LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF VOLUSIA COUNTY

OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

DeBary City Council

Reported by Val Bruneel

September 2, 2026

Public participation

There was no public participation for items on or off the agenda.

Minutes approved

Council unanimously approved the August 5, 2026 City Council Meeting minutes and August 19, 2026 Special City Council Meeting minutes.

Presentation

DeBary Foundation annual update

DeBary Foundation Chair Jim Old reported that the independent nonprofit has shifted from a single-project organization to a community partnership model organized around four strategic pillars. Current and planned work includes the Bricks of Honor program, trail and bicycle-safety initiatives, human-trafficking education, support for Boys and Girls Club programming, Alexander Island projects and City wayfinding signs.

The Foundation has developed five partnerships, expanded its volunteer and professional support, and is completing a strategic plan with performance measures. Old said contributions had passed $30,000 and were approaching $40,000. Council praised the progress, while Council Member Stevenson cautioned against taking on more work than the organization can sustain.

Consent agenda

Council unanimously approved items 3 through 6: contracts with three sports officiating vendors; a three-year renewal with Ballard Partners for lobbying services at $78,000 annually; an agreement allowing traffic and parking enforcement on specified private roads in Spring Walk at the Junction; and DebrisTech, LLC as the City's primary disaster debris monitoring contractor.

The Ballard Partners item is notable to League interests because staff credited the firm's legislative advocacy and assistance securing more than $23 million in state and federal grants. The Spring Walk agreement extends public enforcement authority onto designated private roads, while the DebrisTech contract supports disaster response and FEMA reimbursement requirements.

New business

Agenda Item 7: House Bill 1329 budget requirements

The City Manager previewed the Local Government Financial Transparency and Accountability Act, effective January 1, 2027. Before final budget adoption, local governments must hold a workshop examining how the following fiscal year's budget could be reduced by 10 percent without harming essential police and fire services. Findings or a recording must be posted online at least 14 days before adoption. DeBary's formal exercise will occur between July 15 and September 1, 2027.

Using the proposed fiscal year 2026-2027 budget, staff calculated that a 10 percent reduction would equal $2,382,777 from approximately $23.8 million in expenses. The City Manager emphasized that the law requires the exercise, not an actual 10 percent cut. He also said the City

spent approximately $29,000 on software to meet the law's expanded budget-display and transparency requirements.

Potential reductions included infrastructure and maintenance projects, replacement equipment, community events and discretionary programs. Staff and Council discussed the consequences of delaying stormwater work, road resurfacing, park repairs, equipment replacement and the aging Bill Keller Park pump station. Concerns included flooding, worker safety, liability, higher contracting costs and deterioration of public assets. Several members suggested sponsorships could help preserve community events.

Council Member Pappalardo estimated that a 10 percent millage reduction would save the median DeBary household approximately $58.56 per year, or less than $5 per month. Council members generally agreed that DeBary's lean budget leaves few reductions that would not affect services or quality of life.

The discussion also highlighted home-rule concerns. Council members said statewide requirements intended to address spending elsewhere can burden cities that already operate efficiently. Mayor Chasez and the City Manager separately warned that Amendment 3 could further reduce future property-tax revenue and urged residents to understand its local effects.

There was no public participation. No formal action was taken.

Council and staff reports

Council members reported attending local business, economic-development and transportation events. Mayor Chasez announced a September 9 ribbon cutting for the new 1.3-mile Highbanks Road trail segment and noted that the City will maintain it after opening.

The City Manager reminded the public that the September 9 Special City Council Meeting would include the tentative budget and millage rate. The City Attorney had no report.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.