



OBSERVER CORPS REPORT

DeBary City Council

Reported by Val Bruneel

March 4, 2026

Public participation (non-agenda items)

No speakers.

Minutes Approved:

Feb. 4, 2026 regular meeting

Feb. 18, 2026 special meeting

Vote: 5-0

Presentations:

Annual Comprehensive Financial Report – FY 2025 (James Moore & Co.)

Auditors presented the city's annual financial audit. Results:

- Unmodified opinion issued (clean audit).
- No findings related to internal controls or compliance.
- Federal and state grant audits showed no non-compliance.

Financial highlights:

- FY 2025 expenditures and transfers out totaled about \$20 million.
- Unassigned general fund balance equaled about 77% of expenditures (approximately 284 days of reserves).
- Property taxes accounted for about 35% of general fund revenue.
- Public safety accounted for roughly 45% of expenditures.

Council members thanked the finance department and auditors for the clean audit and strong financial management. The mayor noted the city's financial condition has improved significantly over the past several years and recognized council members for maintaining reserves while completing major projects without adding debt.

New business:

2045 Comprehensive Plan updates

Growth Management Director Steven Bapp presented revisions to several elements of the Comprehensive Plan required under state law.

Changes discussed included:

- Adjusting land use classifications so existing developments match current density levels (DeBary Villas and Riverside condos).
- Splitting public institutional land use into separate education and recreation categories.



- Reclassifying certain city properties including the fire station and environmentally sensitive lands.
- Updating economic development language based on earlier council feedback.
- Maintaining the city's road level-of-service standard at D rather than allowing E.
- Updating capital improvement projects and funding timelines.

Council discussion focused mainly on transportation levels of service. The mayor emphasized that the city should continue striving for level of service D rather than accepting failing road conditions. Staff stated they are reviewing traffic data and potential mitigation measures.

No vote taken. First reading of the ordinance is expected April 1.

Proposed DeBary Land Bank Program

Staff presented a proposed land bank program intended for a voter referendum in November 2026.

Key features:

- Funding through a scalable millage rate between 0.2 and 0.5 mills.
- Council would set the annual rate.
- Program reviewed every four years.
- Voter referendum required after 12 years to continue the program.

Program focus:

- Preservation of land in its natural state.
- Conservation through easements or environmental protection.
- Redevelopment of abandoned or underutilized properties.

Council discussion generally supported the concept. Members discussed potential funding levels, redevelopment goals, and safeguards on how funds could be used.

The mayor expressed concern about including eminent domain authority in the redevelopment section and stated she would prefer removing it from the program.

Council consensus supported moving forward with the proposal for further review. First reading of the referendum ordinance is scheduled for April 1, with a target of placing the measure on the November 2026 ballot.

Board committee appointment:

Hometown Heroes Selection Committee

Bobby Rountree appointed. Staff noted he was honored as a veteran in November 2025 and has lived in DeBary for more than 11 years.

Vote: 5-0



Council reports:

Sell: none

Pappalardo: thanked staff and council for advancing the land bank proposal.

Stevenson: none

Butlien: attended Daybreak in DeBary chamber event, State of the County event, and participated in a Florida League of Cities advocacy committee meeting.

Mayor Chalez: proposed a community mural project for the nation's 250th anniversary. The project would include a large tile mural with 200 community-painted tiles and be unveiled during the Fourth of July celebration before installation at Memorial Park. The mayor plans to personally fund the project through a donation to Gateway Center for the Arts. Council supported the project by consensus.

Staff reports:

City Manager: bridge construction project remains on schedule and notice of commencement signed for the Alexander Island entrance project.

City Attorney: none.