

Town of Melbourne Beach

SPECIAL TOWN COMMISSION MEETING September 3, 2025 Immediately Following the First Meeting 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 Attorney Ryan Knight
Town Clerk Amber Brown

1. Call to Order

Mayor Alison Dennington called the meeting to order at 6:56 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Town Clerk Amber Brown conducted roll call

Commission Members Present

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

Staff Members Present

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

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. Voting on items within the FY 2025-2026 budget

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about 8 amended pages that have been walked on, including pages labeled page 4, 5, 23, 24, 25, 44, 45, and 49. - 3:00

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about leaving off last meeting at salaries and the Fire Department. - 10:15

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about not receiving performance evaluations for the prior Police Chief Melanie Griswold until today, and was given 2019 and 2020, but nothing for 2021, 2022, or 2023.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how there were no written performance evaluations for when Griswold was Chief in 2021, 2022, or 2023.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin spoke about looking at the salary for the 6 employees that have a proposed raise higher than 3%. Suggests approving a dollar value increase to allow the Town Manager to split between those employees as she sees fit.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about how directionally, she would be supportive of Commissioner Robert Baldwin suggested, but thinks the 3% should be applied across the board and the Town Manager can use her discretion when it comes to the differential.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about having a hard time with going over a 3% raise.

Commissioner Anna Butler spoke about liking the proposal from Commissioner Robert Baldwin. Some of the roles of the staff have changed. The Town Clerk is now in a supervisory role which she was not in before, and the Police Admin has taken on a lot.

Commissioner Tim Reed verified that the raise pool would be an additional \$11,010 for a total amount of raise for all 6 positions of \$22,020. Did an analysis and is pretty much in line with what Commissioner Robert Baldwin suggested.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin made a motion for the purpose of computing salary for the 6 individuals that the Town Manager identified as deserving more than the 3% cost of living and merit that was previously approved by the Commission, for those 6 individuals that we in the budget allow them the same 3% COLA and merit but then we would budget an additional pool for \$11,010 for the Town Manager to ascribe across those 6 individuals at her discretion and based on the evidence that supports her decisions; Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow seconded; Motion carried 4-1 with Mayor Alison Dennington dissenting.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how she would have voted for a 3% for everyone and an additional raise for the Police Admin.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about the formula error on the updates page. - 24:54

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said they caught this when finance sent the Commission the expense and revenue break out for that fund. Spoke about for page 49, the Excel formula added the revenue over expenses instead of subtracting it.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow suggested having a summary of each of the GL to correlate with the bank balances.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin confirmed the accounting software has a budgeting model.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr said the budgeting model is manual to use, someone would have to enter all of the information.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how the Commission does have the authority to have an audit done.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about the updates to the budget that are summarized on page 3. Page 4 has updated revenues. Page 7 has updated salaries for the Police Department. Page 17 has updated costs for general liability, property, and automobile insurance and those numbers went down. Page 20 salaries were increased to show all of the officers included in that department. Page 23, the workers' compensation cost was updated. Half was attributed to Public Works, the rest was attributed to the other departments, Fire, Police and Code Enforcement. Page 26 workers' compensation was increased for one individual for Code Enforcement. Page 28 workers' compensation increased for Public Works. Page 49 was the update in stormwater for the updated number due to the formula error.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how page 2 says balances as of July 31, 2025. Verified it will be updated when the August bank statements come out. - 40:44

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro asked the Commission if they would like to remove the money for the vehicle allowance from the Executive Department.

Mayor Alison Dennington said remove it, and if it is needed pull it from contingency.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked if the contingency needs to be increased to cover this.

Mayor Alison Dennington said the contingency is already double the normal amount.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin made a motion that we remove in the Town Manager budget the allocation for gas and oil and reflect the salary at \$120,000; Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow seconded; Motion carried 5-0.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about in the FRS system for the Town Manager and Fire Chief positions the Town would need to put in 50%, so those positions are not included in the retirement system. Instead, they are in the ICMA-RC 457 plan. Another option is to put the contribution into their own retirement plan. - 45:00

Mayor Alison Dennington suggested calling an emergency meeting to have the brochure say retirement benefits instead of FRS.

Town Clerk Amber Brown asked if the Commission made a motion to approve a non FRS retirement, would that allow us to change the brochure without having another meeting?

Mayor Alison Dennington said they could strike FRS and say it was a scrivener's error.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said the SAFER Grant miscellaneous income figure was updated, which then changes all of the numbers associated with that. - 51:20

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said page 4 was changed due to the grant and short term capital became long term, page 23, 24, 25 are all Fire Department pages and the short term capital became long term capital. Took \$50,000 from Ryckman Park for stormwater. Said there is still \$50,000 for playground equipment. The stormwater was reduced to cover the Fire Department. If the Town is not awarded the SAFER grant, the Town can borrow the money from the general fund.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said no SAFER Grant funds have been awarded yet. - 1:00:25

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about an alternate proposal for the Fire Department if we do not get the SAFER Grant. Take the 6 firefighters out of the budget and put the budget back to a volunteer department. Take the sale of the fire trucks and put it in contingency, then if the grant does come through then the money is set aside. The cost for the 6 firefighters, around \$500,000-\$600,000, can go into stormwater. It is fiscally irresponsible to budget for this when we do not have the money. It is fundamentally wrong.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked about putting money into contingency. Concerned if the issue is not resolved, the department might dissolve and then revert to the County.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about how the idea is that we would continue to work on this to come up with a solution.

Mayor Alison Dennington said if the Fire Chief leaves, we look for a new one and rebuild the Department. We have to make budget decisions based on the money we have.

Commissioner Anna Butler said we have to make budget decisions that are fiscally responsible but we also have a responsibility for the health and welfare of the residents.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about continuing to discuss a solution in future years.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow asked for the Fire Chief's input on if we do not get the grant.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin asked if the Fire Chief would also address what happens if we don't get the full grant. Is it all or nothing?

Mayor Alison Dennington asked the Fire Chief to speak about the hybrid system.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown read a quote from Chief Financial Officer Ingoglia of DOGE "the first role of government is to protect its citizens, so if you are protecting your citizens the very first lines that you fill on your budget are fire and police. Personally I don't want to hear from any local government saying that they're going to cut from any fire or any police because those are the first things they should be taking care of."

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how this is not a cut, it would be an addition.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said the proposal is to provide a consistent, guaranteed response. Indian Harbour along with us are the last municipalities depending on volunteers. Harbour is currently looking into hiring positions to cover 8 hour shifts. Response times are one component for why the positions are needed. The other components are under-resourced responses and lack of any automatic aid agreements, lack of consistent frontline supervisory personnel on the initial fire apparatus and burnout. Burnout on our volunteers whether there is 1 fire call or 1000 calls, the burnout is having to be ready every second of every day. As far as contingency plans, the 6 people would cover all of the issues for the best bang for the buck. Another possible option is only having 1 supervisor officer on shift, but that would not allow us to get the automatic aid back. It would fix some of the problems, but not all of the problems.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said to his knowledge, you either get or don't get the funds from the SAFER grant, it is a reimbursement. The total out-of-pocket if we do not get the grant would be \$972,361. That is the worst-case scenario, as if all of the employees were hired on October 1. Thinks it could take a while to hire, but said he cannot guarantee that all of the employees would not be hired right away. Statistics from NFPA residential structures account for 74-77% of reported fires annually, residential fires account for 75-80% of all civilian fire deaths in the United States. Based on those statistics, our community would be more at risk than places with more condos/businesses. Wants to make sure the residents are protected and that when they call 911, their expectations will be met. The majority of the calls happen between 8am-8pm. The problem with having shifts cover only those times is all of the other hours are at risk. There are calls every day and every hour. Looking at the total data it is skewed one way or another. For example, when someone walks into the station for a medical call the response time is immediate, and then you average that among all of the calls, it skews the data.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about a handbook on NFIRS which says you use the time from which the Fire Department is dispatched. Said Brevard County has been in a contract negotiation so they are short hundreds of firefighters, but they now have a contract so they will be able to retain them which will help response times. Spoke about false alarms and how those could be handled differently. Asked the Fire Chief if he has accounted for any of these things. - 1:23:16

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how to his knowledge Brevard County staffing has been understaffed for a while. They have not closed any stations, and their response times should not be increased by filling the positions. They have been forcing overtime. It would reduce the burden on the existing employees.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked why not provide data before and after the automatic aid.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about not tracking the data of when Indialantic gets on scene. Said he could go to Indialantic's Fire Chief to pull their reports if the Commission feels it is important. For the last 5 years, the amount of time we were able to get 2 people on scene within 8 minutes was 46% of the time. 2 people in 10 minutes, 55% of the time. 2 people in 15 minutes, 66% of the time. Time we were able to get one person (himself,

the Fire Chief) on scene within 10 minutes was 85% of the time. Over 5 years there have been 57 fire calls where ignition occurred. False alarms and false calls 140. The whole point of people installing automatic alarm systems is to get the Fire Department there quicker and reduce the loss on the property or protect lives.

Commissioner Tim Reed verified the total ask is \$972,361 if the Town pays for this outright without the grant and the SAFER award is all or nothing and is a reimbursement.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown has not heard of the SAFER Grant being awarded at a lower rate. The Town would have to report to them every pay period to prove they are still employed.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if there is any fraudulence in the application if they could deny reimbursement to which the Fire Chief said he supposes so. Verified that the \$972,361 would cover everything we have today and the paid firefighters. - 1:36:08

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about how the 6 people are needed and the best bang for the buck. 1 supervisor per shift would allow us to apply for the grant again or look for other possibilities. - 1:36:45

Mayor Alison Dennington asked about what happens after the grant runs out.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown spoke about you can do a fire assessment, increase the mileage, or apply for other grants. The Town has to pay for a Fire Department one way or another.

Mayor Alison Dennington asked if there is a claw back clause if the Town decides to go back to a volunteer department.

Fire Chief Gavin Brown said from what he read, he does not believe there is a claw back provision that they would take the money back. There is a provision about not being able to add any additional people without retaining the original 6 positions.

Commissioner Tim Reed made a motion for Department 22, that we take the 6 paid fire positions out of the expenditures and go to the model of the current volunteer department and fund it at that appropriate level, budget \$150,000 into contingency in Department 19, and the money that is removed for the 6 paid positions is budgeted into stormwater fund 351; Mayor Alison Dennington seconded;

Commissioner Tim Reed said the intent of this proposal is to make the commitment to work towards getting a solution in the new year. This is not intended to be a cut to the Fire Department. Recognizes the obligations for public safety, and to work on a solution.

Mark McBride – 310 Second Ave – Spoke about 3% raises were given which is wonderful, the \$11 thousand merit raise bothers him, does not know how many other mistakes are made, said the Commission was given a budget at the 11th hour, does not understand numbers, please take great care to understand it. - 1:43:02

Jan Pence – 200 Riverside Dr – Passed out information on a property in the County. There is a detailed article on Truth and Accuracy Matter showing exactly what it will cost residents in the Town of Melbourne Beach if we get turned over to Brevard County.

Steve Walters – 416 Sixth Ave – What happens if the new Commissioners are against it. The problem is they won't be doing it for long if the new Commission is not in favor of it. The volunteer department has sustained for 70 years. For response time, anything can affect it. 99% of calls are handled by the Police Department.

Frank LaGrassa – 412 First Ave – Spoke about how the Fire Chief said he would leave if he did not get paid firefighters, and provided altered data. When the taxes become too much, residents might agree to zoning changes to get promised revenue. The data has been geared to an agenda, tax payers money doesn't grow on trees. With more time afforded by the referendum, the public will become informed.

Reynaldo Del Valle - 215 Ash Ave – This should be postponed for several months.

Bruce Larson – 1507 Pine St – Verified \$160,000 was pulled from stormwater. Said you have to have a balanced budget. If you get the grant, you still don't have the revenue to offset it. Could borrow or take from reserves or look at other places to cut money out, but something would need to be done.

Lauren Hardman – 320 Sixth Ave – Asked if other departments have applied for grants. The Fire Department has been doing it for years, and has saved the Town tons of money. Said she is very disheartened that the Commission is just putting this aside. Anyone saying things against the Fire Chief, if you do not step up to volunteer, how dare you question his work ethic. Said it is very clear who supports the Mayor and who the Mayor supports in this Town. Safety first couldn't be clearer.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said Finance is the only other that has applied for grants.

Susan Stark – 307 Fifth Ave – You received data in February when the Chief presented the demographics of the volunteers. If you are not proactive, you will have to be reactive. You should have asked for a plan A and B. If you are reactive, you can outsource to Indialantic which is \$800,000 and does not include all of the services. The Town needs BLS response in Town. Asks that the Commission to add money to the budget for this issue. - 2:00:30

Gail Gowdy – 215 Ash Ave – Spoke about if you don't have the money you can't spend it. Commissioner Tim Reed is doing what is responsible. Things have been going along for years the way it has been. There is no emergency right now. Consider the citizens trying to understand what the budget will be and how they will afford it.

Motion failed 2-3 with Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow, Commissioner Robert Baldwin, and Commissioner Anna Butler dissenting.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin made a motion to adjourn; Motion failed for a lack of second.

Commissioner Robert Baldwin left at 9:03 pm

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about Department 13 if the employee survey is included.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr spoke about how that expense is coming out of the current year's budget. They are in the process of building the survey and should be done shortly.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about how he believed the survey was to be done yearly.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how that was not her recollection, but can be done if the Commission would like. It was not budgeted for FY26.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about how Department 21 has around \$50,000 difference in the previous years. - 2:11:30

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how in previous years, the State Pension Reimbursement was not shown in this department. It was reflected elsewhere.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked if the new finance report will reflect the \$50,000 spent and the Town Manager said no.

Finance Manager Jennifer Kerr spoke about how it was number 522.02 Police Pension.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow confirmed it was commingled and then separated.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how changes need to be noted and confirmed with the Town Manager this was the only change that was noted.

Commissioner Tim Reed confirmed the \$50,000 in FY25 in Department 29 is not being budgeted for FY26 since it was for the Deckard software purchase.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said the \$13,500 was for Deckard and \$1,000 was for BS&A. Does not recall the final price for Deckard, it was less than \$50,000.

Mayor Alison Dennington said there was \$127,000 budgeted for code, said it would be a breach of contract. Said there was no money budgeted for a Zoning Official. Confirmed the Town Manager did not get Commission approval before signing the 2024 contract.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said it was in legal. Said she had \$9,000 budgeted for a Zoning Official in Planning and Zoning.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about page 41 Fund 172 which funds some police salary. Asked if it is sustainable to support police since the fund is trending in the negative. If something interrupts the parking revenue stream we would have to quickly find a way to cover the salary in the general fund. - 2:22:56

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how that is something the Commission will have to look at, and assess the revenue with the raised rate. Said she tries to be conservative with the revenue. It usually exceeds what is projected.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about being short in the Building Department. We always have a hard time keeping employees. How do we fund the department if homes stop building. Look into having a company because then you would not have to pay them.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how that would be up to the Commission.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about that might be an opportunity to speak with the new Town Manager about continuity of services.

Commissioner Tim Reed asked about page 44 parking pass revenue, facility rental has increased, and asked if those 2 are something we can look at increasing.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how they increased the prices a few years ago where non residents pay a substantial deposit.

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about reviewing all fees on a yearly basis.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about how revenue should be in the general fund not segregated in a special fund.

Commissioner Tim Reed made a motion to move these revenue streams from Fund 175 into the general fund wherever it is appropriate;

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how if that was done then the expenses would have to be moved as well. Revenue does not directly offset an expense which is why revenues and expenses are in their own bucket.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about how there are funds that carry strictly expenses.

Mayor Alison Dennington seconded;

Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow spoke about how there would be a \$76,000 ending cash balance for FY25. Confirmed this would not prevent us from allocating that cash for projects.

Lauren Hardman – 320 Sixth Ave – Asked if the motion is to lump everything into the general fund, so then you cannot track all of the expenses. Then it will not be followed. Was not clear on the purpose for doing this. - 2:38:35

Commissioner Tim Reed said they would have the same revenue lines they would just show up in the general fund.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how they would still itemize the general fund but they would not be able to track the revenue against the expense.

Commissioner Tim Reed said to clarify, these revenue streams would show the same as they are currently itemized, it would just show up under the general fund. Would carry an expense fund for the Ryckman Park items.

Commissioner Anna Butler spoke about not understanding the goal of what this would fix.

Mayor Alison Dennington spoke about how it is better accounting to do this way, would still be able to track the expenses.

Motion failed 2-2 with Vice Mayor Dawn Barlow and Commissioner Anna Butler dissenting.

Commissioner Tim Reed spoke about page 49 Fund 341, stormwater. FY25 there was a transfer of \$710,000.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro spoke about how the ARPA Fund was closed. When the Town received the ARPA money a fund was set up for it, and in the first year, all of the money was allocated. Since it was for stormwater and that fund was closed, it was transferred to this fund.

Mayor Alison Dennington said ARPA funds were 1.8 million. ARPA qualifications were that you had to obligate it by a contract, and then the contract had to begin the work by a certain date and they were prohibited from using it for payroll.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said that is not true, they have reported to ARPA and there has never been a problem.

Commissioner Tim Reed verified that there are no longer requirements for reporting because the funds were expended.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said they expended the full amount of ARPA money in the first year so they are no longer required to act under those guidelines.

Commissioner Tim Reed confirmed this money is no longer ARPA money.

Town Manager Elizabeth Mascaro said they used payroll to satisfy the ARPA requirement, which enabled the Town to use the money for whatever they decided. Confirmed this money is in no way at risk. Does not know the claw back period, but everything is legal so this would not apply.

6. Adjournment


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

Meeting adjourned at 9:48 pm.



Alison Dennington
Mayor

ATTEST:



Rachel Pembrook (Oct 9, 2025 14:31:07 EDT)
Rachel Pembrook
Transcriptionist

