



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

DeBary City Council

Reported by Val Bruneel

June 3, 2026

Public participation

There was no public participation for items not on the agenda.

Minutes approved

Council approved the minutes from April 1, 2026, City Council Meeting, the May 6, 2026, City Council Meeting, and the May 20, 2026, Special City Council Meeting.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Presentations

The City recognized the 2026 Citizen's Academy graduates. Staff noted this was the seventh Citizen's Academy class and that approximately 175 residents have graduated from the program since it began in 2021.

Consent agenda

Council Member Stevenson requested that Item 6 be pulled from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

Council approved the remaining Consent Agenda items:

Agenda Item 4: East Highbanks Townhomes MOU

Council approved a Memorandum of Understanding between the City and the developer related to required offsite improvements for the East Highbanks Townhomes project.

Agenda Item 5: FDOT State Rights of Way Maintenance Agreement

Council approved Resolution No. 2025-13 for the State Rights of Way maintenance contract.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 6: 4th of July Media Promotion Agreement

Parks and Recreation presented an agreement with iHeart Media, Inc. and XL 106.7 to promote the City's 4th of July event. The agreement includes promotional



announcements, social media posts, website calendar listings, and an on-site station presence. The City's cost is \$650 for a DJ/MC.

Council discussed expected attendance, crowd control, parking, shuttles, and public safety planning. Staff stated the event typically draws an estimated 4,000 to 5,000 people and that shuttles, additional law enforcement, fire safety support, and communication with shuttle operators would be used to manage the event.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Public hearings

Agenda Item 7: St. John's River Estates Special Residential Neighborhood Improvement District

Council approved the second reading of Ordinance No. 05-2026 to place two questions on the November 3, 2026, ballot for affected voters in St. John's River Estates. The first question is whether to create the Special Residential Neighborhood Improvement District. The second question is whether, if the district is approved, it may impose a special assessment of up to \$500 per parcel per year.

Staff explained that this was a resident-initiated request verified by the Volusia County Supervisor of Elections. The district would be intended to help address neighborhood streets and drainage deficiencies.

There was no public participation.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 8: Meadowlea Overlay District minimum lot size

Council approved the second reading of Ordinance No. 06-2026, reducing the minimum lot size in the Meadowlea Overlay District to 4,200 square feet.

Staff explained that many lots in the Leisure World Park/Meadowlea area are under the 5,000 square foot minimum required by the underlying MH-5 zoning, making many existing lots non-conforming. Staff stated the ordinance does not increase density or create additional lots, but makes existing lots conforming for lot size.

There was no public participation.

Vote: Approved unanimously.



Agenda Item 9: Form-Based Code Overlay District setbacks and frontage

Council approved the first reading of Ordinance No. 07-2026, adjusting setback and frontage requirements in the Form-Based Code Overlay Districts.

Staff explained that the current code can be difficult to apply to corner lots and parcels with three street frontages, especially along U.S. 17/92. The proposed changes create more workable standards for street side setbacks and building frontage requirements while maintaining the intent of the Form-Based Code.

Council members generally described the item as a cleanup or housekeeping matter to make the code more workable in real-life redevelopment situations.

There was no public participation.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

New business

Agenda Item 10: Karen Chasez Way

Council approved Resolution No. 2026-03 recognizing Mayor Karen Chasez's accomplishments during her term as Mayor and naming the entrance road into Alexander Island Park "Karen Chasez Way" in perpetuity.

The City Manager described Mayor Chasez's leadership in the Alexander Island project, including the City's efforts to prevent the property from being developed and preserve it as a nature park. Council members expressed support for the recognition.

There was no public participation.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 11: Non-Ad Valorem Fire Assessment Rate Study

Council awarded RFP 17-26 for a Non-Ad Valorem Fire Assessment Rate Study to Stantec Consulting Services, Inc. in the amount of \$57,215.

Staff explained that the study will evaluate possible funding methodologies for fire rescue services and provide implementation guidance for future Council consideration. Staff emphasized that the vote approved the study only and did not approve a fire assessment fee.



The City Manager stated the study is a proactive step in light of possible state-level changes affecting property tax revenue. Council discussed the difference between a fire impact fee and a fire assessment fee, and noted that the study would provide data before any future decision is made.

There was no public participation.

Vote: Approved unanimously.

Agenda Item 12: Fiscal Year 2026-27 Budget discussion

The City Manager gave an overview of the upcoming budget process and preliminary budget considerations. He stated the proposed budget would be provided to Council on or before July 10, with the proposed millage rate to be set at the July 15 meeting. A budget workshop is expected in August, with tentative millage and budget adoption scheduled for September 9 and final adoption scheduled for September 23.

The City Manager recommended maintaining the millage rate at 3.65 mills for FY 2026-27. He noted DeBary continues to have one of the lowest millage rates in the area and said the City operates with a lean staff of about 50 full-time employees.

Budget highlights discussed included:

1. A proposed 3.5% employee salary increase.
2. An 8.1% increase in the law enforcement contract.
3. Fire services costs, including continued planning for a new fire truck.
4. Alexander Island Park costs and the expected December 2026 grand opening.
5. Potential parks projects, including a splash pad upgrade and Rob Sullivan Park improvements.
6. A goal of increasing road resurfacing funding to \$1 million.
7. Public Works facility needs.
8. Stormwater rate study considerations and possible future fee structure changes.
9. Possible legislative appropriations for stormwater projects.

The City Manager also discussed the potential impact of proposed state property tax changes if approved by voters in November. He stated that the impact to DeBary could be approximately \$2.3 million under a \$150,000 exemption and approximately \$3.8 million under a \$250,000 exemption in future fiscal years. He outlined possible future options, including millage adjustments, a fire assessment fee, service reductions, or a combination approach.



Council members expressed concern about the possible loss of local control and the impact of state-level tax changes. Several members also noted that DeBary's lean operating model may put the City in a better position than some other municipalities, but also leaves less room for cuts.

No formal action was taken on the budget item.

Council reports

Council Member Sell had nothing to report.

Council Member Pappalardo reported attending the semi-quincentennial mural activity and noted an upcoming Volusia County opioid mitigation funding oversight committee meeting.

Council Member Stevenson had nothing to report.

Vice-Mayor Butlien reported attending Daybreak DeBary, a VCAR legislative update, the Volusia League of Cities dinner, and the Citizen's Academy meetings. She also mentioned anticipation for the opening of Fort Florida Road.

Mayor Chasez reported attending a meeting led by the Sheriff's Office fraud and detective unit. She said there will be a more focused effort on fraud prevention due to increasingly sophisticated scams, including some assisted by AI. She also disclosed that she had completed the purchase of a one-acre parcel on the community church property at West Highbanks Road and Fort Florida Road, which related to prior votes from which she had recused herself.

Staff reports

The City Manager had nothing to report.

The City Attorney had nothing to report.

Upcoming meeting

The next Special City Council Meeting is scheduled for June 17, 2026, at 6:30 p.m.