CITY OF LABELLE

MINUTES

Regular Commission Meeting
Thursday, June 11, 2026, at 5:30 PM

LaBelle Commission Chambers
481 West Hickpochee Ave
LaBelle, FL 33975

CITY COMMISSION:

Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor
Jackie Ratica, Vice Mayor
Kevin Holland, 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 meeting was called to order by Mayor Wilkins at 5:33 PM.

2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Invocation by Commissioner Holland and Pledge of Allegiance lead by Vice Mayor Ratica.

3. Roll Call

PRESENT
Mayor Julie C. Wilkins
Vice Mayor Jackie Ratica
Commissioner Bobbie Spratt
Commissioner Hugo Vargas
Commissioner Kevin Holland
City Attorney Derek Rooney via Teams
Deputy City Clerk Tijauna Warner

4. Additions of Emergency Basis From Mayor, Deletions and Approval of Agenda Items

5. Presentations

A. National League of Cities Prenatal to 3 Initiative - Keitha Daniels, Hendry County Director of Economic Development

Keitha Daniels presented an overview of the National League of Cities Prenatal to 3 Initiative, which focuses on identifying and addressing the needs of young children, families, and childcare providers in the LaBelle area.

Ms. Daniels outlined the initiative's process, including community surveys, provider focus groups, review of responses, development of an implementation plan, and evaluation of outcomes. She requested the City's support through a resolution recognizing childcare efforts, permission to distribute survey information at City facilities, and review of the final recommendations.

A discussion ensued among the Commission regarding childcare needs, community engagement, and potential ways the City can support families and early childhood development initiatives. No formal action was taken.

Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to approve pulling Resolution 2026-12 from Consent Agenda to Presentation, Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Wilkins called for the questions. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

B. RESOLUTION 2026-12 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA, APPROVING ASSESS TO CHILDCARE PROGRAMS, ISSUES, AND BARRIERS TO ASSIST FAMILIES AND PROVIDERS; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to approve Resolution 2026-12, Seconded by Commissioner Spratt. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve the addition of Duplex Development Rights in R-2T and R-3 Zoned Areas, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

Patty Kulak gave a brief explanation of Duplex Development Rights in R-2T and R-3 Zoned Areas.

Commission gave directions for Patty Kulak to proceed to review Duplex Development Rights in R-2T and R-3 Zoned Areas.

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve the addition of Matt Howard to the agenda, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ratica. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

Matt Howard appeared before the Commission to provide an update on Extra Art Education, formerly Extra Art Theater LLC, which will transition to nonprofit status effective July 1. He presented a proposal to lease a city-owned facility specifically referencing the old DMV building on J.C. Lyons Drive as a permanent operating space for the organization's arts programming for children, including after-school classes, homeschool electives, prop and set construction, and office operations. He indicated the organization has the capacity to operate five to seven days per week and could pay approximately $500 per month in rent.

Mayor Wilkins clarified that she was under the impression that Extra Art Theater LLC and the Firehouse Community Theater had reached a mutual arrangement following last month's meeting, and that this appearance was related to a resolved matter. Mr. Howard corrected this, stating that no formal agreement with the Firehouse had been reached, though no ill will existed. He confirmed that the organization plans to attend the Firehouse's next board meeting.

Mayor Wilkins encouraged Mr. Howard to continue pursuing a collaborative relationship with the Firehouse, noting that as a small community, shared use of the theater for performances could be a practical solution. Mr. Howard explained that while the organization would be willing to use the Civic Center or Firehouse for performances on a rental basis, their day-to-day programming requires a dedicated space they can use consistently, which the Firehouse cannot provide given its full production schedule.

Mayor Wilins acknowledged the value of the organization's programming for children and directed Mr. Howard to work with city staff, specifically Superintendent Mitchell Wills, to identify what city-owned space, if any, might be available, and to return to the Commission with viable options.

6. Consent Agenda Items for Consideration

(Any commissioner or citizen may request to have an item removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda for further discussion.)

A. Approval of May Check Register

B. Approval of Minutes:

May 14, 2026, City Commission Meeting Minutes

C. Approval of Staff Reports:

-HCSO- Lt. Allen Hudson

-Fire Department- Chief Brent Stevens

-Building Department- Mark Lynch

-Code Enforcement- Zane Mungillo

D. ITB 2026-01 LaBelle Fire Department - Hardening and Addition Contract - DEC Contracting Group Inc

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

7. Non-Public Hearing Items for Consideration

(Limited to 15 minutes per item: 3-5 minutes optional presentation time with the remaining time for discussion by the Commission)

A. LaBelle Drinking Water System Improvements Change Order No. 1

Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to approve LaBelle Drinking Water System Improvements Change Order No. 01, Seconded by Commissioner Spratt. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

B. Civic Center Conversion Discussion

Mayor Wilkins introduced a discussion regarding the potential conversion of the Civic Center into a permanent Commission meeting room and city office space. She noted that the Civic Center generates approximately $69,000 in gross revenue annually, but that when labor, materials, and ongoing repair costs are factored in, the facility does not pay for itself.

Superintendent of Public Works Mitchell Wills presented a general concept developed by city staff. The proposal envisions segregating the building: the front half would be converted into office space, and the rear half would be retained as a large meeting room capable of accommodating 150–200 people, suitable for Commission meetings and public gatherings. The existing stage area could potentially be retained for small performances. Mr. Wills noted that the planned demolition of the old water tower and construction at the maintenance facility site would necessitate relocating the maintenance department, likely to the LaBelle Development building, and consolidating remaining staff in the current City Hall or Civic Center.

Vice Mayor Ratica requested that a floor plan be developed for the Commission's review before a decision is made. Mr. Wills indicated a drawing already exists and that cost estimates could be provided within a week. No formal action was taken; the item was presented for discussion and direction only.

C. CMAR DW & WWTP Update

Deputy City Clerk Tijauna Warner advised that formal recommendations would be brought before the City Commission at the July 9, 2026, Meeting.

D. Animal Control Update

Superintendent Wills reported significant progress on the animal control facility. The pole barn, fencing, and kennel cages are approximately 95 percent complete, with full operation expected by the end of the following week. Four large fans have been installed for temperature control, and a screen enclosure wrap similar to that used at the 4-H Rodeo Grounds is being installed to serve as a wind and sun break. The facility now operates six days per week with animal control officers and a kennel technician, and on-call coverage is maintained on Sundays.

Mr. Wills also reported that the PetConnect software system is near completion. The digital platform will allow residents to report and locate lost pets within a five-mile radius, and will be accessible county-wide, not limited to the city.

8. Public Hearings and/or Ordinances

A. ORDINANCE 2026-05 *(second reading)* AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA, ANNEXING A 74+/-ACRE PROPERTY LOCATED SOUTH OF W SR 80 ROAD AND NORTH OF HELMS ROAD, INTO THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA; IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ANNEXATION PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 171, PART II, FLORIDA STATUTES; REDEFINING THE BOUNDARY LINES OF SAID CITY IN CONFORMANCE THEREWITH; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL BOUNDARY MAP OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA, PROVIDING THAT EXISTING FUTURE LAND USE AND ZONING DESIGNATIONS REMAIN UNTIL CHANGED BY THE CITY ORDINANCE; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Nathan read Ordinance 2026-05 and Ordinance 2026-06 title into the record.

Patty Kulak gave a brief explanation of Ordinance 2026-05 and 2026-06.

Public Hearing Opened 6:42pm

No Comments

Public Hearing Closed 6:44pm

Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to approve Ordinance 2026-05, Seconded by Commissioner Spratt. Mayor Wilkins called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.

Voting Yea: Mayor Wilkins, Vice Mayor Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland

B. ORDINANCE 2026-06 (second reading) AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA, PROVIDING FOR A SMALL-SCALE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN AMENDMENT TO THE FUTURE LAND USE MAP FOR A 84.04+/-ACRE PROPERTY LOCATED SOUTH OF W SR 80 ROAD AND NORTH OF HELMS ROAD; AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DESIGNATION FOR THE PROPERTY FROM UNINCORPORATED HENDRY COUNTY COMPREHENSIVE PLAN "MULTI-USE" DESIGNATION TO THE CITY OF LABELLE "OUTLYING MIXED USE" DESIGNATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve Ordinance 2026-06, 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

9. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

(Limited to 3 minutes per person)

Gail Perry addressed the Commission with a suggestion that the city's online agendas include direct hyperlinks to supporting documents and backup materials for each agenda item, to improve public accessibility.

Deputy City Clerk Tijauna Warner advised that the City of LaBelle's website already provides direct hyperlinks to agenda materials and is ADA accessible. She further explained that the website complies with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA standards and offers translation capabilities in more than 250 languages, ensuring greater accessibility for residents and visitors.

10. City Related Business by Commissioners

11. Adjournment

Motion made by Vice Mayor Ratica to adjourn the meeting, 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 meeting at 7:14 PM.

CITY OF LABELLE
CORPORATE
SEAL
FLORIDA

Julie C. Wilkins, Mayor

ATTEST: Tijauna Warner, MPA, MMC, City Clerk