

On July 14, 2025, the City Commission of the City of Wauchula, held its regularly scheduled budget workshop at 4pm. The workshop was held at 225 E. Main Street, Wauchula, Florida.

Nadaskay called the workshop to order.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT

Commissioner Anne Miller
Mayor Pro Tem Russell Smith
Mayor Keith Nadaskay
Commissioner Sherri Albritton
Commissioner Gary Smith

STAFF PRESENT

City Manager Olivia Minshew
Deputy City Manager John Eason
Assistant City Manager Sandee Braxton
Community Development Director Kyle Long
Assistant Chief of Police Tom Fort
Director of Project Management and Procurement Ward Grimes

2025-2026 Proposed Budget Discussion

Braxton began by stating the 2025-2026 proposed budget was \$26.4 million.

Braxton explained that, although the budget was balanced using the rollback rate, that was only made possible by using fund balance for things that would not normally come out of that fund. Braxton explained the largest contributing factors for the increase in expenses, as well as a few strategies to increase revenues, which included a potential tax increase.

Braxton discussed the following Contributing Budget Factors, which summarized the entire budget proposal.

Personnel Services

While not the largest expenditure type, personnel expenditures do make up a significant portion of the City of Wauchula's overall budget. Therefore, staff spends considerable time each year reviewing personnel expenses. A quick recap of the factors relating to personnel impacting this proposed budget include:

- Continuing to implement the new step plan for all employees to prepare for the \$15 minimum wage requirement by September 30, 2026. Overall salaries for the proposed budget is \$4.35 million which is a 10.33% increase from current budget
- Individual step raises for employees who are expected to or have achieved certain milestones
- Health Insurance will see a significant change this year. The City is moving from a fully funded structure to a self-funded pool which will decrease the volatility of future rate changes and budget fluctuations. The fully funded renewal was quoted at a 13% increase. Switching to the self-funded pool, we will see an approximate 8.25% increase in premiums.
- Maintaining current Health Savings Account (HSA) contribution levels at \$3,200 for family and \$1,600 for individuals.

- Continued funding of the Employee Wellness Program.
- Workers' compensation premiums increased 20%.
- The required annual contribution to the Pension Fund is 9.34% of payroll. The required OPEB contribution is 0%.

Operating Expenses

Every department is carefully reviewed each year to ensure sufficient funds are budgeted to maintain city & utility operations, while being prudent with taxpayer and rate payer dollars. The following factors are worth noting in operating expenses:

- The budget includes an increase of 20% for automobile liability, and property and casualty liability premiums. This change can be seen across all Funds
- Continuation of the Employee Recognition Program and related funding for such can be seen in both the General Fund (Dept 519-54920) and Utility Fund (Dept 539-54925) at \$2,500 each.
- Continuation of the workstation replacement schedule produced the need for 8 computers and 9 tablets in 11 different departments. The departments include 511, 512, 513, 519, 521, 572, 502, 533, 535, 539, and 593.
- Routine termite tenting of some City facilities will need to take place during FY26. These facilities include 303 W Main Street (former Police Department), 723 Green Street (former Boy Scout Building), and 135 W. Main Street (the Train Depot) and are budgeted at \$23,000 in 519-54620
- Hardware upgrades for IT security and storage have been budgeted in 519-55200 and 539-55200 for a combined \$3,000. This annual replacement budget will keep our IT security hardware up to date and ensure continuous functionality.
- Another \$10,000 is budgeted for the next phase of street name sign replacement throughout the city-limits in 541-54600.
- Lift station liner repairs and a 5HP discharge pump are budgeted in Dept 535-54680 and a new chart recorder and Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) upgrades are budgeted in 535-55200 all totaling \$16,000.
- A new line item in department 535 has been created to account for sludge hauling expenses due to new regulations from FDEP. This is budgeted in 535-55210 for \$125,000.
- Annual recloser replacement for the electric distribution system can be seen in 593-55202 for \$30,000.
- Regular pole inspections are due again in this fiscal year. We have budgeted \$60,000 (593-55268) to inspect all utility poles belonging to the City of Wauchula for treatment and replacement.
- In order to expedite LED street and yard light replacement installation, we have increased this budget to \$70,000 (593-55280)
- There is another employee in the Electric Distribution Department (593-55400) that needs to begin apprentice school starting next fiscal year which is budgeted at \$12,000.

Capital Expenditures

The City continues to invest in our facilities, equipment, vehicles & existing infrastructure. Proposed capital expenditures are approximately \$8.23 million for FY 25-26. The following items are representative of this commitment:

- Vehicles and Equipment
 - As a continuation of our established fleet replacement program, the following replacements have been budgeted for this fiscal year. These can be found in:

- General Fund
 - Dept 521-Police Department
 - 3 Police Vehicles (\$180,000)
 - Dept 572- Recreation
 - 1 Service Body Pick-Up Truck (\$63,000)
 - Zero-Turn Mower (\$19,500)
 - Utility Fund
 - Dept 533- Water Distribution
 - Backhoe (\$125,000)
 - Dept 535-WWTP
 - 1 Pick-up Truck (\$50,000)
 - Dept 536- Sewer & Locates
 - Plotter printer for GIS maps (\$6,000)
 - Sewer Camera (\$10,500)
 - Dept 539- Administration
 - Skid Steer (\$125,000)
 - Replace GIS Server (\$6,500)
 - Dept 593- Electric Distribution
 - 1 Bucket Truck (\$280,000)
 - Gooseneck Equipment Trailer (\$20,000)
- Buildings and Other Infrastructure
 - Dept 519- General Administration
 - Public Works Fuel Farm (\$15,350)
 - Dept 541- Roads & Street
 - Downing Circle mill and repave (\$230,000)
 - Hidden Creek Circle Street lighting (\$50,000)
 - Dept 532- Water Treatment Plant
 - Chlorine Analyzer (\$5,200)
 - Dept 533- Water Distribution
 - Water Facilities Plan update (\$75,000)
 - Dept 535- Waste Water Treatment Plant
 - Painting clarifier #2 (\$40,000)
 - Repairing the jockey pump (\$8,000)
 - Dept 536- Sewer & Locates
 - Replace 8-inch Gravity Sewer line between Knollwood and Farr Field lift station (\$450,000)
 - Repair sewer line on Peace Drive (\$40,000)
 - Dept 539- Administration
 - Enclosing additional covered storage (\$25,000)
 - Public Works Fuel Farm (\$15,350)
 - Dept 593- Electric Distribution
 - Spare Relay Breaker (\$6,000)
 - Storm hardening projects (\$100,000)
 - Hardee Crossing Subdivision extension (\$10,000)
 - Capacitor Installation (\$45,000)
 - Annual switch replacement (\$15,000)
 - Dept 534- Sanitation
 - Public Works Fuel Farm (\$15,375)

- Community Redevelopment Agency
 - Infrastructure
 - In-Fill Housing (\$1,245,000)
 - Power Plant Demolition (\$1,000,000)
 - 1st Avenue Water & Sewer (\$200,000)
 - Bay Street Sidewalk (\$26,000)
 - 8th Avenue Sidewalk (\$61,000)
 - 1st Avenue Sidewalk (\$13,000)
 - Farr Field Improvements (\$3,500,000)
 - Heritage Park Electrical (\$70,000)

Debt Service

This year's budget will see a decrease in debt service payments due to the pay-off of 1 loan during FY 24-25. The annual payment reduction is \$33,706.

Grants & Aids

The Wauchula CRA continues to seek public/private partnerships in order to maximize the impact of the Tax Increment Financing funds. In addition, the CRA will set aside \$200,000 in additional funds for new commercial grant projects in FY 25-26. These can be seen in Dept 584-58110. Another partnership which is equally vital to the CRA, is through an interlocal agreement with Hardee County. This agreement allows the CRA to fund public relations, administered by the Main Street Wauchula organization, to support marketing, the arts, and community events held in the CRA district. This funding is seen in Dept 584-58220.

Other Uses

Transfers & Contingency

The city makes effort each year to build contingency into the budget for unexpected expenses. The proposed budget includes \$2,967 in contingency in the General Fund. The increased level of service in our Parks and Recreation department, the City's need to stay competitive in an ever-growing job market, and infrastructure maintenance requirements have stretched the General Fund to this point. Additionally, Utility Fund and Sanitation Funds include \$153,088 and \$23,898 respectively in contingency.

The total transfer to the General Fund from the Utility & Sanitation Funds increased by \$73,740, which is less than a 4% increase from current FY. General Fund administration supports the enterprise funds as well, and while expenses continue to increase in the General Fund the revenues to help support those expenses do not increase at the same rate.

Grant Funded & Potential Projects (Not in proposed budget)

Staff has found it more efficient to match grant funded project expenses with their relative revenue as they occur. Therefore, the following projects are expected to be in process during FY 25 -26 and be funded with grant funds.

Project	Purpose	Grant Agency	Amount
Alabama Street Roadway Improvements	Resurfacing of Alabama Street between N. Ohio Avenue and N. Florida Avenue, approximately .243 miles.	Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)- Small Counties Outreach Program (SCOP)	\$359,888

Tennessee Street Roadway Improvements	Resurfacing of Tennessee St, between N. Ohio Avenue and North Florida Avenue, approximately .243 miles associated safety improvements will also be addressed, as appropriate.	Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)- Small Counties Outreach Program (SCOP)	\$455,509
Oak Street, Bay Street, and/or Palmetto Street Roadway Improvements	Resurfacing as much of Oak , Bay and Palmetto Streets as funds will allow.	Housing and Urban Development (HUD)	\$2,000,000
Hogan Street Extension	Extend Hogan Street to connect North and Southbound Highway 17.	Florida Department of Commerce	\$441,125
Senior Center	Design and construct a new ADA compliant senior center	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 25-26	\$3,000,000
Restroom Improvements	Update restroom facility at Heritage Park	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 25-26	\$500,000
Power Plant Demolition	Demolition and site improvements at old power plant	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 25-26	\$4,000,000
Auditorium Safety Improvements	Upgrade current facility to include ADA accessibility, sprinkler system, fire rated curtain, upgraded rope and weight fly system, and lighting upgrades	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 25-26	\$2,500,000
Runway and Taxiway Extension	Feasibility and environmental studies, design and construction of a runway and taxiway extension to allow for safe landing & take-off of medium sized jet aircraft.	Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) and Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 23-24 & FY 24-25	FDOT Grant- \$450,000 LP#1- \$4,000,000 LP#2- \$5,500,000
T-Hangar	Design and construct an additional multi-unit T-Hangar	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 23-24	\$2,500,000
Rotating Beacon & Tower	Design and construction of a rotating beacon and tower at the airport.	Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT)	\$325,000
Airport Terminal Building	Design and construct a new airport terminal/pilot's lounge.	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 25-26	\$1,750,000

Municipal Airport Deep Well	Install a new deep well to support economic development to include fire suppression capabilities	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 25-26	\$1,332,938
T-Hangar	Design and construct an additional multi-unit T-Hangar	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 25-26	\$5,000,000
Southwest Area Elevated Water Tower	Design and construction of a third elevated water tower in the southwest area of the county	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 23-24	\$8,212,789
Heard Bridge Waterline Loop	Extend the waterline on Heard Bridge Road north to REA Road and west to Highway 17, looping the main water system	Hardee County Economic Development Authority (EDA)	\$1,000,000
Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)	Design and implement an advanced metering infrastructure system for electric and water meters city-wide	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 23-24	\$4,750,000
Public Works Fuel Farm	Install a storm hardened fuel station for the Public Works departments.	Florida Department of Emergency Management-Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (FDEM-HMGP)	HMGP-\$138,225 City Match-\$46,075
Administration Building and WWTP Generators	Installation of 3 back-up generators at the Administration and Police Department Building, WWTP Control Chamber and WWTP Control Room.	Florida Department of Emergency Management-Hazard Mitigation Grant Program (FDEM-HMGP) and Florida Department of Commerce	HMGP-\$506,546 FL Dept of Commerce-\$23,672
Public Safety Hardened Facility	Hardened facility to expedite public safety measures aiding in restoration after disasters	Legislative Appropriation (LP) FY 25-26	\$5,000,000

Braxton reviewed the overall city-wide budget and discussed expenditure types, personnel salaries/benefits, fund balance, debt service and ad valorem tax.

Nadaskay recessed the budget workshop at 5:46 pm in order to hold the City Commission meeting that was scheduled at 6:00 pm.

Nadaskay reconvened the budget workshop at 7:53 pm.

Eason discussed the general fund and community redevelopment agency fund.

Grimes discussed the airport fund, utility fund and sanitation fund.

With no further business to discuss, Nadaskay adjourned the Budget Workshop at 9:34 p.m.

Mayor Richard K. Nadaskay, Jr

City Clerk Stephanie Camacho