

# Observer Reports

August/September 2025 Voter

## City of Port Orange Council Meetings

Amy Legare reporting

**May 20, 2025**

The State of the City video was presented. The video noted highlights such as the clean audit reflecting strong financial health, stable staffing levels, progress on the Parks Bond Initiative, stormwater infrastructure improvements, enhanced transparency, ongoing city maintenance, and the dedication and hard work of City staff.

The Railroad Society of the Port Orange Depot thanked the council for the recent approval to purchase the extra property for the Port Orange Depot. The Society is trying to make the Port Orange Depot self-sustaining. They have been receiving donations as well.

A citizen expressed concerns regarding construction and wetlands in relation to the annexation of Vintage Acres which passed first reading at the last meeting on May 6, 2025. The citizen also requested the Land Development Code be revised to declare that wetlands and ponds are not buildable acreage.

Tobacco Free Volusia provided information on where to get help to quit smoking.

Two citizens spoke on flooding issues in the city. Updates on drainage projects were requested. The mayor commented that information was being added to the city's web page on stormwater projects. The city manager confirmed there is a page dedicated to stormwater on the City's website to provide updates, links about different topics of the stormwater system, how stormwater works, and a link to the County's website with County specific details.

A councilman expressed concern that citizens were not getting responses when using the county's non-emergency number.

A councilman stated that the city would no longer be adding fluoride to the city provided water as per the new state law. The city attorney stated that there would be a resolution on the fluoride topic.

### **June 3, 2025**

A citizen complained about lack of support from the city to address residential storm damage. Permits have been denied for fences and roofs for damage occurring as far back as 2022. The mayor asked for a contact person and number for the citizen to call. The city manager stated that the city development staff will contact the citizen.

The Port Orange Community Trust has awarded \$20,500 to support things like food pantries, The Beacon Center, and the youth historical society this year. The Trust also works with a junior advisory board on city activities to help the youth learn to work in the community.

A rezoning ordinance passed in support of Transform 386. The property will be rezoned to neighborhood for a single-family home to be rebuilt to the new standard of 3 feet above the original foundation.

The 2025-2026 budget was presented. Public workshops will be held in July. Public hearings will be held in September. The council will vote on the budget in September.

### **June 17, 2025**

The City Council approved funding for a School Resource Officer (SRO) despite one objection that these officers should be totally funded by the county school board. Port Orange has been the only school system without an SRO in the county.

Port Orange has exchanged property with the county school board to consolidate sports fields, making it easier for families with multiple children to attend events at one location. Public meetings will be held to discuss future property uses.

The Mayor's/City golf tournament to support youth athletic scholarships was very successful.

The City Council passed the ordinance to annex "Vintage Acres". This is a voluntary annexation. Several members of the public spoke on flooding issues in the area as a reason to not develop this property. The Council felt that annexation was one process and development was another. Council members were sensitive to the flooding concerns and want to be actively involved in the development of "Vintage Acres" so everything possible can be considered to mitigate future flooding.

## **Deland City Council**

### **Mara Whitridge reporting**

The agendas are related to flood mitigation, tree mitigation, and we have a new one this month, allowing chickens in the backyard. Also, I noticed that a lot of agendas are being continued until the following month. It looks like people are looking at how big their properties are and how many houses they can put on them.

It seems that for the tree mitigation you must replace a live oak 25 inches in diameter. So, you are required to plant one new tree as a replacement for the older tree. It must be 6 inches in DBH which is much less than 25 inches. Mitigation credits cannot typically be earned by preserving existing trees. However, in special cases, like the Deland tech park, developers can seek exceptions through planned unit development.

At the June 3 meeting of the city Council, 143 acres located just west of interstate 4 slated to become Deland tech park city Forster told commissioners that the developer submitted evidence to the tree advisor committing showing the project could not proceed without removing trees the day of the land city commission voted unanimously to allow the tree removal, following a recommendation by the tree advisory committee

At the July 7 meeting the five members of this city commission voted to approve a new seven-page law that sets out complicated rules for residence who want to enjoy fresh eggs laid in their backyard. People may keep a maximum of four chickens no roosters they need to be in roots that are on the property. The new law imposes \$100 fee

## **South Daytona**

### **Olga Hernandez reporting**

July 2025

The city has been busy addressing flooding and storm water management issues. They are working to excavate retaining ponds and installing pumps and pipes to better manage flooding like they had in prior hurricanes. This is a big priority of the Council and their Public Works department.

The undergrounding of electrical wire on route one are in the works and new landscaping is in progress. This is the main corridor of the business district and is attracting new commercial companies providing options for surrounding residents to come to the city.

# School Board of Volusia County, Florida

## Ann Harrell, Reporting

### June-July, 2025

The Volusia County School Board met in regular session on the dates listed above with Chairman Jamie Haynes presiding. Members: Ms. Jamie Haynes, District 1; Ms. Krista Goodrich, District 2; Mrs. Jessie Thompson, District 3; Donna Brosemer, District 4; and Mr. Ruben Colón, District 5. Also present: Dr. Carmen J. Balgobin, Superintendent, and School Board Attorney.

During the recent School Board meetings,

- The Volusia County School Board will restructure its calendar to hold one regular meeting a month, rather than two.
- Board members were very vocal about shortening the school board meetings.
- SOMETHING TO SHOUT ABOUT: Volusia County Schools received an overall "A" grade from the Florida Department of Education for the 2024-2025 school year, their first since 2008-2009.
- For the 2024-2025 school year, all traditional schools earned an "A", "B", or "C" grade. The number of "A" schools increased significantly.
- SPREAD THE GOOD NEWS: There are no schools in Volusia County Schools with a "D" or "F" grade, a first since the 2008-09 school year.
- All Volusia County high schools have attained an "A" or "B" rating for the first time in Volusia County history.
- Mainland High School earned its first-ever "A" rating, and T. Dewitt Taylor Middle-High School in Pierson earned its first-ever "B" rating.
- School Superintendent Dr. Carmen Balgobin stated: "When our School Board, families, staff, and community partners stand together and work hard, our students and community excel."
- Budget Challenges: The district faces a budget deficit of about \$25 million. This is attributed to factors like reduced funding from the Florida legislature and declining student enrollment, with enrollment for 2024-2025 around 57,100 students, a decrease of 897 from the previous year. For the 2025-2026 budget, VCS will use \$8

million in reserves to balance the budget, which is a significant decrease from the previous year's deficit spending.

- To address the deficit, the school board is considering options like adjusting staff ratios, boosting enrollment, and potentially consolidating schools.
- Health Insurance Change: The Volusia School Board voted to adopt a new health insurance provider, focusing on preventative care. The new health insurance provider is Curative of Texas. Curative offers a plan with no premiums, no copays, or deductibles but requires a baseline visit within 120 days.

**CHALLENGE: Name the 16 municipalities that make up Volusia County.**

The next regular School Board meeting is Tuesday, July 29, 2025, at 4:30 p.m.