



**CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP HAINES CITY, FLORIDA**  
**MINUTES**

**June 24, 2025, 4:00 p.m.**  
**City Hall Commission Chambers**  
**620 E. Main Street, Haines City, FL 33844**  
**Phone: 863-421-9921   Web: hainescity.com**

Commissioners in  
Attendance:

Mayor Morris L. West  
Vice-Mayor Vernel Smith, Jr.  
  
Commissioner Anne Huffman  
  
Commissioner Omar Arroyo  
  
Commissioner Kim Downing

Staff in Attendance:

City Manager, James Elensky  
City Attorney, Fred Reilly  
City Clerk, Sharon Lauther

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## 1. CALL TO ORDER

The Mayor called the Budget Workshop to order at 4:00 PM on 06/24/2025 in the City Commission Chambers, located at 620 E Main Street, Haines City, FL.

## 2. PRESENTATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS

### 2.a Budget Presentation

Omar DeJesus, Finance Director, CPA, provided a general overview of the first budget workshop session. During the session, eight key questions were presented to the City Commission to help guide the discussion and determine the needs and priorities for capital improvement planning.

**\*\*\* Commissioner Arroyo entered the chambers at 4:14 PM\*\*\***

The Organizational Goals are proposed to be revised to align more strategically with the city's long-term vision. The updated goal categories include:

- Safe, Clean, and Beautiful
- Thoughtful Growth and Community Vision
- Smart and Connected City
- Stronger Businesses, Brighter Futures
- High-Quality Infrastructure & Facilities
- Recreation, Culture, and Community Life

Finance Director went over the survey results.

Commissioner Huffman expressed interest in establishing a separate strategic goal focused on employees, specifically to enhance onboarding and create a smoother hiring process. A discussion followed among the Commission. Commissioner Downing recommended conducting an anonymous employee survey to gather input on what staff would like to see improved or implemented.

At this time, a review of the General Fund revenue was conducted. Finance Director Omar DeJesus noted that if the millage rate remains unchanged, the CRA would see an estimated \$850,000 increase to its budget. It was also noted that the TRIM notice must be finalized and submitted by July 17, 2025.

The discussion focused on how much revenue would be generated if the millage rate or fire assessment were decreased and how it would affect the bottom line.

At this time, each Department Director gave a presentation for the capital projects projected for the FY 25/26.

**April Brown, Planning Manager** - The acquisition of four (4) new vehicles is intended to replace existing trucks currently utilized for inspections and site visits. Funding for these vehicles will be sourced from the Building Department's Enterprise Fund, specifically through revenue generated from permit fees.

**Terrell Griffin, Parks and Recreation Director** A total of \$1,705,000 is being requested; however, \$522,000 of that amount is allocated specifically for electronic and fiber infrastructure requirements. Director Griffin provided an overview of the needs for each division. A discussion followed regarding the proposed allocations and departmental priorities.

**\*\*\* City Attorney Fred Reilly entered the Chamber at 5:17 PM\*\*\***

**Finance Director DeJesus** provided an overview of the Other/General Government line items within the General Fund, outlining key expenditures and funding priorities.

**Fire Chief Codi Donahue** presented the various operational and capital needs for the Fire Department. With continued growth and the upcoming opening of Fire Station #3, the department requires a new fire engine. Additionally, a **rescue truck** is required to replace an existing unit used primarily for EMS calls.

Chief Donahue also noted the need for an additional staff position to oversee paramedic compliance. In terms of equipment, personnel safety gear is needed due to the department's involvement in joint responses with law enforcement.

Lastly, improvements to the living quarters were discussed, specifically replacing the carpet in the firehouse bedrooms, with a recommendation to transition to laminate flooring for durability and ease of maintenance.

**Police Chief Jay Hopwood** presented the current and projected needs of the Police Department. He reported that six (6) vehicles need replacement, including two unmarked administrative vehicles, a replacement vehicle for a detective, and a new vehicle for the Deputy Police Chief.

Chief Hopwood highlighted the need to update the department's tasers and replace aging rifles, noting that the current rifle inventory is approximately 30 years old. Additionally, facility upgrades are necessary, including flooring, bathroom renovations, and tile work within the police department building.

A discussion was held regarding take-home vehicles for executive staff. Chief Hopwood also proposed adding two (2) additional K-9 officers to ensure K-9

coverage on every shift, noting that while the Polk County Sheriff's Office is available for support, their response times can be unpredictable.

Other departmental needs include the acquisition of new police software and the installation of updated door card readers to enhance overall building security.

The next budget workshop is scheduled for Monday, July 14, 2025, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM. Immediately following, the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) budget workshop will be held from 12:00 Noon until 3:00 PM.

#### **4. ADJOURNMENT**

Without any further business the meeting was adjourned at TIME.

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Morris L. West, Mayor

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Sharon Lauther, MMC, City Clerk

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Fred Reilly, City Attorney