

Observer Reports

June/July 2025 Voter

Ormond Beach Commission

Susan Bayley reporting

April 1, 2025

Most of this long meeting dealt with the commission's decision to end fluoridation of the city's water system. There was a public hearing on this matter so commissioners heard from several local dentists, pediatric dentists and Medicaid officers about how important fluoridated water is for children. Two commissioners suggested that this issue be placed on the next ballot, but all commissioners eventually decided to approve this ordinance. Former commissioner Kent (now on the Volusia County council) again voiced strong support for taking fluoride out of the city's waste.

Commissioners voted, not unanimously, to increase the limit in which the city can make purchases without commission approval \$25,000 to \$75,000. It hasn't been increased for 30 years. Commissioners realized from resident comments that the city must do more to enforce codes in residential neighborhoods.

April 15, 2025

A resident, Jennifer Bright, attends commission meetings, always making a three-minute presentation outlining in detail concerns about city spending. At this meeting, she also spoke twice regarding ordinances and the city budget: 1) she had read 2,000 pages concerning the preservation of public spaces and 2) she had read another 2,000 pages of the city's budget. Commissioners made no comments on her presentations.

Commissioners want overnight sleeping in tents to align with state law. They tabled discussion on its employee benefits package, wondering whether bids should only come from local vendors and whether the package should continue to be 10 years or lowered to five.

May 6, 2025

A rather unusual meeting in that commissioners asked questions of some of the people who spoke for three minutes on a variety of topics, something that is not usually done:

Storm drains, a particular problem after hurricane Milton: Tolland and other commissioners said that the assistant manager is working with the home owners

association on one of the complaints. Another resident reported this as an ongoing problem.

First Step Shelter: All commissioners were bothered to know that local media have been reporting that the city might end its financial support when they don't want to do this. A councilman from Ponce Inlet urged the commission to continue supporting the shelter, while First Step executive director urged the city to continue its support. Commissioners decided to send the Shelter a letter confirming its financial support so that it arrives before the next board meeting of First Step.

City of Port Orange Council Meetings

Ann Harrell reporting

April 1, 2025

Memorandum of Agreement with Immigration and Customs Enforcement – Public comment concerning the power and authority to interrogate and arrest without warrant. To the citizen it sounds like the wild west when a sheriff gathers a posse to pursue a criminal. The citizen asked for a better explanation of the activities and the impacts on the city and police force. No comment from the council members.

Council acknowledged the Arthaus Down Under painting project to beautify the bridge support structures in the parking area for restaurants under the Dunlawton bridge on the peninsula.

April 15, 2025

The council awarded a certificate to an employee of Circle K for thwarting a \$10,000 bitcoin scam of an elderly couple.

Members of the Academy of Law and Government at Atlantic High School attended the council meeting and were acknowledged by council members for being interested in public service and government.

A police officer was recognized for outstanding academic achievement at Daytona State College (DSC) and being inducted into the DSC Hall of Fame for performing lifesaving first aid while sustaining an injury.

A Police officer has been selected as the Volusia League of Cities Employee of the Year in Public Safety for the entire County.

City employees found a more cost-effective way to treat water. Instead of having to dispose of waste lime from the water treatment process they found a process that produces sand instead of lime. The sand can be used for sandbags. This is a \$800,000 savings.

Council reported on **First Step Shelter** <https://firststepshelter.org/> and its importance to the entire county, not just the City of Port Orange. The City Council and citizens should continue to support the shelter.

May 6, 2025

Port Orange sponsors a university to educate residents on how the city works. It was established in 2017. Weekly classes begin every March. The program lasts about 2 months.

A proclamation was passed for Water Safety Month. Florida offers a voucher for free swimming lessons to eligible families with children under 4 years of age.

Arthaus Foundation artwork is progressing on the bridge support structures under the Dunlawton Bridge. The official unveiling of the art project was May 23, 2025.

Two citizens spoke out regarding flooding issues in their respective neighborhoods. Both citizens expressed concern that the city was not addressing flooding issues. Council members did not provide feedback.

The council discussed changes to the water bill. If everyone received and paid the water bill electronically it could save the city close to \$200,000 in mailing costs. Concerns were raised regarding the possibility of fraud and how some senior citizens would prefer paper transactions. The council agreed to discuss this matter at the June 17 regular meeting.

The council would like to partner with homeowners associations to exchange information on fraudulent service contractors.

The Port Orange Environmental Advisory Board would like the city to consider a residential Adopt-a-drain program like the one in Daytona Beach. The Board will be giving away native butterfly bushes at the fall festival. The Board is very supportive of ECHO and Volusia Forever and will present information on the acreage in the Volusia Forever program at a future council meeting.

There was a first reading of Ordinance No. 2025-14 for voluntary annexation of 56.5 acres near Airport Rd. There is controversy regarding changing zoning from agricultural to residential, the density of future residential development, impacts on flooding, and the burden on fire and police services. The Ordinance unanimously pass the council.

The council reported that the Volusia/Flagler Transportation Planning Organization will be constructing roundabouts to make intersections safer. There will be a roundabout built at the intersection of Tomoka Farm Rd and Pioneer Trail where there is currently a 4-way stop.

Deland City Council

Mara Whitridge reporting

The council decided to join the class action legislation for PTSA along with Deltona.

84 units of affordable housing where the Putman Hotel was. 13 units are set aside for people transitioning from the Neighborhood Center. City staff recommended they deny it because of lack of parking only 94 plus 52 bike spaces. The city council approved it 3-1. Looking for more 24-hour parking closer.

South Daytona

Olga Hernandez reporting

South Daytona's motto is "Small city... Big possibilities".

The South Daytona Council has been very engaged in preparing their small city for the coming hurricane season. The city is bordered by the Halifax River which flooded several neighborhoods in the last three hurricanes. They have been deepening the retention ponds and scooping the swales to give potential flood waters a place to drain. New pumps have been or are being replaced to better handle the water.

The commission is also very concerned about state legislative attack on home rule changes, especially to local development autonomy.

School Board of Volusia County, Florida

Ann Harrell, Reporting

The Volusia County School Board met in regular session on April 22, 2025, with Chairman Haynes presiding. All Board members in attendance as well as Dr. Carmen Balgobin, Superintendent and Dr. Gilbert Evans, School Board Attorney.

Highlights of the April 22, 2025 meeting:

- Addition Financial Credit Union presented Volusia County Schools a \$10,000 check as part of their Co-Branded Debit Card Program with Volusia County Schools
- that give 3 cents back to VCS for every transaction made.
- Hot topic: After a very lengthy discussion with public comments (both pros and cons) the Board approved a contract to purchase 6.44 acres plus 18.97 acres of the Spring Vista site in Debary for the Enterprise Elementary replacement school. Motion carried with 4 in favor and 1 against.

The next regular school board meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, June 3, 2025 at 4:30 p.m. Administration Complex, 200 N. Clara Ave., Deland, FL 32720, phone: 386-734-7190.

DID YOU KNOW? The last day of school for students is May 28, 2025.