MINUTES
City of Cocoa
Special Meeting of The City Council

July 7, 2026

A Special City Council Meeting was held on Tuesday, July 7, 2026, in Cocoa City Hall, in City Council Chambers, located at 65 Stone Street, in Cocoa, Florida, 32922, as publicly noticed.

I. Opening Matters:

Mayor Blake called the meeting to order at 5:10 p.m.

Ms. Victoria Mitchner-Jones provided the invocation, and Deputy Mayor Goins led the assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance.

The City Clerk took the roll.

PRESENT:	Michael C. Blake	Mayor
	Alex Goins	Deputy Mayor
	Lavander Hearn	Councilmember
	Lorraine Koss	Councilmember
	Patricia Weeks	Councilmember
	Anthony Garganese	City Attorney
	Stockton Whitten	City Manager
	Lori Chabot	Recording Secretary

ABSENT:

OTHER STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Abigail Morgan, Public Works Deputy Director; Rebecca Bowman, Finance Director; Charlene Neuterman, Community Services Director; Jonathan Lamm, Fire Chief; Evander Collier, Police Chief; Jack Walsh, Utilities Director; Lorne Stinnett, HR Manager; Mary Humbert, Director of Business Systems and Innovation; Samantha Senger, Communications & Economic Development Director; Mitch Lawyer, Interim Chief Technology Officer; and David Grissom, Helpdesk Support Tech.

II. Approval of Agenda and Minutes:

1. Agenda: Regular Meeting of July 7, 2026. (2026-342).

* **MOTION by Councilmember Weeks; Seconded by Councilmember Koss to approve the July 7, 2026, Special City Council meeting agenda as written.**

THE VOTE ON THE MOTION WAS:

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Goins, Hearn, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

III. Stantec's City of Cocoa Financial Analysis:

City Manager Whitten began the meeting with a brief statement about what will be covered by Stantec's Senior Manager, Peter Napoli. This will be followed by a presentation by Finance Director Rebecca Bowman.

Mr. Napoli provided a presentation[1] and began with a revenue sufficiency analysis for the General Fund, Utility Fund and Stormwater Fund to provide options and recommendations to the City Council and staff.

The General Fund Analysis began with evaluating sufficiency of revenues from property taxes and other sources to meet projected costs. This included observing operating levels per the proposed Budget annual CIP spending and a plan to increase the Fire Assessment rates.

Mayor Blake asked about ad valorum revenue and if we received it. In response, Ms. Bowman explained that the Property Appraiser's office just certified tax rolls on June 30.

Councilmember Weeks stated she would like to see a rollback in 2027.

Mr. Napoli spoke about the fire assessment roll per household and the tier 1 and tier 2 non-residential properties. He explained that there is a proposed increase of 3%, which is about $7.00 per house. The water/sewer rate analysis would be to ensure the current rate is sufficient to meet the costs of the utility. Operating reserves for utilities, debt service coverage and recommendations for Fiscal Years 2027 – 2028 were discussed as well.

[1] Exhibit A: Stantec and City of Cocoa Annual Financial Analysis

Additionally, it was recommended for a stormwater increase of 2% ($2.80 per home) in 2027 and 4% thereafter, which would be evaluated annually.

Councilmember Koss asked if we were locked in the tier system. In response, Mr. Napoli stated not necessarily, but there are a fair number of administrative tasks that would need to be done to change it, which would include a study to support it. He said that many cities have or are moving in that direction. He explained the process and where in the process that would be done.

Mr. Napoli discussed the General Fund and recommended no millage rate increase, a Fire Assessment increase of 3%, a 2% increase for stormwater utility and no increase for water/sewer.

City Manager Whitten spoke of the current levels of service, meaning no new level of services were added. He also spoke about the School Board having a public safety academy built to house the academy, software, equipment etc. Further details were discussed on the program, instructors, requirements etc.

Ms. Bowman began sharing the highlights of revenue, expenditures, and major capital requests. She also discussed the challenges and potential changes. It is important to add technical infrastructure upgrades, to look at recruiting and retaining personnel, whether public safety or general employees, and getting those with appropriate education and/or experience. Other possible changes include Ad valorem reductions, required utility permit changes for projects valued under $7,500 and a 10% budget reduction exercise. She added the biggest part of budget is utilities. The 10% exercise is not proportional and that it would come from other areas.

Ms. Neuterman explained the $7,500 project value and how that would work. Many of those things will not include the building department fees, however planning will need to review for zoning and or variances.

Deputy Mayor Goins asked if there were inspections for items under $7,500. In response, she replied no, only to be sure of locations.

Councilmember Weeks asked about the budget reduction exercise and if the city could adopt it. In response, Ms. Bowman replied yes, the city could but it is not required.

Ms. Bowman shared another change to the rules regarding the vote required to change the millage rate. A 110% increase above the rollback rate now requires a 2/3 vote.

IV. FY 2026 Balanced Budget Proposal Overview:

City Manager Whitten explained what is needed from Council to move forward with preparing the budget. He continued they will prepare a budget based on the following, unless 3 members vote no:

- No millage change
- 3% fire assessment increase
- 2% stormwater increase
- No change - utility water/sewer

Mayor Blake voted to move forward with the recommendation and prepare the proposed budget. Also, in agreement were Deputy Mayor Goins and Councilmember Hearn. Councilmembers Koss and Weeks were not in favor.

V. Council Discussion:

Mayor Blake spoke about the rollback vs. getting projects completed. There are projects in the queue, and he is in favor of 6.952 mils. Ms. Bowman added there needs to be a recommendation from council for finance to complete the budget.

Councilmember Weeks stated she goes back and forth with the rolled back rate. She has heard that people want some relief. She believes they deserve a break and would like to do that.

Councilmember Koss asked about a comparison of the cities and where Cocoa fell.

City Manager Whitten reminded Council of several non-residential new construction projects that will be coming about in the next few years.

Councilmember Hearn asked about the transient oriented districts. City Manager Whitten asked Ms. Senger to share information about what the multi-modal area would or could look like.

Councilmember Koss mentioned the neighborhood and the fit with the multi-modal station. She also asked about having citizen input as we get closer.

Additionally, she is in favor of the rollback rate; that it would be attractive to the area.

Deputy Mayor Goins stated if we rolled back, we might hurt the projects we want. He asked about the percentage increase of citizens paying taxes. In response, City Manager Whitten stated that is not known yet, however when it does, it will show on the property appraiser's website.

VI. Public Input/Citizen Participation

VII. Adjournment:

* **MOTION by Councilmember Weeks; Seconded by Councilmember Koss to adjourn the Special Meeting of July 7, 2026.**

AYES: Blake, Weeks, Goins, Hearn, Koss

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0)

The meeting adjourned at 6:45 p.m.

Michael C. Blake, Mayor

ATTEST:

Lori Chabot, Recording Secretary