed, suggesting more than one, not just at the entrance. They could place an immediate sign on Gulf Boulevard so tourists and others driving by would see and recognize the designation. The Clerk acknowledged the suggestion.

### D. Purple Heart Day Proclamation

Mayor Brooks stated that the Purple Heart Day Proclamation for August 7, 2027 was informational, and the City Clerk confirmed this.

**E. Memorial Day Celebration**

Mayor Brooks stated that she had not yet had an opportunity for a meaningful conversation with the Fire Chief about the Memorial Day celebration and therefore could not provide further information. She asked whether any commissioner had input.

**F. Sister City**

Commissioner Ghovaee, who had raised the topic, said it had been briefly discussed at an earlier meeting. It is valuable to connect with other cities, whether local, out-of-state, or international, for tourism and collaboration. He recalled traveling to Atlanta several years earlier with Pinellas Park's mayor at the time, when Pinellas Park was Atlanta's sister city, and spending an evening speaking with them and learning how they do business and how we do it.

Mayor Brooks noted that there are specific requirements for establishing a sister city and asked whether the commissioner had reviewed them. The City Clerk explained that the City previously had a sister city resolution but later dissolved it because we were doing more of the work and both sides have responsibilities. Commissioner Ghovaee agreed that it has to work both ways.

**G. Committee for the City's 80th Anniversary**

The City Manager introduced the item as a discussion of staff's ideas for the committee and asked Megan, the City's staff member overseeing event planning, to present them.

Megan Powers, assistant to the City Manager, reported that she had been working with the City Manager on event-planning goals for the 80th anniversary, including a committee that would involve residents, business owners, and others. She said staff would submit a draft plan once it is finished, hopefully by the next meeting. The proposed structure was as follows:

- The committee would consist of five resident volunteers, one appointed by each commissioner. They would be unpaid, and their appointments would be announced at a Board of Commissioners meeting and recorded in the Clerk's minutes.
- Two non-voting staff liaisons, chosen by the City Manager, would serve, likely one from Recreation and one from the City Manager's office. One would serve as the designated facilitator and take minutes or notes, and the other would serve as backup.
- The first meeting would be held about ten days after the Board's appointment. If practical, the committee would meet twice a month, though likely monthly at first, and more often as decisions become necessary.
- The committee would not follow Robert's Rules of Order, and no formal motions would be made. It is "a committee of collaboration and to get things done." The facilitator could take a consensus only if at least three residents were present. The facilitator would summarize aloud and ask for objections.

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- Members not consistently available for the 80th committee meetings could be replaced after staff notified the Board and reopened the application process.
- All meetings would be announced and posted on the website, with public input at the start of each meeting. Residents could also email commissioners or staff.
- The City would review costs, funding, safety, and permitting. The City Manager would then present the committee's consensus recommendations to the Board for approval, modification, or denial.
- Appointments, ideally at the next Board meeting or workshop, after the plan is approved. A concept plan for the Board sometime after January 1. A final schedule and budget in February 2027. A Founders Day celebration on Cinco de Mayo, May 5, 2027. A final report within 60 days of the event.

Commissioner Tagliarini asked Ms. Powers to clarify whether commissioners would nominate or appoint. She explained that staff would provide the Board with all applications, and each commissioner could name a top choice or a top three, since some choices may overlap. The commissioner understood this as the Board providing joint input on applicants.

Commissioner Tagliarini asked whether the committee would fall under the newly created volunteer program and who would run it. Ms. Powers answered that it would and that she would run it.

Commissioner Dillon asked when the application process would begin. Ms. Powers said she hoped to have the plan and application ready for review at the next Board meeting. The commissioner said that, having contacted prospective volunteers who had no timeline to consider, people need to know the schedule. Ms. Powers said they would have a timeline because they would need to know when they are available and when they are needed.

Commissioner Ghovaee asked what skill sets staff would seek. Ms. Powers said she would look for someone with budgetary experience, given the number of events and the municipal budget, as well as people willing to get down and dirty and actually work the event. They would set some stipulations. Commissioner Ghovaee asked how long the anniversary celebration would last. Ms. Powers said smaller events would occur throughout the year leading up to Founders Day, the largest event.

Mayor Brooks said the committee's intent was for the community to help plan and make it a community event, not a commission or staff event. Based on what was laid out, it would be a good idea to decide when the meeting would be held, consistent with the Civil Service Commission's hours, and to advertise that when soliciting volunteers. She does not want to go into the community to ask for volunteers, but rather have people sign up to volunteer. They would choose them the same way they appoint others to that commission.

The City Manager said staff could post the opportunity on the City website and the City's Facebook page. He proposed two meetings in each of the first two months, then monthly, for about six meetings before May 5, and confirmed that each commissioner would select members, not staff.

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Mayor Brooks, they must be transparent when posting because they want people to know when the meetings will be. They would not want people to apply who cannot attend the meetings. She does not care whether they have budgetary experience. The committee's role is to plan an event that reflects what the community wants, not what any one commissioner wants. Budget matters are the staff's responsibility. The idea is to plan an event that is mindful of what the community wants, not one based on any commissioner's preferences.

Mayor Brooks stressed that time is of the essence, since May 5 is not far away and they have been discussing it for a while. It is essential to get this rolling so the committee has ample time to make decisions and do the work, and so the Recreation Department is not left scrambling in just a few days. They need ample time to plan. She noted that fundraising cannot be done at the last minute, so that also needs to be planned for.

The City Manager asked whether the Board was comfortable with staff beginning to solicit volunteers now. Mayor Brooks stated she had no issue with that. The staff are uniquely qualified to publish the opportunity and bring back applicants. She added that if some 30 people apply who are passionate about being involved with the city, those 30 people need to be placed somewhere in this city doing something. If not on this committee, perhaps it is one of the other things that Commissioner Tagliarini brought before them and they voted on. This is a great opportunity to kick off recruiting volunteers and to bring in the people in this city who want to be plugged in and included in their decision-making for things like that. Ms. Powers said she would probably follow the same format when advertising for the Citizens Academy, which drew good feedback.

Mayor Brooks asked whether the Citizens Academy had been rescheduled. Megan said she had just discussed it that week with the City Manager and that talks were at a very early stage. Mayor Brooks said she had sought a Citizens Academy since first attending Florida League of Cities training upon election. She explained it helps residents understand what each department does so that expectations align with each department's scope. She would love to see that start back.

### H. John Levique Pirate Days

Commissioner Dillion, who had raised the topic, said he had spoken with longtime residents and determined that the event ended around 2014. It was a fantastic, annual event. Everyone ran around in pirate outfits. The Pirate's Pub in Johns Pass still keeps a tip jar for "John Levique days," so many people in the area still know about it. He would like the events to resume or be held as a city event to bring the Johns Pass community back together.

Mayor Brooks said it was typically held in May. Public Works Director Megan Wepfer said they could incorporate it into the anniversary celebration and make it a two-day event.

Mayor Brooks said the feedback she received was that many things were going on, but it became a drinking problem. She noted that a John Levique scavenger hunt exists in Johns Pass, geared mostly toward children. Merchants would likely welcome an event during the slow season, and Recreation would develop it. Commissioner Dillon said the timing is irrelevant to him; he would just like to bring the event back. Events help put this city on the map.

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### I. R.O.C. Park Discussion

Community Development Director Marci Forbes said the issue had come up a couple of months earlier and that staff had looked into it, but she was not prepared to discuss it. The City and the Madeira Beach Yacht Club had an agreement concerning the right-of-way, apparently dating from 1971. A dedication and easement grant exist for the portion of the public street known as Rex Place, which describes the property and its dedication. Staff would share it with the Board so they could understand the options.

Commissioner Dillon said he was told the City owned about 20 feet on the south side of the street. Parking staff had suggested that reorienting spaces at Johns Pass would yield only two or three additional stalls, but restriping about 900 feet of street with angled pull-in parking could add 80 to 90 stalls at no cost, just the striping. The City would not be taking away their parking, only restriping it to use the 20 feet the City owns. The City could later sketch the concept on the Rock Park map.

Commissioner Ghovaee asked staff to review whether any conditions exist, what they are, and whether the agreement includes a sunset provision.

## 7. CITY MANAGER

### A. Resolution 2026-10, Health Insurance Opt-Out Compensation Program

Finance Director Consultant Andrew Laflin explained that the City has no formal policy for employees who elect not to take the City's group health plan. The proposal was a formal stipend for employees who opt out in lieu of insurance, with verification procedures to confirm other coverage, such as through a spouse. It would benefit employees and save money because the minimum employee-only plan costs $1,044 per month, or a little over $12,000 per year, and enrollment has been at or nearly 100 percent for several years. A stipend of perhaps $3,000 to $5,000 could prompt employees with other coverage to decline the City's plan. Staff sought direction on the concept.

Mayor Brooks asked whether lower enrollment would raise premiums. Mr. Laflin said he did not have a definitive answer but noted that the City is in a group health insurance plan with other Florida municipalities and local governments, and that increases are driven mainly by claims experience. He did not expect a direct correlation and said staff could ask the City's representative. Only two employees currently do not take the City's insurance, so the group benefit should be unaffected.

Mayor Brooks said she was interested in providing a financial stipend for non-participating employees but would want it delivered through an FSA or HSA credit card used for health-related expenses. The City provides health insurance at 100 percent for the employee, so an employee forgoing it should receive a health benefit in return.

Commissioner Dillon said an HSA restriction could effectively penalize employees whose spouses have better coverage. The Mayor said it is a health benefit the City provides and, in her view, if a

stipend is paid, it should be dedicated to a health benefit, not a cash benefit. The card can be used for any health-related service, copay, product, or childcare. Commissioner Dillon said he would consider a 50/50 approach and asked how much it would save. Mr. Laflin explained that the employee-only insurance premium is $1,044 per employee per month, or $12,000 and some change annually. If an employee decides not to take the coverage, the cost is zero. If this is enacted, they would not know whether it affects the insurance premium the City pays; they could ask their rep. They could explore the FSA account to see if it is possible and make a qualifying contribution to an employee who is not in the health plan.

Commissioner McGeehen asked whether they had received any feedback from other employees who might wish to opt out. The City Manager said he did not know and that they would have to wait until next year for the opt-out period to enact the program.

Commissioner Ghovaee asked whether those who opt out would be required to sign a legal document stating that they are not accepting the City's insurance. The City Attorney responded to a commissioner's question about documentation, stating that employers typically require proof of other insurance and a signed statement declining coverage, which protects the City.

Commissioner Tagliarini said that, based on prior experience with Pinellas County Schools, where an employee who declined insurance received money in their paycheck, restricting use to over-the-counter health expenses seemed disingenuous. He argued that the City has already budgeted the funds and cash is cash. Let's let the employee decide. He disliked the idea of dictating how they have to spend that money, given that a spouse's plan may already cover over-the-counter items. He is more inclined to give them cash.

Mayor Brooks responded that many companies provide FSA cards in lieu of insurance, which is the basis of her view. The stipend should be a health benefit, as the other employees receive. An employee who works for the city and gets insurance pays nothing. If it is part of the health benefits package and they choose to get their insurance somewhere else, then they are forgoing a benefit. If they will be giving a benefit for the opt-out, then it should be on an FSA card.

The City Manager asked for specific direction and described the choice as binary: a cash stipend or an FSA card stipend. The Finance Director noted a resolution is ready if the Board prefers cash. Mayor Brooks said she would support a $ 300-per-month FSA stipend. The Finance Director said the stipend would have to be well below the $12,000-plus annual cost, and staff had considered an amount between $250 and $350 per month. A commissioner said he was not ready to support the card but supported research to confirm it is feasible, and asked staff to review how other cities handle this. The Finance Director added that an FSA card is non-taxable but that unused balances may expire, and said staff would present pros and cons for employees. Another commissioner again suggested splitting the stipend between cash and a card, so the portion not used on over-the-counter items is not lost.

Mr. Laflin concluded that staff would return with a more formalized approach for an FSA card option, including potential vendors and mechanics, for further workshop discussion. The Board concurred. No formal action was taken.

**B. John's Pass Village Directional Signage**

The City Manager's assistant, Megan Powers, reported that she contacted five companies regarding directional signage for the John's Pass area, and only two responded, in addition to the quote from the John's Pass Association. One company declined the job because it was too large. The quotes were as follows:

- Signarama: just over $20,000 for the full project of five signs, using cypress lumber. The company did not have marine-grade posts available.
- Florida Building Technologies: $33,000, using marine-grade posts and stainless steel hardware.

Ms. Powers said the quotes covered only the sign shell, not the graphics, and did not include permitting or installation. She hoped to install in-house and said Signarama's price would be higher if installation were required. She said she provided both companies with the same specifications and informed them that marine-grade materials were needed because the signs would be exposed to saltwater.

Commissioner Dillon asked whether the John's Pass developer would be required to provide signage under the planned development guidelines, and suggested coordinating to avoid clashes and potentially save money. Ms. Powers said she would need to check with Community Development. Mayor Brooks noted that the developer had not yet reached site plan review, so that project is years away. The City Manager estimated 3.5 to 4 years if things move quickly.

Mayor Brooks observed that the quotes were not apples to apples because of the cypress versus marine-grade difference. Public Works Director Megan Wepfer said the sign shown resembled what is currently in the village and that some existing signs had been removed because they had rotted. Marine grade would offer the best longevity and low maintenance, and that placement should account for the Flexi-Pave installed throughout the village. Mayor Brooks said she favored the higher-quality sign, saying a $10,000 difference is not a savings if it does not last. She said she would be more inclined to the marine-grade option to get a high-quality sign that would last longer. Ms. Powers said the cost would be over $30,000 so they would have to bid it out.

Commissioner McGeehen said he agreed that they should go with the marine grade. It would be an investment to what they want and to last a long time. Director Wepfer said that for the $33,000, they would need to confirm the locations. Some signs that are still up look similar. They could remove a single-sided sign.

Commissioner Ghovaee said the comparison of the signs seemed like apples and oranges and asked whether the companies had been given the sign specs. Ms. Powers explained that she had. It would be harder not to go out to bid.

Mayor Brooks also noted that the Florida Building Technologies quote contradicts itself, stating that the price includes installation, materials, and labor, while a handwritten total reads $33,000 plus labor and installation.

Ms. Powers said this was primarily to determine whether the commission would like her to issue an RFP, because the project appears to be over $30,000.

The Board's consensus was to issue an RFP.

## 8. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

### A. 2025 National Flood Insurance Program's (NFIP) Community Rating System (CRS) Annual Report

Community Development Director Marci Forbes presented the annual update of the Local Mitigation Strategy (LMS), the Pinellas County group in which communities track projects and issues and the projects they are advancing to mitigate flooding. The update earns points under the CRS. She reminded the Board that in October 2025 the City's CRS rating was upgraded from a 7 to a 6, giving the community a 20 percent flood insurance discount. She advised that if residents question their discount, they should contact their insurance agent. Reasons they might not see the discount include having a larger existing discount or being on the national violation tracker list. She noted that Pinellas County is rated a 2 and therefore receives a greater discount, which may explain differences residents notice.

Ms. Forbes explained that the LMS annual update is a CRS requirement and will come to the Board on the consent agenda for approval. She brought it to the workshop for visibility. She added that staff historically lacked the capacity to be proactive in the LMS process, but with more staff and resources, the City is increasing its participation.

Commissioner Ghovaee asked whether a site with historic designation affects insurance levels. Director Forbes replied that it will have no negative impact on the community.

## 9. FINANCE

### A. Presentation of FY 2026 Financial Results (Resolution 2026-11, FY 2026 Budget Amendment #2)

Finance Director Consultant Andrew Laflin presented the fiscal year 2026 year-end results, noting that year-end procedures were still underway and that some expenses could still be recorded. He explained that state law permits a municipality to amend the prior year's budget within 60 days after year-end, so the next voting meeting in mid-November would be the opportunity for any amendment. An amendment is needed only if a department's total expenses across personnel, operating, and capital exceed its budget. Based on current results, an amendment did not appear necessary.

Mr. Laflin said total actual revenues were about $32.1 million and total expenditures about $50.8 million, a change of about $18.7 million. He attributed the difference mainly to the $18 million-plus purchase of the 555 property and other non-recurring transactions. The general fund showed actual revenues of about $20.7 million and expenses of about $36 million, roughly a $15 million deficit. This was partially offset by a roughly $3 million emergency bridge loan. He noted this outcome was anticipated during the budget process.

Fund observations.

- Stormwater showed a deficit due to substantial capital projects, such as Areas 3 and 5, with no dedicated revenue source beyond 2019 debt proceeds.
- Parking and Marina were the largest profit-generating funds among the City's eleven funds.
- The impact fee fund collected about $547,000 this year, and none had been spent. There are no official plans in the FY 2027 budget, but an amendment could allocate eligible projects.
- The Archibald Park fund had a deficit of about $590,000 from capital projects.
- The Building fund had increased expenses because staffing shortages required contractual professional services.
- The stormwater revenue variance between budget and actual reflected budgeted reserves from prior debt, which are not true revenue.

Stormwater had about $7.5 million in encumbrances. Much of the Area 5 project will likely be spent in FY 2027, so no FY 2026 amendment is needed. However, an FY 2027 amendment will likely be required. That amendment would also address the 555 property and the 545 property, operating and redevelopment costs, and planning, design, and engineering. He expected to bring it forward after the new calendar year.

Community Development was over budget by about $27,000, compared with a budget of about $1,042,000. Staff identified costs, including special magistrate and other professional services, that were charged to the department but should be billed to others, such as Building and the City Manager's office. Reclassifying them would bring the department under budget. A commissioner asked how confident he was that no amendment would be needed, and he responded that he was "very confident" after reviewing the invoices that day with Ms. Forbes.

Information Technology, Legal Services, and Human Resources showed negative variances, but these are due to encumbrances, which are purchase commitments rather than actual expenses. Staff expect to close out open purchase orders within one to two weeks, likely eliminating those variances. He said he would monitor the numbers and could prepare an amendment quickly if needed.

On a normalized basis, excluding non-recurring items (the bridge loan proceeds, the Pinellas County EMS station reimbursement and related expenses, FEMA grants, the 555 property acquisition, and the John’s Pass dredging project) and adding the budgeted stormwater debt service transfer, the general fund showed a deficit of about $2.085 million. Parking, formerly part of the general fund, had a profit of over $2 million. Combined, the general fund and parking were modestly positive.

## 10. RESPOND TO PUBLIC COMMENTS/QUESTIONS

Mayor Brooks stated that there had been no public comments, so no responses were required.

## 11. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Brooks adjourned the meeting at 3:32 p.m.

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Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Clara VanBlargan, MMC, FCPC, FCRM, MSM, City Clerk

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