CITY OF LABELLE

MINUTES

Regular Commission Meeting
Thursday, October 08, 2026, at 5:30 PM

LaBelle Commission Chambers
481 West Hickpochee Ave
LaBelle, FL 33975

CITY COMMISSION:

Vince Ross, Mayor
Jackie Ratica, Commissioner
Kevin Holland, Commissioner
Bobbie Spratt, Commissioner
Hugo Vargas, Commissioner

ADMINISTRATION:

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

Minutes

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ross at 5:31 PM.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT
Commissioner Jackie Ratica
Commissioner Bobbie Spratt
Commissioner Hugo Vargas
Commissioner Kevin Holland
Mayor Vince Ross
City Attorney Derek Rooney
City Clerk Tijauna Warner

3. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

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

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

None.

5. Presentations

A. Lee Health - Katie Larsen, Government Relations Director

Katie Larsen provided an update on Lee Health's planned expansion into the LaBelle and Hendry County area. The presentation outlined key milestones in the project timeline, including the current grant administration phase, ongoing final renovation design and operational planning, and the commencement of procurement for medical equipment, technology, and furnishings. The project team anticipates coming before the board within the next few months to secure necessary permits for the complete build-out of the space. Renovations and fit-outs are projected to be complete in the summer and fall of 2027, with patient services expected to launch between February and April of 2028.

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 September Check Register

B. Approval of September Minutes:

September 10, 2026 LPA Meeting Minutes

September 10, 2026 City Commission & Tentative Budget Meeting Minutes

September 17, 2026 City Commission Final Budget Special Meeting Minutes

C. Approval of Staff Reports:

-HCSO- Lt. Allen Hudson

-Fire Department- Chief Brent Stevens

-Building Department- Mark Lynch

-Code Enforcement- Zane Mungillo

-Woodard & Curran- Justin deMello

D. Upsizing Pipe - Tortilla Plant

Motion made by Commissioner Spratt to approve Consent Agenda Items pulling Woodard & Curran Staff Report, Maintenance Department Relocation, & Civic Center Capacity, Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Ross called for the question. A discussion ensued.
Voting Yea: Commissioner Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Ross

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. Maintenance Department Relocation

Commissioner Vargas provided context for the public regarding the Maintenance Department Relocation item. He explained that the maintenance department, currently located behind the fire station, had been considered for relocation to the building housing the Building Department and Code Enforcement offices due to planned water tank construction on the current maintenance site. Lilly Davenport noted that the Civic Center is encumbered under a USDA loan agreement that requires the facility to generate revenue, and that any future plans must account for this obligation until the loan is retired. Superintendent Wills subsequently confirmed that arrangements had been made with contractors to allow the maintenance department to remain in its current location during construction, eliminating the immediate need to relocate.

B. Civic Center Capacity

Public Comments provided by the following: Allen Hudson (resident) and Ron Zimmerly (resident) opposing changing the Civic Center Capacity

Fire Chief Stevens and Fire Marshal Josh Rimes presented the fire code basis for the current occupancy limits. He explained that the building lacks sprinkler systems and fire alarm systems, necessitating conservative occupancy calculations. The current maximum is 500 for open space and 350 for table-and-chair configurations. The primary concern was events without tables and chairs where attendance has reportedly exceeded 600–700 persons, with crowd managers provided by private event organizers not performing their duties properly. Fire Marshal Rimes indicated that installation of a sprinkler and fire alarm system could potentially

raise the open-floor capacity to approximately 900, though that would also require expanding door widths and other code compliance upgrades. The Commission expressed interest in obtaining cost estimates for such upgrades.

Commissioner Spratt requested that the Civic Center Capacity item be postponed to the November meeting to allow all commissioners adequate time to review the materials, noting that some members had been unable to access the relevant agenda attachments.

C. Woodard & Curran Staff Report

Commissioner Vargas wanted to recognize Woodard & Curran for their hard work and dedication to the City of LaBelle.

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve the Woodard & Curran Staff Report, Seconded by Commissioner Spratt. Mayor Ross called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Commissioner Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Ross

D. 2026 Employee Handbook

Motion made by Commissioner Holland to approve the Employee Handbook, Seconded by Commissioner Vargas. Mayor Ross called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Commissioner Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Ross

E. RESOLUTION 2026-37 A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COMMISSION OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE CITY OF LABELLE FIRE DEPARTMENT FEE SCHEDULE AND CHARGES RELATED TO LAND DEVELOPMENT APPLICATIONS, PLAN REVIEWS, INSPECTIONS, RE-INSPECTIONS, PERMITS, AND FIRE APPARATUS STANDBY SERVICES; PROVIDING FOR THE ADOPTION OF AN AMENDED FEE SCHEDULE; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Derek Roone read Resolution 2026-37 title into the record.

Josh Rimes gave a brief explanation of Resolution 2026-37.

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve Resolution 2026-27, Seconded by Commissioner Ratica. Mayor Ross called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Commissioner Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Ross

8. Public Hearings and/or Ordinances

A. ORDINANCE 2026-01 *(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 1.58+/-ACRE TRACT GENERALLY LOCATED NORTH AND SOUTH OF WEST YEOMANS AVENUE, NORTH OF WEST HICKPOCHEE

AVENUE, AND WEST OF NORTH MAIN STREET; AMENDING THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN DESIGNATION FOR THE PROPERTIES FROM "DOWNTOWN DISTRICT" DESIGNATION TO "COMMERCIAL" DESIGNATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

B. ORDINANCE 2026-02 *(second reading)* AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA, AMENDING THE CITY OF LABELLE ZONING MAP FOR A 1.58+/-ACRE TRACT GENERALLY LOCATED NORTH AND SOUTH OF WEST YEOMANS AVENUE, NORTH OF WEST HICKPOCHEE AVENUE, AND WEST OF NORTH MAIN STREET, AMENDING THE ZONING DESIGNATION FROM PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) AND DOWNTOWN BUSINESS DISTRICT (DBD) ZONING DISTRICT TO PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) ZONING DISTRICT, PROVIDING FOR IDENTIFICATION OF THE SUBJECT PROPERTY; PROVIDING FOR INTENT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Derek Rooney read Ordinance 2026-01 and Ordinance 2026-02 title into the record.

The Commission considered Ordinances 2026-01 and 2026-02 concurrently, as they jointly addressed the small-scale comprehensive plan amendment and rezoning of an approximately 1.58-acre tract located at the corner of State Road 80 and North Main Street the former Trading Post site from Downtown District/Downtown Business District designations to Commercial/Planned Unit Development (PUD) designations to accommodate a proposed Wawa convenience store and fuel station. The items were before the Commission for second and final reading.

Commissioners disclosed ex parte communications: Mayor Ross had met with representatives of Wawa and with the landowner; Commissioner Spratt had met with the Wawa representatives and the landowner and had spoken with many residents; Commissioner Holland had spoken with the landowner; and Commissioner Vargas had spoken briefly with associated parties and with numerous constituents. Commissioner Ratica had not spoken with Wawa representatives.

Neal Montgomery, Dan Delesi, Taylor Parker, Brain Kelly, and Mike Liggins presented the project.

Public Hearing Opened

Comments made by: Josh Worthen (resident), Christina Davidson (resident), Leonard Enriquez (resident), Diane Shields (resident), Allen Pickles (resident), Jill Cabai (resident), and Mary Giddens (resident via email to Commissioner Ratica) opposing Ordinance 2026-01 and Ordinance 2026-02 and Joe Leon (resident), Ramiro Rodriguez (resident), Doug Smith (resident), Tifton Kyle Holt (resident) in-favor of Ordinance 2026-01 and Ordinance 2026-02

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve closing the Public Hearing for Ordinance 2026-01 and Ordinance 2026-02, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Ross called for the question. Motion passed unanimously.
Voting Yea: Commissioner Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Ross

Public Hearing Closed

Patty Kulak gave a staff recommendations if the commission decides approval of Ordinance 2026-01 and Ordinance 2026-02.

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve Ordinance 2026-01, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Ross called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed 3-2.
Voting Yea: Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Ross
Voting Nay: Commissioner Ratica, Commissioner Spratt

Motion made by Commissioner Vargas to approve Ordinance 2026-02 with staff recommended changes, Seconded by Commissioner Holland. Mayor Ross called for the question. A discussion ensued. Motion passed 3-2.
Voting Yea: Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Ross
Voting Nay: Commissioner Ratica, Commissioner Spratt

C. ORDINANCE 2026-12 *(second reading)* AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF LABELLE, FLORIDA, AMENDING CHAPTER 8.7, HISTORIC PRESERVATION, OF THE CITY OF LABELLE CODE OF ORDINANCES, TO CONFORM THE CITY'S HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF THE CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT PROGRAM UNDER 36 CFR PART 61; REVISING THE COMPOSITION, TERMS, AND DUTIES OF THE HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD; ADDING PROVISIONS FOR PUBLIC MEETINGS, STATE REPORTING, NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATIONS, AND STANDARDS COMPLIANCE; UPDATING REFERENCES TO STATE AGENCIES; ADOPTING DESIGN GUIDELINES BY REFERENCE; ESTABLISHING AN AD VALOREM TAX EXEMPTION FOR THE REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES UNDER SECTION 196.1997, FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS, SEVERABILITY, CODIFICATION, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Derek Roone read Ordinance 2026-12 title into the record.

Public Hearing Opened

No public comment was received.

Public Hearing Closed

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

9. Public Comment on Non-Agenda Items

(Limited to 3 minutes per person)

John Barry expressed concerns with the ALPRE Block Camera and requested that they be removed.

Maria Ruiz requested the City give opportunities for business to choose a roll-off dumpsters provider.

Christina Davidson expressed concerns with the convenient store having alcohol in the front stores.

10. City Related Business by Commissioners

City Attorney Rooney raised a final action item, requesting Commission authorization for the mayor to execute an agreement allowing the Recreation Board to piggyback on the city's Enterprise Fleet contract.

Motion made by Commissioner Ratica to authorize the Mayor to execute an agreement allowing the Recreation Board to tag onto the city's Enterprise Fleet contract, Seconded by Commissioner Spratt. Mayor Ross called for the question. Motion passed unanimously. Voting Yea: Commissioner Ratica, Commissioner Spratt, Commissioner Vargas, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Ross

11. Adjournment

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

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Ross adjourned the meeting at 9:32 PM.

CITY OF LABELLE CORPORATE SEAL FLORIDA

Vince Ross, Mayor

ATTEST: Tijauna Warner, MPA, MMC, City Clerk