

CITY OF LABELLE



MINUTES

City Commission LDRC Workshop
Thursday, March 12, 2026, at 4:00 PM

LaBelle Commission Chambers
481 West Hickpochee Ave
LaBelle, FL 33975

CITY COMMISSION:

Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor
Kevin Holland, Commissioner
Jackie Ratica, Commissioner
Bobbie Spratt, Commissioner
Hugo Vargas, Commissioner

ADMINISTRATION:

Tijauna Warner, MPA, MMC, Deputy City Clerk
Derek Rooney, Esq., City Attorney
Mitchell Wills, Superintendent PW

Minutes

1. Call to Order

The workshop was called to order by Mayor Wilkins at 4:04 PM.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT

Mayor Julie C. Wilkins

Vice Mayor Jackie Ratica

Commissioner Bobbie Spratt

Commissioner Hugo Vargas

Commissioner Kevin Holland

Deputy City Clerk Tijauna Warner

ABSENT

City Attorney Derek Rooney

3. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Waived.

4. Topic

A. LDRC Mission & Vision Plan

Jerica Mungillo, Director of LaBelle Downtown Revitalization, presented draft mission and vision statements developed from interviews with city and LDRC leadership. She explained the statements reflect common themes identified by ten community leaders, particularly the significance of the oaks and the river, as well as agricultural elements intended to honor LaBelle's farming heritage.

Mayor Wilkins expressed appreciation for the draft and suggested revising the word "endures" to "thrives" in the vision statement to better convey growth and prosperity. Commissioner Holland supported both terms, noting that "endures" reflects resilience while "thrives" represents future aspirations. He also commended the overall language for capturing the community's identity and balancing preservation with growth.

Vice Mayor Ratica requested additional time to review the statements, citing her experience with similar initiatives. The Commission expressed general support for the direction and indicated they would provide further feedback to Mungillo for refinement.

B. Workplan Review:

-Captain Hendry House

-Ft. Thompson Parklet

-Solar Lighting Installation

LDRC President Alex Stefano presented a comprehensive work plan focused on aligning initiatives with City priorities, emphasizing research, planning, and funding development prior to project implementation.

Key highlights include:

Expansion of board membership to strengthen organizational capacity.
Increased engagement with downtown businesses and stakeholders.
Support for recent private investment and coordinated redevelopment efforts.
Planned initiatives such as expanded markets, new community events, downtown improvements, and grant-funded projects.
Exploration of district expansion and historic preservation efforts.

Major long-term projects include updating the historic survey, redevelopment concepts such as the Everett Hotel, and activation of key historic properties including the Captain Hendrie House.

C. LDRC and City Contract

The LDRC presented a proposed agreement to formalize its relationship with the City, primarily for grant eligibility and operational clarity.

The organization requested an increase in annual funding from \$21,000 to approximately \$60,000, citing industry benchmarks and expanded programming. Additional funding would support staffing, events, and community initiatives.

Commissioners acknowledged the request but indicated funding considerations would be addressed during upcoming budget workshops. Concerns were raised regarding financial constraints and timing.

D. Downtown Events

The LDRC discussed potential management of the Swamp Cabbage Festival, as the current committee has expressed readiness to transition responsibilities. While the festival presents revenue opportunities, commissioners noted the complexity of event coordination and staffing capacity.

Additional efforts include improved coordination of community events, including Fourth of July activities, and collaboration with local organizations to streamline scheduling and maximize community participation.

The LDRC introduced the opportunity to pursue Certified Local Government (CLG) designation, which would enhance access to historic preservation grants, training, and formal participation in preservation efforts.

Commissioners expressed general support for exploring the designation, noting that implementation would require City direction, potential ordinance updates, and continued coordination on major projects.

E. Public Comment

No public comments.

F. Next Steps/Action Items

The commission indicated general approval of the LDRC work plan while noting that funding decisions would be addressed during upcoming budget meetings scheduled for June 11th, June 25th, July 9th, July 23rd, and August 6th. Additional workshops may be scheduled as needed before budget finalization.

The LDRC was encouraged to submit written requests with financial statements and formal funding proposals. Discussion of the Swamp Cabbage Festival transition would require a dedicated joint workshop to address logistics, timing, and implementation details.

5. Adjournment

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to adjourn the workshop. Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously. Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Wilkins adjourned the workshop at 5:05 PM.



ATTEST: Mauna Warner, MPA, MMC, City Clerk

Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor