# TOWN OF PALM BEACH

## Minutes of the Special Town Council Meeting
## Held on July 16, 2026

### CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 09:31 AM in the Town Council Chambers.

**Members Present**: Bridget Moran, Ted Cooney, Lewis Crampton, Danielle Moore, Julie Araskog, Nicki McDonald

Staff Present: Kirk Blouin, Carolyn Stone, Bob Miracle, Kelly Churney, and Town Attorney Joanne O'Connor

### INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Town Clerk Churney led the invocation, and Council President Cooney led the Pledge of Allegiance.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA

**A motion was made by Council President Pro-Tem Crampton and seconded by Council Member McDonald to approve the agenda as presented. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.**

### COMMENTS

1. MAYOR AND TOWN COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mayor Moore thanked Deputy Town Manager Bob Miracle and staff for the clear and informative budget presentation. She also noted the uncertainty surrounding the proposed property tax reform legislation and its potential implications, emphasizing the importance of the budget discussion. Additionally, she reminded residents who will be away during the election on August 18 to request a vote-by-mail ballot before the application deadline.

2. PUBLIC - 3 MINUTE LIMIT

Rick Salvadore and Skip Aldridge, Co-Chairs of the Citizens Association of Palm Beach, outlined the organization's three budget priorities for Fiscal Year 2027. He urged the Town to address safety concerns along Reach 8 caused by erosion and exposed structural remnants, continue improvements to the deteriorated sidewalk south of the Lake Worth Bridge, and pursue a collaborative, long-term approach to shoreline resilience involving Town staff, the Shore Protection Board, and the Citizens Association. They thanked the Town Council and staff for their continued support.

## GENERAL BUSINESS

3. Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Budget

Town Manager Kirk Blouin introduced the Fiscal Year 2027 budget workshop, explaining that the purpose of the session was to review the proposed budget and ensure alignment before the September budget hearings. He thanked Deputy Town Manager Bob Miracle and staff for their work preparing the budget and presentation and noted that he would provide clarification or historical context as needed during the discussion.

Deputy Town Manager Bob Miracle presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2027 budget, outlining projected revenues, expenditures, staffing recommendations, capital improvements, equipment replacement, and reserve balances. He proposed reducing the millage rate from 2.6110 to 2.5345, noting that the recommendation would result in no tax increase for homesteaded properties while continuing to support essential Town services. Mr. Miracle explained that property tax revenues remain the Town's primary source of funding and reviewed the major revenue and expenditure changes, including salary and benefit adjustments, contractual services, capital transfers, and equipment replacement. He discussed the recommendation to add new staff positions, including bringing certain landscaping services in-house to improve service quality, operational flexibility, and achieve long-term cost savings, while also highlighting positions that were deferred pending further evaluation. Mr. Miracle reviewed planned vehicle and equipment replacements, highlighting the extraordinary increases in acquisition costs and extended delivery times for public safety and public works equipment, which continue to place pressure on the Town's long-term capital planning. He also summarized the proposed Capital Improvement Program, including ongoing investments in roads, utilities, facilities, parks, and coastal infrastructure, identified projects included and excluded from the proposed budget, and concluded with an overview of the Town's reserve balances, emphasizing the Town's strong financial position. Town Manager Kirk Blouin provided historical context regarding service delivery, the transition from contracted to in-house services, when cost-effective, and the Town's continued commitment to maintaining critical infrastructure through long-term capital planning.

Council members thanked staff for the comprehensive budget presentation and expressed appreciation for the collaborative budget development process. There was broad support for the recommendation to bring certain landscaping services in-house, citing anticipated long-term cost savings, improved quality control, and operational efficiency. Council members also discussed staffing needs within the Planning, Zoning, and Building Department, particularly in light of new state permitting requirements, rising costs, and extended delivery times for public safety vehicles and equipment, future capital improvement priorities, the proposed Bethesda-by-the-Sea traffic signal, the Lake Trail elevation project, and the importance of maintaining adequate reserve balances.

The Council engaged in extensive discussion regarding the proposed millage rate reduction. Council President Pro Tem Crampton expressed support for reducing the millage rate as proposed, citing the Town's history of budget surpluses, rising property values, strong reserve balances, improved pension funding, stabilized healthcare costs, and the desire to continue reducing the tax burden on residents while demonstrating fiscal stewardship. The remaining Council members generally favored maintaining the current millage rate, citing uncertainty surrounding potential state property tax reform, inflationary pressures, rising equipment and construction costs, future capital and infrastructure needs, continued pension funding, emergency preparedness, and the importance of preserving the Town's financial flexibility and reserve levels. Council members agreed that the budget was well-prepared and looked forward to continuing the discussion during the upcoming budget hearings.

Mr. Miracle presented an overview of the potential impacts of the proposed state property tax amendment on the Town's long-term financial outlook. He explained that the proposed increase in the homestead exemption and reduction of the non-homestead assessment cap could significantly reduce future property tax revenues, with an estimated annual impact of approximately $3.3 million once fully implemented. Mr. Miracle emphasized that additional legislative changes could further increase those impacts over time. He outlined potential strategies to address future revenue reductions, including expenditure reductions, increased or new user fees, special assessments, adjustments to the millage rate, or a combination of those approaches. He also compared Palm Beach's reliance on property tax revenues with other municipalities, noting that while the Town remains in a relatively strong financial position and maintains one of the lowest millage rates in the region, property taxes remain its primary source of General Fund revenue. Finally, Mr. Miracle reviewed recently adopted state legislation affecting local governments, including new budget transparency requirements, mandated budget reduction exercises, expanded online financial reporting, and future quarterly salary reporting requirements, before concluding with the schedule for the September budget hearings.

Public Works Director Jason Debrincat explained that the increased funding for the sanitary sewer ejector station program reflects rising construction costs and a long-term initiative to replace the Town's aging air-operated ejector stations with more reliable and efficient mechanical pumping systems. He noted that replacement priorities are based on comprehensive condition assessments and asset management data. During the discussion, Council asked about the flexibility of the five-year replacement schedule, and Mr. Debrincat explained that while project timing could be adjusted, the priorities are driven by engineering evaluations, asset condition, and long-term operational needs.

Council members discussed several potential capital projects and budget priorities, including improvements to the South End sidewalk, athletic field lighting, roadway resurfacing, and the proposed traffic signal at Via Bethesda. Staff responded to questions regarding project costs, funding responsibilities, and implementation timelines, noting that the Town will continue coordinating with the Florida Department of Transportation regarding the South End sidewalk and would prepare additional cost estimates for potential interim improvements. Staff also explained the history of the Via Bethesda traffic signal proposal, related funding discussions, and the status of other deferred capital projects. Council members also discussed the importance of advancing the Town's pavement management program and continuing to prioritize long-term infrastructure investments.

Council members also discussed the Town's overall budget growth over recent years and requested additional context regarding the factors contributing to increased expenditures. Staff explained that the growth reflects a combination of rising personnel and benefit costs, pension funding, healthcare expenses, inflation, increased capital project and technology investment costs, contractual services, and expanded service levels, while noting that many operational enhancements have also generated corresponding increases in revenue. Staff further confirmed that an analysis comparing contracted services with in-house staffing includes all associated personnel, equipment, and operational costs to ensure accurate financial comparisons.

Council President Cooney called for public comment.

Mark Zeidman, 229 Barton Avenue, encouraged the Council to maintain the current millage rate, citing uncertainty surrounding the proposed property tax amendment, future capital funding needs, and potential revenue shortfalls. He emphasized the importance of maintaining the Town's strong financial position, stable tax policy, and high level of services while avoiding the need for future millage increases or deferred infrastructure projects.

Kristy Pressly, Counsel for the Breakers and a resident of Seaspray Avenue, spoke in support of the proposed Via Bethesda traffic signal, emphasizing that it is a public-safety improvement benefiting pedestrians, residents, visitors, and motorists. She stated that the Breakers collaborated with Town staff on the project for several years and noted that the Breakers agreed to forgo previously budgeted improvements to help facilitate the installation of the traffic signal.

Council members continued discussing the proposed FY2027 budget, including long-term funding for the pavement management program and other future capital projects. Questions were raised regarding the Town's future bonding capacity as a potential financing option for major infrastructure improvements. Additional discussion focused on reserve levels, future budget flexibility, pension funding, and the proposed millage rate. While one Council member reiterated support for a modest millage rate reduction, the majority continued to favor maintaining the current rate, citing uncertainty surrounding the proposed state property tax amendment, future capital needs, and the importance of preserving the Town's long-term financial stability.

Council reviewed the proposed budget items and reached consensus on several funding priorities. The Council concurred with the items recommended for inclusion in the proposed budget and directed staff to maintain the current millage rate. The additional revenue generated by maintaining the current rate will be allocated equally between the Coastal Fund and the pavement management program. Council also agreed to defer consideration of the Seaview Park field lighting project, Lake Trail resiliency improvements, and other future capital initiatives pending additional information and further discussion. Staff was directed to continue evaluating the pavement management program, including funding needs and project priorities, for future budget cycles.

4. **71-2026** A Resolution Of The Town Council Of The Town Of Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, Approving A Proposed Operating Millage Rate Of 2.6110 For The Tentative Fiscal Year 2027 Budget; Approving The Computed Rolled-Back Millage Rate Of 2.4094 To Be Provided To The Property Appraiser In Accordance With F.S. 200.065; Establishing The Date, Time And Place Of The First And Final Budget Hearings To Consider The Proposed Millage Rates And Tentative Fiscal Year 2027 Budget And Directing The Town Manager To Transmit This Information To The

Property Appraiser Of Palm Beach County In Accordance With The Requirements Of F.S. 200.065.

**A motion was made by Council Member Araskog and seconded by Council Member Moran to approve Resolution 071-2026. The motion was carried unanimously, 4-1, with Council President Pro Tem Crampton dissenting.**

5. **72-2026** A Resolution of the Town Council of the Town Of Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, Amending Golf Fees for Fiscal Year 2026.

**A motion was made by Council Member Araskog and seconded by Council Member Moran to approve Resolution 072-2026. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.**

6. **73-2026** A Resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, Establishing Marina Annual and Transient Dockage Rates for the Fiscal Year 2026.

**A motion was made by Council Member Araskog and seconded by Council President Pro-Tem Crampton to approve Resolution 073-2026. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.**

7. **74-2026** A Resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, Amending Recreation Department Fees for Fiscal Year 2026.

**A motion was made by Council Member Araskog and seconded by Council President Pro-Tem Crampton to approve Resolution 074-2026. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.**

8. **75-2026** A Resolution Of The Town Council Of The Town Of Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, Relating To The Worth Avenue Improvement Project; Providing Authority, Purpose And Definitions And Interpretation; Providing Certain Findings; Establishing A Public Hearing To Consider Approval Of The Assessment Rolls And Reimposition Of The Maintenance Assessments And Their Collection Pursuant To The Uniform Assessment Collection Act; Directing The Provision Of Notice; Providing For Collection Of The Improvement Assessments And Preparation Of An Updated Improvement Assessment Roll; Establishing The Estimated Maintenance Cost And Providing For Imposition Of Maintenance Assessments For The Fiscal Year Beginning October 1, 2026; Directing Preparation Of An Updated Maintenance Assessment Roll; Directing The Method Of Collection; Providing For Revisions To Assessments; Providing Conflicts, Severability, And An Effective Date.

**A motion was made by Council Member Araskog and seconded by Council President Pro-Tem Crampton to approve Resolution 075-2026. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.**

9. **76-2026** A Resolution Of The Town Council Of The Town Of Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, Relating To Maintenance Of The Peruvian Avenue Improvement Project; Providing Authority, Purpose And Definitions And Interpretation; Providing Certain Findings; Establishing A Public Hearing To Consider Approval Of The Assessment Roll And Reimposition Of The Maintenance Assessments And Their Collection Pursuant To The Uniform Assessment Collection Act; Directing The

Provision Of Notice; Establishing The Estimated Maintenance Cost And Providing For Imposition Of Maintenance Assessments For The Fiscal Year Beginning October 1, 2026; Directing Preparation Of An Updated Maintenance Assessment Roll; Directing The Method Of Collection; Providing For Revisions To Assessments; Providing Conflicts, Severability, And An Effective Date.

**A motion was made by Council Member Araskog and seconded by Council President Pro-Tem Crampton to approve Resolution 076-2026. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.**

10. **77-2026** A Resolution Of The Town Council Of The Town Of Palm Beach, Palm Beach County, Florida, Relating To The Collection And Disposal Of Commercial Solid Waste; Establishing The Estimated Assessed Cost Against The Properties That Will Be Benefitted Thereby; Directing The Town Manager To Prepare An Updated Solid Waste Assessment Roll; Establishing **A** Public Hearing To Consider Approval Of The Assessment Roll And Reimposition Of The Service Assessments And Their Collection Pursuant To The Uniform Assessment Collection Act; Directing The Provision Of Notice; And Providing For An Effective Date.

**A motion was made by Council Member Araskog and seconded by Council President Pro-Tem Crampton to approve Resolution 077-2026. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.**

## ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Deputy Town Manager Bob Miracle announced the dates of the Town's upcoming budget hearings for the public record. The first budget hearing will be held on Tuesday, September 8, at 5:01 p.m., and the second on Thursday, September 17, at 5:01 p.m.

## ADJOURNMENT

**A motion was made by Council Member Moran and seconded by Council President Pro-Tem Crampton to adjourn the meeting at 12:40 PM. The motion was carried unanimously, 5-0.**

APPROVED:

Edward A. Cooney, Town Council President

APPROVED:

Kelly Churney, CMC, Town Clerk

Date: 8/11/26