

Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the City Commission of the City of Auburndale held February 2, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. in the Commission Room of City Hall, after having been properly advertised, with the following members present: Mayor Alex Cam, Vice Mayor Jordan Helms, Commissioners: Travis Avery, Sean Levy, and Crystal Tijerina. Also, present were: Interim City Manager Amy Palmer, City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr., City Clerk Brandon Henry, and Police Chief Terry Storie.

Mayor Alex Cam declared a quorum present, and the Meeting was opened with prayer by Pastor Curtis Johnson, New Life Praise & Worship Tabernacle, and a salute to the flag led by Boy Scout Troop 123.

**Motion** by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Avery, to approve Minutes of the City Commission Meeting of January 20, 2026. Upon vote, all ayes.

Interim City Manager Amy Palmer welcomed Boy Scout Troop 123, who are here this evening to earn their Citizen in the Community Merit Badge.

Police Chief Terry Storie announced the results of the Police Department's Haunted 5k and presented a donation to the Breast Cancer Foundation of Central Florida.

Commissioner Levy said he was out there with his family, it was a great event.

Parks and Recreation Director Cody McGhee presented a schedule of upcoming events.

Interim City Manager Palmer said the applicant for Agenda Item 1 "Ordinance #1845 Annexing Property into City Limits- Berkley Crossing Property" has requested the item be postponed to the March 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting.

Mayor Cam asked if there was public comment on any item not on the agenda. There was no public comment.

### **1. ORDINANCE #1846 ANNEXING PROPERTY INTO CITY LIMITS – FDOT SUNTRAX**

Community Development Director Julie Womble said the City received a petition from the State of Florida Department of Transportation, 605 Suwannee St., Tallahassee, FL to annex two parcels totaling 67.47+/- acres into the City limits. The property is located east of the Polk Parkway and south of Pace Road. The property is adjacent to City limits to the south and east. The annexation does not create an enclave. The proposed annexation is as a result of the owner's request for city utilities and city services.

Establishing a Future Land Use and Zoning classification on the property will be considered at Public Hearings before the Planning Commission and City Commission at later dates. The action currently before the City Commission is only on the annexation of the property into the City. Staff recommends approval of Ordinance #1846 annexing the FDOT SunTrax properties into the City limits. She presented graphics depicting the proposal.

Interim City Manager Palmer said the proposed Ordinance was prepared by the Community Development Department and reviewed by the City Manager and City Attorney. The proposed Ordinance was approved on first reading January 20, 2026 and staff recommends approval.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. read Ordinance No. 1846 entitled: **AN ORDINANCE EXTENDING THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF THE CITY OF AUBURNDALE, FLORIDA SO AS TO INCLUDE THEREIN ADDITIONAL TERRITORY LYING CONTIGUOUS AND ADJACENT TO THE PRESENT BOUNDARIES OF THE CITY; DESCRIBING SAID ADDITIONAL TERRITORY; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HERewith; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE (General Location: Pace Road and Polk County Parkway),** by title only.

Mayor Cam asked for citizen comment. There was no citizen comment.

**Motion** by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Levy, to approve Ordinance #1846 annexing property into City limits – FDOT SunTrax, as read on second and final reading by title only. Upon vote, all ayes.

## **2. SELECTION OF FINALISTS FOR CITY MANAGER POSITION**

Interim City Manager Palmer said on December 15, 2025, the City Commission approved the desired characteristics and criteria for the new City Manager. The position was advertised on December 16, 2025, with a deadline for submitting resumes of Friday, January 16, 2026. Thirteen applications were received and were distributed to the City Commission at the January 20, 2026 regular meeting.

Former City Manager Bobby Green will make a brief presentation on the recruitment process prior to the City Commission's discussion and selection of finalists for the City Manager position.

Former City Manager Bobby Green presented the City Manager search process thus far, and future steps. He presented tips and guidelines on the interview process. He reminded the Commission that the applicants are aware of the public nature of this process. He said the one of the applicants (Jeremy Marshall, City of High Springs) has requested Veteran's Preference – he summarized the statute regarding Veteran's Preference.

Mayor Cam said he is grateful for all the applicants. He said Jeff Brown from the City of Daytona Beach rose to the top, due to his professional and prior city manager experience – and his previous experience with the City of Auburndale serving as City Clerk, Special Projects Manager, and Assistant City Manager. Mayor Cam said Mr. Brown's cover letter really stood out to him – with Mr. Brown referencing that Auburndale's culture made such a lasting impression on him that he has sent previous teams of employees to experience the Auburndale way. Mayor Cam said for these reasons combined with meeting the preferred criteria that the Commission approved, he has no reservations about moving Mr. Brown's application forward to the interview process. The City Manager from the City of High Springs also met the Commission's preferred criteria, and he would welcome the opportunity to interview him as well.

Vice Mayor Helms said he agrees with Mayor Cam. He agrees that Mr. Brown checked a lot of the boxes for both required and preferred criteria, and that he would be a very strong candidate for us to interview along with Jeremy Marshall. Applying Veteran's Preference makes perfect sense to him. He has city manager experience with 10+ years of public service, and he has been in Florida. He is comfortable with moving Mr. Marshall forward. Vice Mayor Helms said another name he would like to add to the list is Ben Ziskal. He is an Auburndale resident and works for Polk County. He does not have city manager experience but has 10+ years of public service. Vice Mayor Helms said he likes to look at areas of concern for the City, and how a person's experience is applicable. He said he thinks everybody would say that in Auburndale we are concerned about managing growth and development responsibly, so having a city manager with a depth of knowledge in that area would be valuable to us.

Commissioner Avery said he agrees with both the Mayor and Vice Mayor regarding the three candidates they presented. He said he would stick to that as well. Those three candidates would be his preference for interview.

Commissioner Levy said he has the same three on the top of his pile. He said he knows Mr. Ziskal personally from Youth Sports and has spent time around him – Commissioner Levy says he knows him to be a good family man and a stand-up guy and is also a veteran despite not asking for Veteran's Preference. Commissioner Levy said he really keyed in on Jeff Brown's experience as the Economic Strategic Opportunities Director for the City of Daytona Beach. That is exactly what we need in Auburndale right now, someone with some vision to bring in new businesses and opportunities for employment. He liked that about Mr. Brown's resume.

Commissioner Tijerina said she is not going to say what has already been said. She is in agreement with her peers and would like to see Mr. Brown, Mr. Ziskal, and Mr. Marshall.

Vice Mayor Helms said he would like to at least discuss Ms. Suzanne Linton from the City of Tarpon Springs, serving as their Director of Information Technology and Chief Information Security Officer. She has a very impressive education and tons of certifications from Harvard, and 10+ years in public service. He said she has not served in Polk County or Auburndale, but has a very positive cover letter and experience. Vice Mayor Helms said he did his research on the applicants, and was nothing but impressed with Ms. Linton. He would like to at least discuss her – whether we add her to the list or stick with the three we agreed to. He would not want to miss the chance to discuss a really good candidate.

Commissioner Tijerina said she had similar feelings when she first went through the packet and talked to some other directors who managed a similar type of area. The consensus she got was that managing one specific area in a municipality may not speak to managing all. Commissioner Tijerina said she sees Vice Mayor Helm's point and that she asked questions because she thought Ms. Linton would be a good candidate – but she thinks compared to the experiences of the other three candidates, it would not be a good use of time. She said she is open to other opinions.

**Motion** by Commissioner Tijerina, seconded by Commissioner Avery, to approve the list for potential candidates to interview for City Manager to be Jeff Brown, Jeremy Marshall, and Ben Ziskal.

Vice Mayor Helms said he understands and appreciates the conversation, he just wanted to toss it out there. He is very happy with the short list of three that we are moving forward with to interview.

Mayor Cam agreed.

Upon vote, all ayes.

Mr. Green, Interim City Manager Palmer, and the Commission discussed the date and time of the interviews.

Mr. Green said this would be advertised as a special meeting of the City Commission.

City Attorney Frederick J. Murphy Jr. said that is very important that we notice and advertise it as a Special Meeting of the City Commission so that the Commission could take action if it desired to do so.

**Motion** by Vice Mayor Helms, seconded by Commissioner Tijerina, to set a Special Meeting of the City Commission on February 11<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m. to interview the three top candidates for the City Manager position. Upon vote, all ayes.

Mr. Green said if there is any issue with any of the candidates, we will let everybody know.

City Attorney Murphy confirmed that Mr. Green would come a little early to coordinate the interview process including the questions to be asked by each Commissioner.

Mr. Green confirmed.

The Meeting was adjourned at 7:34:31 p.m.

I HEREBY CERTIFY that the foregoing Minutes are true and correct.



Brandon Henry, City Clerk