



CITY OF BELLE ISLE, FL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Tuesday, November 04, 2025 * 6:30 PM
MINUTES

Present was:

Mayor – Jason Carson
District 1 Commissioner – Frank Vertolli
District 2 Commissioner – Holly Bobrowski
District 3 Commissioner – Karl Shuck
District 4 Commissioner – Bobby Lance
District 5 Commissioner – Beth Lowell
District 6 Commissioner – Stan Smith
District 7 Commissioner – Jim Partin

Absent was:

1. Call to Order and Confirmation of Quorum

Mayor Carson called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m., and the Clerk confirmed the presence of a quorum. City Manager Rudometkin, Chief Grimm, Attorney Shaffer, Public Works Director Phil Price, and Clerk Heidi Peacock were also present.

2. Invocation and Pledge to Flag - Commissioner Frank Vertolli, District 1
Comm Vertolli led the invocation and Pledge to the Flag.

3. Presentations - na

4. Public Comments & Announcements

Mayor Carson opened for public comment.

- Cris Whittaker, residing at 5220 Oak Island Rd, addressed safety concerns regarding golf carts operating on the sidewalks along Hoffner Avenue. Noted that the sidewalks were previously safe for pedestrians, joggers, and children, but have become hazardous due to golf carts, especially during school rush hours. He cited incidents of carts weaving around strollers, pets, and walkers, as well as instances in which pedestrians were told to yield to carts.

Mr. Whittaker said he reviewed Ordinances 2011 and 2504, as well as Florida Statute 316.21(3), and highlighted that sidewalks must be at least 8 feet wide for legal golf cart use. Hoffner sidewalks do not meet this requirement, and FDOT has not approved exemptions. Noted confusion in ordinance enforcement, especially near Embassy Drive, where carts must transition to roads but often continue on sidewalks. He emphasized proactive safety measures rather than waiting for accidents to occur. He proposed the following for Council consideration: (1) Restrict golf carts to roadways where appropriate, (2) maintain sidewalks exclusively for pedestrians, runners, and children, and (3) consider banning golf cart use on sidewalks during peak morning hours between 7–9 a.m.

There being no further comments, Mayor Carson closed public comments.

5. Consent Items

- a. Approval of City Council Meeting Minutes - October 21, 2025

Mayor Carson called for a motion to approve items a and e as presented.

Comm Vertolli moved to approve the consent item as presented.

Comm Lowell seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 7:0.

6. Unfinished Business

- a. Bing Grant Application - Regal Landing Wall Repair

City Manager Rudometkin presented a request from homeowners at Regal Landing for funding for wall repairs through the Bing Grant program. The wall has existing code violations, and the repair project will address these issues and enhance the surrounding area. Although the homeowners are not registered with an HOA, they qualify under the Bing

Grant criteria. Staff recommended approval of reimbursement for up to 50% of the project cost. Three quotes were provided, and homeowners are present to discuss their preferred contractor. Staff recommended approval of reimbursement for up to 50% of the project cost.

Doug Tedesco, residing at 1425 Horizon Court, explained the homeowners' choice of contractor for the wall repair project. After reviewing multiple quotes and inspecting the wall with contractors, they selected the \$19,500 bid from Ground Werks because the contractor demonstrated expertise, proposed a durable solution, and is properly insured. Tedesco noted challenges in obtaining quotes and emphasized that the selected contractor has prior experience with city projects. He said that the previous wall repair was a temporary, superficial fix that used rusted metal and did not address structural issues. They stressed the current project will be done correctly, including replacing blocks and addressing underlying problems, to ensure a long-lasting, proper repair.

Comm Lowell expressed appreciation to the homeowners for their efforts on the wall repair project, noting its long duration and coordination with code enforcement. She emphasized the importance of ensuring the selected contractor is registered with the City of Belle Isle. Recognized city support for related work, including assistance with a tree, and expressed that the project will be successfully completed.

Comm Partin inquired about meeting Section 2 requirements for the Bing Grant, specifically Letter P, regarding efforts to secure funding from Orange County neighborhood grants before applying to the city. The City Manager confirmed that they had engaged with Orange County about available grant programs, noting that the applicants do not have a registered association.

After discussion, Comm Lowell moved to approve the Bing Grant for a total wall repair project of \$19,230, with reimbursement up to 50% (\$9,615) distributed as follows: \$5,000 for District 5, \$2,500 for District 6, \$1,115 for the Mayor's District, and \$1,000 for District 2. Reimbursement will occur upon submission of the completed work invoice. Comm Smith seconded the motion, which was passed unanimously 7:0.

b. 3904 Arajo Condemnation Update

City Manager Rudometkin provided an update on the Arajo property. The contractor and homeowner were expected to attend, but did not. Since the previous meeting, the Vice Mayor conducted an on-site inspection, and a licensed contractor/resident provided a written assessment. The contractor's report noted severe structural deterioration, extensive mold, termite damage, water intrusion, and non-block construction, recommending that the home be demolished rather than repaired.

CM Rudometkin said the City Attorney arranged pro bono guidance for the homeowner, who has been referred to potential assistance resources. The homeowner reported delays in receiving an insurance/annuity check due to address issues and is working with her contractor to assess salvageable items. Staff noted concerns about unauthorized entry into the home and clarified that the City had changed the locks and would provide keys as needed. He said the long history of unresolved issues at the Arajo property, with repeated delays over several years, despite prior plans to repair it. The homeowner's anticipated funding appears insufficient for the extensive structural and termite damage identified. Staff recommended that, if Council grants additional time for repairs, a firm deadline be set for securing funds and beginning work. Otherwise, the City may need to proceed with enforcement actions, as the home likely requires demolition. Discussion was turned over to Council.

Vice Mayor Partin reported that he conducted a full video-documented inspection of the Leiser property and concurred with the contractor's assessment of severe deterioration, including extensive rot, termite damage, structural concerns due to non-block construction, and significant interior clutter throughout the home. He expressed concern that the homeowner's plan to clean out and repair the home would far exceed available funding. Staff noted the long history of attempts to address the property's condition over several years.

Mayor Carson expressed concern after learning the homeowner's mortgage payoff is significantly lower than previously understood and that the home is wood-framed, making repairs far more costly. Given the extensive structural damage and the homeowner's limited funds, the member stated that demolition may be the most practical option. He noted that spending \$45,000 on repairs would be ineffective, whereas demolition could allow the homeowner to pay off the loan and potentially sell the cleared property.

After discussion, Council reviewed the extensive structural, electrical, and environmental hazards present in the condemned home, noting that it would require a near-full rebuild. Council expressed concern that the homeowner's planned \$45,000 in repairs would not make the structure habitable or pass required inspections. Council also discussed safety risks, liabilities, and the need to prevent unauthorized entry. Staff confirmed the home is secured and can be re-noticed for condemnation. Habitat for Humanity and other assistance programs were mentioned, though the homeowner has indicated she intends to use personal funds to repair the home despite its condition. Council concluded that the structure is unsafe and beyond feasible repair.

After further discussion, Commissioner Smith moved to re-advertise the condemnation notice, to provide the homeowner with 30 days to retrieve belongings under supervision, and to proceed with demolition after the 30-day filing date period. Commissioner Partin seconded, and the motion passed unanimously 7:0, specifying that demolition would occur 30 days from the filing of the new notice.

7. New Business

a. Approval of FDLE Drone Replacement Program Financial Assistant Agreement

Chief Grimm reported that the department was awarded a \$25,000 financial-assistance grant for the purchase of an American-made Skydio drone. Corporal Clark, serving as the department's grant manager, secured the funding. The state requires non-Chinese manufactured drones for security reasons. Because the award exceeds \$25,000, the Chief requested Council approval to proceed with the purchase.

Comm Smith moved that the City Council approve the acceptance of the FDLE drone replacement grant and award, and authorized the purchase of the Skydio X10 drone system from ~~Accident~~ Axon Enterprise Incorporated for \$25,000, to be reimbursed in full through the FDLE drone replacement program.

Comm Bobrowski asked if the \$25,000 covers the training. Chief Grimm said that the department already has trained and licensed drone pilots and currently operates a \$5,000 drone with daytime limitations. The new drone will allow thermal and nighttime operations. There is no cost to the City for the purchase. The department will retain the existing drone for additional daytime coverage and operational flexibility.

Comm Partin seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 7:0.

b. Military Activation Pay and Benefits Policy

Chief Grimm reported on research into military pay supplementation for city employees on active-duty orders. Under the proposal, the City would cover the difference between an employee's City salary and their military pay, based on verified military pay statements. This would not increase the Police Department's overall budget, as funds are already allocated per salary line item, and the City also saves on insurance costs while members are on active duty. The program would support recruitment and retention and apply to all City departments. Examples of prior deployments showed varying pay gaps depending on rank and years of service. The Chief noted this approach ensures employees are made whole financially while serving in the military.

Comm Bobrowski asked whether the City's Police Department payroll budget will cover military pay differences without increasing overall costs. The program serves as a recruitment and retention tool. Chief Grimm noted that the program allows the city to subsidize military pay differences for officers without additional net cost, as each officer's salary remains budgeted, making it a cost-neutral recruitment tool. Anytime you're activated, you go on Title 10 wars, and your insurance is 100% covered by the military for six months before and six months after. For family coverage, the only thing that sometimes happens is that officers or soldiers forget to re-enroll in TRICARE Select, and they end up on TRICARE Prime when they get activated. So the city's insurance is canceled.

It's a super win, and it does make us a super friendly military, because this isn't just for the police department. This would cover all the departments here in the city. So now you're bringing in some veterans who know that if they get deployed, they'll be taken care of, they'll be made whole if they have to serve their country.

Comm Bobrowski questioned whether the 240 hours of annual training are mandatory and suggested it should be stipulated as such to avoid optional or unrelated courses. Chief Grimm noted that the 240 hours of yearly training generally cover one weekend per month and two weeks per year, primarily for deployments lasting more than 30 days. Most training is already accounted for in the city's budget, so no additional city expense is expected. Employees must decide whether to participate in extra training, which the military would compensate.

City Manager Rudometkin said this will be included as a supplement to our personnel policy when approved.

After discussion, Comm Lowell moved to approve the proposed military activation pay and benefits policy for formal adoption and implementation. Comm Bobrowski seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 7:0.

c. Bing Grant Application - Belle Isle Pines HOA

City Manager Rudometkin presented the Bing Grant application for Belle Isle Pines. He said the existing bollards on the island are deteriorating and unsecured. The HOA would like to replace them with highly durable, impact-resistant bollards, similar to those used at fire stations.

Allen Haskins, residing at 1832 Winddrift Road and HOA President, explained that Belle Isle Pines is a voluntary HOA with limited funding, maintaining only irrigation and landscaping. The neighborhood entrance island and existing bollards have been repeatedly damaged, and the current bollards were never properly installed. The HOA proposes replacing them with high-impact, custom bollards and plans to manage installation in-house. Funding details are

included in the council packet. City Manager Rudometkin asked that the HOA ensure they submit the proper permits and that the contractor is registered with the city.

After discussion, Comm Shuck spoke in support of the bollard replacement, citing repeated damage to neighborhood entrance bricks from trucks. He motioned to approve a grant reimbursement of \$5,654, with \$5,000 from District 3 and \$654 from the Mayor, for the project. Comm Bobrowski seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 7:0.

d. CCA Sponsorship - Casino Night February 21, 2026

Comm Vertolli moved to approve sponsoring the Viva Las Vegas Casino Night at CCA on Saturday, February 21, 2025, for the Royal Flush for \$1,500.00. Comm Lance seconded the motion, which passed unanimously 7:0.

8. Attorney's Report

Mayor Carson welcomed and introduced Attorney Benjamin Schaefer, who will be sitting in on our P&Z Board meetings and Council meetings as needed.

9. City Manager's Report

a. City Manager's Report and Work Plan

City Manager Rudometkin announced before the start of the meeting that he had received a message that his mother was not well and that he may have to return to California in the coming days.

City Manager Rudometkin reported on the following,

- Ongoing communication with FEMA regarding the debris reimbursement application. FEMA has reopened the review and may contact the Chief as a subject matter expert. Updates will be provided as available.
- Draft lease for the Lancaster House sent to Billy Morgan for review. Lease terms, including rent and duration, remain under discussion; staff will present final recommendations once comments are received.
- Halloween "Boogie on the Bridge" event was successful. Upcoming events include the December 3 "Light the Way" celebration, Thanksgiving activities, and end-of-year parades. Volunteers and the Police Department were acknowledged for their support.
- Staff to provide information from planning contractor April Fisher and facilitate a meet-and-greet. The agenda will include scheduling a December meeting.

b. Chief's Report

Chief Grimm reported on the following,

- Chief Grimm announced upcoming November and December events, including community notifications via email, social media, and digital signs. The Team Sports Fishing Association requested use of Venetian Park for a December 14 tournament; Council gave preliminary support pending proper permits and coordination.
- October events, including parades, 5K run, Halloween activities, and other community programs, were highlighted. Staff and volunteers, particularly Sergeant Wasman and Sergeant Ferriola, were recognized for successful event management.
- Chief emphasized balancing resident concerns with public events, noting positive community participation and cooperation during road closures. He reported on an arrest related to cell phone theft targeting hotel guests, with an ongoing investigation.

He noted that he expects November to be quieter ahead of December events; Council will continue event planning and public communication.

c. Public Works Report

Phil Price reported on the following,

- Sidewalk repair work is ongoing in The Landings and Conway Lakes neighborhoods. Work will pause during the holiday season if unfinished. Night work at Judge and Conway has been completed with temporary asphalt; final repairs are expected by February as part of an Orange County project.
- Spoke briefly on the Team Sports Fishing program as a valuable youth activity, noting positive personal experience.

10. Mayor's Report

Mayor Carson expressed thanks to the Special Events Committee, volunteers, City staff, and the Police Department for a successful community event at City Hall and the bridge. The event was well-received, fostered community engagement, and ran smoothly, including setup, cleanup, and on-site support. There was consensus to consider making it an annual event.

11. Commissioners' Report

- Commissioner Vertolli highlighted the Boolgie on the Bridge and brought the community together.
- Comm Lowell expressed appreciation for the recent community event, noting strong public participation and positive feedback from residents. She acknowledged staff and volunteers for their efforts and confirmed she will call in for the November 18 meeting due to family obligations.
- Comm Smith announced that he will also be absent on the 18th due to prior obligations.
- Comm Partin enjoyed the Halloween event, thanking the Events Committee and volunteers. Noted strong community participation, including attendees from beyond the city. Also acknowledged the Military Activation Pay and Benefits policy for staff awareness.
- Comm Lance commented positively on the Belle Isle Pines neighborhood during the presentation and noted the great job their neighborhood did during Halloween night.

12. Adjournment

There being no further business, Mayor Carson called for a motion to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously at 8:19 pm.