



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
City Commission Agenda Memo
REGULAR MEETING

#25-0764

TO: Honorable Mayor & Members of the
Fort Lauderdale City Commission

FROM: Rickelle Williams, City Manager

DATE: September 3, 2025

TITLE: First Reading – Ordinance Amending Section 8-145(a) and repealing Section 8-145(b), (c), (d) and (e), “Regulation of Vessels Anchored in Public Waterways”, of the Code of Ordinances making it unlawful to anchor a vessel for more than thirty (30) days within a six (6)-month period within the City’s public waterways during certain time periods - (**Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4**)

Recommendation

Staff recommends the City Commission adopt an ordinance amending Section 8-145(a) and repealing 8-145(b), (c), (d) and (e), entitled “Regulation of Vessels Anchored in Public Waterways,” of the Code of Ordinances making it unlawful to anchor a vessel for more than thirty (30) days within a six (6)-month period within the City’s public waterways during certain time periods.

Background

In 1971, the City of Fort Lauderdale had an ordinance making it unlawful to anchor a vessel for more than 24 consecutive hours in the public waterways of the City. In 2009, the Florida Legislature, pursuant to the adoption of Laws of Florida 2009-86, amended § 327.60, Florida Statutes, preempting local government’s authority to regulate the anchorage of vessels, prohibiting local government from enacting, continuing in effect, or enforcing any such ordinance.

In 2025, with the adoption of Laws of Florida, Chapter 2025-39, § 327.60 Florida Statutes was amended to permit local governments within counties with a population of at least 1.5 million people (i.e. includes Broward County) to regulate the duration of the anchoring of vessels during certain time periods. Chapter 2025-39 was not self-effectuating, so to effectuate it in the City of Fort Lauderdale it is necessary to adopt an ordinance implementing the provisions of Chapter 2025-39. The proposed ordinance permits the City to regulate the anchorage of vessels, excluding any time the vessel is anchored overnight for the purpose of completing permitted marine construction, installation, or maintenance work.

On June 4, 2025, City staff held a public meeting at Saint Sebastian Church to share information about potential options to mitigate resident concerns related to anchoring at Lake Sylvia. During the meeting, City staff explained the differences of anchorage limitation areas and creating an ordinance through the adoption of Laws of Florida, Chapter 2025-39. The approximately fifty (50) meeting attendees, that through a show of hands, displayed overwhelming support for creating an ordinance rather than introducing anchorage limitation areas.

On July 8, 2025, the Marine Advisory Board recommended approval of the proposed ordinance amendment with eight (8) voting in support and two (2) in opposition.

On September 3, 2025, City staff are scheduled to present the proposed recommendations at the City Commission Conference Meeting (CAM #25-0820). The key changes include:

- The amendments to Section 8-145(a) prohibit the anchoring of a vessel within the public waterways within the corporate limits of the City of Fort Lauderdale for a period of one (1) hour or more between (i) one-half (1/2) hour after sunset and (ii) one-half (1/2) hour before sunrise for more than thirty (30) days in any six (6) month period, excluding any time the vessel is anchored overnight for the purpose of completing permitted marine construction, installation or maintenance work.
- The above provisions are not applicable to areas specified as (i) anchorage limitation areas authorized § 327.4108 Florida Statutes (2025) and (ii) public mooring fields as authorized under Rule 62-330.420, Florida Administrative Code.

A violation of the proposed amended Code Sec. 8-145(a) is punishable in accordance with City of Fort Lauderdale Code of Ordinances Section 1- 6 generally providing for fines not to exceed \$500 or imprisonment not to exceed 60 days or both fine and imprisonment for each violation.

City staff recommends that the City Commission approve the proposed ordinance as the continued unregulated and unmanaged long-term anchoring may pose threats to the health, safety, and welfare of City of Fort Lauderdale residents from:

- The number of abandoned and derelict vessels, vessels at-risk of becoming derelict, and unoccupied vessels stored on the waters of the City for extended periods of time, requiring the expenditure of City funds and human resources to address the problem;
- Increased illegal discharge of materials detrimental to water quality and public health and threats to protected aquatic flora and fauna, including seagrass; and
- Hazards to navigational safety which may endanger public and private marine infrastructure such as docks, piers, seawalls and bridges, especially before and

during storms.

Sections 8-145(b), (c), (d) and (e) are being repealed as it is beyond the scope of what local governments are permitted to regulate under Chapter 2025-39.

If the City Commission decides not to implement the proposed ordinance, the public waters of the City will continue to be open for unrestricted long-term anchorage of vessels, except in areas designated (a) anchorage limitation areas under Sec. 327.4108 or (b) public mooring areas under Rule 62-330.420, Florida Administrative Code. The City does not have any designated anchorage limitation areas, but it does have one designated public mooring area at the Las Olas Bight. The Las Olas Bight is the area immediately south of the Las Olas Bridge and east of Poinciana Drive on western shoreline of the Intracoastal Waterway.

Resource Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

Strategic Connections

This item supports the 2029 Strategic Plan, specifically advancing:

- The Public Places Focus Area, Goal 5: Build a beautiful and welcoming community.

This item advances the Fast Forward Fort Lauderdale 2035 Vision Plan: We are Here.

This item supports the Advance Fort Lauderdale 2040 Comprehensive Place specifically advancing:

- The Public Places Focus Area
- The Parks, Recreation & Open Spaces Area
- Goal 2: Be a community with high quality parks and recreational facilities that highlight the character of our city.

Attachments

Exhibit 1 – Ordinance

Exhibit 2 – Business Impact Estimate

Exhibit 3 – July 8, 2025, Marine Advisory Board Draft Minutes

Exhibit 4 – Chapter 2025-39, Laws of Florida

Exhibit 5 – City of Fort Lauderdale Code of Ordinances Section 1- 6

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