LONGWOOD CITY COMMISSION
Longwood City Commission Chambers
175 West Warren Avenue
Longwood, Florida

WORK SESSION MINUTES
July 15, 2026
10:00 AM

Present:
Mayor Tony Boni
Deputy Mayor Abby Shoemaker (Via Webex)
Commissioner Brian D. Sackett
Commissioner Matthew McMillan
Commissioner Matt Morgan
William Watts, City Manager
Liane Cartagena, City Clerk
David Dowda, Police Chief
Troy Feist, Fire Chief
Dustin Woolbright, Financial Services Director
Chris Kintner, Community Development Director
Shad Smith, Public Works Director
Chris Capizzi, Leisure Services Director
Magdala Ridore, Human Resources Director
Craig Dunn, Information Technology Director
Brian Amberg, Deputy Fire Chief
Cuong Tran, Finance Operations & Budget Manager
Carlos Escobar, Purchasing Manager
Eddie Rios, Streets and Stormwater Supervisor
Jammie Tackett, Utilities Division Manager
Adriana Martinez, Senior Administrative Assistant
Richard Paris, Facilities Maintenance Manager
Jacqueline Aubrey, Community & Media Relations Manager
Molly DeKoeyer, Human Resources Program Manager
Eric Nagowski, Public Works Engineer

1. **CALL TO ORDER.** Mayor Boni called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

   Commissioner Morgan moved to suspend the rules. Seconded by Commissioner Sackett and carried by a unanimous voice vote.

2. **REVIEW AND DISCUSS THE PROPOSED BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026- 2027**

Budget Overview

City Manager William Watts opened the workshop noting that departments were challenged to evaluate their operations, identify efficiencies, delay purchases where appropriate, and reduce expenditures while maintaining the level of service expected by residents. He emphasized that the proposed budget supports implementation of the City's 2026-2031 Strategic Plan and continues investments in public safety, infrastructure, parks, technology, Fire Station 15, and modernization of the City's water treatment facilities.

Mr. Watts advised the proposed budget remains balanced while maintaining the City's 5.5000 millage rate, unchanged since 2013. He also discussed the potential impacts of future property tax reform at the state level and noted staff continues to pursue operational efficiencies, grants, legislative funding opportunities, and alternative revenue sources to strengthen the City's long-term financial stability.

Mr. Woolbright provided an overview of the proposed budget, highlighting several organizational changes, including centralizing communication costs within the Information Technology Department, consolidating utility and facility maintenance expenses into the newly created Facilities Maintenance Division, and assigning employee salaries directly to the departments in which employees are housed rather than allocating costs among multiple funds. He reported the proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget totals approximately $78.7 million, consisting of General Fund, Special Revenue, Capital, and Enterprise Funds, while maintaining the City's current staffing level of 176.5 full-time positions. He also reviewed the proposed property tax revenues, projected General Fund reserve balance, and noted the budget was [redacted] prepared using a 96% property tax collection rate in accordance with Florida law.

City Commission

Ms. Cartagena presented the proposed City Commission budget, noting it remains relatively stable and reflects a slight overall decrease primarily due to reduced health insurance costs while maintaining current operational funding.

Commissioner Sackett questioned whether the budget reflecting conference costs associated with the Orlando conference should be more expensive than the South Florida conference. Following discussion, staff agreed to review historical conference expenditures and revise the proposed amount, if appropriate, before budget adoption.

The Commission also discussed the annual Commissioner donation account line. Following discussion, the Commission reached consensus to reduce the annual Commissioner discretionary project allocation from $10,000 to $5,000 for the proposed Fiscal Year 2026-2027 budget.

City Attorney

Ms. Cartagena presented the proposed City Attorney budget, explaining the increase over the current fiscal year more accurately reflects anticipated legal service needs based on recent experience and is intende[redacted] reduce the need for future budget amendments and transfers throughout the fiscal year.

City Clerk

Ms. Cartagena presented the City Clerk budget, noting the overall increase attributable to the addition of a third full-time position earlier in the fiscal year. She advised that despite increased personnel costs, operating expenditures were reduced through careful review while continuing to support records management, elections, cemetery administration, legislative services, public records, and technology initiatives.

City Manager

Mr. Watts reviewed the City Manager's proposed budget, noting an overall decrease from organizational restructuring and reduced promotional expenditures. He also advised that Leadership Seminole funding would be centralized within the City Manager's budget to allow leadership staff from various departments to participate without each department maintaining separate budget allocations.

Facilities Maintenance

Mr. Smith presented the budget for the newly created Facilities Maintenance Division. He explained the consolidated budget reflects an increase of approximately $1.3 million because utilities and mowing mo[redacted] into this line, along with smaller items. The new division assumes responsibility for HVAC systems, plumbing, electrical work, generators, janitorial supplies, building repairs, utility services, mowing, irrigation, and general facility maintenance. These functions will improve operational efficiency, consolidate contracts, provide better emergency response, reduce duplication of services, allow bulk purchasing, and create long-term cost savings.

The Commission discussed the significant increase reflected in the Facilities Maintenance budget and noted the increase resulted from transferring expenses previously contained within numerous departmental budgets rather than creating new expenditures. Staff also identified and agreed to correct a typographical error within the budget book identifying utility services.

Human Resources

Ms. Ridore presented the proposed Human Resources budget reporting health insurance premiums decreased by 3.7% after experiencing a 9.2% increase the previous year, dental premiums decreased by 5%, and vision insurance rates remained unchanged. Ms. Ridore attributed the favorable renewals to the City's employee wellness initiatives, increased employee engagement in healthcare decisions, and proactive management by Human Resources. She advised these reductions are projected to generate approximately $600,000 in citywide savings through lower total compensation costs.

Ms. Ridore also reported the City's property and casualty insurance renewal increased by only 2% compared to the previous year's 5.6% increase. She credited continued emphasis on safety, claims management, and risk reduction efforts for helping position the City for more favorable insurance renewals. She further explained the primary increase within the Human Resources operating budget is associated with implementation of the ADP Human Resources and Payroll System. The transition from Edmunds to ADP will consolidate multiple standalone systems into a single platform, automate many manual processes, improve reporting and compliance, reduce paper-based processes, and modernize Human Resources operations. She advised the software implementation would be presented separately for Commission approval.

Ms. Ridore explained the increase in the City's liability insurance reflects anticipated deductible expenses for claims below the City's insurance deductible in addition to annual premium costs. She advised the City has experienced a higher frequency of lower-cost claims during the current fiscal year and maintains contingency funding to address unpredictable losses while minimizing premium increases through a higher deductible structure.

Ms. Ridore explained outside labor counsel is used primarily for collective bargaining negotiations, employee relations matters, and specialized legal issues. She noted staff has become increasingly self-sufficient through training and internal expertise, reducing reliance on outside counsel while maintaining funding for unforeseen matters.

Mayor Boni requested information regarding the percentage of personnel costs within each City fund. Staff advised approximately 42% of the City's total budget represents salaries and benefits, with approximately 30% attributable to the General Fund and the remaining 12% funded through Enterprise operations.

Deputy Mayor Shoemaker requested clarification regarding the proposed employee compensation plan and whether the proposed 2% adjustment to the salary schedule would result in employees receiving both the pay range adjustment and the proposed 4% salary increase. Ms. Ridore explained the 2% adjustment applies only to the City's salary schedule to maintain competitive pay ranges and prevent salary compression for new hires. Current employees would receive only the proposed 4% salary adjustment.

Deputy Mayor Shoemaker expressed concern that the proposed minimum salaries mirrored the current salaries for those positions and suggested the Commission review the salary ranges before adoption. Staff explained the City Manager and City Clerk positions differ from the remainder of the City's compensatio[redacted] plan because both positions serve at the pleasure of the Commission and may be structured differently [redacted] than the City's standard compensation schedule.

Financial Services

Mr. Woolbright presented the proposed Financial Services budget, noting personnel expenditures increased, primarily due to organizational restructuring and staffing changes. Operating expenditures, however, decreased through reductions in employee development costs, reassignment of communication expenses to Information Technology, and elimination of a financial advisory retainer. He explained the funding for residential Solid Waste services is proposed to be transferred to a separate fund should the City implement a non-ad valorem assessment for solid waste collection. Mr. Watts advised the proposal is consistent with the Waste Pro contract and would be presented to the Commission separately at a future meeting.

Mr. Woolbright also discussed Finance Department efforts to modernize payment processing by increasing the use of Automated Clearing House (ACH) electronic payments. He advised the City continues encouraging vendors to accept electronic payments through outreach efforts and new vendor registration processes with the long-term goal of reducing paper checks, improving efficiency, increasing security, and lowering processing costs. He reported that staff continues to actively manage the City's investments by moving available funds into higher-yield certificates of deposit, money market accounts, and State investment pools while maintaining sufficient liquidity for operations. He noted these efforts have [redacted] significantly increased investment earnings through improved cash management and short-term investment strategies.

Purchasing

Mr. Woolbright presented the Purchasing budget, noting the primary increase reflects the addition of a Procurement Coordinator position to assist the Purchasing Manager with the City's growing procurement workload. The position was transferred from an unfunded Finance Department position and therefore did not increase the City's overall staffing level. He also discussed implementation of OpenGov procurement software, explaining the system would streamline procurement processes, improve compliance with purchasing laws and policies, expand vendor participation, and increase competition for City projects. Staff anticipates the software will ultimately offset implementation costs through improved procurement efficiencies.

Mr. Watts also highlighted the City's participation in the regional AGIL Purchasing Cooperative, a collaborative purchasing initiative with neighboring municipalities that leverages regional purchasing power to reduce the cost of goods and services. The Commission expressed support for the continued cooperative purchasing efforts.

Utility Billing

Mr. Woolbright presented the proposed Utility Billing budget, explaining that the largest expenditure [redacted] continues to be residential solid waste disposal, which is currently collected through utility bills as a pass[redacted] through payment to Waste Pro. Personnel costs decreased slightly due to staff turnover and internal promotions. The Commission discussed future options for billing residential solid waste services. Staff explained that the Waste Pro contract contemplates consideration of a non-ad valorem assessment beginning in the second year of the agreement, which would move residential solid waste charges from monthly utility bills to annual property tax bills.

Mayor Boni questioned whether Waste Pro should bill customers directly rather than the City serving as the billing agent. Staff explained that while direct billing could be explored, the current billing structure and potential special assessment provide greater assurance of payment and reduce the risk of service interruptions and unpaid accounts. Commissioner Morgan noted that a non-ad valorem assessment would simplify collections and improve payment security, while Commissioner Sackett expressed concern regarding the impact of an annual assessment on residents living on fixed incomes.

Following discussion, the Commission directed staff to review the Waste Pro contract, evaluate available billing alternatives, including direct customer billing, and determine whether Waste Pro utilizes direct billing in other jurisdictions. Staff will return with recommendations before the Commission considers any changes to the City's solid waste billing method.

Information Technology

Mr. Dunn opened his presentation by reporting a recent cybersecurity incident in which the City's security systems successfully isolated and eliminated malicious software within minutes without impacting City operations. He emphasized the event demonstrated the effectiveness of the City's cybersecurity investments and security protocols.

Mr. Dunn advised the Information Technology Department continues identifying cost-saving opportunities while improving technology services throughout the organization. Excluding communication costs transferred into the department during the budget restructuring, the department's operating budget decreased approximately 5% from the prior fiscal year through continued modernization efforts and replacement of legacy systems. It was noted that the City has experienced no successful cyberattacks affecting municipal operations and praised Information Technology staff for maintaining the City's technology infrastructure and security. The Commission commended the department's proactive approach to cybersecurity and technology management. Mr. Dunn explained costs regarding contractual software expenditures primarily consist of annual maintenance agreements supporting Citywide software platforms and technology systems. He also acknowledged the City's continued partnership with local technology vendors whenever feasible.

Police Department

Chief Dowda presented the Police Department budget, advising that the department continues to provide management and operational support for all law enforcement services while maintaining the safety and welfare of the community. He reported the proposed budget remains largely consistent with the prior fiscal year, with only minor adjustments attributable to inflation and the organizational realignment of certain operational expenses into other departmental budgets. The department's performance measures were reviewed and it was noted that the Police Department responded to more than 40,000 calls for service and self-initiated activities during the reporting period. Chief Dowda explained those figures include both dispatched calls and proactive officer activity initiated by patrol personnel. The Commission recognized the significant workload managed by the department and commended staff for maintaining efficient emergency response times and service levels while operating within the proposed budget.

Fire Department

Chief Feist presented the proposed Fire Department budget, noting the primary increases support continued emergency response capabilities through additional paramedic training and replacement of aging equipment. He explained that while the department employs a sufficient number of certified paramedics, many have advanced into supervisory positions, creating the need to train additional personnel to maintain operational staffing on rescue units. He advised that funding is included to replace aging fire hose and related equipment that has reached the end of its service life in accordance with National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, as well as to begin outfitting the new Engine 17 prior to its anticipated delivery. Additional operating increases reflect software maintenance, EMS supplies, and increased repair and maintenance costs associated with the aging apparatus fleet. He noted that while equipment is transferred whenever practical, reserve apparatus must remain adequately equipped to ensure uninterrupted emergency response.

The Commission discussed the department's equipment replacement schedule and the importance of maintaining fully operational reserve apparatus. Commissioners commended the Fire Department for maintaining a modest budget increase while continuing to prioritize public safety and emergency preparedness.

Community Development

Community Development Director Chris Kintner presented the proposed Community Development budget, noting the department evaluated discretionary expenditures in response to the City's budget priorities while recognizing the need to preserve essential services. Proposed reductions included the economic development consulting contract, the commercial property GIS software subscription, the Small Busines[redacted] Grant Program, and promotional advertising associated with Longwood Life. Mr. Kintner advised that although these programs provide value, many of their functions can be performed internally or deferred to reduce operating costs. He also identified the Historic District Grant Program as a potential future budget discussion.

The Commission discussed the proposed elimination of economic development consulting services and the department's strategy for continuing economic development efforts. Mr. Kintner explained that staff will continue building relationships with developers, commercial brokers, and property owners while facilitating redevelopment opportunities throughout the City. He advised that Longwood's primary challenge is no longer attracting interest from businesses, but rather assisting developers and property owners in successfully redeveloping available sites. The Commission also discussed eliminating the GIS software subscription and reducing Longwood Life advertising expenditures. Staff advised both services could largely be replaced through internal resources while continuing to promote business and community development initiatives. Deputy Mayor Shoemaker commended Mr. Kintner and his staff for their continued economic development efforts and supported the department's ability to perform many of these functions internally.

Lewis House Discussion

Mr. Kintner presented an update on the Lewis House project, advising that the City's Request for Qualifications resulted in one qualified response with estimated construction costs ranging from approximately $270,000 to $340,000 to relocate and reconstruct the building as previously envisioned. C[redacted] Manager Watts explained that due to the deteriorated condition of the existing structure, any future project would involve constructing a new building incorporating only limited salvageable materials from the original Lewis House. The Commission discussed several alternatives for preserving the City's historic asset, including relocation to Magnolia Park, placement near the cemetery as a historical feature, or limiting the project to a stabilized structure with interpretive signage rather than constructing a fully functional public building. Commissioners expressed a desire to preserve the historical significance of the Lewis House while minimizing future expenditures. Following discussion, the Commission directed staff to pursue a lower-cost preservation alternative and return with recommendations that conclude the project while recognizing the City's historical heritage.

Leisure Services

Leisure Services Director Chris Capizzi presented the proposed Leisure Services budget, noting the department achieved an overall budget reduction of approximately 3% through operational efficiencies and the transfer of certain maintenance responsibilities to the newly created Facilities Maintenance Division. He explained that building maintenance, utilities, and other general facility expenses have been centralized under Facilities Maintenance, while specialized park maintenance functions, including playgrounds, athletic fields, irrigation systems, and related recreational infrastructure, remain within the department due to their specialized nature.

Mr. Capizzi advised funding is included to resurface and repaint the City's pickleball courts following temporary crack repairs completed during the current fiscal year. The Commission discussed the increasing popularity of pickleball and whether additional tennis courts should be converted for pickleball use. Staff explained the City continues to experience consistent use of both tennis and pickleball facilities and recommended preserving the existing tennis courts while evaluating opportunities to add pickleball striping where feasible.

The Commission supported continuing to monitor facility usage before making any changes to court configurations. They also discussed the proposed elimination of funding associated with the Longwood Life publication. Staff advised that reducing advertising expenditures would provide budget savings while allowing the City to continue promoting community news through other communication methods. Commissioners expressed support for reviewing alternative marketing strategies while continuing to maximize opportunities to promote City events and initiatives. Staff received direction to evaluate future advertising options and return with recommendations that balance cost savings with effective public outreach.

Public Works

Mr. Smith presented the proposed Public Works budget, noting the department reflects a significant reduction primarily due to the transfer of utilities, mowing, generators, building maintenance, and other facility-related expenses to the newly created Facilities Maintenance Division. He explained that while the overall departmental budget appears substantially lower, the decrease is largely the result of organizational restructuring rather than reduced services. He also reviewed several budget reductions, including postponing the Windsor Manor survey, reducing funding for tree removal, delaying replacement of security cameras, and reducing road material expenditures. He advised increases were limited to employee training, commercial driver's license certification, fuel, and subscription costs associated with the City's asset management software.

The Commission discussed the budget realignment and acknowledged that many expenditures previously reflected within the Public Works budget are now consolidated under the Facilities Maintenance Division.

The Commission expressed support for the organizational changes and recognized that future budgets will provide a more accurate comparison once the restructuring is fully implemented.

Non-Departmental, Building Fund, Police Education Fund, Special Law Enforcement Trust Fund, and Special Assessment Fund

Mr. Woolbright reviewed the proposed non-departmental budget, explaining that the transfers represent administrative allocations from the General Fund to various special revenue funds as needed to maintain positive fund balances. He advised that the special revenue funds are restricted to specific purposes and revenue sources and therefore require separate accounting.

Mr. Kintner presented the Building Fund budget and advised there were no significant changes from the current fiscal year.

Mr. Woolbright reviewed the Police Education Fund, explaining the fund supports police training and educational expenses. He reported the fund remains financially stable. He then reviewed the Special Law Enforcement Trust Fund, explaining it is funded through confiscated property proceeds and may only be used for qualifying law enforcement purposes. Finally, he reviewed the Special Assessment Fund, explaining the fund is used to account for assessments collected through the tax roll for specific neighborhoods and related maintenance responsibilities.

A recess was taken at 12:22 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 12:48 p.m.

Parks and Events

Leisure Services Director Chris Capizzi reviewed the Parks and Events special revenue funds, explaining t[redacted] these funds are intended to operate without a deficit and that staff evaluated event expenditures to reduce the need for General Fund support. He advised that the proposed reductions were intended to balance the fund while maintaining the City's most successful events and could be reconsidered if the Commission desired to restore funding. He reviewed proposed reductions, including removing funding for the Fourth of July fireworks display, reducing Parks and Recreation Advisory Board promotional funding from $10,000 to $5,000, eliminating Bark Fest, and discontinuing the City-funded Juneteenth event due to attendance levels and cost considerations. He explained that events could potentially return with sufficient sponsorship support or community partnerships.

The Commission discussed the importance of sponsorships and identifying outside funding opportunities to support City events. Commissioners expressed concern regarding the removal of fireworks from the Fourth of July event due to the impact on attendance, sponsorship opportunities, and community participation. Staff advised that sponsorship opportunities would continue to be aggressively pursued, including potential event sponsorships and future naming rights opportunities associated with the amphitheater. Following discussion, the Commission directed staff to restore funding for the Fourth of July fireworks display and pursue additional sponsorship opportunities to offset the cost. Staff advised that savings identified throughout the budget workshop could be utilized to accommodate the restoration of fireworks funding. The Commission also discussed reallocating the previously reduced Commissioner donation line allocation toward fireworks funding if necessary.

The Commission further discussed the Orlando Health amphitheater sponsorship agreement and future naming rights opportunities. Mayor Boni advised he would explore discussions with Orlando Health regarding an increased sponsorship contribution and potential fireworks sponsorship, while recognizing the value of the existing relationship and the importance of maintaining access to nearby event parking.

Citizens on Patrol (C.O.P.) and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT)

Mr. Woolbright reviewed the Citizens on Patrol (C.O.P.) and Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) funds. He advised the C.O.P. fund remains financially stable but would require continued General Fund support in future years to maintain operations. The Commission recognized the value of the C.O.P. program, particularly its assistance with traffic control and community events, and noted the program provides operational savings by reducing the need for additional police overtime. Staff reviewed the CERT program and explained that the program currently operates using existing fund balance and does not have an ongoing funding source. Chief Feist advised that while CERT members continue to provide support at certain events, the program's original emergency response role has evolved due to expanded County emergency response resources and specialized rehabilitation capabilities. He also noted current participation has declined significantly. The Commission discussed transitioning CERT under Seminole County's regional CERT model, which would allow volunteers to continue participating while eliminating the City's obligation to independently fund and administer the program. Following discussion, the Commission directed staff to explore transitioning the City's CERT program to the Seminole County model and communicate with current volunteers regarding the transition.

Impact Fees

Mr. Woolbright reviewed the City's impact fee funds, explaining these restricted revenues are collected from new development and must be used for projects that support growth-related infrastructure needs. He advised that the funds are primarily designated for police, fire, recreation, public works, and mobility improvements, with limited expenditures proposed for the upcoming fiscal year. The Commission discussed the purpose of recreation impact fees and confirmed that these fees are associated with new residential development, including new apartment complexes and residential construction. Staff advised that future evaluation of the City's impact fee structure may provide an opportunity to update fees to better align with current infrastructure needs and development impacts.

Stormwater Fund

Mr. Smith presented the Stormwater Fund budget and advised the department focused on maintaining a balanced fund by reducing capital projects and reallocating certain personnel expenses. He explained that the fund continues to support regulatory compliance, stormwater system maintenance, inlet repairs, pipe improvements, and required permitting activities. He advised the City received a grant supporting development of a comprehensive Stormwater Master Plan, which will assist with future stormwater planning and improve the City's Community Rating System score, potentially reducing flood insurance costs for residents. He also advised staff will conduct a stormwater fee evaluation to determine whether adjustments are appropriate, noting the City's current fee structure is lower than many comparable municipalities.

Capital Project Funds and Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Mr. Woolbright reviewed the City's capital project funds and advised the Public Facilities Fund and Water/Sewer Funds maintain positive fund balances. He explained that capital project priorities were established based on available funding and City priorities. The Commission discussed the Capital Improvement Program and potential financing options for currently unfunded projects. Mr. Woolbright advised that staff had previously received direction to explore financing options and presented a potential loan structure to support the current year's CIP projects. He advised that a loan of approximately $1.7 million could provide funding for priority projects while maintaining manageable annual debt service. The Commission directed staff to continue evaluating financing options for the CIP, including pursuing a potential loan to fund identified capital projects.

Debt

Mr. Woolbright reviewed the City's outstanding debt obligations and advised that existing general obligation debt includes the Reiter Park loan and another governmental capital funding note. The Commission discussed the possibility of refinancing existing debt to reduce annual debt service obligations and create additional capacity for future capital projects. Mayor Boni requested staff evaluate whether refinancing the remaining general obligation loans into a larger loan structure would be beneficial. Staff agreed to review available options and report back to the Commission.

Enterprise Funds and Septic-to-Sewer Program

The Commission discussed ongoing septic-to-sewer conversion projects and future utility infrastructure planning. Staff advised Phase 3 of the septic-to-sewer program is moving forward through a State Revolving Fund loan and represents the final currently planned phase under the existing program structure.

Mr. Smith advised that staff will conduct a sewer impact fee study as part of future utility planning. He explained that historically the City has paid sewer impact fees associated with conversions but that many municipalities require new connections to pay applicable impact fees. Mayor Boni expressed support for evaluating the implementation of sewer impact fees for future connections.

3. **ADJOURN.** Mayor Boni adjourned the meeting at 2:06 p.m.

Minutes approved by City Commission: August 3, 2026.

Tony Boni

Tony Boni, Mayor

ATTEST:

SEAL

Liane Cartagena, City Clerk