September 16, 2025
5:30 PM

The City Council of the City of Inverness met on the above date in Regular Session at 212 W. Main Street with the following members present:

President Davis
Vice President Lizanich
Councilwoman Bega
Councilwoman Hepfer
Councilman Craig
Mayor Plaisted - *Absent*

Also present were City Manager Williams, City Attorney Hartley, Staff Members, and City Clerk Jackson.

FINAL BUDGET AND MILLAGE LEVY

Resolution 2025-09 and 2025-10 Final Millage and Budget Adoption Public Hearing* with the following Notice was served to all Council, Mayor, Media, publicly posted, and TRIM Notices were mailed to each City of Inverness property owner by the Property Appraiser's Office.

FY 2025-26
INVERNESS BUDGET WORKSHOPS
PUBLIC NOTICE - REVISED

PLEASE BE ADVISED **BUDGET RELATED WORKSHOPS FOR FY 2025/26** ARE CALLED FOR THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS, AT 212 W. MAIN STREET, INVERNESS, FLORIDA, AS FOLLOWS:

April	1, 2025	5:30pm	Overview Workshop of Projects & Goals
May	6, 2025	5:30pm	Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Workshop
August	5, 2025	5:30pm	City-Wide Budget Workshop
Sept.	2, 2025	5:30pm	Tentative Budget Adoption - 1st Public Hearing **RESCHEDULED**
Sept.	**3, 2025**	**5:01pm**	**Tentative Budget Adoption - 1st Public Hearing**
Sept.	16, 2025	5:30pm	Final Budget Adoption - Final Public Hearing

/s/ Gene Davis
President of City Council

Council President Davis opened the public hearing. He commenced by stating the purpose of this hearing is for the final adoption of a property tax rate (or millage) and budget for the 2025-2026 fiscal year for the City of Inverness. A proposed property tax rate was advertised on the TRIM notices of 7.7600 mills. The City of Inverness budget has been finalized using the rate 7.5600 mills. The final millage rate is greater than the rolled back rate of 7.3443 mills by 2.94%.

Council President asked for Council input and there was none.

Council President asked if there was anyone present who wished to address the Council as to any item within the Budget or millage levy. No one spoke for or against.

Council President stated be advised that the proposed budget was developed using the rate of 7.5600 mills. The next motion must be to adopt the final millage rate. Any budget amendments may be made after adoption of the final millage rate. Called for a motion to read the Final Mill Levy Resolution by title only. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to read the Resolution by title only. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. The motion carried.**

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-09

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS OF CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE FINAL LEVYING OF AD VALOREM TAXES FOR THE CITY OF INVERNESS FOR FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING ON OCTOBER 1, 2025 AND ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2026; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Councilwoman Bega motioned to adopt the Final Mill Levy Resolution adopting a final millage rate of 7.5600 mills for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. Roll call vote was as follows: Councilwoman Bega, yes; Councilwoman Hepfer, yes; Councilwoman Lizanich, yes; Councilman Craig, yes; Council President Davis, yes. The motion carried.

President Davis asked if there was a motion to read the Final Budget Resolution by title only. **Councilwoman Hepfer motioned to read the Final Budget Resolution by title only. Seconded by Councilwoman Bega. The motion carried unanimously.**

RESOLUTION NO. 2025-10

A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS OF CITRUS COUNTY, FLORIDA ADOPTING A FINAL BUDGET COMMENCING OCTOBER 1, 2025 AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2026; PROVIDING FOR PROPOSED EXPENDITURES; PROVIDING TAXABLE VALUES; PROVIDING FOR OPERATIVE FISCAL YEAR; PROVIDING FOR EXPENDITURES DURING FISCAL YEAR AND SUBSEQUENT HOLD OVER FUNDS; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Councilwoman Hepfer motioned to adopt the Final Budget Resolution adopting the final budget for the 2025-2026 Fiscal Year as proposed by roll call vote. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. Roll call vote was as follows: Councilwoman Bega, yes; Councilwoman Hepfer, yes; Councilwoman Lizanich, yes; Councilman Craig, yes; Council President Davis, yes. Motion carried unanimously.

The Public Hearing was closed.

The Invocation was given by Councilwoman Hepfer, and the Pledge of Allegiance was led by the City Council.

ACCEPTANCE OF AGENDA

Councilwoman Lizanich motioned to accept the Agenda as presented. Seconded by Councilman Craig. The motion carried.

PRE-SCHEDULED APPEARANCES

None

PUBLIC HEARINGS / WORKSHOP

None

OPEN PUBLIC MEETING

Karen Esty thanked Council for reaching out to the BOCC to offer office space. Spoke of the 2-hour parking limit relating to possible future BOCC meeting at the Inverness Government Center. Concerned for business parking.

John Labriola thanked the City for the changes in Cootertober, making it more family friendly.

CITY ATTORNEY REPORT

None

CONSENT AGENDA

a) Bill Listing*
   - Recommendation – Approval

b) Council Minutes – 09/02/2025 & 09/03/2025*
   - Recommendation – Approval

Councilwoman Hepfer motioned to accept the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. The motion carried.

CITY CLERK'S REPORT

None

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

15)a) Community Development Block Grant – Medical Arts District* with City Manager Williams stating the City, partnering with HCA Florida Citrus Hospital, embarked on a much-needed planning project several years ago that focused on the future of the Medical Arts District to support economic and infrastructure development, and the look to future development and growth of the hospital. The resulting study highlighted a number of opportunities for future needed investment to include multimodal connectivity, drainage, parking, and transportation/traffic. Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) grant funds are appropriated by Congress and allocated by HUD to rebuild disaster-impacted areas and provide crucial seed money to start the long-term recovery process. These flexible grants help cities, counties, Indian tribes, and States recover from Presidentially declared disasters, especially in low-income areas, subject to availability of supplemental appropriations. Since CDBG-DR assistance may fund a broad range of recovery activities, HUD can help communities and neighborhoods that otherwise might not recover due to limited resources. There is an opportunity for the City and HCA Citrus Hospital to partner on a CDBG-DR grant application to bring about improvements in streetscaping and drainage within the Medical Arts District, as the applicant must be a local government. The total amount being asked in the application would be $10millon. Councilwoman Bega spoke of the importance of Public Private Partnerships and wants to be clear of the benefits to the City as she had received a question from a citizen. City Manager Williams spoke of the advantages of HCA Citrus Hospital being in the City limits as they are a huge contributor investing in the community. Reminded that HCA does not own the hospital, it is a lease. Councilman Craig questioned the DRA and pump, and new entrance. City Manager provided a history of basement flooding in the hospital and that the hospital will erect signage regarding a new entrance. Councilwoman Lizanich questioned if it would help alleviate school traffic as safety is a top priority. Thinks the partnership is wonderful. Council President Davis spoke of the history of the hospital. Need to look at the overall scheme as HCA is a large employment base and tax contributor. We need a good hospital in Inverness. **Council consensus was for the City Manager to proceed as presented.**

15)b) Whispering Pines Park Sublease* with City Manager Williams stating Whispering Pines Park (WPP) has been a gem in the community, serving as a regional park facility well beyond the jurisdictional limits of the City. WPP is not owned by the City, rather sublet from the Florida Forest Service to be managed/operated in part as a public recreation facility along with the goals and objectives of the Withlacoochee State Forest. The current 50-year sublease is set to expire in less than 5 years. WPP is faced with a number of much-needed capital improvements that would require investment by the City that would not be tenable under the current sublease arrangement. Council direction was to work with the State on a new structure and arrangement for the future of Whispering Pines Park that provide pathways forward towards the relationship with the State and the future of the park. Spoke of the hopes for a 50-year lease from the State. City Manager Williams provided a brief history and points of the sublease. The State suggested removing the Forestry Division and creating a direct lease between the City and State. Councilwoman Hepfer spoke in favor of a direct lease for 50 years. Councilman Craig questioned if it would be a hurdle removing Forestry. Keep the park as an outdoor recreation area. Councilwoman Bega questioned if Forestry agreed with City Manager stating definitely and the park would remain for public open purpose. Councilwoman Lizanich was in favor of the direct lease for 50 years as it would make it better to invest in. President Davis did not want to consider giving the park back and was glad that everyone was in favor of a direct lease. **Council consensus was for the City Manager to proceed as presented for a direct lease for a future structure and arrangement with the State for the future of Whispering Pines Park.**

15)c) City of Inverness Legislative Priorities 2026* with Asst. City Manager Calascione stating annually there is opportunity to present the Local Legislative Delegation with the City's points of interest and concern for consideration by the State Legislature. A draft letter, to be signed by the Mayor, puts forth those points of interest and concern of the City. Though many of the points continue to be a focus year to year, cooperative funding and support including local match amounts as outlined of $1,000,000 for an RV Campground at Whispering Pines Park, $500,000 local match for the West Inverness Trail Connector, and replacement of the boundary fencing for Whispering Pines Park. The scheduled date for the Legislative Delegation is currently set for October 31 with the Council and the Mayor invited to attend. Councilwoman Bega confirmed that the order of priorities in the letter was not relevant. **Council consensus was for the City Manager to proceed as presented.**

15)d) Ordinance 2024-850 Refunding of Account Deposits– First Reading* with Finance Director Koter stating this ordinance is a modification to City Ordinance Chapter 22, Section 92 and 94, relating specifically to customers with multiple accounts and refunding deposits when services are canceled. This would allow the City to apply final balances due on an account for a customer to outstanding bills on other accounts for the customer prior to issuing a refund check. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to have the Clerk read Ordinance 2025-850 by Title only. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. The motion carried.**

ORDINANCE 2025- 850

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF INVERNESS, FLORIDA, AMENDING SECTION 22-92 OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES ENTITLED DEPOSITS AND FEES FOR ESTABLISHING SERVICES; AMENDING

SECTION 22-94 OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES ENTITLED COLLECTION OF CHARGES; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY AND INTERPRETING THIS ORDINANCE; PROVIDING FOR INCLUSION INTO THE CODE AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Councilwoman Hepfer motioned to approve Ordinance 2025-846 by rollcall vote on a first reading. Seconded by Councilwoman Lizanich. Roll call vote was as follows: Councilwoman Bega, yes; Councilwoman Hepfer, yes; Councilwoman Lizanich, yes; Councilman Craig, yes; and President Davis, yes. The motion carried.

15)e) Fire Station Bay Door Replacement RFP Bid Award* with Fire Chief Bessler stating the Fire Department issued a Request for Proposal (RFP 2025-01- FD) for the replacement of bay doors and operating systems at the fire station. The existing doors are aging, prone to frequent malfunctions, parts becoming difficult to obtain, and the doors have no longer become cost-effective to repair. Their unreliability delays emergency response times and compromises station security. Four sealed responses were received from American Roll-Up Door Co. - $48,756; Overhead Door Co. of Ocala - $70,114; Nouveau Construction LLC - $67,058; and C & D Industrial Maintenance - $220,123. He also announced the fire department has been awarded funding for requested SCBA equipment. **Councilwoman Bega motioned to award the bid for replacement of the fire station bay doors to American Roll-Up Door Company and authorize the City Manager to execute the agreement. Seconded by Councilwoman Hepfer. The motion carried.**

15)f) Code Compliance Lien Reduction Approach* with City Manager Williams stating code compliance is an essential function of any well-run community. The goal is always compliance over penalty. However, there are cases where fines ordered by the Code Magistrate are in placed to garner focus to compliance and can accrue significant daily fines with an accompanying lien that by time of compliance an approach to a lowering settlement is often met. Historically, the City has taken these cases to Council for consideration under the auspice of verifying that compliance has been achieved and that any reduction in fines to release a lien must garner the City's hard costs in administering the case. Often this results in a significant reduction in total amount. Several options were discussed. Option 1 remain as we do currently, Option 2 collect raw cost and abatement period fines, set by the Magistrate, if no action from the property owner satisfies the order within the set number of days, or Option 3 to handle each case by case. City Attorney Hartley addressed the question of homesteaded property. **Council consensus was for the City Manager to proceed with Option 2 as presented.**

15) g) Project/Program Updates *(Verbal)*

- Cootertober Promo Video with Parks & Rec Director Worley. The video highlighted the list of events by Bobby Malke, Hannah Spittlehouse, and Sunny Cooter. It was amazing and will go out on social media, City website, etc.
- Annual Road Improvement Program with Public Works Director Pell confirming it is ongoing and when finished will roll into next year.
- Stormwater Structures – Repair/Replace will be installed in the next several weeks.
- Other included the passing of Deputy LaHera, 9/11 ceremony and exhibit at the Valerie Theatre, and another successful Small Town Saturday Night.

COUNCIL/MAYOR SUBJECTS

Councilwoman Bega thought this evening was a great meeting and requested to sit on the committee that will be choosing new carpet for the Valerie Theatre. Everyone agreed.

Councilwoman Hepfer stated 9/11 ceremony was sobering and people are very appreciative of the exhibit in the Valerie Theatre.

Councilwoman Lizanich was emotional when giving the closing comments at the 9/11 ceremony. Spoke of Deputy LaHera. Small Town Saturday Night was wonderful.

Councilman Craig provided detailed information from the recent TDC meeting and congratulated Inverness with 32% of visitation to the County. Spoke of the Main Street program and it was agreed that the City is not interested in participating.

President Davis stated that he remembers where he was and what he was doing on the day John F. Kennedy was killed and the 9/11 event. Spoke of a recent documentary regarding greater details of 9/11. Thanked the staff for all they do and thanked the audience for coming to the meeting.

CITIZENS NOT ON AGENDA

David Belknap spoke of the upcoming showing of the Rocky Horror Picture Show and certain activities done by those that are followers of the show.

Meeting adjourned at 7:12 p.m.

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City Clerk Council President