



Fort Myers Beach Town Council

Town Hall Council Chambers

2731 Oak Street

Fort Myers Beach, FL 33931

Minutes

Thursday, September 11, 2025

5:01 PM

ORDER OF BUSINESS

I. CALL TO ORDER

Members present: Mayor Allers, Vice Mayor Atterholt, Council Member King, Council Member Safford and Council Member Woodson.

II. PUBLIC COMMENT

Susan Coke, resident, distributed information and noted that she previously sent it to the council members. She reviewed her presentation to dispute the proposed 26% tax increase.

Jackie Valazquez expressed concern about the rate increase and asked what the town was responsible for. She listed items that the town recently purchased and thought they had a large payroll. She asked why they do not encourage people to build and move here and to be mindful of the residents.

Cliff Gallagher, a resident, described his experience with the tax assessor, who said he was a new person when he bought out the co-owners, even though he had lived in his house for years. He said the town had to cut its expenses because his taxes would go up by almost \$400.00. He suggested services be cut back.

Ellen Vaughan, resident, thought they had a tough job balancing the budget. She did not want to see various organizations' budget cuts because those amenities made the town special.

III. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Resolution 25-262; FY26 Proposed Millage Rate

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FORT MYERS BEACH, ADOPTING THE PROPOSED AD VALOREM MILLAGE RATE FOR THE TOWN OF FORT MYERS BEACH, FLORIDA FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 COMMENCING OCTOBER 1, 2025 AND ENDING SEPTEMBER 30, 2026 FOR THE PURPOSE OF PROVIDING SUFFICIENT FUNDS FOR THE GENERAL FUND; SETTING THE SECOND AND FINAL PUBLIC HEARING FOR WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24,

2025 AT 5:01 P.M. TO ADOPT THE FINAL OPERATING AD VALOREM MILLAGE RATE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor Allers read the title of the resolution.

Council Member King moved to table this item, seconded by Council Member Safford.

The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Council Member Safford moved to reopen the item, seconded by Mayor Allers.

The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Council Member Safford moved to set the tentative millage rate to be finalized at the September 24, 2025, meeting at 5:01 p.m. to 1.1500 mills, seconded by Mayor Allers.

Public comment:

Susan Coke, resident, commented about a trailer sitting on flooded property and not paying any taxes. She discussed the lack of enforcement and vacation rentals.

Jackie Valazquez, resident, noted that her children enjoyed Bay Oaks when they were younger, but now she does not want to pay for someone else's education. She wanted the town to stop wasting the taxpayers' money on building the dunes.

Cliff Gallagher, resident, stated that he lives on the beach part-time, but pays 10% in taxes, which is higher than full-time residents. He did not receive anything from FEMA.

Public comment closed.

Manager Penner announced that the Town Council proposed an operating ad valorem millage rate for FY 25-26 at 1.150 mills, which was 1.15 for each \$1,000 of assessed valuation. The current year rollback rate is .08954 mills. The proposed operating millage rate is 28.43% greater than the rollback rate.

The motion carried 3-2 by roll call vote, with Vice Mayor Atterholt and Council Member King dissenting.

B. Resolution 25-263; FY26 Tentative Budget

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FORT MYERS BEACH, ADOPTING THE TENTATIVE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 COMMENCING OCTOBER 1, 2025 AND ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2026; SETTING THE SECOND AND FINAL BUDGET ADOPTION PUBLIC HEARING FOR WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 24, 2025 AT 5:01 P.M. AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor Allers read the title of the resolution. Finance Director Joe Onzick thanked Budget Manager Kassandra Penner for putting the presentation together and those who provided input. The presentation started with an

Overview, General Fund Budget Workshop Revenues & Expenses, Bridge Loan Calculation, Bridge Loan Status - Budget Workshop and Tentative Adjustments, Impact & Risks - Community Services Director Jeff Hauge.

Director Hauge provided a review of the various services under his direction.

He noted that \$436,850.00 was cut from the Bay Oaks budget and he reviewed the impacts from those cuts. He listed the activities that will be eliminated and reported that hours of operation will be reduced. Staff will not be cut, but position openings will not be filled. Discussions regarding the use of a key fob system for facility access were ongoing. All special events, including 4th of July and New Year's Eve fireworks, will be eliminated. He addressed other programs that will be reduced. He explained how cuts would affect Mound House activities, including reduced hours and the elimination of some programs. Program materials, best museum practices and legal acceptance of materials will be affected. Director Hauge explained the scope of Public Works and noted that other cuts and reallocations enabled them to cover those costs.

Council Member Safford asked whether the 4th of July fireworks could be held since it was the country's 250th anniversary. Director Hauge replied that it was up to the town council.

Council Member Woodson challenged the Friends of Bay Oaks to raise money for the fireworks. She worried about the after-school and summer programs for the kids because they were a benefit for parents and the reduced staff-to-children ratio was a concern.

Vice Mayor Atterholt asked if the market rate was being charged for programs. Director Hauge replied that they were close. If they charged the market rate, they might be able to save some programs, but they would lose some participants, like they did two years ago. However, a slight increase was proposed.

Council Member King asked about drones for fireworks. Director Hauge responded that they were about \$50,000-60,000.00, plus all other event-related costs. Town Manager Will McKannay indicated that the Chamber of Commerce was having a drone show during the Sand Sculpting Championship and he will use that event for comparison purposes.

Mayor Allers stated that the reduction of hours for Bay Oaks is the result of potential cuts and will affect the community. Director Hauge responded that they would do the best they could with the staff they had, but it would take a toll on them.

Director Onzick continued with Tentative Adjustments to Human Resources. Human Resources Director Talissa Oliveira explained why she wanted to increase the employee appreciation budget.

Emergency Services & Compliance Director Thams Yozzo described why \$50,000.00 was needed for the emergency lighting program. He noted that the funds were pulled from another fund related to community policing.

Community Development & Planning Director Frankie Kropacek explained the \$40,000.00 correction to the Mooring Field budget. He added that the fees were right in the middle compared to other fields. He described how the

Mooring Field benefited the town.

Mayor Allers suggested increasing the fees to absorb the \$60,000.00. Town Clerk Amy Baker described increases in costs due to more meetings, an increase in software costs and elections. Training was eliminated.

Council Member Woodson did not support removing training. Mayor Allers agreed.

Director Onzick continued with Tentative Adjustments to Finance, Total Tentative Adjustments by Department, FY25-FY26 Position Change Comparison, All Funds Revenue by Source, Use of Reserves, Grant Revenue, Bridge Loan Status, General Fund Expenses by Department, Expense Budgets of All Funds, FY26 Tentative Budget, Debt Service, DEO Bridge Loan and Florida State Revolving Fund.

Council Member Safford asked whether they were still adding to the emergency fund reserves. Director Onzick explained the complexity of determining what was in the emergency reserve fund today, but he will have the information as soon as possible. He discussed utilizing the FDEM (Florida Department of Emergency Management) money.

Council Member Woodson asked whether they were cutting too many children's programs and felt that training in the Town Clerk's office should not be cut. She thought it was premature to set the millage rate.

Vice Mayor Atterholt noted that utility rates would most probably increase. He commented that they were contributing to the emergency reserve fund. He could not raise the millage rate based on speculation and supported keeping the millage rate the same.

Council Member King suggested that the Friends of Bay Oak raise money for children's programs. He suggested selling the old town hall property or the property for the proposed Mooring Field facilities. He explained how property owners going back online were losing the storm-related tax relief from Lee County. He did not support an increase.

Mayor Allers agreed with the other council members that the staff did an excellent job moving things around to reduce the budget. He expressed concern about the emergency reserve fund, noting that the town had not raised the millage rate since 1991, unlike other communities. Town Manager McKannay explained why he was not comfortable with the cuts presented, especially at Bay Oaks.

Mayor Allers stated that he would not support a 26% increase, but he could support a lower increase.

Town Manager McKannay commented that they were still researching potential lines of revenue. He stated that a millage rate of 1.255 would result in an additional \$1.191 million, while an increase of 1.029 would result in \$177,000.00. He indicated that the smaller amount could help save some programs and contribute to some infrastructure projects.

Council Member Woodson suggested a rate of 1.12, which was an additional \$600,000.

Council Member Safford was comfortable if they could cover the \$700,000.00 of the 50% grant and see where they were in two weeks.

Manager Penner stated that 1.15 would be an additional \$719,000.00.

Council Member Safford moved to table the resolution, seconded by Mayor Allers.

The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Council Member Safford moved to reopen the resolution, seconded by Mayor Allers.

The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Mayor Allers moved to approve the resolution to coincide with Exhibit A to match the previously adopted tentative millage rate of 1.150 mills based on the discussion today and the adjustments, seconded by Council Member Safford.

Public comment:

Cliff Gallagher, resident, said the millage rate on a document from the property assessor was 1.2550. He was told that was the proposed rate. Public comment closed.

The motion carried 3-2 by roll call vote, with Vice Mayor Atterholt and Council Member King dissenting.

C. Resolution 25-264; FY26 Tentative Fee Schedule

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF FORT MYERS BEACH, ADOPTING THE TENTATIVE FEE SCHEDULE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2025-2026 COMMENCING OCTOBER 1, 2025 AND ENDING ON SEPTEMBER 30, 2026 AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE

Mayor Allers read the title of the resolution. Director Onzick utilized PowerPoint for his presentation. Slides include the FY26 Tentative Fee Schedule Changes. Director Kropacek explained that the fees that dropped to zero would be included in a package. Director Onzick continued with the Fee Schedule Changes. Mayor Allers stated that the town council agreed not to increase the Personal Watercraft Vendor License and the Parasailing Vendor License fees by more than 3% per year. Director Yozzo explained that since the fees had been waived, he was trying to align with surrounding municipalities. He added that the fee would go back to 3% the following year. Vice Mayor Atterholt commented that the vendors were amenable to increasing fines for violations. Director Yozzo also increased the fees for penalties. Council Member King did not support increasing the fees. Director Yozzo responded that it was a tentative increase and that he would adjust it. Council Member Woodson suggested increasing the penalties to make up the difference. The increase in beach raking fees would be eliminated.

Director Hauge reviewed the increases in Bay Oaks fees.

Director Kropacek described the increases in permit fees. Council Member Safford asked whether an increase of \$10.00 was enough.

Director Kropacek explained that these items were easily handled. Council Member Woodson suggested increasing fees to \$25.00 and Council Member King was fine with a \$10.00 increase. Director Kropacek will research more complex permits that take more staff time.

Council Member King moved to approve the resolution based on the amended changes discussed, seconded by Council Member Safford.

No public comment.

The motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

IV. FINAL PUBLIC COMMENT

Michael J. Gutierrez, a resident, complimented everyone on how they conducted the meeting.

V. ADJOURNMENT

Council Member King moved to adjourn, seconded by Council Member Safford. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Minutes adopted as presented, September 24, 2025. Motion by Council Member King and seconded by Council Member Woodson.
Passed 5-0.



[Amy Baker \(Oct 16, 2025 15:55:38 EDT\)](#)

Amy Baker, Town Clerk