



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT
New Smyrna Beach City Commission
Reported by Rice S. Wagner

May 12, 2026

The city commission opened its meeting with the New Smyrna Beach Youth Council. The seven students presented updates on work accomplished and proposed over the 25- 26 year. Funds for a proposed rock garden were approved. The initial part of the commissioners' meeting was led by a member of the youth council.

City Manager Kevin Cowper gave his report on the current state of the city. May 20 will be the groundbreaking for the Corbin Park Stormwater project. The 27th Avenue Park has reopened. May 25 the city will celebrate both Memorial Day at 10:30 AM and on July 4 the 250th anniversary of the United States.

The 26-27 city budget will be presented in September, and the first public workshop will take place on July 16th. NSB's Strategic Plan can be found on the city's website.

A follow-up on previous public input included how funding was being used for the Westside Stormwater Projects, the need for sidewalks beachside and a request from a citizen to use fire hydrants in a more patriotic manner. (The Utility Commission employees will be holding a contest which will be completed before July 4th.)

Items brought up by citizens at this meeting included positive input on the city's purchase of land adjoining Myrtle Avenue Park. Praise was given for the city's 'clean audit'.

Thanks to the 2026 Mike Martin Pro/Am Surf and Skate Festival (April 9-12), over \$25,000 was raised through the Safari Club for scholarships. The event attracted over 2K attendees and 800K views in the media.

Concerns by citizens included—

1. The height of hedges next to roads needs a limit
2. The city is being questioned as to why residents are charged for FOYA requests, one in particular, returning the information three months later and asking for a \$600 payment to review the paperwork
3. Some type of education should be provided for e-bike riders
4. A policy should be in place regarding data centers (space, water, electricity, etc.)
5. Toilet to tap best done in retention ponds, not drinking water

The NSB Youth Council was then dismissed and the regular city commission continued with a report from City Manager Cowper.



Cowper spoke to the advantages of buying the property next to the Myrtle Avenue Park. The land is underused and could provide a positive gateway to the city. It would serve as a catalyst to other land in the area. Community meetings will be held to determine future use.

Purchase tied to the Turnbull Creek Conservation Lands was made in an ongoing effort to preserve area land. This is an effort to preserve the Turnbull Bay Watershed and promote sustainable development. Tony Miller, NSB's new natural resources coordinator, wants to develop a management program (fire lines, ditches).

Much time was spent discussing the approval of a PUD four 11.3 acres located along 44 and Myrtle Avenue. Note that the PUD must meet all items in the Land Development Code. This is the possible site of a Sprouts store and other businesses in the shopping area. Although some residents in the area opposed the proposed development, several positives were discussed. They included 1. Sustainable development preserving the historic nature of the area. 2. Redevelopment of the brown field left by the railroad (not paid for by taxpayers). 3. Butterfly garden and the preservation of historic trees. This project is seen as infill rather than supporting urban sprawl. It will help to better balance the tax base (currently 86% residential). The projection is for the creation of 250 jobs. Concerns by the public included possible flooding and traffic issues plus homeless encampments. Mayor Cleveland emphasized the importance of stormwater control, leaching of chemicals into the aquifer, trains that 'stop' the town and high density under L1 zoning.

The vote was 4-1 (Martin-no) to allow the PUD with the requirement that the changed site plan come before the City Commission when completed.

The second major issue of the evening was the revision of Land Development Regulations which relate to houses of worship and religious land use. Currently there are no limits for growth of churches, specifically in residential areas. The city has proposed a guideline based on occupancy which would put the churches more in line with neighborhoods and help prevent overgrowth in areas occupied by homes. The vote was 5-0 in favor of establishing limitations.

The meeting adjourned at 10 PM as the city mandates. Any unfinished business will be handled at the next meeting scheduled for May 26.

May 26, 2026

Dates to remember—Budget Workshops July 14th and 16th



Groundbreaking for the Corbin Park Stormwater Project took place and there was a ribbon cutting for the completion of the 27th Avenue Park.

During Public Participation a number of residents spoke in favor of supporting WastePro in the new contract phase of waste management for New Smyrna Beach. Of particular concern was the elimination of recycling for city residents and the loss of the many community outreaches which WastePro has provided over the last twenty years including areas such as the Marine Discovery Center. Beyond that, there will be a limit on garbage and yard waste amounts. The one action that seemed to determine the Commissioners' votes was the fact that WastePro did not question the vote during the appeals time frame. Citizens requested an explanation for why and how rates were changed. In regard to recycling, citizen drop-off will be provided at a fire station on beachside and on Turnbull on the mainland. Glass will now be accepted. One reason for dropping recycling is that 37 to 47% was unusable because it was determined to be contaminated (not washed).

Note that a consultant was hired to help the city make a final decision on the waste contract. WastePro was \$14.84 (per customer) higher than FCC, which came in at \$25.43. Concern was expressed regarding the wide gap, and the Commission will be checking to see that the contract is fully implemented. Commissioners McGuirk and Martin recommended that a public workshop covering waste management be implemented.

Citizens expressed concern over the cut in the amount of reimbursement given to residents who use solar panels. No grandfather provision was allowed, and in one case caused the solar panel payoff to go from five to thirteen years. People want to know how and why this happened.

Ordinance 25-26 was adopted. It relates to local churches and how they can expand in the future.

Annette Taylor was appointed to the Planning and Zoning Board and Anna Cardice is now on the Historic Preservation Board.

Under Commissioner comments, Lisa Martin again requested a letter which would indicate the city's disapproval of a data center. Kudos to Mayor Cleveland for his handling of the Memorial Day service. And the city clerk reminded everyone to make sure that his or her voter registration card is updated.