



CITY COMMISSION MEETING HAINES CITY, FLORIDA
MINUTES

July 3, 2025, 7:00 p.m.
City Hall Commission Chambers
620 E. Main Street, Haines City, FL 33844
Phone: 863-421-9921 Web: hainescity.com

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

Staff in Attendance: City Manager, James Elensky
City Attorney, Fred Reilly
City Clerk, Sharon Lauther

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor West called the City Commission Meeting to order at 7:12 PM on July 3, 2025 in the City Commission Chambers, located at 620 E Main Street, Haines City, FL.

2. INVOCATION

Pastor Henry Babers from Parkview Christian Life Center of Haines City provided the invocation.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Mayor led the pledge of allegiance.

At this time Attorney Reilly stated that there is a lot that goes into setting policy. The City Manager, attorney and City Clerk have difficult jobs. The attorney stressed that everyone needs to stay in their respective lanes. If there is an issue please contact the attorney directly for any clarification.

4. PRESENTATIONS

4.a Boys & Girls Club Week Proclamation

City Clerk Sharon Lauther read the proclamation into the record. Curtis Reddick was unable to attend, however, he expressed thanks for honoring the Boys & Girls Club Week proclamation.

4.b Juneteenth Freedom Day Proclamation

City Clerk Sharon Lauther read the proclamations into the record.

Lekia Johnson accepted the proclamation on behalf of the Juneteenth committee and thanked the City for all the support

5. Anderson v City of Haines City Settlement

Attorney Reilly provided an overview of the shade meeting held at **4:00 PM**, regarding a proposed settlement in an ongoing legal case. Key points include:

The settlement is contingent upon City Commission approval.

The City's insurer will pay \$550,000 to the plaintiff.

The City will cover the insurance deductible, without admitting liability.

A release of claims will be signed by the plaintiff.

Final disposition is expected in approximately 2–3 weeks.

Commissioners have been advised to refrain from public comment until resolution; citizens may comment.

Resolution No. 25-881 was introduced by Commissioner Downing and read into the record by Attorney Reilly. A scrivener's error was noted: Anne Huffman's name should be removed from the short title. Commissioner Huffman clarified that while multiple counts were involved in the case, all counts related to her were removed. Before the trial began, Commissioner Anne Huffman's name was removed. At this time, Mayor West opened the public hearing.

Rebecca Rubio- 1012 Seery St., Haines City, FL, asked if it is illegal to re-post a social media post to bring awareness. No one else came forward and the public hearing was closed.

A roll call vote was taken:

Commissioner Downing- yea

Commissioner Arroyo- yea

Commissioner Huffman- nay

Vice-Mayor Smith- yea

Mayor West- yea

Motion carried 4-1

Moved by Kim Downing

Seconded by Vernel Smith

Carried

6. PUBLIC COMMENTS - REGARDING ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA

7. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor West inquired if any members of the dais had questions regarding the consent agenda. No questions were raised.

Mayor West opened the public hearing for items listed on the consent agenda. No comments were received from the public, and the public hearing was subsequently closed.

Mayor West announced that **Item 7e** would be **removed from the consent agenda**.

A motion was requested by Mayor West to approve the remaining items on the consent agenda.

Moved by Vernel Smith

Seconded by Kim Downing

Approve consent as a whole.

Carried Unanimously

7.a Meeting minutes 06.05.25

7.b City Commission Workshops 06.24.2025

7.c Cemetery Deeds

7.d Modification to Interlocal Agreement with PCSO 2025-2029

Staff recommends approval of the Haines City Modification for the Interlocal Agreement for Police & Fire Dispatching and Telecommunication Services through the Polk County Sheriff's Office.

7.e Resolution No. 25-1877 Aldi Property Easement for City Gateway Sign Location

Staff recommends approval of the Resolution authorizing execution of the Easement with Aldi (Florida) LLC, a Florida limited liability company, ("Aldi") for an easement for a Gateway sign.

7.f Administrative Vehicle Purchase Utilizing Florida Sheriff's Association Contract Pricing

Staff recommends approval of the purchase of an administrative vehicle to accommodate growth and additional vehicle needs, utilizing the Florida Sheriff's Association contract pricing.

7.g Agreement to Piggyback a Contract Services Bid by Another Governmental Entity – Building Inspector and Plans Examiner

City staff recommends the approval to have Nova Engineering and Environmental, LLC provide two (2) temporary positions for Building Inspectors through the piggybacking of the City of Largo RFP 23-P-771 for contractual building services.

8. NEW BUSINESS

8.a Ordinance No. 25-2105 – Major Modification of the RPUD for Scenic Terrace North – First Reading

Richard Greenwood, Development Services Director, presented Ordinance No. 25-2105 for first reading. Discussion took place. Mayor West opened the public hearing. No one came forward, and the public hearing was closed. Commissioner XXX introduced Ordinance No. 25-2105. Attorney Reilly read Ordinance No. 25-2105 into the record for first reading.

This item will be continued on July 17, 2025

Moved by Omar Arroyo

Seconded by Vernel Smith

Staff recommends approval of Ordinance No. 25-2105, on first reading, regarding a major modification to the Scenic Terrace North RPUD, by including an increase of 27 units and recreation space reduction, with the following conditions:

1. The recreational amenities should be identified and detailed on site construction plans prior to approval.
2. All other requirements set forth in Ordinance No. 22-1785 shall be made part of this Ordinance No. 25-2105.

Carried Unanimously

8.b Ordinance No. 25-2114 –Land Development Regulation Text Amendments- Chapter 5-First Reading

Development Services Director Richard Greenwood presented Ordinance No. 25-2114. Following a period of discussion, Mayor West opened the public hearing. With no members of the public coming forward, the hearing was formally closed. Commissioner Arroyo subsequently introduced the ordinance for consideration. Attorney Reilly then read Ordinance No. 25-2114 into the official record during the second reading, marking this item as old business.

Moved by Anne Huffman

Seconded by Vernel Smith

Request approval of Ordinance No. 25-2114, on first reading, for text amendments to the Land Development

Carried Unanimously

- 8.c Resolution No. 25-1874 – Conditional Use to Permit the Sale and Serving of Beer and Wine at 950 Lily Avenue, Haines City, Florida.

Development Services Director Richard Greenwood presented Resolution No. 25-1874, outlining specific conditions for Commission consideration. Commissioner Huffman inquired about the allowance of alcohol consumption in the courtyard area and requested clarification on property ownership. Jonathan Rodriguez, located at 950 Lily Avenue, came forward and confirmed ownership of the property. Commissioner Huffman expressed concern regarding the proximity of alcohol service to a nearby school and Pre-K facility and questioned who would sign the conditional use agreement. It was noted that hours of operation would begin after daycare closing hours. Mayor West opened the public hearing; no public comments were received, and the hearing was closed. Vice-Mayor/Commissioner Smith introduced the resolution, and Attorney Reilly read it into the record. The motion to approve Resolution No. 25-1874 carried 4-1, with Commissioner Huffman voting nay.

Moved by Omar Arroyo

Seconded by Kim Downing

Staff recommends approval of Resolution No. 25-1874, to permit the sale and serving of beer and wine at 950 Lily Avenue, the Haines City Food Park. Said Conditional Use shall terminate within three (3) years of the date of Resolution No. 25-1874, and the property owner shall have the opportunity to reapply

Carried

- 8.d Resolution No. 25-1876 Legal Services Contract for PFAS Litigation Claim

Richard Greenwood, the Development Services Director, presented Resolution No. 25-1874 to the commission. The resolution included several conditions for consideration. Commissioner Huffman raised questions about whether alcohol would be allowed to be consumed outside in the courtyard and also inquired about the ownership of the property. At that time, Jonathan Rodriguez, who

resides at 950 Lily Avenue, came forward to clarify that he and his associates were the property owners. The discussion that followed highlighted Commissioner Huffman's concern about serving alcohol in close proximity to a school and Pre-K facility, which she stated was generally frowned upon. She also asked who would be responsible for signing the conditional use agreement. It was noted that the hours of operation for the proposed use would take place after the daycare had closed for the day.

Mayor West then opened the public hearing, but no members of the public came forward to speak, so the hearing was subsequently closed. Vice-Mayor and Commissioner Smith introduced the resolution, and Attorney Reilly read it into the official record. The resolution was approved in a 4-1 vote, with Commissioner Huffman opposing.

Moved by Kim Downing

Seconded by Omar Arroyo

Staff recommends the City Commission approve the legal services contract with Grossman and Kelly, LLP (“Grossman”) concerning the PFAS Litigation settlements in relation to DuPont, 3M, TYCO, BASF and other Defendants.

Carried

8.e Resolution No. 25-1878 Legal Services Contract for Insulin Price Fixing Litigation Claim

Attorney Reilly provided an overview of an ongoing legal claim and indicated that, should the claim be deemed valid, the City would be presented with Resolution No. 25-1878. Following his remarks, Mayor West opened the public hearing, during which no members of the public came forward to speak. The hearing was then closed. Subsequently, Commissioner Arroyo formally introduced the resolution, and Attorney Reilly read it into the record.

Moved by Omar Arroyo

Seconded by Vernel Smith

Staff recommends the City Commission’s approve the Legal Services Contract with Grossman and Kelly, LLP (“Grossman”) concerning the Insulin Price Fixing Litigation settlements in relation to 40+

Pharmaceutical Company Defendants and 3 Pharmacy Benefit Manager Defendants.

Carried Unanimously

8.f Resolution No. 25-1879 Fire Assessment Fee for Fire Protection Services

Finance Director Omar DeJesus presented Resolution No. 25-1879, noting an estimated annual revenue projection of approximately \$5.5 million. During the discussion, Commissioner Downing suggested the possibility of reducing the fire assessment fee and offering a tax break to residents. Attorney Mark Lawson weighed in with his opinion on agenda order, followed by Commissioner Huffman's remarks praising Mayor West's experience and leadership. Attorney Lawson apologized for his earlier oversight. Commissioner Huffman reiterated concerns over the fire assessment fee, emphasizing prior discussions about potentially reducing or eliminating it, though such changes would require alternate funding sources. Mayor West informed the commission that the State did not approve grant funding for the Emergency Operations Center for the upcoming year, prompting Commissioner Downing to review past grant awards and advocate for resident relief. Commissioner Arroyo recommended approving the current fee for fiscal year 2025–2026 and revisiting the possibility of reducing it for fiscal year 2026–2027. Finance Director DeJesus reminded the commission that the fire assessment fee doesn't cover the entire department budget, with the city subsidizing about \$1 million each year. Discussions also covered compliance with TRIM notice requirements, and Commissioner Huffman requested more proactive communication from the Finance Director regarding key budget deadlines. Attorney Lawson assured the commission of his support and outlined the implications of cutting fees. Mayor West then opened the public hearing, but no residents came forward, and it was subsequently closed. The mayor suggested initiating discussions in November to reassess the fee structure for the next fiscal year. Vice-Mayor/Commissioner Smith formally introduced the resolution, which Attorney Reilly read into the record. Commissioner Downing cast the lone "nay" vote, and a copy of the proceedings was submitted to the clerk for official recordkeeping.

Moved by Anne Huffman

Seconded by Vernel Smith

Staff recommends the City Commission approve the attached Resolution, adopting the Non-Ad Valorem Assessment roll for the Fire Service

Assessment, continue to look for new revenue, and/or certify a proposed increase in property taxes by August 4, 2025.

Carried

8.g Resolution No. 25-1880 – Stormwater Assessment Fee for Stormwater Management Services

Finance Director Omar DeJesus introduced Resolution 25-1880, which Attorney Lawson noted contained a scrivener's error requiring the date to be corrected to July 2, 2025. After a brief discussion, Mayor West opened the public hearing, but no one came forward, and it was subsequently closed. Commissioner Huffman officially introduced the resolution, and Attorney Reilly read it into the record.

*****Following this, Mayor West announced that item 8i would be the next topic of discussion.**

Moved by Anne Huffman

Seconded by Vernel Smith

Staff recommends the City Commission approve the attached Resolution, adopting the Non-Ad Valorem Assessment roll for the Stormwater Assessment, continue to look for new revenue, and/or certify a proposed increase in property taxes by August 24, 2025.

Carried Unanimously

8.h State Grant Funded Fiber

Brian Ross, Technology Management Director, recommended approval with PCS to build a multi-agency redundant fiber optic network, partially funded by a state grant. The state is funding the entire project. came forward and the public hearing was closed.

Moved by Omar Arroyo

Seconded by Anne Huffman

Staff recommends approval of contracting with PCS to build a multi-agency redundant fiber optic network partially funded by a state grant.

Carried Unanimously

- 8.i Request to Enter into an Agreement with SEMCO Construction, Inc. for the Old Train Depot Building Repairs

The Parks and Recreation Director, Terrell Griffin, presented an agreement with SEMCO Construction, Inc. for repairs and upgrades to the Old Train Depot Building, which was identified as an unbudgeted request. Discussion ensued regarding the financial feasibility and appropriateness of the proposal. Vice-Mayor Smith raised concerns about the cost's value to the city, while Commissioner Arroyo, a certified building contractor, deemed the quote exorbitant. Griffin noted that a defined scope of work could be established and potentially put out for bid. Commissioner Downing referenced the previously discussed amount of \$138,000 and questioned the addition of further funds to the proposal. Stacey Stokes-9145 Lake Hashama Rd., Haines City, FL-provided background on the insurance payment previously approved. Further insight into the depot's needs was shared by Francis Vandyver. Commissioner Downing emphasized the importance of preserving the historical status of the building. It was concluded that an RFP process should be initiated for Commission review. No agreement was approved during this meeting.

Moved by Vernel Smith

Seconded by Omar Arroyo

Staff requests guidance from Commission to enter into an agreement with SEMCO Construction, Inc. to perform the repairs and upgrades at the Old Train Depot Building.

Carried Unanimously

- 8.j Cisco Equipment Enterprise Agreement 3-Year Term

Brian Ross, Technology Management Director, presented Cisco equipment enterprise agreement for consideration. Discussion took place. At this time, Mayor West opened the public hearing. No one came forward and the public hearing was closed.

Moved by Anne Huffman

Seconded by Vernel Smith

Staff recommends approval of a 3-year Enterprise Agreement with Cisco Systems, Inc. for streamlined and comprehensive support for the City's core network infrastructure.

Carried Unanimously

8.k Relocation of Fiber for Andrew R. Reilly City Hall Annex

Agenda Adjustment

Resolved Item: Relocation of fiber at the Andrew R. Reilly Complex

Action: Item removed from the agenda as it has already been resolved.

Staff recommends approval of contracting with PCS to relocate the City's fiber optic cable for the Andrew R. Reilly City Hall Annex.

8.l Extension of Fiber to Fire Station No. 3/EOC

Brian Ross, Technology Management Director presented the contract with Precision Contracting Services ("PCS") to relocate City fiber for the Andrew R. Reilly City Hall Annex. Discussion took place. Mayor West opened the public hearing. No one came forward and the public hearing was closed.

Moved by Omar Arroyo

Seconded by Anne Huffman

Staff recommends approval of contracting with PCS to extend the City's fiber optic cable to Fire Station No. 3/EOC for a cost not to exceed \$213,535.

Carried Unanimously

8.m General Employee Pension Board Applications

Discussion: Review of applications to fill a vacancy on the General Employee Pension Board.

Reference: Trustees serve four-year terms under Ordinance 11-1378.

Outcome: Lisandra Rivera was unanimously selected to fill the vacant trustee position.

Moved by Omar Arroyo
Seconded by Vernel Smith

Carried Unanimously

8.n Police Pension Board Application

Discussion took place regarding the applications received for the vacancy on the Police Pension Board. In accordance with Ord. 11-1370, trustees serve a term for four years. Commissioner Huffman stated it would be nice if the applications had a section asking why they would want to serve on the Board. At this time, Mayor West asked the Chief to give a little background on the officers who were submitted.

Steven Evans has 8 years of experience.

Britney Tarr- has 2-3 years of experience

Richard Rodriguez has 2 years of experience, 2 years of Code Enforcement experience, as well as 25-27 previous Law Enforcement experience

Discussion took place. Mayor West opened the public hearing. No one came forward and the public hearing was closed.

Richard Rodriguez was presented for consideration.

Moved by Omar Arroyo
Seconded by Kim Downing

Carried Unanimously

Amendment:

Moved by Anne Huffman

Ron Brown was presented for consideration. Failed for lack of a second

Amendment:

Moved by Omar Arroyo
Seconded by Kim Downing

Steven Evans presented for consideration

9. CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

City Manager Elensky stated that two items presented to the Governor was cut from the state budget.

10. CITY CLERK'S REPORT

At the request of City Clerk Lauther, the Commission briefly discussed who would represent Haines City as the voting delegate at the upcoming annual conference. Mayor West expressed that another member should have the opportunity to gain experience in the role. By unanimous consensus, Vice-Mayor Smith was appointed to serve as the city's official voting delegate.

11. CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

No report

12. COMMISSION COMMENTS

Commissioner Huffman expressed satisfaction at being vindicated in the matter of *Erica Anderson vs. City of Haines City*.

Commissioner Arroyo emphasized the importance of following legal counsel's guidance.

Commissioner Downing stated she will reserve her comments for the next meeting.

Vice-Mayor Smith and **Mayor West** had no comments.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Without any further business the meeting was adjourned at 9:39 PM

Morris L. West, Mayor

Sharon Lauther, MMC, City Clerk