



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

Port Orange City Council

Reported by Amy Legare

February 3, 2026

The consent agenda was passed unanimously. Five items supported the city's resiliency projects. Two for stormwater management. Two for wetland mitigation to support a pump station upgrade. One approves the Florida Department of Environmental Protection grant agreement for \$1.4 M for the upgrade of the Ponce Inlet master lift station and replacement of wastewater pipes. A resident commented on the wetlands mitigation/pump station project questioning the recording of the property in the public record.

A resident spoke on the Let Volusia Vote campaign regarding the discharge of treated wastewater into the aquifer. The resident asked Council members to sign a petition, released on Sunday, stating over development is a concern, and citizens should have a voice in whether treated wastewater is discharged into the aquifer.

Council explained that, as part of the wetlands/pump station project requirements approved in the consent agenda, the city must provide mitigation. The designated land will remain in its current natural state in perpetuity and cannot be sold or developed. When the mitigation bank was established, it was assigned a specific number of credits, and the city cannot alter the property in any way. Council noted that these actions represent the final steps necessary for the city to obtain the required permit to begin construction on the project this spring.

Regarding the treated wastewater concerns, Council clarified that the city does not pump wastewater into the aquifer nor does the city plan to. The city utilizes reclaimed water ponds rather than discharging wastewater into the river. The City of Daytona Beach conducted a pilot program to determine whether the wastewater could be treated to state-required standards, the city did not distribute treated wastewater to their residents. The state now requires municipalities and counties to submit plans by 2028, outlining how they will cease discharging wastewater into surface waters. If a plan is not submitted, discharge must stop immediately; however, jurisdictions that submit an approved plan may have until 2032 to comply. Many years ago, the City of Port Orange discontinued surface water discharge and instead purchased property to create reclaimed water ponds, allowing treated wastewater to be reused for irrigation purposes.

The city manager was asked to review the county council meeting video/minutes held on February 3, 2026, for policies related to Volusia and Florida Forever legislation and provide information to the city council.

Council approved the resolution for the sale of property to Florida Department of Transportation. Council suggested that proceeds from this sale be reinvested into purchasing land for stormwater projects.

The first reading of Ordinance No. 2026-1, to amend water service code related to private water systems, was followed by several residents expressing concern that the residents who own the



homes but not the property would be saddled with the costs of upgraded water pipes and meters. Council clarified that, under state law, park owners are not permitted to upcharge the city's water fees. The amount charged to residents must be the same as the rate charged by the city. Council clarified that the obligation for mobile home parks to maintain their private water systems is already established in the City Code and is not being changed by the proposed action. Florida statutes state that it is illegal for park owners to increase water bills beyond actual costs. The only permissible charges are for direct expenses, such as hiring a third party for services or covering maintenance and repair costs associated with their private infrastructure. Most RV and mobile home parks are already operating in accordance with the proposed Ordinance change. Council explained that the private parks have both a master meter and sub-meters; however, approximately half of the meters within the five parks do not function. As a result, the city has been estimating water usage because they cannot replace meters located on private property. The infrastructure in question is privately owned and located on private property. City staff are prohibited from entering private property. The affected five communities will have one year to make the necessary adjustments. The motion for the first reading of Ordinance 2026-1 passed 3-1.

February 17, 2026

By Consent Agenda, the city council approved removal of a 37-inch live oak historic tree so an additional soccer field could be constructed. The city will comply with all mitigation options triggered by the removal of this tree.

By Consent Agenda, the city council approved a list of seven projects to be submitted for consideration to the Volusia-Flagler Transportation Planning Organization.

The city council recognized by proclamation both Freemanville Day and World Encephalitis Day.

Public comment was heard on the flooding to a mobile home community due to regrading at a neighboring school along with a new drain installed by the property owner.

Public comment was heard on a nuisance feral cat community.

Multiple council members were unaware of the flooding problem and feral cat community issues raised during the public participation portion of the agenda. City staff were tasked with following up with the residents' flooding issue. Police spoke to the resident regarding the feral cats before meetings end.

The second reading of Ordinance 2026-1 was passed 4-1. This ordinance clarifies the rules and procedures for the installation of master meters, billing for master meter accounts, and maintenance of private water systems within the city. Properties out of compliance will have one year to come into compliance. Public comment was heard concerning a mobile home community getting conflicting information from the city versus the property owner as to who owns the water meters.

Council approved three property purchases to facilitate flood mitigation efforts.