



**MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
of THE MARY ESTHER CITY COUNCIL  
September 3, 2025 - 6:00 PM**

195 Christobal Road – North, Mary Esther, FL 32569

**CITY COUNCIL PRESENT**

Chris Stein, Mayor  
April Sutton, Councilmember  
Susan Coxwell, Councilmember

Bernie Oder, Mayor Pro Tem  
Larry Carter, Councilmember  
Richard Lawson, Councilmember

**CITY STAFF PRESENT**

Jared Cobb, City Manager  
Hayward Dykes, City Attorney  
Dillon Morris, City Clerk

Kelvin Cherry, Code Compliance Officer  
Heather Day, Finance Director  
Shawn Lindsey, Public Works Director  
Tyler Reed Community Development Director

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Chad Rewis, OSCO Captain

Jeff Wagner, OCWFD Chief

**1. INVOCATION**

Jeff Wagner, Fire Chief, Ocean City-Wright Fire Control District, gave the invocation.

**2. CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Stein at 6:00 p.m.

**3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Mayor Stein led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**4. ROLL CALL**

The City Clerk called the roll as reflected above.

**5. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

Mayor Stein asked if the council wished to make any changes to the agenda. Hearing none, Mayor Stein asked for a motion. Councilmember Sutton initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Carter. The motion passed unanimously.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>PASSED (5-0)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember April Sutton
<b>SECOND:</b>	Councilmember Larry Carter
<b>AYES:</b>	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
<b>NAYS:</b>	None

**6. FY 2026 BUDGET HEARING**

**6.1. Proposed FY 2026 Budget and 5-Year Community Investment Plan**

Heather Day, Finance Director, discussed the proposed budget rate, highlighting the current millage rate, the increase in water and sewer utility rates, an employee cost-of-living adjustment, and an increase in insurance rates. She discussed several changes, including the increase in grant revenues in the general fund, the shifting of funds between projects, and the expected rise in animal control expenditures. Mayor Stein asked if anyone had any questions. City Manager Cobb discussed why the cemetery plans were not included in the budget. Mayor Stein opened for public comments. Hearing none, Mayor Stein closed public comment. Mayor Stein asked

City Clerk Morris to read the title of Ordinance 2025-05 into the record, to which he did. Mayor Stein read the following into the public record:

- The name of the taxing authority is the City of Mary Esther.
- The rolled-back rate is 4.8756 mills.
- The percentage increase by which the millage rate exceeds the rolled back rate is 3.09%.
- The millage rate to be levied for Fiscal Year 2026 is 5.0261 mills.

Mayor Stein asked for a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2025-05, adopting an ad valorem tax millage rate for the 2025-2026 taxable year. Councilmember Carter initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Sutton. The motion passed unanimously.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>PASSED (5-0)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember Larry Carter
<b>SECOND:</b>	Councilmember April Sutton
<b>AYES:</b>	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
<b>NAYS:</b>	None

Mayor Stein announced that the second and final public hearing for the FY 2026 millage rate and budget is scheduled for 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, September 23rd at City Hall, and that the public may also attend the meeting virtually.

## 7. SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

### 7.1. Yard of the Month

City Clerk Morris presented the yards submitted for the September Yard of the Month. Mayor Stein asked if the council had any preference. After some discussion, the council expressed a preference for 189 Marcia Dr. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to select 189 Marcia Dr. as the Yard of the Month for September 2025. Councilmember Coxwell initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Sutton. The motion passed 4-1.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>PASSED (4-1)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
<b>SECOND:</b>	Councilmember April Sutton
<b>AYES:</b>	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Susan Coxwell
<b>NAYS:</b>	Richard Lawson

## 8. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Stein asked if the council wished to make any changes to the consent agenda. Hearing none, Mayor Stein asked for a motion. Councilmember Sutton initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Coxwell. The motion passed unanimously.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>PASSED (5-0)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember April Sutton
<b>SECOND:</b>	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
<b>AYES:</b>	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell

<b>NAYS:</b>	None
--------------	------

- 8.1. Financial Report**
- 8.2. Public Works Report**
- 8.3. Library Report**
- 8.4. Fire Department Report**
- 8.5. Community Development Report**
- 8.6. Jacobs Report**
- 8.7. Law Enforcement Report**
- 8.8. Minutes of the August 4th, 2025 Regular Council Meeting**

**9. CITIZENS WHO HAVE REQUESTED TO BE PLACED ON THE AGENDA**

None.

**10. PUBLIC COMMENT (NON-AGENDA ITEMS)**

None.

**11. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

**11.1. Second Reading and Adoption of Ordinance 2025-04: Comprehensive Plan Amendments**

Tyler Reed, Community Development Director, discussed the second reading and adoption of Ordinance 2025-04, discussing adopting the new comprehensive plan, the transmittal to the state, Mary Esther complying with the state's recommendations of changing the 2040 projections to 2050, and the maximum densities. Mayor Stein asked if there was any discussion. Hearing none, Mayor Stein had City Clerk Morris read the title of the ordinance into the record. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to approve the adoption of the City of Mary Esther Comprehensive Plan update and the second reading of Ordinance 2025-04. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to approve the adoption of the City of Mary Esther Comprehensive Plan update and the second reading of Ordinance 2025-04. Councilmember Lawson initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Sutton. The motion passed unanimously.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>PASSED (5-0)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember Richard Lawson
<b>SECOND:</b>	Councilmember April Sutton
<b>AYES:</b>	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
<b>NAYS:</b>	None

**12. NEW BUSINESS**

**12.1. First Reading of Ordinance 2025-06: Platting Procedures**

Tyler Reed, Community Development Director, provided the background on the first reading of Ordinance 2025-06, stating that it was intended to comply with Florida State statutes. He discussed how this would streamline the platting process, which would be conducted administratively with established guidelines. Mayor Stein asked if he considered it a good deal. Community Development Director Reed stated that he viewed this process as a positive development. City Attorney Dykes discussed the process of platting and how it differs now with the state bill. Mayor Pro Tem Oder asked if it was Ordinance "2025-05" or "2025-06." Community Development Director Reed stated that it was "2025-06" and that there had initially been a scrivener's error. Legal Attorney Dykes discussed further how platting would affect the city, ensuring that the city does not receive a dedication to maintain specific streets or roads. Councilmember Coxwell asked what would happen if a developer disagreed, with City Attorney

Dykes, stating that the city would take action to show that the roads received are not city roads. Councilmember Sutton clarified that Councilmember Coxwell was inquiring about what would happen if the developer disagreed with the administrative authority. Community Development Director Reed stated that the plats must follow the land development code and state regulations. City Attorney Dykes added that if the plat did not meet the code, it would be denied. Mayor Stein asked if there was any more discussion. Hearing none, Mayor Stein asked City Clerk Morris to read the title of the ordinance into the record, to which he did. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to approve the first reading of Ordinance 2025-06. Councilmember Sutton initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Carter. The motion passed unanimously.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>PASSED (5-0)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember April Sutton
<b>SECOND:</b>	Councilmember Larry Carter
<b>AYES:</b>	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
<b>NAYS:</b>	None

**12.2. Adoption of Resolution 25-13: FY 2025 Budget Amendment**

Heather Day, Finance Director, discussed the background of Resolution 25-13, including the changes to the budget resulting from the resolution. Councilmember Sutton asked if the Rays Pond project was considered complete. Shawn Lindsey, Public Works Director, stated that the developer still had some housekeeping items to address before the project would be considered complete. Councilmember Sutton inquired about the large gap around the drain, to which Public Works Director Lindsey responded that it was one of the items to be addressed. Mayor Stein asked if they had removed the tall weeds, with Public Works Director Lindsey stating that they were not yet done, but they were working on it. Councilmember Sutton asked about the purpose of the metal around the grate, and Public Works Director Lindsey explained that it was a skimmer designed to reduce pollution. Mayor Stein let City Clerk Morris read the title of the resolution into the record. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to approve Resolution 23-13, adopting a budget amendment to the FY 2025 budget. Councilmember Coxwell initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Sutton. The motion passed unanimously.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>PASSED (5-0)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
<b>SECOND:</b>	Councilmember April Sutton
<b>AYES:</b>	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
<b>NAYS:</b>	None

**12.3. Consideration of City Manager Evaluation**

Walt Hanline, National Center for Executive Leadership & School Board Development, discussed the scoring of City Manager Cobb's evaluation. Mayor Stein asked if anyone had any questions. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to approve the city manager evaluation as presented. Councilmember Coxwell initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Lawson. The motion passed unanimously.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>PASSED (5-0)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
<b>SECOND:</b>	Councilmember Richard Lawson

<b>AYES:</b>	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
<b>NAYS:</b>	None

**12.4. Discussion and Consideration of Home for the Holidays Program**

City Clerk Morris discussed the Home for the Holidays program and is seeking approval for the mayor to conduct it. Mayor Stein added that if anyone sees a house they like, they should email him, doing so in an unlimited number, and not post pictures on the website. The council discussed posting the photos on the website. Councilmember Sutton discussed submitting pictures directly and only including images that have been submitted to the city. The council also added that residents can submit houses to the city. Mayor Stein asked for a motion to allow the mayor to conduct Home for the Holidays, awarding certificates to houses that are decorated for the holidays, Halloween and Christmas, including submissions from citizens and other councilmembers. Councilmember Sutton initiated the motion, seconded by Councilmember Coxwell. The motion passed unanimously.

<b>RESULT:</b>	<b>PASSED (5-0)</b>
<b>MOVER:</b>	Councilmember April Sutton
<b>SECOND:</b>	Councilmember Susan Coxwell
<b>AYES:</b>	Larry Carter, Bernie Oder, April Sutton, Richard Lawson, Susan Coxwell
<b>NAYS:</b>	None

**13. COUNCILS' STANDING COMMITTEE STATUS REPORTS**

Councilmember Sutton discussed hearing a lot about transportation, the upcoming legislative session, and an upcoming luncheon with the commerce secretary.

Councilmember Coxwell is looking forward to the Veterans Day parade.

Councilmember Lawson had no additional comments.

Mayor Stein thanked City Clerk Morris and Councilmember Sutton for securing sponsorship for the Veterans Day celebration, and is currently seeking a Grand Marshal.

Councilmember Carter discussed dealing with his daughter's leukemia. He thanked everyone who had supported him during the difficult times, looked forward to being more active, and asked about the city's progress with the school speed cameras. City Manager Cobb remarked that the city is starting training that week and expects it to be running in November.

Mayor Pro Tem Oder discussed the loss of a member on the Public Library Cooperative, their next meeting, the Florida League of Cities' release of convention sessions, the NWFL Economic Development Council, and upcoming policy committee meetings.

**14. OTHER COMMENTS**

City Attorney Dykes had no additional comments.

City Clerk Morris reminded the council to check their mailboxes, complete their cybersecurity training, and complete their ethics training.

City Manager Cobb stated that the tree lighting would take place on December 6.

Mayor Stein asked about the Santa Run, and City Clerk Morris stated he would discuss it with him later.

**15. ADJOURN**

The council meeting adjourned at 6:53 p.m.

Minutes approved at the 10/6/25  
meeting.

Dillon Morris  
Dillon Morris, City Clerk

