



CITY COUNCIL MEETING

City Hall – Council Chamber
405 Bagshaw Way, Edgewood, Florida
Tuesday, January 20, 2026 at 6:30 PM

MINUTES

A. CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION, & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council President Horn called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. He asked for a moment of silence and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. ROLL CALL & DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

Clerk Riffle confirmed a quorum with Mayor Dowless and all five Councilmembers present.

Elected Officials

John Dowless, Mayor
Richard A. Horn, Council President
Chris Rader, Council President Pro-Tem
Susan Lomas, Councilmember
Casey McElroy, Councilmember
Beth Steele, Councilmember

Staff:

Sandra Riffle, City Clerk
Dean DeSchryver, Police Chief
Miguel Garcia, Deputy Chief
Abe Class, Police Officer
Ellen Hardgrove, City Planner
Drew Smith, City Attorney

C. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

This item was heard out of order after the Ordinances.

Chief DeSchryver introduced new Police Officer Abe Class to City Council.

D. CONSENT AGENDA

1. December 16, 2025 City Council Meeting Minutes

Council President Horn noted an error on Section 2, Page 2. Councilmember Steele's vote needed to be changed from "Favor" to "Absent."

Councilmember Rader made a motion to approve the December 16, 2025 meeting minutes with the correction. Seconded by Councilmember Lomas. The motion was approved by voice vote (5/0).

E. ORDINANCES (FIRST READING)

1. Ordinance 2026-01 -Scriveners Error Tattoo & Body Piercing

City Attorney Smith read Ordinance 2026-01 by title only. He explained that the original ordinance, Ordinance Number 2024-06, which added tattoo establishments by Special

Exception in the ECD inadvertently showed body piercing was also allowed by Special Exception. This ordinance serves to correct that error, as body piercing remains a prohibited use.

Council President Horn expressed a preference for banning tattoo and piercing uses in all zones. Attorney Smith clarified that tattoos are protected under the First Amendment and must be permitted in at least one zoning district of the City. Councilmember Lomas noted that the social stigma regarding tattoo studios has diminished.

Public Comment:

- Anthony Artica (Property Manager, 4710 S. Orange Avenue): Stated a new tenant, a tattoo business, at the property he manages did not initially understand the regulations but has ceased operations. He emphasized that the industry has evolved into a modern art form and noted the space is well-presented.

In response to Council President Horn, Attorney Smith noted that signage for the establishment could be addressed during the Special Exception review.

Councilmember Rader made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-01 for first reading; seconded by Councilmember Steele. The motion was approved by a roll-call vote (4/1).

Councilmember Rader	Favor
Councilmember Lomas	Favor
Councilmember Steele	Favor
Councilmember McElroy	Favor
Council President Horn	Oppose

F. PUBLIC HEARINGS (ORDINANCES – SECOND READINGS & RELATED ACTION)

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

H. NEW BUSINESS

1. Harbour Island Bridge Repairs

City Clerk Riffle reported that Ayres Structural Design Inspection completed an assessment of the Harbour Island Bridge (Structure ID 755400) in December. A draft Request for Qualifications (RFQ) is currently under technical review by CPH. Once finalized, it will be reviewed by the City Attorney and published on DemandStar.

Council President Horn remarked that the repairs would be time-consuming and expensive. In response to Mayor Dowless, Clerk Riffle stated she would inquire with CPH regarding the estimated project duration. Councilmember Rader requested that CPH present their assessment at the next meeting.

2. Solid Waste RFP

The franchise agreement with FCC Environmental Services terminates on September 30, 2026. Clerk Riffle requested direction on whether to initiate a formal RFP or negotiate a one-year

renewal. She cited concerns including late franchise fee remittances, incorrect reporting, and equipment maintenance issues (specifically, trucks operating without cameras).

Mayor Dowless expressed concerns regarding the complexity of the RFP process but noted his dissatisfaction with recent service failures. Councilmembers Steele and McElroy shared negative experiences regarding service reliability and communication.

Mayor Dowless said that the RFP process is fairly involved and requires significant effort to adopt a new contract and educate residents during the transition.

Councilmember McElroy suggested proceeding with an RFP regardless of whether there is a probationary year.

The Councilmembers were not interested in a five-year automatic renewal. Councilmember McElroy said they have had ample opportunity to improve with the new managers.

Council President Horn suggested giving them February and March to show improvement. The Council's consensus was to bring the subject back to the March agenda.

3. Parking Regulations Discussion

City Planner Hardgrove briefed the Council regarding a proposed overhaul of the City's off-street parking regulations. The Planning and Zoning (P&Z) Board began their review of the proposed regulation on January 12, 2026. She addressed three concepts discussed by P&Z.

- **Market-Driven vs. Regulatory Standards:** Planner Hardgrove advised against a purely "market-driven approach" (where developers determine their own parking needs). She noted that Edgewood's specific constraints—including high vehicle dependency, a 0% alternative transportation usage rate, and a lack of municipal parking infrastructure—make a market-driven approach problematic.

The Council discussed the potential for a parking shortage with a market-driven approach. Council President Horn pointed out that the burden can be on the operator rather than the City. He did express concern about the consequences of people parking on residential streets. Planner Hardgrove discussed the direction that the P&Z was going, allowing the large shopping centers to interchange tenants despite the substandard quantity of spaces. The impact from smaller plazas when introducing higher demand uses could result in public safety hazards.

- **Treatment of Obsolete Buildings:** The discussion focused on the dilemma of allowing older structures within the ECD that cannot meet modern parking codes (e.g., the former Art Angels building and Dan's Saw and Tool building) to have uses requiring a higher parking demand vs. encouraging redevelopment in the ECD. Allowing these obsolete structures to have reduced parking quantity, where the property owners assume investment risks could help with avoiding vacant storefronts. However, there could be negative implications. Councilmember Horn noted it may be self-regulating in

that business owners frequently struggle to secure private financing if a site lacks adequate parking.

Council discussed percentage-based reductions in required parking in exchange for site improvements or the issuance of formal waivers. Significant concern was raised regarding current shared parking regulations; Council noted that the requirement to record parking agreements in Orange County records serves as a deterrent to prospective businesses. There was a clear desire to modify the current regulations to simplify the process and encourage more collaborative parking arrangements between neighbors.

Ultimately, the Council reached a consensus to move toward a "market-lenient" policy for obsolete buildings, aiming to facilitate temporary occupancy and prevent blight while awaiting long-term redevelopment. It was affirmed that while older structures will be granted greater flexibility, all new construction must continue to meet current city standards. Planner Hardgrove noted that the Planning and Zoning Board had reached a similar conclusion and would be refining the specific regulations for these buildings at their upcoming meeting.

Unpaved Parking: Planner Hardgrove stated that current City Code prohibits unpaved parking. In response to Mayor Dowless, she clarified that the church on Holden Avenue (Fellowship Baptist) was annexed from Orange County with "grandfathered" status, as the County traditionally permitted grass parking for once-weekly church use. Churches today often are used more than once a week and she referenced Deeper Fellowship who routinely has conferences and events. This increased intensity has resulted in off-site parking issues and the unauthorized use of unpaved areas (including the former Le Coq Au Vin site), creating a Code Enforcement concern.

The church was permitted to restripe its lot subject to sanctuary capacity limits, however, determining exact seat-count increases is difficult.

The P&Z Board's consensus was to limit unpaved parking on a temporary basis with very strict requirements to prevent unpaved lots from becoming de facto permanent parking: only in conjunction with a Special Event permit and limited to two events per year per parcel or business, with a 72-hour maximum, and significant fines for noncompliance. The P&Z only supported permanent unpaved parking in limited environmental circumstances, such as tree preservation.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

J. CITIZEN COMMENTS

- **Dan Wheeler:** Reported ongoing noise issues from "Low Life," a business involving engine work. He stated the noise is plainly audible from his residence.
- **Tina Demostene:** Noted that vehicles at the location are parking on the grass.

City Attorney Smith discussed the legal distinctions between "plainly audible" standards and decibel meter requirements. He offered to provide samples of various noise ordinances for Council review.

K. BOARDS & COMMITTEES

1. Special Exception 2026-01 - Tattoo Studio 4712 S Orange Ave.

(This item was heard out of order following Presentations.)

The applicant requested a Special Exception for a tattoo establishment. Planner Hardgrove outlined the P&Z recommendation for approval with a condition ensuring window and door transparency to align with ECD vision goals: That the street-facing windows and doors shall maintain transparency, including but not limited to: no use of opaque window tints, curtains, or "blacked-out" vinyl wraps, and no placement of interior fixtures or furniture that would obstruct views into the studio from the exterior.

In addition, Code requires the following for all tattoo studios:

1. All activities conducted at the establishment shall be in accordance with applicable state statutes and regulations;
2. Tattoo establishments are prohibited from operating between the hours of 9:00 p.m. and 8:00 a.m.;
3. Tattoo establishments shall not be established within 1,500 feet of an existing tattoo establishment as measured in a straight line from the nearest point of each lot or parcel.

Planner Hardgrove stated the request was in a leased space at the strip center at 4710 S Orange Ave. Zoned ECD.

Conditions that P&Z heard from the public but declined to recommend with the approval included:

Site Improvements: Requirement to re-stripe the parking lot to current Code design standards and reduce or close existing curb cuts. P&Z commented that requiring a single tenant to redesign a pre-existing parking lot and modify curb cuts for a Special Exception would constitute an undue burden on the applicant.

Intensity Restrictions: A cap of five (5) or six (6) stations/chairs. P&Z noted that limiting the number of stations could artificially hinder the establishment's growth and success. Furthermore, a hair salon (a comparable "by-right" use) would not be subject to such chair restrictions, making the proposed condition inequitable.

Planner Hardgrove said there are 26 parking spaces in front of the strip center and three in the back of the property. Today's regulations would require 80 spaces. The property is legally nonconforming. Except for noncompliant ADA spaces, there is no trigger in the code to have the lot restriped.

Applicant Bruno Lahr was in attendance and addressed City Council. He introduced himself and said it is his dream to open his own studio. He understands that tattoos can have a negative association; however, his studio is a very clean, modern concept and he hires good family-oriented people. He said he thought he was following the regulations but did not know about the special exception requirement and the need for a sign permit. He apologized for this and said that he follows rules.

Public Comment:

- Megan Milligan opposed the request, citing concerns about the applicant beginning build-out prior to approval without consequences. She also pointed out the concentration of undesirable shops in the area: Crystal shop, smoke shop and now tattoos. She noted that, at the P&Z meeting, the applicant said he could close at 6:00 pm but P&Z did not include this as a condition. She would like that to be reconsidered if Council was going to approve the special exception.
- Ryan Smith (via Tina Demostene): Submitted written opposition to the Special Exception request.
- Anthony Artica (Property Owner): Requested the opportunity for the business to proceed, promising full compliance. He said some rules were broken unintentionally.
- Tina Demostene stated that the shopping center restriped their lot without a permit and shared her observation that if all the suite of the strip center were leased, parking will be problematic.

She reviewed criteria for a special exception and said a tattoo establishment does not meet those criteria and that approval will set a precedent. She further stated that the parking should be brought into compliance with and tighten the condition so that the applicant will take care of the requirements.

In response to a question as to whether the wall sign was in compliance, Planner Hardgrove confirmed that the business signage was compliant.

Councilmember Rader addressed comments regarding the applicant's prior actions and said the establishment was not open for business. He noted that the prohibition of opening was a direct and appropriate consequence of the applicant acting out of sequence to build-out the space before securing the necessary Special Exception and Certificate of Occupancy.

Addressing the property manager, Mr. Artica, Councilmember Rader observed that this was the second instance of code enforcement issues involving a business on this specific property. He strongly recommended that the property management more thoroughly vet potential tenants and understand local regulations before executing leases. He emphasized that the City provides a clear path to approval that, if followed, ensures an operator is not placed in legal or financial jeopardy.

Councilmember Rader further clarified the Council’s position on enforcement consistency, stating that there are numerous examples of businesses that were not permitted and subsequently were not allowed to operate. He asserted that the Council does not simply "forgive infractions"; rather, it maintains a consistent application of the law.

Regarding the nature of the business itself, Councilmember Rader disagreed with the assertion that modern tattoo studios carry a negative connotation, noting that they are a part of the norm in 2026. He reminded the Council and the public that the matter currently under consideration was the land use itself, not the secondary code enforcement history of the site.

He concluded that because the use meets the established Special Exception and code criteria, he supported the approval. Councilmembers Lomas and Steele expressed their agreement with his assessment. Councilmember Lomas noted that the arguments presented by some members of the public appeared to follow a script, suggesting a coordinated opposition rather than independent concerns regarding the specific criteria of the Special Exception.

Councilmember McElroy said the condition of the site is a separate issue, and it is legally nonconforming.

Council President Horn said that in order to support the Special Exception he would want limited hours of operation.

Mayor Dowless said he does not see a problem and it is preferential to have something in the space. He complimented the property owner for the improvements made to the site and he appreciated that the store owner admitted that he made errors during hte process. He said he supports the Special Exception.

Council President Horn mada a motion to allow the special exception, with Planning and Zoning's recommendation, and with operating hours limited to 10:00 am to 6:00 pm. Councilmember McElroy seconded the motion. The motion failed (2/3) by roll call vote with Councilmember Rader, Lomas and Steele in opposition.

Councilmember McElroy	Favor
Councilmember Steele	Oppose
Councilmember Lomas	Oppose
Councilmember Rader	Oppose
Council President Horn	Favor

Councilmember Rader made a motion to approve Special Exception 2026-01 to allow a tattoo establishment to be located at 4712 S. Orange Avenue with the condition that the street-facing windows and doors shall maintain transparency, including but not limited to: no use of opaque window tints, curtains, or "blacked-out" vinyl wraps, and no placement of interior fixtures or furniture that would obstruct views into the studio from the exterior. Councilmember Lomas seconded the motion. The motion was approved by roll call vote (4/1).

Councilmember McElroy	Favor
Councilmember Steele	Favor
Councilmember Lomas	Favor
Councilmember Rader	Favor
Council President Horn	Oppose

Councilmember Lomas left the meeting at 7:21 pm.

L. STAFF REPORTS

City Attorney Smith – no report

Police Chief DeSchryver

1. Chief's Report December 2025

- Chief DeSchryver reported that interior and exterior painting quotes for the department are being obtained.
- He noted that Vehicle 67 (2016 Explorer) requires replacement due to high mileage and repair costs.
- He shared a video regarding recent immersive training completed by the department and said it is very worthwhile training. City Clerk Riffle

1. Clerk Riffle's Report 12-17-2025 through 1-16-2026

- **Municipal Election** – With no opposing candidates, Councilmembers Lomas and Rader will retain their respective seats. There will not be a 2026 municipal election.
- **Business Tax Receipts (BTR) Update FY 2025/2026:** As of January 15, 2026, only 20 business accounts remain delinquent. Staff members Brett and Ashley have been actively working to ensure all municipal businesses renew their receipts for the current fiscal year. A final delinquent notice was mailed in January. Effective February, any remaining delinquent accounts will be referred to Code Compliance Officer Zane for the issuance of a Notice of Violation (NOV).
- **Financial Audit:** Staff members at City Hall and the Police Department are collaborating with financial auditors to finalize the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 audit. The process is proceeding efficiently, and the City aims to submit all necessary documentation to Carr, Riggs & Ingram (CRI) by the end of January.

M. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL REPORTS

Mayor Dowless

- Mayor Dowless Received Council’s consensus to move up to \$2,000,000 to a higher-interest account. He said the money would still be accessible.

- He provided an update on potential state-level tax rate changes and the possibility of an infrastructure sales tax to lower property taxes. He thought it will be difficult to pass but we need to be ready.

Council Member Lomas – no report

Council Member McElroy – no report

Council Member Rader – no report

Council Member Steele – no report

Council President Horn – no report

N. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Rader made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:58 pm.



Richard A. Horn, Council President

Attest:



Sandra Riffle, City Clerk