

CITY OF WESTLAKE



MINUTES

City Council Special Meeting

Tuesday, August 26, 2025, at 6:00 PM

The Lodge at Westlake Adventure Park
5490 Kingfisher Blvd.
Westlake, Florida 33470

CITY COUNCIL:

JohnPaul O'Connor, Mayor
Greg Langowski, Vice Mayor
Gary Werner, Council Member – Seat 1
Eric Gleason, Council Member – Seat 2
Charlotte Leonard, Council Member – Seat 3

CITY STAFF:

Ken Cassel, City Manager
Zoie P. Burgess, CMC, City Clerk
Donald J. Doody, Esq., City Attorney
Osniel Leon, AICP, Planning and Zoning
Suzanne Dombrowski, P.E., ENV SP, Engineering

A special meeting of the City Council of the City of Westlake was held on Tuesday, August 26, 2025, at 6:00 PM., at The Lodge at Westlake Adventure Park, 5490 Kingfisher Blvd. Members of the public also attended the meeting through electronic means and accessed as follows:

1. Webex meeting from a computer, tablet or smartphone at the following link:
<https://cityofwestlake.my.webex.com/>

Meeting ID: 2861 481 5509
Password: hello

2. Participants also dialed in using the following number:

United States Toll: +1-650-479-3208
Meeting ID: 2861 481 5509

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor O'Connor called the City of Westlake special meeting of Tuesday, August 26, 2025, to order at 6:00 PM

ROLL CALL

Present and constituting a quorum:

Councilman Gary Werner
Councilman Erik Gleason
Councilwoman Charlotte Leonard
Vice Mayor Greg Langowski
Mayor JohnPaul O'Connor

Also present:

Kenneth Cassel, City Manager
Donald J. Doody, Esq., City Attorney
Zoie Burgess, CMC City Clerk
Odet Izquierdo, Deputy City Clerk

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor O'Connor led the Pledge of Allegiance.

ADDITIONS, DELETIONS OR MODIFICATIONS, AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Mayor O'Connor called for any additions, deletions, or modifications to the agenda.

Vice Mayor Langowski made a motion to approve the agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilwoman Leonard.

ROLL CALL

Councilman Werner	YES
Councilman Gleason	YES
Councilwoman Leonard	YES
Vice Mayor Langowski	YES
Mayor O'Connor	YES

With all in favor, motion carried without dissent (5-0).

PUBLIC COMMENTS

This section of the agenda allows for comments from the public to speak. Each speaker will be given a total of three (3) minutes to comment. A public comment card should be completed and returned to the City Clerk. When you are called to speak, please go to the podium, and prior to addressing Council, state your name and address for the record. All public comments will be noted and may receive a response if necessary. Any follow-up will be handled by staff later.

There being no comments, the next item followed.

SPECIAL AGENDA

A. Consideration of the City's options and potential action relative to position of City Manager.

The Council held a wide-ranging discussion on the future of the city manager position considering City Manager Kenneth Cassel's upcoming departure on September 26, 2025.

Mayor O'Connor started the discussion by mentioning his involvement in a recent executive director's search for Palm Beach. He advised the Council not to rush the search for a permanent city manager but noted that there are many options available for an interim position. He expressed his preference for a dedicated city manager solely focused on Westlake's needs.

Vice Mayor Langowski agreed that the Council should take time with the search process, suggesting a timeframe of 4-6 months to ensure the right outcome. He concurred that it was time for separation from Seminole Improvement District stating that one person should not be controlling both entities and the city manager should be fully separate.

Councilman Gleason offered a different perspective, acknowledging the need for the city manager role to be carved out from Seminole Improvement District. However, he emphasized that Westlake has a symbiotic relationship with Seminole Improvement District that needs to be maintained, as they would eventually be part of the City.

Councilman Werner raised concerns about transparency and accountability with the current Inframark contract. He advocated reviewing the entire contract with Inframark for greater transparency.

Councilwoman Leonard suggested considering an acting city manager rather than an interim, noting that municipalities can function with an acting city manager without disruption. She proposed exploring whether someone within the current staff could potentially serve in this capacity temporarily. Councilwoman Leonard expressed concern about bringing in a completely new person with the upcoming budget approval and elections. She supported the idea of an interim manager but wanted to ensure continuity during this critical period. She noted that whoever comes in would need guidance, as Westlake's structure is different from other cities in Palm Beach County.

Mr. Chris Tarase, President of Community Management at Inframark addressed the Council, acknowledging that it is time for the city manager role to be separated from Seminole Improvement District. He confirmed they would support amending the agreement and offered to present Zoie Burgess, the current City Clerk, as a candidate for interim city manager. He noted that they had conducted several interviews for potential city manager candidates and could share these with the Council.

Dr. Sugerman, who previously worked with the city on strategic planning, was suggested as a potential interim candidate by Councilman Werner.

After additional Council discussion, Madam City Clerk, Ms. Burgess, expressed her willingness to serve in a temporary capacity as interim city manager, acknowledging government continuity

CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS

A. Councilwoman Charlotte Leonard – no comments.

B. Councilman Erik Gleason – Councilman Gleason, thanked Mr. Cassel for his service to the City.

C. Councilman Gary Werner - Councilman Werner, thanked Mr. Cassel for his service to the city as well as the audience for their attendance to this special meeting.

D. Vice Mayor Greg Langowski – Vice Mayor Langowski thanked Mr. Cassel for his service and shared his excitement about the future direction of the city.

E. Mayor JohnPaul O'Connor – Mayor O'Connor mentioned that September is Suicide Awareness Prevention Month and proposed introducing a proclamation. He also suggested lighting the City in purple and teal colors, which are the suicide prevention awareness colors. Mayor O'Connor also expressed his appreciation for Mr. Cassel's service to the City, acknowledging the City's progress would not have been possible without him.

REPORT - CITY ATTORNEY

City Attorney, Mr. Doody, offered to help the city manager's transition process to ensure it meets legal requirements. He assured the Council he would provide guidance without interfering with their policy decisions and would support Ms. Zoie Burgess if she were appointed to ensure a smooth transition.

REPORT - CITY MANAGER

City Manager, Mr. Cassel, thanked the Council for the opportunity to serve. He noted that he has committed to being available to answer questions after his departure. He praised the Council for their diligence, stating that they do their homework, read information in advance, ask questions upfront, and discuss issues openly and transparently.

Mr. Cassel reflected on his time with the city, describing it as "a great time" and "fun." He mentioned the work done with the team to establish codes and land development regulations designed to avoid creating legacy issues that could impede future development. He expressed hope that they had "set the table" for predictability that would continue to attract businesses and residents to Westlake for the long term.

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Public Comment – Richard Weber – 15950 Key Biscayne Lane - Mr. Weber expressed how he would like to stay informed about Seminole Improvement District and City issues via email, Westlake correspondence or any other type of available communication system.

Public Comment – Raymond Hicks – 15756 Key Biscayne Lane – Mr. Hicks would like the City and Seminole Improvement District to have separate managers, also would like more transparency regarding the Inframark contract.

Public Comment – Ana Rodriguez - 5991 Whippoorwill Circle - Ms. Rodriguez raised concerns about the current Inframark contract, also voiced how Seminole Improvement District and the City of Westlake should have two separate managers.

Public Comment - Alicia Torres – 5847 Whippoorwill Circle - Ms. Torres is also in agreeance with the separation of Seminole Improvement District and the City of Westlake. Ms. Torres acknowledged Ms. Burgess as the best candidate for interim city manager.

Public Comment – Mr. Bobby Farber – 4829 Saint Armands Way – Mr. Farber expressed how the best candidate for interim city manager would be Ms. Burgess, as she has all the experience needed and has been working for the city for the last couple of years. Mr. Farber also suggested council conduct their own search for city manager and not using Inframark for the hiring process.

Public Comment – Ms. Jackie Campbell - 15220 Siesta Key Lane - Ms. Campbell echoed the sentiments regarding Ms. Burgess, noting that she would be best candidate for interim city manager. She also mentioned a 7:00 PM start time for council meetings to allow more residents to attend.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:37 PM.

Odet Izquierdo, Acting City Clerk

JohnPaul O'Connor, Mayor