

City of Fort Lauderdale

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Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, March 3, 2026

1:35 PM

Broward Center for the Performing Arts - Mary N. Porter Riverview
Ballroom - 201 SW 5th Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312

City Commission Conference Meeting

FORT LAUDERDALE CITY COMMISSION

DEAN J. TRANTALIS Mayor

JOHN C. HERBST Vice Mayor - Commissioner - District 1

STEVEN GLASSMAN Commissioner - District 2

PAM BEASLEY-PITTMAN Commissioner - District 3

BEN SORENSEN Commissioner - District 4

RICKELLE WILLIAMS, City Manager

DAVID R. SOLOMAN, City Clerk

SHARI L. McCARTNEY, City Attorney

PATRICK REILLY, City Auditor

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Trantalis called the meeting to order at 1:45 p.m.

COMMISSION QUORUM ESTABLISHED

Commission Members Present: Vice Mayor John C. Herbst, Commissioner Steven Glassman, Commissioner Ben Sorensen, and Mayor Dean J. Trantalis

Commission Member Not Present: Commissioner Pamela Beasley-Pittman

Also Present: City Manager Rickelle Williams, City Clerk David R. Soloman, City Attorney Shari L. McCartney, and City Auditor Patrick Reilly

COMMUNICATIONS TO CITY COMMISSION

[26-0247](#)

Communications to the City Commission - (Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)

*Historic Preservation Board (HPB)
February 2, 2026*

Communication to the City Commission

A copy of the communication is part of the backup for this Agenda item.

Mayor Trantalis recognized Trisha Logan, Development Services Department Historic Preservation Planner. Ms. Logan explained the HPB communication.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' questions regarding digging and metal-detecting regulations on the beach, Deputy City Manager Chris Cooper stated that current rules limit excessive digging but lack clear thresholds. He indicated that existing regulations and enforcement are adequate. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Vice Mayor Herbst raised safety concerns about excessive beach-digging, citing a recent incident in Lauderdale-by-the-Sea. He requested clarification on how these risks are managed and enforced by Ocean Rescue Lifeguards (Lifeguards) and Parks and Recreation Department staff.

Carl Williams, Parks and Recreation Department Director, explained that while Park rules prohibit beach digging, enforcement is difficult because there is no clear definition. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Mayor Trantalis expressed his viewpoint regarding the lack of clear standards, noting that common beach activities involve digging, and remarked that enforcement personnel are required to make inconsistent judgment calls. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Commissioner Glassman noted his review of the February 2, 2026, HPB Meeting, which included the denial of a historic designation application. He remarked that beach digging and metal detecting were discussed as minor topics within broader conversations about beach use, recreation, and archaeology. A compromise proposal emerged, suggesting increased enforcement of metal detecting, which became a formal HPB communication to the Commission. Commissioner Glassman stated he would provide further commentary on the historic designation at the April 7, 2026, Commission Meeting.

In response to Commissioner Sorensen's question regarding whether metal detectors are permitted on the beach, and how enforcement is addressed, Mr. Williams explained that metal detection is generally allowed, but digging is regulated and enforced by Park Rangers. City Manager Williams clarified that Lifeguards notify the public about concerning behaviors but do not have enforcement authority. Lifeguards may contact Park Rangers or Police Officers as needed. Commissioner Sorensen remarked on the importance of Lifeguard notification.

City Attorney McCartney stated that there is no specific ordinance regarding the use of metal detectors on the beach. Related regulations fall under Park Rule 7.4, which prohibits activities that reduce safety. Additional restrictions may apply during special events at the discretion of the Police Department or Ocean Rescue. Further comment and discussion ensued regarding the ambiguity of this topic. Commissioner Sorensen noted that metal detecting is permitted, and Mayor Trantalis concurred.

Mayor Trantalis expressed skepticism about the need to address metal detecting on the beach and referenced the origin of this communication as described by Commissioner Glassman. He stated that policy should not be developed based on these circumstances, emphasized that metal detecting has not created public safety or nuisance concerns, and that no action is necessary.

In response to Commissioner Glassman's question about the fifteen-inch (15") digging depth threshold and its status as an official policy, Ms. Logan clarified that this benchmark is not codified in any ordinance or Park rule. It originated from a 2011 archaeological testing report and was later referenced in a historic designation report as a guideline for archaeological monitoring or testing.

CITY COMMISSIONERS' REPORTS

Commission Members announced recent and upcoming community events and expounded on related information.

Commissioner Glassman remarked on the 190th birthday of Mary Brickell and her legacy. Mayor Trantalis said that a previous Commission in the early 2000s had approved the secondary naming for a portion of NW 1st Avenue as Mary Brickell Avenue, noting that no further action was taken. The Commission discussed ways to further recognize Ms. Brickell's contributions. Commissioner Glassman recommended moving forward with the secondary street naming of NW 1st Avenue as Mary Brickell Road in coordination with next year's birthday celebration of Ms. Brickell. City Manager Williams confirmed staff would review previous Commission action.

Commissioner Glassman requested a Moment of Silence at tonight's Regular Meeting to honor former Broward County Commissioner Sue Gunzburger.

Commissioner Sorensen reported significant progress on mangrove restoration, highlighting strong leadership and educational benefits for New River Middle School students.

MAYOR'S REPORT

Mayor Trantalis announced recent and upcoming community events and expounded on related information.

Mayor Trantalis discussed improvements to Bass Park, including the construction of a new community center and other park upgrades.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' questions about the developer's access agreement for the new City Hall site, City Manager Williams said that, after consulting with City Attorney McCartney, the City will use a short-term lease agreement instead of a license agreement. This change is intended to streamline and expedite the developer's due diligence of the site. City Attorney McCartney explained that the

Charter allows the City Manager to execute lease agreements of less than one year without Commission approval, provided they include a 30-day termination clause. This approach was chosen to expedite the process. City Attorney McCartney also noted that license agreements are not explicitly addressed in the Charter. City Manager Williams confirmed she will execute the lease agreement and send a formal letter to the Commission with the details. Mayor Trantalis urged staff to move forward quickly.

Commissioner Glassman expressed concerns about delaying the Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) for the new City Hall project until ninety percent (90%) design completion, noting this could cause significant delays. He questioned the deviation from the typical thirty percent (30%) GMP benchmark and shared his perspective. Further comment and discussion ensued. Assistant City Manager Ben Rogers addressed Commissioner Glassman's concerns and explained that Jacobs Engineering (Jacobs) was engaged to support the City during the interim agreement phase, provided initial feedback on risk and pricing. Jacobs advised that projects with less design completion often have higher contingencies and greater risk of future costs and suggested that waiting until ninety percent (90%) design completion could result in a more reliable GMP. Staff is still evaluating this approach in relation to timeline concerns. Further comment and discussion ensued.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

MGR-1 [26-0254](#)

City Commission Follow-up Action Items and Letters to the Commission (LTC) - City Manager's Office (Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)

City Manager Williams reported on efforts to advance a new community engagement initiative focused on economic development in District 3 involving management and staff.

City Manager Williams announced that the Procurement Services Department received State recognition for excellence and cost-saving best practices, and commended staff for their strong performance and leadership.

City Manager Williams outlined federal appropriation requests for community projects and noted a separate \$3,000,000 request from the YMCA. Mayor Trantalis discussed the potential impact of including the YMCA's federal funding request alongside other City requests. Further comment and discussion ensued regarding how to advance multiple federal funding requests and address the YMCA request without

reducing its chances of success. City Manager Williams emphasized the need for additional guidance and strategic positioning, including confirmation of updated federal guidelines to determine whether the YMCA can submit its own application with the City's support or if the City must serve as the lead applicant. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Commissioner Glassman and Mayor Trantalis raised concerns about the need for additional funding for the YMCA project at Holiday Park. Mayor Trantalis referenced the existing lease with Broward Health and the prior \$2,000,000 in Parks Bond contributions from Districts 1 and 2, which were expected to provide sufficient funding. Mayor Trantalis questioned whether the additional \$3,000,000 in YMCA funding was intended to address a funding gap or to leverage additional resources. City Manager Williams remarked that the YMCA is likely seeking federal funds to reduce overall project costs. Mayor Trantalis requested further clarification before the Commission makes a decision.

CITY ATTORNEY'S REPORT

OLD/NEW BUSINESS

BUS-1 [26-0221](#)

Public Engagement in the Budget Process - Office of Management and Budget (Commission Districts 1, 2, 3 and 4)

City Manager Williams provided an overview of this Agenda item.

Mayor Trantalis recognized Laura Reece, Office of Management and Budget Director. Ms. Reece narrated a presentation entitled Public Engagement in the Budget Process.

A copy of the presentation is part of the backup for this Agenda item.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' request, City Manager Williams confirmed that the Commission had agreed to schedule its final meeting before the Summer Break on July 2, 2026.

Mayor Trantalis recognized Kevin Pulido, Office of Strategic Communications Director. Mr. Pulido introduced an interactive budget video that will be shared with the public on social media platforms, including the *Next Door* app.

A copy of the video can be obtained through the Office of the City Clerk.

In response to Commissioner Glassman's questions regarding messaging and public education on property taxes, Mr. Pulido confirmed that a separate public information campaign is being developed to explain the importance of property taxes, including how they support service funding and their role in the budget. Mr. Pulido emphasized that the campaign would focus strictly on education and transparency, not on advocacy, to ensure residents understand the facts.

In response to Commissioner Sorensen's questions about potential property tax reduction legislation at the State level, City Manager Williams stated that staff is closely monitoring legislative proposals, coordinating with the Property Appraiser's Office, and modeling financial scenarios to assess potential budget impacts. The budget strategy emphasizes fiscal prudence, resourcefulness, innovation, and incorporates potential property tax reductions into ongoing labor negotiations, especially with police and fire unions. Staff is taking a cautious, fiscally conservative approach as they prepare for a range of possible budget outcomes.

Yvette Matthews, Assistant City Manager, outlined the potential financial impacts of proposed property tax changes and explained that about thirty percent (30%) of the City's ad valorem revenue comes from homesteaded properties. Ms. Matthews emphasized that the City is actively monitoring developments.

Mayor Trantalis stated that property tax changes are unlikely to affect the immediate budget, would require voter approval, and that any impact on future budgets remains uncertain. Commissioner Sorensen agreed on the need for proactive planning.

In response to Mayor Trantalis' questions regarding how proposed property tax reductions would affect funding for police and fire services, Ms. Matthews clarified that if the legislation is enacted, the City would be required to maintain current public safety funding, even if overall revenues decline. She explained the related budget impacts and provided examples. Further comment and discussion ensued.

In response to Commissioner Sorensen's questions regarding projected budget deficits for Fiscal Years 2028 and 2029, Ms. Matthews confirmed that current estimates show a deficit of approximately \$20,000,000 in FY2028 and \$30,000,000 in FY2029. Ms. Matthews noted that key factors include the expiration of the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants, which would require the City to cover the full cost of

twenty-eight (28) firefighters, as well as additional financial impacts extending into FY2029.

Commissioner Sorensen discussed a worst-case scenario, estimating that significant property tax reductions could result in a total potential revenue deficit approaching \$100,000,000.

In response to Commissioner Sorensen's question about preparing for a worst-case scenario, City Manager Williams stated that departments are already evaluating potential cost-saving measures. She acknowledged that addressing a deficit of this size would require significant strategic decisions, such as reducing or eliminating certain services, identifying new or underutilized revenue sources, and making substantial operational and staffing changes. She remarked on the option to raise taxes. Commissioner Sorensen stated his opposition to raising taxes. Further comment and discussion ensued.

Vice Mayor Herbst raised the issue of how potential property tax reforms could affect debt service, particularly general obligation bonds, and remarked on his understanding. Vice Mayor Herbst said that a voter-approved general obligation bond may offer a safer way to finance a future City Hall, as its debt service could be insulated from future property tax reforms. City Attorney McCartney confirmed she would research and provide an update.

In response to Commissioner Sorensen's question, Vice Mayor Herbst explained that a voter-approved General Obligation bond could secure a protected funding source for debt service on a new City Hall, making it less vulnerable to future property tax changes than general fund financing.

Mayor Trantalis recognized Trent Simpson, 2436 Andros Lane. Mr. Simpson read a prepared statement expressing concern that the public has not been fully informed of all viable options for a future City Hall and urged the Commission to consider both acquisition and new construction.

A copy of the statement is attached to these Meeting Minutes.

BUS-2 [26-0281](#)

Presentation on the Uptown Urban Village Planning Initiative - Development Services Department (Commission District 1)

Mayor Trantalis recognized Anthony Fajardo, Development Services Department Director. Mr. Fajardo provide an overview of this Agenda item.

Mayor Trantalis recognized Jim Hetzel, Development Services

Department Principal Planner. Mr. Hetzel narrated a presentation entitled *UPTOWN URBAN VILLAGE IMPLEMENTATION STATUS*.

A copy of the presentation is part of the backup for this Agenda item.

Vice Mayor Herbst expressed support for affordable housing and economic development initiatives in the North Andrews corridor, aiming to establish a mixed-use, affordable, and an economically vibrant district.

Mayor Trantalis commented on the corridor's proximity to Tri-Rail that makes it a strong model for transit-oriented development. Vice Mayor Herbst commented that the Uptown Cypress Creek Tri-Rail station is uniquely embedded within the development area, making transit a central driver of growth and a critical asset. Further comment and discussion ensued.

EXECUTIVE CLOSED DOOR SESSION - 4:30 P.M. OR AS SOON THEREAFTER AS POSSIBLE

Mayor Trantalis announced the commencement of the Executive Closed-Door Session at 3:09 p.m.

[26-0263](#)

The City Commission shall meet privately to discuss pending litigation, pursuant to Section 286.011(8), Florida Statutes, concerning the following matters(s):

City of Fort Lauderdale v. Florida Department of Transportation - Florida Fourth District Court of Appeal Case No.: 4D2025-2783

City of Fort Lauderdale v. Florida Department of Transportation - Florida Division of Administrative Hearings Case No.: 25-004856RU

City of Fort Lauderdale v. Florida Department of Transportation - Florida Fourth District Court of Appeal Case No.: 4D2026-0271

Present at the attorney-client sessions will be:

Mayor Dean J. Trantalis
Vice Mayor/Commissioner John C. Herbst
Commissioner Steven Glassman
Commissioner Ben Sorensen
City Manager Rickelle Williams
City Attorney Shari L. McCartney
Deputy City Attorney D'Wayne M. Spence
Assistant City Attorney Shaun N. Amarnani

Outside Counsel Howard D. DuBosar, Esq., Weiss Serota, et al.,
Outside Counsel Jeremy S. Rosner, Esq., Weiss Serota, et al., and
Certified Court Reporter from Bailey-Entin Court Reporting

The estimated length of this session will be approximately 15 minutes
for a cumulative length of 45 minutes.

Mayor Trantalis announced the termination of the Executive
Closed-Door Session at 6:04 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Trantalis adjourned the meeting at 6:04 p.m.