
MINUTES

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

Council President Horn called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm. He gave an invocation and then led the Pledge of Allegiance.

B. ROLL CALL & DETERMINATION OF QUORUM

City Clerk Riffle confirmed there was a quorum. Mayor Dowless and all five Councilmembers were present.

Elected Officials Present:

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

Staff Present:

Sandra Riffle, City Clerk
Dean DeSchryver, Police Chief
Brian Muniz, City Hall Intern
Ellen Hardgrove, City Planner
Drew Smith, City Attorney

C. PRESENTATIONS AND PROCLAMATIONS

1. OCPS 2025 Strategic Plan Overview

Scott Howatt, Chief Communications Officer of Orange County Public Schools (OCPS), presented the annual OCPS update to the City Council. He explained that their Board is developing a strategic plan to reflect the community's desires for the school district. Highlights from the presentation included:

- Orange County has been an "A" school district for two consecutive years.
- For the first time, there are no "D" or "F" rated schools in Orange County.
- With 214 schools, it is the fourth largest school district in Florida, and it boasts a 96% graduation rate.
- The half-cent tax extension received the highest approval in the state in 2024, with 72% of the vote.

Mr. Howatt also discussed OCPS' economic needs, district operating fund ratios, and the proposed 2025-2026 budget.

D. CONSENT AGENDA**1. July 15, 2025 City Council Meeting Minutes**

City Clerk Riffle noted an error on page one, under the Consent Agenda. The sentence was changed to read: "City Clerk Riffle provided a correction to Councilmembers for the June 17, 2025, meeting minutes."

Councilmember Rader made a motion to approve the consent agenda with the corrections; seconded by Councilmember Lomas. The motion was approved (5/0) by voice vote.

E. ORDINANCES (FIRST READING)**1. Ordinance 2025-07 Live Local Act**

Note: This item was heard after Boards and Committees.

Attorney Smith read Ordinance 2025-07 in title only.

Planner Hardgrove explained that Ordinance 2025-07 is being presented in response to the Florida Legislature's mandate for every local government to incorporate provisions of the Florida Live Local Act into its land development code. This act requires the city to permit affordable housing in commercial, industrial, or mixed-use zones, which preempts local zoning and land regulations. The preemptions include, but are not limited to, allowable uses, density, height, Floor Area Ratio (FAR), and reduced parking requirements. It also removes the need for review by the Planning and Zoning Board or City Council.

Local governments still retain authority over other land development regulations such as setbacks, landscaping, open space, architectural design, and stormwater management, provided these are applied consistently and do not undermine the Act's intent.

Planner Hardgrove stated that because Edgewood has less than 20% of the land designated Commercial or Industrial, a proposed Live Local project would be required to be mixed-use. There was no public comment.

There was no public comment.

Councilmember Rader made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-07 for first reading; seconded by Councilmember Lomas. The motion was approved (5/0) by roll call vote.

Councilmember Rader	Approve
Councilmember Lomas	Approve
Councilmember Steele	Approve
Councilmember McElroy	Approve
Council President Horn	Approve

2. Ordinance 2025-08 ECD Activity Node Bonus

Attorney Smith read Ordinance 2025-08 in title only.

Planner Hardgrove noted that staff have conducted further analysis regarding the Activity Nodes, and the ordinance will be withdrawn from the agenda. The ordinance will be returned to the Planning and Zoning Board for additional consideration. No vote was taken.

Note: Discussion on this item resumed after Ordinance 2025-09 was completed

Planner Hardgrove explained that the Edgewood Central District (ECD) activity nodes are intended to be mixed-use centers that promote transportation alternatives. The proposed ordinance will clarify the requirements to achieve the density bonuses of the activity node.

Multi-family residential uses in ECD are allowed by right if nonresidential is included in the project (Mixed Use). Without the nonresidential incorporated into the proposed development, multi-family residential use is only allowed by special exception. The special exception process would allow the City Council to determine if the proposed development is compatible with the ECD vision, which is to activate and redevelop Orange Avenue with mixed uses and pedestrian-friendly spaces.

In response to Councilmember Steele's question as to the highest density allowed in ECD, Planner Hardgrove said there is an allowance for 80 units per acre and buildings up to six stories.

Councilmember Rader stated that the ECD was never intended for standalone multi-resident communities. He noted that a property currently on the market is a prime candidate for redevelopment. Planner Hardgrove pointed out that while residential property taxes are a primary source of revenue for local governments, the costs associated with providing services to residents can sometimes outweigh the tax revenue generated compared to commercial uses. The proposed 10% commercial use on a mixed-use property helps retain some of that tax base. The proposed Live Local ordinance requires 10% commercial use.

Councilmember Rader said the goal of the ECD was to make Edgewood a desirable place to live. Planner Hardgrove proposed that the City should keep in mind that Edgewood has the potential for a quality mixed-use project, as it is strategically located near downtown Orlando and the airport. Mayor Dowless responded that there is a delicate balance and that "perfection should not be the enemy of good." Planner Hardgrove stated that the percentage of required nonresidential uses in a mixed-use project should consider commercial absorption; there is no guarantee that the commercial space would be filled.

Councilmember Steele said commercial uses require additional parking and should be required in a mixed-use development. Planner Hardgrove confirmed that a parking management plan would be included in the design requirements. Councilmember McElroy noted that a hotel with other commercial uses would be 100% commercial.

Stephen Novacki with Eastwind Development addressed the Council and provided market data and an analysis of several mixed-use properties. Mr. Novacki expressed his appreciation for Edgewood and believes one of his projects would be a good fit for the City. He said that the types of projects he works on would not work with the current mixed-use and secondary-use requirements. Council

President Horn asked if they would be interested in a project, and Mr. Novacki said they would, but not as the ordinance is currently written. Mr. Novacki thanked the Council for their time.

Planner Hardgrove asked the Council if they would support creating an outparcel for commercial use within the mixed-use development, similar to The Yard, or whether the Council's vision was mixed-use within the building. Councilmember Rader said out-parcel commercial was built at the Cortland/Ecco properties.

Planner Hardgrove said the proposed ordinance would better define the term "mixed-use." Councilmember Rader confirmed that an activity center is integral. Council President Horn stated that he wanted to ensure that increased density also provided benefits for current residents.

The ordinance will be returned to the P&Z for further consideration and will be presented to the Council again at a later date.

3. Ordinance 2025-09 Platting Amendment

City Attorney Smith read Ordinance 2025-09 in title only.

Planner Hardgrove said the proposed ordinance was prompted by Florida Senate Bill 784, reforming the platting process. State law pre-empts local government's ability to create its own process for regulating platting. The required changes standardize and expedite the plat review process by requiring local governments to designate an administrative authority for review, rather than approval by City Council, and by setting specific timeframes for review and response.

There was no further discussion or public comment.

Councilmember Rader made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-09 on first reading; seconded by Councilmember McElroy. The motion was approved (5/0) by roll call vote.

Councilmember Lomas	Approve
Councilmember Steele	Approve
Councilmember McElroy	Approve
Councilmember Rader	Approve
Councilmember Horn	Approve

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

G. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

H. NEW BUSINESS

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

J. CITIZEN COMMENTS

Caleb Castro asked what would make a mixed-use development feasible, such as with The Yard property. Mr. Novacki commented that to make the project work, the structure must be a wood frame, limiting the structure to four stories. He said he doubted if someone would come in to build only four stories with a requirement for 10% commercial.

Sandra Castano asked if Planner Hardgrove is concerned about in Orange County. City Attorney Smith responded that this is a hypothetical discussion.

In response to Ms. Castano, Councilmember Rader stated that City Council members are elected to protect the interests of the City.

James Muszynski asked why there was discussion about the redevelopment of Bell Rental when it is not on the agenda. Planner Hardgrove responded that it was discussed for the sake of an example.

Mr. Muszynski stated his concern about the consequences of such development and does not want looming walls behind residential properties.

Councilmember Lomas said she observed that the handrail, which should be along Holden Avenue at Haven Oaks, is still down. Ellen will call Orange County to get that back in place.

K. BOARDS & COMMITTEES

1. Special Exception 2025-02 Church 4931 S Orange Ave

Note: This was heard after the Consent agenda.

The Ebenezer Christian Church requested a special exception to establish a religious institution (church) at 4931 South Orange Avenue within the Versailles Plaza. The church intends to lease approximately 1,500 square feet. The property is zoned ECD, which permits religious institutions only through a special exception. Planner Hardgrove stated a special exception can only be approved with a finding that the church is compatible with the surrounding area. The primary concern was adequate parking, given the plaza is already substandard in parking quantity and that the parking demand of religious institutions is different than traditional retail and service establishments.

A church's use differs from retail in that its entire membership may arrive at once, whereas individual customers for retail arrive at different times. A survey of the tenants submitted by the applicant showed that if the proposed church is limited to specific times and days, there would be sufficient parking.

Planner Hardgrove stated the Planning and Zoning Board recommends approval of the special exception with the following conditions:

1. The congregation is limited to no more than 60 people.
2. Church services and activities are limited to Sundays at any time and Monday through Saturday after 6:30 PM. The pastor and administrative staff may be present at any time.

3. The church must submit an off-site parking agreement to the City for special events.

Councilmember Rader noted that the uses of other tenants could change at any time, which Planner Hardgrove confirmed, stating that the burden would be on the leasing agent. He also commented on the continued pattern of making uses work in buildings that were not designed for them.

Julieta Kaplan, a representative of the church, and Pastor Jiminez spoke to the Council. In response to Council President Horn, Ms. Kaplan said they expect ten to twelve vehicles during a service. There was no public comment.

Councilmember Lomas made a motion to approve Special Exception 2025-02 to allow the establishment of a religious institution (church) located at 4931 South Orange Avenue within the Versailles Plaza, subject to the following conditions:

- The congregation is limited to no more than 60 people. To increase this number, an amendment to the special exception is required.***
- Church services and activities of assembly are limited to Sundays at any time, and Monday through Saturday after 6:30 PM. Church administrative operations and private meetings with the pastor may occur at any time and day.***
- No outdoor activities or special events are permitted without a City-approved off-site parking agreement. Councilmember Steele seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote (5/0).***

Councilmember Steele	Approve
Councilmember McElroy	Approve
Councilmember Rader	Approve
Councilmember Lomas	Approve
Council President Horn	Approve

L. STAFF REPORTS

City Attorney Smith

Attorney Smith referenced handouts regarding Commercial PACE for Local Government, a program where a public entity provides financing options for energy-efficiency, wind-hardening, and renewable energy projects. The council had a consensus to invite the organization to a future meeting to provide more information.

Police Chief DeSchryver

1. Chief's Report July 2025

- Officer Scott Zane is dealing with an injury that may be long-term. He may be able to come back on full duty or else fill the code enforcement officer position.
- Officer Ryan White will return from military duty on Monday.
- Newly hired Officer Abraham Class will begin training.
- The department is working to fill the opening for Officer Zane's replacement.

- Chief DeSchryver asked if someone on Council would like to serve on the staffing committee. Council President Horn and Councilmember McElroy expressed interest.
- In response to Councilmember Rader, Chief DeSchryver said that Officer Zane has been handling Code Enforcement duties. Councilmember Lomas said that he is doing a great job.
- In response to Council President Horn, solicitors must apply for a solicitor's permit.

City Clerk Riffle

1. Clerk's Report 7/11 through 8/15

- **Citywide Tree Assessment:** The city is exploring a new tree service provider, Tree Wise Urban Forestry, to assess the health of all city-maintained trees within the public right-of-way. They will provide a quote to compare with the current provider, Albert Moore.
- **New Intern:** Brian Muniz has joined the city for six months to help develop a GIS mapping system and assist with record cleanup.
- **Code Compliance:** The new Code Compliance Officer, Scott Zane, is effectively resolving more code violations without formal notices or hearings.
- **FCC Environmental Services:** The company has paid all of its franchise fees for the first two quarters of 2025.
- **Business Tax Renewals (BTR):** The city is transitioning to an online renewal process. So far, 25% of businesses (102 in total) have completed their renewals online.
- **Parking Regulations:** Updated parking regulations are being prepared for a first reading at the September meeting.
- Brett coordinated with nearby businesses at 5416, 5406, and 5301 Hansel Avenue (Community Thrift, Zen Tavern, and Addition Financial) to assume responsibility for mowing the area on the Hansel/Orange Avenue ROW when the area is overgrown.

M. MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL REPORTS

Mayor Dowless

- A large tree in Waterwitch needed to be removed. The Brockmans donated about half the cost of the removal, which helped with the tree budget.
- Councilmember McElroy will attend the Tri-County League of Cities Advocacy. Mayor Dowless expressed a desire for more people to attend Tallahassee legislative sessions on a weekly basis and receive training and help prevent State preemption. Funds were raised to cover participants' travel expenses.
- Mayor Dowless spoke with a company called Retail Strategies, which helps market cities and will meet with them to get more information about their services for the City. Councilmember Rader expressed interest in attending the meeting.
- He discussed the millage rate of 4.437 for Orange County, noting that Orange County properties are charged an additional 2.8437 for the fire ad valorem. The rate paid for Orange County comes to 7.28 mills, which is higher than Edgewood's rate of 5.25 mills. Unlike the County, Edgewood absorbs this cost into the 5.25 mills.

Council Member Lomas

Councilmember Lomas continues to attend monthly meetings at the CAB. – Community Action Board. She expressed frustration because they ask for the Board's input and then negate anything contributed. She said that DOGE made a review of the Community Action Board, and their complaint was that there were not enough Board Members.

Council Member McElroy – no report.

Council Member Rader

- Councilmember Rader said he has noticed signs on the corner of Holden for the Kwik Stop with spinners advertising it as a smoke shop.

Planner Hardgrove said that when the BTR was issued it plainly stated that it was to be a convenience store. Staff warned the business owner that a smoke shop is not an allowed use in the ECD. BTRs include a zoning check upon application.

Planner Hardgrove clarified that there is a zoning use check upon a new application for BTR. Attorney Smith stated that a BTR does not make the determination, as it is not a regulatory or zoning verification document.

- Councilmember Rader stated that the City's GIS maps, which he produced, are from 2021-22. He does not have access to the software with his current employer but is working with CPH and City Hall to get the program.

Council Member Steele – no report

Council President Horn – no report

N. ADJOURNMENT

Councilmember Lomas made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 8:37 pm.


Richard A. Horn, Council President

Attest:


Sandra Riffle, City Clerk