

Town of Melbourne Beach

TOWN COMMISSION WORKSHOP

May 14, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

COMMUNITY CENTER – 509 OCEAN AVENUE

MINUTES

Commission Members:

Mayor Alison Dennington
Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow
Commissioner Robert Baldwin
Commissioner Anna Butler
Commissioner Tim Reed

Staff Members:

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro
Town Clerk Amber Brown

1. Call to Order

Mayor Alison Dennington called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Town Clerk Amber Brown conducted roll call.

Commission Members Present

Mayor Alison Dennington
Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow
Commissioner Anna Butler
Commissioner Tim Reed

Staff Members Present

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro
Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr
Fire Chief Gavin Brown
Town Clerk Amber Brown

Commissioner Members Absent

Commissioner Robert Baldwin

3. Pledge of Allegiance and Moment of Silence

Mayor Alison Dennington led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Public Comments

After being acknowledged by the Mayor, members of the public should state their name and address for the record. The Commission encourages citizens to prepare their comments in advance. Each individual will have three (3) minutes to address the Commission on any topic(s) related to Town business, not on the Agenda.

5. New Business

A. Discussion regarding the FY 2025-2026 budget

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said what she provided is only for Fund 001, the General Fund. She recommended starting with the departments first.

Commissioner Tim Reed recommended starting with the Police Budget, as that is the largest budget.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro introduced the police budget, which is department 21. The first page is the summary roll-up and the following two pages are the breakdown. It is too early to receive the numbers for all of the insurance line items. Said to be conservative, she increased all of those line items by 20%. The Town pays 100% of the health insurance for the employee and 50% for the spouse and children, which seems to be common in government.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked how many employees are included in the line items. - 8:20

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said the police department has 13 employees who participate.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr said they have data on what amount they paid for employees, and what amount they paid for spouses and children. Said she could get that information.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked how much of the police salary is paid from Ocean Park Fund.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said one employee is paid from the Ocean Park Fund.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr said \$80,934 is paid from Ocean Park for salary/benefits.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said another item that is paid from the Ocean Park Fund is for night pay differential, which is a little over \$11,000.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about how the accreditation funds feel optional; not everyone has it. Said he is not a fan of the stipends.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the differential pay is just a projected number, as it will change when she has hard numbers to put in.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about not being a fan of stipends for doing your job; there is a percentage increase for these things in their salary. Said they could log time for doing additional activities, and that could be overtime pay.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the differential pay would be tracked through the payroll system.

Commissioner Tim Reed said shift differential is typically a percentage of salary, not a stipend.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked about salary overtime, which went from \$5,000 to \$13,000.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how this year they are running over because it was projected based on having 2 additional officers, but only one was approved.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow verified that the majority of the police department is going to receive a 3% raise.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said the Police Chief's raise will bring him up to \$125,000 from \$110,000.

Mayor Alison Dennington verified that the Police Chief's raise would be \$15,000. Spoke about when the Commission hired him, he was already given a higher pay than the original range that was set.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said his pay is low based on experience and qualifications, and she thought he was hired at the lower end of the salary range, which she believed the cap was set at \$125,000. Said she will provide the salary information from the RFP.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how the salary overtime was based on hiring 2 officers, which would allow 2 officers per shift and allow them to do training days. The Commission approved 1 officer to make sure there are always 2 officers on duty, but maybe the overtime is so high because of the training days. Believes the training is a good thing, but would not want to hire another officer.

Commissioner Tim Reed confirmed it looked like they would spend \$13,000 for overtime.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked to get information on what has caused the overtime.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about not being against overtime, but he wants to make sure it is funded correctly, or to see if something can be changed to help it.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the volunteers have also helped with overtime.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about wanting a projection for the overtime pay.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about how the different salary pays are done.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr spoke about how during a hurricane, the officers are getting paid 1 ½ or 2 times. During their working hours, they receive double time, but during their off hours, they get paid 1 ½ times for not being able to leave. Holiday pay is a flat amount paid at the end of the year because they have to work, no matter what. - 32:40

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the education incentive pay is for staff with degrees.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr spoke about the education incentive pay is required by FDLE,

and they determine the amount.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow requested the education incentive pay name be changed to remove the word incentive. Asked about the State Pension Reimbursement figure of \$50,513.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr spoke about how the State Pension Reimbursement used to be consolidated with another line item. That amount is a wash as it comes in from the State and goes out to the police pension.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked if the consolidated numbers and the now separated numbers could be presented together to see the difference.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how the increase in the pension amount is directly related to an increase in the salaries, as well as adding an additional officer.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr spoke about how the State Pension Reimbursement is revenue from the State and is then an expenditure to the pension fund.

Commissioner Tim Reed verified the professional services item is for accreditation. -45:02

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow and Commissioner Anna Butler agreed with Commissioner Tim Reed that the accreditation is an optional item.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked about the medical line item that went up to \$10,000.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how that is for a wellness program to include things like counseling.

Mayor Alison Dennington verified the money would only be spent if an employee uses the services. Asked if other local municipalities could join together to decrease the costs.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said she can get clarification on that.

Commissioner Tim Reed said the wellness program is another item he considers optional.

Commissioner Anna Butler verified the health insurance has an employee assistance program.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about the Communication Services line item almost doubling.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how items that are paid monthly were moved from Licenses & Fees and put into Communication Services.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow verified that Licenses & Fees decreased by about \$23,000, and Communication Services increased by about \$6,000.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how Licenses & Fees last year had a large one-time fee for upgrading the radio system.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about including the number of licenses when there are multiple software licenses.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about having to upgrade our Microsoft to 360, so that has increased as well.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about the capital items. - 58:05

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the items in green are being paid out this year. Short-term capital items for this year are \$50,000 for the purchase of a vehicle and \$4,900 for radios. Long-term capital is putting \$30,000 towards a vehicle purchase next year. Police vehicles might not have a lot of miles, but the engines have a lot of miles in idle time.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked how often 2 cars were bought in one year.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the Town has not purchased 2 cars in one year for a while prior to COVID. They could not get cars during COVID. They ordered two vehicles in 2020 or 2021, but did not receive them in the same year.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about a car that had been sold for junk, and she asked for a list of junk vehicles, and that one was not on the list. Since then, there has been a policy change so that if they sell a car for junk, there is information provided on that car.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked if there is a car being purchased, does that mean there is potential to get revenue for selling a car?

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how there is no plan to sell a vehicle because they share cars, so they hot seat the cars.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about wanting to track the cost of all of the equipment that gets put into the vehicles. Asked if all of the added equipment is inventoried.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr spoke about how any significant purchases are added to the inventory list.

Commissioner Tim Reed verified that the intent is to increase the number of vehicles. Asked if there is an option to finance or lease a vehicle.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the Town financed vehicles, but now that the Town can afford to pay cash, it saves the Town from paying interest. - 1:10:32

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how cars are purchased too frequently, and would prefer to buy a car every other year. If we could extend the life of each car, it would save a lot of money.

Commissioner Tim Reed said it seems like this would be for an extra vehicle. If they can conduct their business with the number they have, then they do not need another one.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about wanting to buy vehicles less often, but would consider buying another vehicle if the maintenance costs are high. Would like to scrap the car to keep something else. Thinks the accreditation is a good idea, even though it is an expense.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said another option is to fund half of it this year and half of it next year.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked if there are ongoing costs.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the \$18,000 is to have someone guide them through the accreditation process.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about how his understanding is that it will take 2 years to complete and cost \$18,000 per year.

Mayor Alison Dennington said the 2 years is the length of time you have to complete the process, but you can do it quicker. Then you recertify every 3 years.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about how it could be completed quicker, but once you go down that path, you have to complete it, and it might take longer than a year.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about how there are still funds left from parking, so maybe some of those funds could be used as well.

Town manager Elizabeth Mascaro said they could consider paying the Police Officers out of Ocean Park, and they could redirect some of the money from Ryckman Park.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about looking at items that could be paid with tax dollars versus those from other sources. - 1:20:15

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how taking money from the fund for Ryckman Park could potentially take away from beautification of the Town or other things. Confirmed that any unused money in that fund stays in that fund. It does not get moved to the general fund.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked to have the surplus numbers for the next meeting.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if there is any reduction in liability insurance if the police department is accredited. Spoke about the Town's insurance policy has a 10% deductible. FMIT spoke to her about this year, they are allowing policies to reduce the rate to 5% without increasing the cost.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about possibly funding the accreditation and medical wellness program from parking funds, and holding off on the purchase of a car for this year.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked what the 3% increase is based on.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said the 3% increase is a cost-of-living increase and is based on the CPI. The Police Chief, Fire Chief, Town Clerk, Groundskeeper, one Maintenance

Worker, Police Officer, and Police differential are getting a level up increase to bring them closer to what others are making in that field in the area.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how if there is a COLA program, then you can stay on top of things and don't get behind and need a big bump. Having a COLA serves the purpose of not getting behind inflation and not having a union. - 1:32:05

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said there is no merit increase being offered this year.

Commissioner Anna Butler spoke about a 3% increase across everyone can help with retention because they know what they will get.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about not wanting to get behind on salaries.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the bump in police salary last year put the Town in a much better position when comparing salaries to other municipalities. She would provide what the increases in pay is to the Commission along with the salary surveys.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about wanting to compare the salaries to the different job descriptions. She then suggested going to public comment before moving on.

Frank LaGrassa – 412 First Ave – Spoke about his experience with the wellness program and how it can be considered featherbedding. As far as using Ryckman Park money to fund things, why not use those funds to reduce taxes? As house values go up, taxes are very high, and that will depress demand. - 1:41:50

Town Clerk Amber Brown read a public comment from ***Sherri Quarrie – 701 Pine St – The salary expense is \$63,220 higher for 2026 than 2025 and asked if this was due to the new Deputy Clerk position. For the Building Department, mentioned an increase of \$14,747. Asked if this was related to losing the Building Official. The General Fund has new expenses related to the National League of Mayors, which she believes the Mayor should pay. Mentioned other things taxpayer dollars are going to such as costs associated with short term rentals.***

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how she donates her salary of \$3,800, which covers the League of Mayors. The increase in the Town Attorney is due to the anticipation of increased code cases.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about going to the Fire Department budget Department 22.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said the regular pages are included, but there is an additional page that shows the numbers from Indialantic on the cost to take on 3 new firefighters. Still in discussions with Brevard County, but they just voted to increase the fire tax. The first page above the line is for the full-time Fire Chief, part-time Fire Maintenance worker, volunteers, and the expenses. -1:51:00

Fire Chief Gavin Brown clarified that the Volunteer Stipend is \$38,000, which is based on an 85% compliance rate. There was a decrease in professional services by \$1,000 for a mental health program as the Firefighters' Association has decided to cover that program. Since the

program started, it has been used by 3 people, and it has been very helpful. Has been in the department for 20 years, and two members have committed suicide. Mental health in fire responders is very important. Vehicle maintenance went down, and they will be getting the new fire truck in August.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked what would be done with the old fire truck.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how it will be up to the Commission to decide what they would like to do with the truck. There are options, such as selling it for cash, looking into doing a trade with the fire college for credit to send firefighters to school, or sending the truck to another country (however, this option would not benefit the Town financially). Said the decision should be made August/September timeframe. Getting information on what the truck would sell for and what the college would provide for trade credits.

Mayor Alison Dennington said she would like information on how they can use credits for the college and how long they would have to use them. Would also like to know what the brokers' estimate of the value is, as well as the percentage they would take. Would also like to have some information on the value of similar trucks (check auctions for what they have sold for). Said she is 100% opposed to donating it.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said the truck still has value but it might not be as much as the Commission is thinking, maybe \$75,000 to \$100,000, and might need to be sold out of state.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about the health insurance going down. - 2:03:08

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how the difference in health insurance is because the part-time position, which had health insurance, has switched to per diem, which does not get health insurance. Spoke about how the increase in tools & hardware is for a vent fan, as the current fan needs to be replaced. The new fan would allow the department to cleanly vent a house. Right now, the fans are gas-powered, so they blow the gas fumes into the home when pushing the smoke out. Indialantic provided a quote of \$904,793 to provide fire services to the Town. Brevard County has advised they would do the same assessment that county resident's pay which would be higher than what the Town is proposing. The County has a fire assessment based on the value of the home, and the square footage of the lot. The Town's proposal for paid people would be around \$860,722.

Mayor Alison Dennington commended the Fire Chief on the budget report and said the quote from Indialantic is negotiable.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how you can negotiate for the first year, but once you lose control over the department, you will not be able to get it back, and they can charge anything they want.

Mayor Alison Dennington said she would vote no because it needs to be a referendum.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about if the Town proceeds with paid firefighters, he would recommend doing a fire tax, so it would be a fair cost share among all residents, as there are properties in Town that do not pay any taxes. A fire tax would be paid by everyone in Town.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about the quote for Indialantic is for 3 firefighters, but the Town's proposed cost is for 7 full-time employees and 24 volunteers. - 2:13:50

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how the fire tax could cover everything for the first year. You generally don't want to adjust it year after year, so when they get their cost-of-living raise in pay, that would have to come from the general fund.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how this tax is similar to stormwater; there is a tax above the line and a tax below the line. One is a flat fee, and one is a percentage.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how you can do a flat assessment, but you can also do an assessment based on property size or lot size. The flat assessment is quick and easy to see the numbers, whereas the assessment based on property size will take some work to get the base size of the property, then figure out what to charge per square foot. Said they could do a range, 500-1,000 sq feet pay x, etc.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how this is doable without being an exorbitant expense to the residents.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about wanting to see if it would be possible to have exceptions for residents over a certain age and on a fixed income. Would not be comfortable with such a big deal not going for a referendum.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about agreeing on principle, but his concern is if/when the volunteers decide they can no longer cover the Town. That could happen tomorrow or maybe next month, but if that happens, the Town will not have the option to have its own department. They would have to choose between Indialantic or the County because the Town would be in an emergency mode. - 2:24:20

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about an informal poll that could determine if there was support or opposition.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about software that could have information on square footage, and also mentioned a tax reduction program for residents who are 60 or 65 with certain conditions.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about the salary number \$393,708.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how the salary would be \$55,000 for a supervisor and \$50,000 for a firefighter per shift, which would be comparable in the area and to the police department's starting wage. Said this includes himself and 6 firefighters.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about the shift models.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about the model with 8 employees would have less overtime pay, and they would work less, so the salary would be less, but the number of six staff sounds better to people.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked if the department is ready to be staffed.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how the repairs to the building still need to be done, but those are not paid for by the fire department budget. Most of the budget, other than salary-related expenses, would pretty much stay the same. If there are full-time firefighters, the number of volunteers would be capped at a reduced amount of 24.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if certain items would cost more or stay the same. Spoke about how right now it there are 30 volunteers, it would reduce to 24, and the cost savings associated with that would cover the 6 paid firefighters, such as uniforms, gear, etc.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said they budget \$10,000 every year for bunker gear replacements, which would be for 4 sets. If someone new fits into old gear, they do not need to replace it. They keep an inventory of the old gear that is not being used.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about possibly doing an informal survey and only counting the responses that are registered voters. - 2:41:35

Mayor Alison Dennington said unless there is a cut in taxes, then she will be voting against it. One way that could be done is by cutting the finance clerk and the building clerk. We pay a lot for BS&A, and the whole reason was to be able to stop doing everything on paper, so why pay all of the money for the software when everything is done electronically now?

Commissioner Tim Reed asked if the intent is to go through the entire thing or break it up.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about wanting all of the salaries to be individually listed instead of totals. Wants a policy to say this should be included going forward.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow said this is to show the 3% cost-of-living and any other increases.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how it creates issues when all employees know what each other makes. -2:55:30

Mayor Alison Dennington said that it is public record. Spoke about how it is best practice to provide each employee's compensation and requested if there was consensus from the Commissioners that they put that in the budget.

Commissioner Tim Reed verified that the documents tonight only cover the general fund.

The Commission discussed when to schedule the next meeting to continue this topic.

Town Clerk Amber Brown said she would not be available to attend a meeting the following week, so she would check with the Deputy Clerk.

The Commission agreed to have the next budget workshop on Tuesday, May 20th at 3:00 pm, 4:00 pm, or 5:00 pm. Will determine the start time based on Commissioner Robert Baldwin's availability.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow requested the Town Clerk to send a calendar invite when sending the Commission the ICS file.

Frank LaGrassa – 412 First Ave – Thanked the Mayor for taking a stand on employee compensation transparency. Asked why he couldn't get a total compensation for each employee. - 3:09:30

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how that was provided.

6. Adjournment

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow moved to adjourn; Commissioner Anna Butler seconded; Motion carried 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 9:12 pm.



Alison Dennington
Mayor

ATTEST:



Rachel Pembroke (Jul 11, 2025 17:48 EDT)
Rachel Pembroke
Transcriptionist

