

City Commission Meeting
May 26, 2026
6:00 p.m.

ELECTED OFFICIALS PRESENT:

Scott Tate, Mayor
Karen Marriott, Commissioner, District 1
Lisa Robinson, Vice Mayor, Commissioner, District 2
Al Causey, Commissioner, District 3
Jon Maldonado, Commissioner, District 4

STAFF PRESENT:

Frances Robustelli, City Manager	Adam Poirrier, Assistant City Manager
Ralf Brookes, City Attorney	Camden Mills, Public Services Director
Renee Rose, City Clerk	Devon Schmidt, Finance Director

Mayor Tate called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

City Manager Robustelli requested to remove items 4d and 5b from the agenda. Vice Mayor Robinson requested to add discussion item 7a about shark fishing on the beaches.

Motion: **Commissioner Marriott moved, Commissioner Maldonado seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to approve the May 26, 2026 City Commission Agenda, as amended.**

2. PRESENTATIONS

a. Status of Living Seawall Project

Public Services Director Camden Mills introduced Thomas Ries, Ecosphere Restoration Institute, to present on living shoreline initiatives in the Don CeSar area. Mr. Mills noted the City was a co-applicant with a grant through the Tampa Bay Estuary Program and supported the project with topographic surveys. This work falls in line with the City's strategic initiative for resilience. The end result is intended to provide educational resources and template shoreline designs for residents and businesses.

Mr. Ries presented information regarding "living shorelines" and "living seawalls" as alternatives to traditional hardened seawall systems. The presentation was made part of the meeting record. He explained how traditional seawalls eliminate ecological habitat along shorelines and shared opportunities to retrofit existing seawalls with rock, vegetation, and other features intended to reduce wave energy, improve water quality, extend seawall lifespan, and provide habitat benefits while maintaining shoreline protection. Mr. Ries reviewed the history of hardened shorelines throughout Florida and discussed the costs and limited lifespan of traditional seawalls. Examples of living seawall enhancement projects were shown, including designs incorporating planting shelves, marsh vegetation, mangroves, and rock features to improve ecological function and resiliency. He summarized the City's partnership with the Tampa Bay Estuary Program and the Ecosphere Restoration Institute to develop living seawall demonstration designs for properties along S Maritana Dr near the Don CeSar area. The project included grant funding, engineering design work, permitting coordination, and development of standardized designs intended to streamline future permitting and reduce costs for waterfront property owners. He explained that final engineering designs and regulatory permits have been completed and that design templates, permitting guidance, and contractor recommendations will be made available to residents interested in implementing similar shoreline enhancement projects. He noted the improvements are intended to assist with routine tidal flooding and shoreline resiliency rather than major hurricane storm surge protection.

Questions were regarding the proposed living seawall designs, including potential insect impacts, applicability to local canal conditions, and permitting requirements. Mr. Ries stated that significant insect impacts are not expected due to coastal wind conditions and explained that the St. Pete Beach designs combine traditional retaining walls with vegetation and habitat features intended to reduce wave energy and improve ecological function. Discussion also addressed how the designs could be adapted for additional neighborhoods and properties

without existing seawalls. Mr. Ries explained that lower “seat wall” designs could be used behind existing mangroves or natural shorelines to tie into neighboring seawalls and improve flood protection while preserving vegetation. Discussion continued with permitting and implementation. Mr. Ries noted that the standardized designs were intentionally developed to streamline permitting and could be shared with residents and potentially other coastal communities with similar conditions.

b. Gulf Blvd Utility Undergrounding Project Status & Direction

Public Services Director Camden Mills presented an update on the Gulf Boulevard Utility Undergrounding Project, which is intended to underground electrical, streetlight, and communications infrastructure along Gulf Blvd from 75th Avenue to 35th Avenue. The presentation was made part of the meeting record. He explained that the project has been divided into three phases and reviewed the status of Phase 1, noting that City construction work is complete and that Spectrum and Duke Energy are working through final utility relocations and pole removals. He reported that engineering design for Phase 2 has been completed and that FDOT permitting is nearing completion following coordination with the agency. He outlined ongoing easement acquisition efforts required for utility placement on private properties, noting that several easements remain unresolved. Additional coordination meetings with those property owners are anticipated. He reviewed the status of the Pinellas County Gulf Blvd Improvement Program grant, which provides approximately \$8 million in reimbursement funding for the project. Approximately \$4.1 million has been billed to date, leaving roughly \$3.9 million available; however, the grant agreement is currently scheduled to expire September 30, 2026. He reviewed estimated Phase 2A project costs, which are currently projected at approximately \$8.1 million, including utility relocations, construction services, and inspection costs. After accounting for existing budgeted funds and anticipated grant reimbursements, it’s estimated that approximately \$2.8 million in additional City funding would be required to complete the phase. He requested Commission direction on whether to proceed with procurement and bid solicitation for Phase 2A or discontinue the project and reallocate the remaining budgeted funds.

There was discussion around the project's costs, easement challenges, resiliency benefits, and long-term feasibility. Questions were raised regarding the vulnerability of underground utilities to flooding and saltwater intrusion, remaining grant deadlines, easement acquisition requirements, and the likelihood of construction cost increases beyond current estimates. Mr. Mills explained that underground systems reduce wind-related outages but remain susceptible to flood damage and noted that final construction costs would not be known until bids are received. Concerns were expressed that the project had evolved from a fully funded beautification initiative into one requiring significant additional City investment, with no funding currently identified for the final phase. Discussion also focused on the practical challenges of securing easements, the prospect of a partially undergrounded corridor, and whether the resiliency benefits justified the expense. It was noted there are competing capital needs throughout the City and questions whether undergrounding utilities on a barrier island provided sufficient value given flood risks and the continued vulnerability of ground-level utility equipment.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Kurzman, Bahia Honda Way, spoke in support of improving utility resiliency, cautioning that underground systems can be vulnerable to saltwater intrusion and suggesting that elevating critical utility components may provide greater benefit than additional undergrounding.

Following discussion, there was consensus for discontinuing Phase 2 of the undergrounding project and reallocating the City's budgeted funds to other priorities. Staff was directed to cease work on Phase 2A, develop recommendations for reallocating the FY 2026 and proposed FY 2027 funding associated with the project, and explore with Duke Energy and Pinellas County whether remaining grant funds could be used for utility hardening measures, like elevating vulnerable electrical equipment to reduce flood risk.

3. AUDIENCE COMMENTS

John Kurzman, Bahia Honda Way, requested greater Beach Stewardship Committee involvement in beach-related

decisions, raised concerns about relying on surveys rather than deeds to determine beach property/public access rights, questioned beach chair permit fees, and cautioned against using surveys for trespass decisions due to potential impacts on customary public beach use.

Commission discussion focused on beach property rights, enforcement practices, and the scope of upcoming beach-related ordinance discussions. City Manager Robustelli explained that a limited number of beachfront property owners have provided surveys and deed documentation to the Sheriff's Office for specific trespass enforcement situations, and that information is maintained on a property-specific basis rather than beachwide. Commissioners expressed interest in understanding how neighboring beach communities and law enforcement agencies handle similar issues and requested additional information regarding regional practices. Ms. Robustelli will coordinate with the Sheriff's Office and other jurisdictions to gather information. Discussion also addressed the upcoming June 3 community meeting, with Ms. Robustelli clarifying that the meeting would be limited to sign-related provisions and issues associated with the pending beach signage ordinance. Questions were raised regarding broader beach-use topics, including alcohol consumption, property rights, and beach access concerns. Ms. Robustelli advised that those broader matters would be addressed during the June 9 first reading of the comprehensive beach ordinance package, which includes provisions related to beach use, public and private property issues, wildlife protections, turtle lighting requirements, and other beach management regulations. She encouraged public participation in the June 9 discussion and noted that input had already been received from the Beach Stewardship Committee and Planning Board.

Cameron Mazoochi, W. Maritana Dr., expressed concerns about living shoreline concepts, noting that some residents value maintaining traditional seawalls and waterfront access. He cited potential issues associated with mangroves and oyster beds, including maintenance costs, impacts on neighboring properties, and recreational use of waterways. He spoke against implementing unproven shoreline approaches and questioned whether such solutions could eventually be required. Seawalls are a homeowner responsibility and should continue to be maintained and replaced as needed.

4. CONSENT

- a. Approval of the May 12, 2026 City Commission Work Session and Regular Meeting Minutes
- b. Resolution No. 2026-18: Supporting the Installation of a Public Art Dolphin Sculpture on Corey Avenue
- c. Authorize the City Manager to execute an Agreement No. 26PLN47 with the Florida Department of Environmental Protection in the amount of \$300,000 for the City of St. Pete Beach Vulnerability Assessment and Adaptation Plan Update
- d. ~~Authorize the City Manager to execute the Eighth Addendum and Renewal with the Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority for the Suncoast Beach Trolley Agreement for Fiscal Year 2026 transit service for \$308,279.51.~~
- e. Approve Fiscal Year 2026 Fleet purchases for Building, Code Enforcement, Fire, Public Services, and Resident Services in the amount of \$1,281,491.46 and reimbursement in the amount of \$700,000.00
- f. Approval of Change Order to Scope of Services for Raftelis Operating Fee Study related to Legislative Updates

Motion: Commissioner Marriott moved, Vice Mayor Robinson seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to approve the May 26, 2026 City Commission Consent Agenda, as amended.

5. ORDINANCES

a. Final Reading Ordinance 2026-12: FY2026 Budget Amendment

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ST. PETE BEACH, FLORIDA PROVIDING FOR AN AMENDMENT TO THE BUDGET FOR FISCAL YEAR 2026 BY INCREASING APPROPRIATIONS FOR EXPENDITURE IN THE GENERAL FUND, BUILDING FUND, WASTEWATER, RECLAIMED WATER FUND, STORMWATER FUND AND CONSTRUCTION PROJECT FUND; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION;

CONFLICTS; SEVERABILITY; CORRECTION OF SCRIVENER'S ERROR; CONSTRUCTION; PUBLICATION; AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Attorney Brookes read Ordinance 2026-12 in title only.

Finance Director Devon Schmidt said there were no changes to what was previously presented at the first reading.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public came forward.

Motion: Commissioner Causey moved, Commissioner Marriott seconded, and the motion carried 5-0 to adopt the final reading of Ordinance 2026-12.

b. ~~First Reading Ordinance 2026-13: Amendments to Seawall, Bulkhead, Living Shoreline, and Retaining Wall Standards~~

6. ACTION ITEMS

a. City Clerk Annual Evaluation

City Manager Robustelli explained that the City Clerk's annual evaluation was being conducted in accordance with the City's established charter officer evaluation process. She noted that the evaluation includes input from the City Commission, department directors, direct reports, and a self-assessment, along with a review of accomplishments, goals, and any requested amendments to the employment agreement. The City Manager outlined the process for the evaluation and advised that any Commission direction regarding employment agreement changes would be brought back at a future meeting for consideration.

City Clerk Renee Rose presented her annual performance evaluation materials, including the 360-evaluation summary and comments, self-evaluation, accomplishments, goals for the upcoming evaluation cycle, and compensation information for Commission consideration. She thanked the Commission and staff for their participation and feedback throughout the evaluation process. Evaluation feedback highlighted professionalism, responsiveness, organization, collaboration, and support provided to both the Commission and staff. Constructive feedback included opportunities to improve delegation, measurable goal-setting, and team development initiatives, which were incorporated into the goals for the upcoming evaluation cycle. Ms. Rose also reviewed compensation information included in the packet, including a salary survey of municipal clerks within Pinellas County, historical compensation information for the position, and comparison tables reflecting adjustment scenarios. She requested consideration of proposed contract language regarding future COLA and merit eligibility consistent with general employees, as well as a one-time market-based salary adjustment based on the scope of the position, operational responsibilities of the Clerk's Office, evaluation feedback, and market comparison information.

Discussion on the City Clerk's performance evaluation included compensation survey data, professional certifications, and compensation proposal. The City Clerk was commended for her leadership, professionalism, organizational stability, responsiveness, and contributions to the City during her first year of service. Discussion included the City Clerk's ongoing pursuit of the Master Municipal Clerk (MMC) designation, comparisons to compensation levels in other municipalities, and considerations related to merit, market adjustments, and the City's current financial condition. Following discussion, a majority of the Commission expressed support for a 10% market adjustment to the City Clerk's base salary. The Commission also discussed proposed contract language that would align future cost-of-living and merit-based compensation adjustments with those approved for general employees, subject to satisfactory performance evaluations and Commission approval. Ms. Robustelli and City Attorney Brookes provided clarification regarding the proposed amendment and its administration. The Commission reached consensus to amend the City Clerk's employment agreement to reflect a base salary of \$107,217 and to incorporate the proposed language regarding future cost-of-living and merit-based adjustments.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No members of the public came forward.

Motion: Commissioner Causey moved, Commissioner Maldonado seconded, and the motion carried 4-1 to provide a one-time 10% market adjustment plus CPI and merit going forward for the City Clerk. Vice Mayor Robinson voted no.

7. ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

a. Discussion on shark fishing on the beach (added)

Vice Mayor Robinson discussed concerns related to shore-based shark fishing, including public safety risks associated with fishing lines, hooks, discarded gear, chumming activities, and drone use in heavily populated beach areas. She referenced reports from residents and personal observations of shark fishing occurring near swimmers and beachgoers and discussed similar regulations adopted by neighboring communities. Discussion focused on balancing public safety concerns with potential legal limitations on regulating fishing activities. It was noted that beach fishing may be protected under state law and there was interest in understanding the City's authority to regulate shark fishing, chumming, and related activities. City Attorney Brookes advised that he would prepare a legal memorandum addressing regulatory options, potential liability concerns, and relevant legal considerations for future Commission review. City Manager Robustelli noted the proposed beach ordinance already includes provisions prohibiting chumming from the beach and the improper disposal of fish carcasses. It was requested that future discussions also include the use of drones in connection with shark fishing activities and any regulatory authority the City may have over their operation on City property.

8. CITY CLERK, CITY MANAGER, CITY ATTORNEY, AND CITY COMMISSION REPORTS

Renee Rose, City Clerk – She reminded elected officials and applicable staff that Form 1 Statements of Financial Interests are due by July 1, 2026, and must be filed electronically through the State's EFDMS system. Reminder emails from the Florida Commission on Ethics will be sent in the coming weeks. Elected officials are also reminded of the annual requirement to complete four hours of ethics training. The Florida League of Cities is offering a webinar training opportunity on July 15, and Madeira Beach is hosting an in-person viewing option for those interested. Information on both options was recently distributed by email.

Frances Robustelli, City Manager – She reported that several state legislative funding requests have advanced through the legislative budget process and are waiting for the Governor's signature. The projects include \$1.5 million for Fire Station 22, \$2 million for Pass-a-Grille wastewater lift station repairs and improvements, and \$1.825 million for Boca Ciega Drive improvements. She noted that state legislators continue to advocate for the funding requests and that additional updates will be provided as information becomes available.

City Attorney Brookes – nothing to report

Commissioner Maldonado – He thanked Mayor Tate for attending his District 4 meeting.

Commissioner Causey – nothing to report

Vice Mayor Robinson – She thanked Fire Rescue staff for hosting the Fire Ops 101 program and shared appreciation for the opportunity to gain a firsthand understanding of firefighters' duties and responsibilities. She announced a community workshop on historic designation scheduled for May 28, encouraging residents to learn about the potential benefits of historic designation for qualifying properties. Additionally, she reminded residents of monthly office hours at the Library, generally held on the first Monday of each month at 5pm, with schedule adjustments announced for July and September.

Commissioner Marriott – She thanked the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office for investigating reports of illegal debris dumping on vacant and construction properties in District 1 and encouraged residents to remain vigilant and report suspicious activity. She also commented on the Memorial Day weekend, noting that the beach was well attended by families and visitors and expressing appreciation for the positive atmosphere and orderly holiday

weekend.

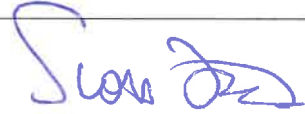
Mayor Tate – He reflected on the significance of Memorial Day and expressed appreciation for those who honored and remembered the sacrifices of military service members. He highlighted upcoming community events related to the nation’s 250th anniversary and Independence Day celebrations and expressed enthusiasm for opportunities to bring the community together through civic and recreational events.

Mayor Tate adjourned the meeting at 8:10pm

MINUTES APPROVED: JUNE 9, 2026



RENEE ROSE
CITY CLERK



SCOTT TATE
MAYOR