On July 6, 2026, the City Commission of the City of Wauchula, held its regularly scheduled budget workshop at 4:00 pm. The workshop was held at 225 E. Main Street, Wauchula, Florida.

Nadaskay called the workshop to order.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT
Commissioner Anne Miller
Mayor Pro Tem Russell Smith
Mayor Keith Nadaskay
Commissioner Sherri Albritton
Commissioner Gary Smith

STAFF PRESENT
City Manager Olivia Minshew
Deputy City Manager John Eason
Assistant City Manager Sandee Braxton
City Clerk Stephanie Camacho
Chief of Police Ron Curtis
CRA Director Jessica Newman
Director of Projects and Procurement Ward Grimes
Community Development Director Kyle Long
Accountant Anna Retana

2026-2027 Proposed Budget Discussion
Braxton began by stating the 2026-2027 proposed budget was $28,688,439.00.

Braxton stated the budget was balanced using the rollback rate and reviewed the following Contributing Budget Factors, which summarized the entire budget proposal.

Personnel Services
While not the largest expenditure type, personnel expenditures make up a significant portion of the City of Wauchula's overall budget. Therefore, staff spends considerable time each year reviewing personnel expenses. A quick recap of the factors relating to personnel impacting this proposed budget include:

- Implementation of the new step plan for all employees to reach the $15 minimum wage requirement by September 30, 2026. This year is the final step plan adjustment for full implementation of our 5 year plan. Overall salaries for the proposed budget is $4.59 million which is a 5.56% increase from current budget
- Individual step raises for employees who are expected to or have achieved certain milestones
- Year 2 of our participation in the self-funded health insurance pool will see a 6% increase in premiums.
- Maintaining current Health Savings Account (HSA) contribution levels at $3,200 for family and $1,600 for individuals.
- Continued funding of the Employee Wellness Program.
- Workers' compensation premiums increased 5%.
- Required annual contribution to the Pension Fund is 3.64% of payroll and the OPEB contribution is budgeted at 6.36% for a total of 10% for retirement benefits

Operating Expenses
Every department is carefully reviewed each year to ensure sufficient funds are budgeted to maintain city & utility operations, while being prudent with taxpayer and rate payer dollars. The following factors are worth noting in operating expenses:

- The budget includes an increase of 5% for automobile liability and property and casualty liability premiums.
- Continuation of the Employee Recognition Program and related funding for such can be seen in both the General Fund (Dept 519-54920) and Utility Fund (Dept 539-54925) at $2,500 each.

- Continuation of the workstation replacement schedule produced the need for 11 computers and 3 tablets in 7 different departments. The departments include 511, 519, 521, 541, 503, 539, and 593.
- To ensure continuous improvement and accountability, an update to the strategic plan can be found in each city fund for a total of $7,500.
- In the Roads and Streets department, another $10,000 is budgeted for the next phase of street name sign replacement throughout the city-limits in 541-54600 and the continued improvements of the Florida Avenue sidewalk are also budgeted for $7,000 in 541-54602
- A new security camera is planned for the new water storage facility built during FY 25-26. This is found in 533-55200 for $4,000
- Regular replacement of chart recorders for $3,500 and new pallet racks for the WWTP maintenance shop for $5,000 are budgeted in 535-55200
- Continuation of the contracted sludge hauling is budgeted in 535-55210 for $130,000
- Smoke testing and sewer manhole lining is budgeted in 536-54600 for $6,000 and $30,000 respectively
- Replacement tracks for the mini excavator will be $5,000 and are budgeted in 539-54655
- Bulk material bins for the laydown yard ($5,500) and pallet racks for the warehouse ($5,000) can be found in 539-55200
- Annual recloser replacement for the electric distribution system can be seen in 593-55202 for $30,000
- In order to expedite LED street and yard light replacement installation, we have again budgeted $70,000 (593-55280)
- An employee in the Electric Distribution Department (593-55400) that needs to begin apprentice school starting next fiscal year which is budgeted at $12,000.

<u>Capital Expenditures</u>
The City continues to invest in our facilities, equipment, vehicles & existing infrastructure. Proposed capital expenditures are approximately $9 million for FY 26-27. The following items are representative of this commitment:

- Vehicles and Equipment
  - As a continuation of our established fleet replacement program, the following replacements have been budgeted for this fiscal year. These can be found in:
    - General Fund
      - Dept 521- Police Department
        - 2 Police Vehicles ($120,000)
      - Dept 541- Roads & Streets
        - Pick-Up Truck ($54,000)
      - Dept 572- Recreation
        - Tractor Loader Backhoe(TLB) ($47,000)
        - 2 Zero-Turn Mowers ($46,000)
    - Utility Fund
      - Dept 502- Meter Department
        - Pick-Up Truck ($50,000)
      - Dept 533- Water Distribution
        - Air compressor for Pneumatic Tools ($8,000)
      - Dept 535-WWTP
        - Golf Cart ($7,500)
      - Dept 536- Sewer & Locates
        - Sewer Camera ($35,000)
      - Dept 539- Administration
        - Replace Domain Controller Server ($8,000)
      - Dept 593- Electric Distribution
        - 1 Bucket Truck ($280,000)- Roll Forward from Prior Year
        - Flat Bed Truck ($65,000)
        - Chipper ($90,000)
- Buildings and Other Infrastructure
  - Dept 541- Roads & Street

        - Mill and repave Kentucky & Georgia ($230,000)
    - Dept 584- Community Redevelopment Agency
        - Land Acquisition for Senior Center ($300,000)
        - Project Signage
            - Historic City Hall ($5,000)
            - Crews Park ($6,000)
            - Peace River Park ($6,000)
        - Auditorium Improvements ($2,560,000)
        - In-Fill Housing ($1,245,000)
        - Power Plant Repurpose ($1,000,000)
        - Bay Street Sidewalk ($8,125)
        - New Development Sidewalks ($115,000)
        - Farr Field Improvements ($2,345,269)
    - Dept 532- Water Treatment Plant
        - ½ Water Facilities Plan ($37,500)
    - Dept 533- Water Distribution
        - ½ Water Facilities Plan ($37,500)
        - 2 Insertion Valves ($14,000)
    - Dept 535- Waste Water Treatment Plant
        - Chlorine Analyzer ($6,000)
    - Dept 536- Sewer & Locates
        - Repair sewer line at Kraven & Highway 17 and Florida and Main ($50,000)
    - Dept 539- Administration
        - Enclosing additional covered storage ($35,000)
    - Dept 593- Electric Distribution
        - Transformer Pad Extension ($10,000)
        - Storm hardening projects ($100,000)
        - Hardee Crossing Subdivision extension ($10,000)
        - Annual switch replacement ($15,000)

Debt Service

This year's budget will see an increase in debt service payments due to the completion of the state revolving fund funded project at the waste-water treatment plant during FY 25-26. In the Utility Fund the annual payment increase for FY 26-27 is $45,674. We made the last debt service payment on the financed police vehicles, making the General Fund completely debt free.

Grants & Aids

The Wauchula CRA continues to seek public/private partnerships in order to maximize the impact of the Tax Increment Financing funds. The CRA will set aside $250,000 in additional funds for new commercial grant projects in FY 26-27. These can be seen in Dept 584-58110. Another partnership which is equally vital to the CRA, is through an interlocal agreement with Hardee County. This agreement allows the CRA to fund public relations, administered by the Main Street Wauchula organization, to support marketing, the arts, and community events held in the CRA district. This funding is seen in Dept 584-58220.

Other Uses

Transfers & Contingency

The city makes an effort each year to build contingency into the budget for unexpected expenses. The proposed budget includes contingencies as follows:

- General Fund- $55,222
- Airport- $5,719
- Utility- $123,239
- Sanitation- $36,974

The total transfer to the General Fund from the Utility & Sanitation Funds increased by $57,311, which is less than a 3% increase from current FY. General Fund administration supports the enterprise funds as well, and while expenses continue to increase in the General Fund the revenues to help support those expenses do not increase at the same rate.

Grant Funded & Potential Projects (Not in proposed budget)

Staff has found it more efficient to match grant funded project expenses with their relative revenue as they occur. Therefore, the following projects are expected to be in process during FY 26 -27 and be funded with grant funds.

Project	Purpose	Amount
Senior Center	Design and construct a new ADA compliant senior center	$3,000,000
Administration Building Generator	Installation of back-up generator at the Administration and Police Department Building	$217,251
Street Sweeper	Purchase a mechanical street sweeper to maintain city roads	$500,000
Oak Street, Bay Street, and/or Palmetto Street Roadway Improvements	Resurfacing as much of Oak, Bay, and Palmetto Streets as funds will allow	$2,000,000
Hogan Street Extension	Extend Hogan Street to connect North and Southbound Highway 17	$441,125
City Wide Roadway Improvements	Mill and resurface various roads city wide	$5,113,266
Court Street Improvements	Full depth reconstruction of approximately 350 feet of road	$166,130
Heard Bridge Road Improvements	Mill and repave of approximately 2,000 feet of Heard Bridge Road	$1,173,888
Heritage Park Restroom Improvements	Update restroom facility at Heritage Park	$500,000
Community Court Park	Repourpose vacant city property to an active court park	$2,000,000
Auditorium Safety Improvements	Upgrade current facility to include ADA accessibility, sprinkler system, fire rated curtain, upgraded rope and weight fly system, and lighting upgrades	$2,500,000
Farr Field #1	Add a third softball field, splash pad, playground, and parking lot	$2,867,458
Farr Field #2	Renovate 2 existing fields, restrooms, concession stand, and press box	$3,500,000
Runway and Taxiway Extension	Feasibility and environmental studies, design and construction of a runway and taxiway extension to allow for safe landing & take-off of medium sized jet aircraft	$9,950,000
T-Hangar #1	Design and construct an additional multi-unit T-Hangar	$2,500,000
T-Hangar #2	Design and construct an additional multi-unit T-Hangar	$5,000,000
Airport Taxi Lane- T-Hangars	Extend taxi lane and build additional T-Hangars	$5,000,000
Rotating Beacon & Tower	Design and construction of a rotating beacon and tower at the airport	$325,000
Airport Terminal Building	Design and construct a new airport terminal/pilot’s lounge	$1,750,000
Municipal Airport Deep Well Design	Design a new deep well to support economic development to include fire suppression capabilities	$1,332,938
Airport Fuel Farm	Design new fuel station to include AVGAS	$164,000
Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI)	Design and implement an advanced metering infrastructure system for electric and water meters city-wide	$4,750,000
Southwest Area Elevated Water Tower	Design and construction of a third elevated water tower in the southwest area of the county	$8,212,789
Heard Bridge Waterline Loop	Extend the waterline on Heard Bridge Road north to REA Road and west to Highway 17, looping the main water system	$1,510,000
Effluent Spray Field	Develop an effluent spray field along the City's existing reuse line	$2,000,000
WWTP Centrifuge Dewater	Design and installation of a mechanical dewatering system at WWTP to reduce sludge volume, improve efficiency, and lower operational costs	$2,000,000
Replace Sewer Line Behind Stadium and Sunset Park Neighborhood	Reroute the sewer line that runs behind the stadium and Sunset Park to Farr Field upgrading old infrastructure and rerouting flow to the plant relieving the burden on #3 Lift Station and providing for increased capacity to the southwest service area	$15,000,000
Power Plant Demolition	Demolition and site improvements at old power plant	$4,000,000
WWTP Generator #1	Installation of back-up generator at the WWTP Contact Chamber	$342,306
WWTP Generator #2	Installation of back-up generator at the WWTP Control Room	$277,685
Storm Harden Riverview Lift Stations	Raise 3 lift stations in flood zone to improve storm hardening	$2,386,500
Public Safety Hardened Facility	Hardened facility to expedite public safety measures aiding in restoration after disasters	$5,000,000

Braxton reviewed the overall city-wide budget and discussed expenditure types, personnel salaries/benefits, fund balance, debt service and ad valorem tax.

Grimes reviewed the General Fund.

Nadaskay recessed the budget workshop at 5:06 pm in order to hold the City Commission workshop that was scheduled for 5:00 pm.

Nadaskay reconvened the budget workshop at 6:06 pm.

Newman reviewed the Community Redevelopment Agency Fund.

Retana reviewed the Airport Fund.

Eason reviewed the Utility Fund.

Long reviewed the Sanitation Fund.

With no further business to discuss, Nadaskay adjourned the Budget Workshop at 6:56 p.m.

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Mayor Richard K. Nadaskay, Jr

City Clerk Stephanie Camacho