



MINUTES
BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS
WORKSHOP MEETING
DISCUSSION ON CITY MANAGER
AUGUST 21, 2025
2:00 P.M.

The City of Madeira Beach Board of Commissioners held a workshop meeting at 2:00 p.m. on August 21, 2025, in the Patricia Shontz Commission Chambers at City Hall, located at 300 Municipal Drive, Madeira Beach, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayor
Ray Kerr, Vice Mayor/Commissioner District 2
David Tagliarini, Commissioner District 1
Eddie McGeehen, Commissioner District 3
Housh Ghovae, Commissioner District 4

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

CHARTER OFFICERS PRESENT: Robin Gomez, City Manager
Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk
Andrew Laflin, Finance Director
Thomas Trask, City Attorney

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. DISCUSSION ON CITY MANAGER

A. City Manager Discussion

Mayor Brooks said she requested the workshop so the Commission and the public can discuss the City Manager's performance. As elected officials, it is their responsibility to ensure that the City has strong, effective leadership to serve the residents, businesses and staff best. Unfortunately,

under the current leadership of City Manager Robin Gomez, the City is not receiving the direction it needs. The purpose of the meeting was to outline key issues with the current City Manager's performance and support the need to begin a search for new leadership.

Mayor Brooks listed a few of the items that she spoke about at the last meeting.

- Lack of leadership and accountability. The City Manager has consistently failed to provide the leadership necessary to guide his staff. Departments have lacked clear direction, accountability, and timely follow-through, which resulted in inefficiencies and frustration.
 - The City Manager reported incorrect information on the dredging project permit process, and he did not provide timely updates.
 - The jetty was removed without Commission approval.
- Not adhering to the City's purchasing policy.
 - The piling project was approved at over \$30,000 by the City Manager. He failed to hold a public meeting for the pilings specifically requested by a Commissioner.
 - The Integris contract for \$60,000 was signed on September 16, 2024, without Commission approval, and a budget amendment was brought forward on May 28, 2025.
 - The City missed a funding opportunity by not applying for LMS grant monies, which cost the City millions of dollars.
- Poor communication and responsiveness. Communication has been delayed, incomplete, or dismissive. It erodes public trust and weakens their ability to govern effectively.
 - Lack of updates when requested by the Commission on key projects and issues, including the jetty, dredging, the Snack Shack, Tom & Kitty Stuart Park, and post-storm repairs within the City.
 - Inaccurate information provided to the Commission, including the jetty. He misstated the permit status, process timelines, and agency steps about the dredging project.
 - The way he speaks to residents and business owners showing favoritism to some and dismissive to others. It is unprofessional and not the standard of leadership or representation that she wants for the City.
- Lack of preparation and staff support. A successful City Manager fosters teamwork, preparation, and morale.
 - They have seen disengagement, low motivation, and a lack of initiative among staff.
 - He came unprepared to Commission meetings. When the Commission requested staff appropriation needs, he came to the meeting without the information.
 - He did not provide a bullet-point account of the Code Enforcement processes.
 - He did not provide timely, accurate updates to Commissioners.
 - He dismissed post-hurricane recovery needs as not a priority.

Mayor Brooks said she previously discussed these issues with Mr. Gomez in one-on-one meetings before bringing them to the Commission. Her confidence in the City Manager's ability to lead has diminished both among Commissioners and within the Community. Without confidence in their Chief Administrator, the City cannot move forward effectively. She believed it was in the best interest of the residents, staff, and future progress to begin to search for a new City Manager who can bring leadership, accountability, and vision to Maderia Beach.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment.

Belinda Gonzer, resident of Madeira Beach Yacht Club, described two negative interactions with Mr. Gomez, including one where he suggested her property might be purchased by a developer and demolished, and another where he questioned whether she lived at her property full-time before the storm.

John Hendricks, 569 Normandy Rd, said he was involved in the hiring of the City Manager and considered him a close personal friend, but something changed several years ago. Many things that the Commission put through when he was on the Board have not been completed. There was no follow-up on them. The City continues to throw good money after bad. He said he and Linda Chaney worked hard getting the funding from the State for the dredging project, and the ball has been dropped. The jetty was easily repairable, but the City Manager took it upon himself to destroy it. He said the budget was \$25 million two years ago, and the proposed budget for this year is \$46 million. The City of Seminole, which is five times larger than Madeira Beach, is \$28 million. It is obscene for a town this small. He said the City Manager is not the same man he used to know.

Robin Stack, 728 Sunset Cove, said that he had informed Mr. Gomez about Florida's no-gouging law after the hurricane, but the City had still used inflated prices for damage estimates, causing difficulties for residents trying to rebuild.

Charles Lunsford, an 85-year-old resident, questioned why the Commission had extended Mr. Gomez's contract five months ago if there were such significant issues with his performance. He suggested forming an executive committee to oversee the City Manager rather than replacing him.

Captain Dylan Hubbard of Hubbard's Marina detailed issues with the dredging project, stating that Mr. Gomez had repeatedly claimed they were waiting for Army Corps of Engineers approval, but a news investigation revealed no permit application had been submitted. He described how, after this was discovered, Mr. Gomez ceased communicating with him. Captain Hubbard also expressed frustration about the jetty removal, the swim buoy debacle, changes to the Seafood Festival, and the elimination of Final Friday events without consulting affected businesses. Many businesses in John's Pass Village are frustrated that the parking garage has not been built. He said someone needs to be accountable for the \$20,000 in upgrades to the truck that was recently purchased.

Jim Rostek, protected address, cited concerns about retribution from Mr. Gomez, stating that many residents were afraid to speak publicly. He said the FY 2026 budget is out of control. He criticized the handling of permits after the storms, the lack of accountability for lost equipment during the hurricane, failure to follow purchasing policies, and alleged favoritism in hiring practices within the Fire Department. He urged the Commission to remove the City Manager.

Alex Condacore from Starlight Cruises described issues with sand accumulation at John's Pass affecting their business and claimed Mr. Gomez had been unhelpful when approached for assistance after the hurricane.

John Connolly, Normandy Rd., questioned why Tom and Kitty Stewart Park remained closed, noting it was a source of revenue for the City that should have been prioritized for reopening after the hurricane.

Edward Smith, E.F. Smith & Associates, inquired whether the newly built elevated homes on small lots could have their steps and balconies extended, similar to those being elevated.

After public comments concluded, Vice Mayor Kerr stated that while there were concerns, he wanted to give Mr. Gomez an opportunity to address them before making any decisions. He noted the challenges of the past ten months following Hurricane Helene and felt the City had made significant progress in recovery. While acknowledging mistakes had been made, he questioned whether they warranted dismissal.

Commissioner Tagliarini requested that Mr. Gomez be given a chance to respond to the issues raised. He reminded everyone that all Commissioners also live in the city and had experienced hurricane damage themselves. He shared that he had spoken with department supervisors and employees, with the vast majority expressing support for Mr. Gomez as a manager. Commissioner Tagliarini suggested implementing an action plan with specific monitoring requirements rather than immediately replacing him.

Commissioner McGeehan emphasized the importance of the chain of command, with residents at the top, followed by the Board of Commissioners, the City Manager, and department heads. He stated that the residents' opinions should be prioritized.

Commissioner Ghovae stated that he had heard only negative feedback about the City Manager and believed they should move forward with a replacement.

Mayor Brooks said this was about the City and was not personal. She addressed some additional concerns, including the handling of the pilings and the jetty removal. She stated that she had repeatedly asked Mr. Gomez to hold public meetings on these issues, but he had refused. She expressed concerns about his management style, specifically the lack of discipline and oversight of departments. She gave an example of the Recreation Center after Milton and said it should have been dried out. She repeatedly requested pictures of the interior to show the mold and never received them. She was in support of looking for a new City Manager based on a pattern and management style. A city manager needs to pay attention to what is going on in the departments, mentoring the people working for them, and being present in the day-to-day activities of the City. She said the City Manager had the opportunity to do better, and he chose not to.

City Attorney Trask outlined the process for removing the City Manager according to Section 5.4 of the City Charter, which would require a resolution with specific reasons for removal, followed by either the City Manager's resignation or a public hearing. Mr. Gomez has an employment agreement that was extended until December 31, 2028, and it provides a process for determining his severance pay.

Mr. Gomez then suggested moving forward with a separation agreement rather than going through the full removal process. He proposed providing the agreement to the City Attorney, who would

then discuss it with each Commissioner before placing it on the agenda for the next regular meeting on September 10th.

All Commissioners agreed to proceed with the separation agreement approach. The City Attorney noted that once the separation was finalized, they would need to appoint an acting City Manager within 48 hours of his resignation and then begin the recruitment process for a permanent replacement.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Brooks adjourned the meeting at 3:09 p.m.

ATTEST:

Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayor

Clara VanBlargan, MMC, MSM, City Clerk