

CITY OF WESTLAKE



MINUTES

City Council Special Meeting

Tuesday, February 24, 2026 at 4:00 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
Erik Gleason, Council Member – Seat 2
Charlotte Leonard, Council Member – Seat 3

CITY STAFF:

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

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor O'Connor called the City of Westlake Special Meeting on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, to order at 4:00 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:

Zoie P. Burgess, CMC, Acting City Manager
Odet Izquierdo, Acting City Clerk
Donald J. Doody, Esq., City Attorney

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.

Mayor O'Connor called for a motion to approve the agenda as is.

Motion by Councilman Werner, to approve the agenda as is, seconded by Councilman Gleason.

UPON 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.

Acting City Clerk Izquierdo reported that no public comment cards were received.

PRESENTATIONS/PROCLAMATIONS

A. Review of City Manager Candidates and Selection of Finalists

Mayor O'Connor explained that the purpose of this discussion was to focus on narrowing the candidate pool based on qualifications, leadership experience, and alignment with the city manager role as previously discussed during the recruitment process. He noted that the council had conducted one-on-one interviews with each candidate and the goal was to identify the top three candidates.

Councilwoman Leonard announced that they had received an email that morning from one candidate who had withdrawn from consideration after accepting another position.

Mayor O'Connor indicated he would speak last and asked each council member to share their top three choices, emphasizing this discussion would help narrow the field to at least three candidates, with the possibility of having a backup as well in case contract negotiations did not work out.

Councilwoman Leonard presented her choices as: Leondrae Camel (first), Howard Brown (second), and Michael Jackson (third).

Councilman Gleason identified Leondrae Camel as his first choice, Howard Brown as second, and his third choice Larry Tibbs.

Vice Mayor Langowski listed Leondrae Camel first, Howard Brown second, and Peggy Castano third.

Councilman Werner stated Howard Brown as number one, Mark Kutney as second, and indicated he also liked Peggy Castano as well.

Mayor O'Connor noted the consistency among the council, with four out of five members having Leondrae Camel as their number one choice and Howard Brown as number two. His personal selections were Leondrae Camel first, Howard Brown second, and Peggy Castano third.

Councilman Werner asked about the process for the final candidates, questioning whether they would have public interviews as previously discussed. Mayor O'Connor confirmed this was the expectation based on prior discussions.

The council reached consensus on bringing forward the top two candidates: Leondrae Campbell and Howard Brown, given the strong agreement among council members on these two choices.

Motion by Councilwoman Leonard to move forward with two candidates, Leondrae Camel and Howard Brown, for consideration for the city manager position, seconded by Councilman Werner.

UPON ROLL CALL:

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

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

Mr. Doody outlined the next steps, explaining the candidates would be hired as independent contractors. He would prepare a contract and clarify employment terms, emphasizing that the settlement would exclude city-provided benefits.

Council members were encouraged to have individual discussions with candidates before March 3rd to better understand their qualifications. These individual conversations aimed to inform the public presentations planned for March 3rd, with potential follow-up questions if necessary.

Acting City Clerk Izquierdo confirmed that candidates would return for the March 3rd meeting, and council members would communicate with them individually before then.

CITY COUNCIL COMMENTS

A. Councilwoman Leonard admired the interview process as a great experience, noting it was very organized and well-prepared. She thanked staff for their work in preparing for the candidates and expressed satisfaction with having strong top choices.

B. Councilman Gleason expressed appreciation for all the candidates they interviewed, noting he enjoyed speaking with each of them and learning about what they could offer the city. He expressed confidence in the consensus reached regarding the two individuals selected for further interviews.

C. Councilman Werner agreed with the consensus about how the interviews were conducted, acknowledging that staff and Acting City Manager Ms. Burgess did a good job organizing the process. However, he expressed some reservations about the overall candidate pool, stating he felt they were "okay candidates" rather than great ones. Despite this concern, he felt they could make a good selection from the current round but suggested the city should consider charter amendments in the future to attract candidates from other municipalities.

D. Vice Mayor Langowski thanked staff and the council for their work in the City Manager hiring process.

E. Mayor O'Connor complimented the organization of the city manager selection process and expressed satisfaction that the majority of council members had the same top two candidates, indicating strong consensus.

REPORT - CITY ATTORNEY

Mr. Doody reported that he would be engaged in contract negotiations and would bring a contract template to council members for review and input.

REPORT - CITY MANAGER

Acting City Manager, Ms. Burgess, provided a reminder about the next council meeting scheduled for March 3rd. Ms. Burges also addressed a school district community meeting that had been scheduled for March 5th to present plans for the new school.

Ms. Burgess announced that the city would be participating in a reading program at Golden Grove Elementary, with volunteers including Mayor O'Connor registered to participate.

Acting City Clerk Ms. Izquierdo noted that five people had been registered through her office, including two members from the education board.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, Mayor O'Connor adjourned the meeting at 4:31 PM.

Odet Izquierdo, Acting City Clerk

JohnPaul O'Connor, Mayor