



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

DeBary City Council

Reported by Val Bruneel

Date: May 6, 2026

Time: 6:30 PM

Summary

The DeBary City Council approved the first reading of a proposed ordinance establishing a city Land Bank Program referendum for the November 2026 ballot. The meeting also included presentations from the Good Samaritan Clinic and Volusia League of Cities, approval of several consent agenda items, discussion regarding school board property issues, and approval to convert a part-time Growth Management planning technician position to full-time.

Public Participation

Resident Chris Schaefer spoke regarding concerns with code enforcement, alleging retaliation following a special magistrate dismissal of a prior code case and describing difficulties obtaining responses from city staff. City Manager Carmen Rosamonda agreed to facilitate a meeting with the residents to address concerns.

Resident Gary Cruz urged Council to consider placing a city charter amendment on the ballot to prohibit treated wastewater from being used as drinking water or injected into the aquifer, citing concerns overgrowth and water quality. He referenced similar efforts in other jurisdictions and requested Council direct the city attorney to prepare language for a future meeting.

Presentations

Representatives from the Good Samaritan Clinic of West Volusia provided an overview of services available to uninsured adults. The clinic, a faith-based nonprofit serving the area for 19 years, provides free medical, dental, and elder care services to qualifying uninsured residents living below 300% of the federal poverty level. Representatives emphasized that many clients are working individuals and families facing financial hardship rather than only homeless or indigent populations. Council members noted the clinic's relatively broad eligibility requirements and encouraged residents in need to seek assistance.

Mayor Nancy Miller of Daytona Beach Shores, serving as President of the Volusia League of Cities, presented Home Rule Hero Awards recognizing municipal advocacy efforts during the state legislative session. Mayor Karen Chasez and City Manager Carmen Rosamonda were recognized for legislative advocacy, including participation in



Tallahassee on municipal issues. Miller also noted Vice Mayor Phyllis Butlien's ongoing service with the Volusia League of Cities and prior recognition of Economic Development Director Sheri Grant.

Public Hearing

Ordinance No. 02-2026: DeBary Land Bank Program Referendum (First Reading)

Council approved the first reading of Ordinance No. 02-2026, which would place a referendum on the November 3, 2026 ballot asking voters whether to establish a DeBary Land Bank Program funded by an ad valorem tax between 0.20 and 0.50 mills. If approved by voters, the program would be used for conservation, preservation, limited non-residential redevelopment, and strategic land acquisition intended to help manage growth and maintain community character.

Growth Management Director Steven Bapp and City Manager Carmen Rosamonda presented the proposal, emphasizing that the city is nearing buildout and faces increasing state preemption of local land-use authority through legislation such as the Live Local Act. Staff stated the program would provide an additional tool to proactively preserve open space, acquire environmentally sensitive land, address neglected non-residential properties, and respond to development pressures that local governments increasingly have limited authority to regulate. Staff highlighted prior city acquisitions, including Alexander Island, Palm Drive, and other properties purchased to prevent development or preserve open space.

Council discussion focused heavily on state limitations on municipal growth management authority and concerns over increasing density, traffic, and redevelopment pressures. Council members emphasized that the proposal would go directly to voters, prohibit eminent domain, prohibit borrowing against program revenues, require public approval for acquisitions, and include sunset and review provisions. The program would be reevaluated every four years by Council and would expire in 2039 unless extended by referendum.

Council Member Sell stated that purchasing land is increasingly one of the few remaining methods available to prevent unwanted development due to state legislative changes. Council Member Papalardo characterized the proposal as a significant conservation and growth-management measure and emphasized its voter approval, funding restrictions, and transparency provisions. Vice Mayor Butlien stressed the need for public education about the proposal, noting interest from neighboring municipalities. Mayor Chasez stated that, given the current legal environment, the proposal represented one of the few remaining ways for the city to influence future development patterns.



No public comments were offered during the hearing. Council approved the first reading unanimously, 5-0. The ordinance will return for second reading on May 20, 2026.

Consent Agenda

Council unanimously approved the consent agenda, including:

- Amendment to the Florida Greenways and Trails easement agreement for Bill Keller Park
- Resolution 2026-02 adopting the City of DeBary Disability and Nondiscrimination Policy and Procedures
- Memorandum of Understanding among D&E Restoration Services, BTR DeBary Owner, EHOV DeBary, and the City of DeBary
- Continuing contract with Chinchor Electric, Inc. for traffic signal construction and communications equipment services

New Business

Growth Management Planning Technician Position

Council unanimously approved converting a part-time Planning Technician position in the Growth Management Department to a full-time benefits-eligible position effective May 17, 2026. Human Resources Director Wendy Cullen cited increased workload associated with permitting, development review committee support, code enforcement coordination, business tax receipts, façade grants, and major city projects including Town Park, City Center, and the mobility plan.

Mayor Chazez noted that the city historically avoids adding staff positions to limit costs and maintain lower taxes, emphasizing that DeBary continues to operate with significantly fewer staff than neighboring jurisdictions. The city expects to maintain fewer than 50 total positions despite continued growth.

Council Member Reports / Communications

Council members discussed several community topics, including the city's cleanup of the former Bank of America property, the Donald E. Smith Trail extension, Arbor Day tree giveaways, volunteer activities at the Gateway Center, and an upcoming community mural project tied to America250 celebrations.

Council Member Sell requested an update regarding Volusia County Schools property acquisitions near Spring Vista. Rosamonda stated the city continues to oppose school construction on the 22-acre Spring Vista parcel, maintaining that previous council denials regarding land-use consistency remain in effect. He reported the school board recently



approved sale of the separate 48-acre Buckley property to a private development group and defended the city against criticism that DeBary opposes schools, outlining past efforts to secure school facilities in the city.

Council Member Stevenson requested clarification regarding the feasibility of pursuing a city policy related to wastewater reuse following public comments earlier in the meeting. Staff indicated the city may have limited authority because Volusia County controls water utilities.

City Manager Rosamonda announced that staff from Senator Rick Scott's office would visit City Hall on May 19 to assist residents and participate in Citizens Academy programming.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned following council and staff reports.