

CITY OF LABELLE



MINUTES

City Commission Comprehensive Plan Workshop

Thursday, December 11, 2025, 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 4:01 PM.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT

Mayor Julie C. Wilkins

Vice Mayor Jackie Ratica

Commissioner Bobbie Spratt

Commissioner Hugo Vargas

Commissioner Kevin Holland

City Attorney Derek Rooney

Deputy City Clerk Tijauna Warner

3. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Commissioner Hugo led the invocation, Vice Mayor Ratica led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. New Business

A. Comprehensive Plan Update

Alexis Crespo provided an overview of the Comprehensive Plan update process, including an evaluation of existing conditions, changes in state law since the City's last major update in 2010, and recommended next steps. The Comprehensive Plan was described as the City's long-range planning document guiding growth, land use, infrastructure, and development over a minimum 20-year planning horizon.

Alexis reviewed recent state legislation, including Senate Bill 180, which limits local governments from adopting more restrictive comprehensive plan or land development regulations following recent hurricanes. City Attorney Derek Rooney explained that the law prohibits increased development standards or new regulatory processes until at least October 2027, with the possibility of extension.

Alexis recommended expediting state-required, non-restrictive amendments to bring the City into compliance, completing those amendments by spring or summer 2026, and continuing work on recommended policy changes, with adoption deferred until legally permissible.

Commissioners and consultants discussed challenges created by inconsistencies between zoning classifications and the Future Land Use Map, particularly where zoning allows multifamily development but future land use limits density to three units per acre.

Key discussion points included:

- Concerns about unintended multifamily development in established neighborhoods
- Historical changes that consolidated residential categories

Potential solutions, including:

- Re-establishing low-, medium-, and high-density residential categories
- Allowing vested rights for properties zoned R-2 or R-3
- Clarifying density calculations and mixed-use standards

Commissioners expressed opposition to widespread increases in density and emphasized caution in locating multifamily housing.

Alexis noted that infill development has been a primary challenge and suggested focusing higher-density development in areas such as South LaBelle Village, where infrastructure and coordinated planning can be more effectively managed. The importance of protecting neighborhood character was emphasized throughout the discussion.

Commissioners discussed the need for improved long-term planning for parks and open space, noting the success of green space planning in Port LaBelle. Potential future strategies include enhanced open space requirements and incentives or bonus density programs tied to the preservation of green space.

Rhea Hunter presented recommended updates to the Economic Development Element, noting that it is not required by state law and provides flexibility for policy direction. Key points included shifting the focus from tourism-only language to a broader economic development strategy, supporting job creation so residents can live and work locally, aligning incentives with target industries (including healthcare), and incorporating findings from the City's prior Economic Development and Resiliency Plan.

Commissioners discussed the need for formalized incentives to attract employers while balancing fiscal responsibility.

Rhea reviewed housing-related state law changes, including requirements to compensate developers if affordable housing is mandated. Discussion emphasized a preference for incentives rather than mandates, concerns about affordability definitions based on regional Area Median Income, a strong interest in protecting neighborhood character, and opposition to allowing accessory dwelling units (ADUs) within the City.

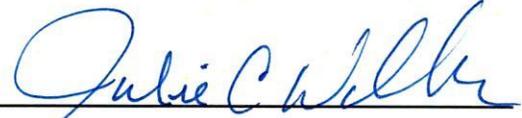
Infrastructure capacity and funding challenges were discussed at length. City Attorney Rooney explained limitations on requiring developers to fund existing infrastructure deficiencies and emphasized the importance of long-range capital planning. Commissioners noted public concerns regarding infrastructure keeping pace with growth.

Rhea outlined ongoing coordination with Hendry County, including joint planning discussions to address annexation patterns, service areas, and future growth boundaries.

Mayor Wilkins called for a three (3) minute break at 5:04pm.

5. Adjournment

Mayor Wilkins adjourned the workshop at 5:07 PM.



Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor



ATTEST: Tijauna Warner, MPA, MMC, Deputy City Clerk

