



TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL BUDGET MEETING MINUTES

**MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2025 – 5:01 PM
PIERSON TOWN CENTER**

1. Call meeting to order

Mayor Gray Leonhard called the meeting to order at 5:09 PM and asked Town Clerk Yvonne Braddock to take the roll call.

2. Roll call

PRESENT:

Mayor Gray Leonhard
Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund
Councilmember Jimmy Anderson
Councilmember Linnie Richardson
Councilmember Brandy Peterson

3. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

Councilmember Linnie Richardson gave the invocation, which was followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. NEW BUSINESS

a. Budget workshop and millage rate first reading – Mayor Gray Leonhard

Mayor Leonhard turned the meeting over to Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith for a summary on the millage rate and budget.

b. Budget summary

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith gave a summary of the upcoming budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Mr. Smith noted that he had calculated ad valorem tax income for both the previous year's millage rate of 5.2439 and the preliminary millage rate of 5.6529.

c. General Fund report

Mr. Smith presented the General Fund budget, highlighting areas where expenses had increased. Mr. Smith noted that budgeted numbers for animal control and legal services had increased significantly. Mr. Smith explained that the Town had surpassed its budgeted expenses mostly due to Hurricane Milton clean-up, which added an unexpected \$63,000 to the year's expenses. Mr. Smith said that FEMA had approved \$68,000 in funding for Hurricane Milton, but he did not know how long it would take for the State to disburse those

41 funds. Mr. Smith said that he anticipated increases to employee health insurance and
42 explained that retirement contributions to FRS had increased from 13.63% to 14.03%.

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44 Mr. Smith explained that last year's shortfall in permit fee income versus expenses had been
45 corrected due to the increase in permit fees. He said the permitting fees might eventually need
46 their own fund because permit fee income cannot be used for any other purposes.

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48 Mr. Smith said he had reduced funds allocated to repairs and improvements at the Town
49 Center in the 2025-2026 budget because he thought the income from rentals at the Town
50 Center should fund those improvements. Mr. Smith noted that there had been overages for
51 2024-2025 in the allocated budgets for repairs and improvements at the parks, comprehensive
52 planning services, and utilities.

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54 Mr. Smith suggested that if the Town was not going to reach an agreement regarding the
55 Volusia Sheriff's Office contract, they could keep the current millage rate flat at 5.2439 and
56 re-allocate the VSO contract funds to capital improvements such as road repairs or new
57 playground equipment at the park. Mr. Smith said keeping the VSO contract at the renewal
58 rate of \$345,522.00 would require the Town to borrow more money from reserves to balance
59 the budget.

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61 Mr. Smith stressed that the Town needed to increase revenue and said the only ways in which
62 Pierson could accomplish this were to increase the tax base, increase property taxes, or charge
63 for the use of its facilities. Mr. Smith said cutting expenses would require the Town to make
64 cuts to attorney fees, planning fees, or payroll costs, either by requiring employees to pay a
65 portion of their benefits or by reducing the number of employees.

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67 d. Water Fund report

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69 Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith presented the proposed Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Water Fund budget.
70 Mr. Smith reminded the Council that a 17.5% water rate increase had been proposed and
71 would be voted on at the September 16, 2025 council meeting. Mr. Smith said his proposed
72 budget factored this increase in the water income.

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74 Mr. Smith noted that roughly \$121,000 was spent on the design grant for the wastewater
75 treatment system but said this had been reimbursed by the SRF grant.

76
77 Mr. Smith said water rate increases were necessary because of increased costs for utilities,
78 treatment supplies, several upgrades and improvements to the water tower, a flow meter
79 installation required at the original water plant, and the remaining balance owed on the new
80 water plant not covered by the original CDBG grant. Mr. Smith said there was also discussion
81 regarding a cost-sharing agreement with resident Fidel Velazquez to extend a 6" water main
82 approximately 2,000 feet north of Palmetto Avenue.

83
84 Mayor Gray Leonhard asked about the cost of the new pump which was replaced at the
85 original well site after a lightning strike. Deputy Clerk Smith said this was covered by an
86 insurance claim payout which had already been received.

e. Proposed C.O.L.A. rates

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith presented a proposed Cost of Living Adjustment of 3% for Town staff. Mr. Smith stated that Volusia County had approved a 4% increase.

Vice Mayor Greenlund asked if the \$7,600.00 on the provided spreadsheet was the total amount that would be added to annual payroll expenses if a COLA increase were passed; Mr. Smith confirmed that it was.

Vice Mayor Robert F. Greenlund made the motion to approve the 3% C.O.L.A. increase for Town staff; seconded by Councilmember Brandy Peterson. The motion carried on a roll call vote 3-0. Councilmembers Jimmy Anderson and Linnie Richardson did not vote due to family members being among staff.

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith read Resolution 2025-11:

A Resolution of the Town of Pierson of Volusia County, Florida, adopting the tentative levying of ad valorem taxes for Volusia County for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. The Fiscal Year 2025-2026 tentative operating millage rate is 5.2439 mills which is greater than the rolled-back rate of 4.9172 mills by 6.64%.

Councilmember Linnie R. Richardson made the motion to approve Resolution 2025-11 which adopts the tentative operating millage rate of 5.2439 for Fiscal Year 2025-2026; seconded by Councilmember Jimmy Anderson. The motion carries on a roll call vote 5-0.

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith read Resolution 2025-12:

A Resolution of the Town of Pierson of Volusia County, Florida, adopting the tentative budget for the General Fund for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. The Town of Pierson set forth the appropriations and revenue estimate for the General Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 in the amount of \$1,234,302.00.

Councilmember Brandy Peterson made the motion to approve Resolution 2025-12 which adopts the tentative budget for the General Fund in the amount of \$1,234,302.00 for Fiscal Year 2025-2026; seconded by Councilmember Linnie R. Richardson. The motion carries on a roll call vote 5-0.

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith read Resolution 2025-13:

A Resolution of the Town of Pierson of Volusia County, Florida, adopting the tentative budget for the Water Fund for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. The Town of Pierson set forth the appropriations and revenue estimate for the Water Fund budget for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 in the amount of \$482,065.00.

Vice Mayor Robert F. Greenlund made the motion to approve Resolution 2025-13 which adopts the tentative budget for the Water Fund in the amount of \$482,065.00 for Fiscal

135 **Year 2025-2026; seconded by Councilmember Linnie R. Richardson. The motion carries**
136 **on a roll call vote 5-0.**

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138 **5. ADJOURNED**

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140 **Hearing no further business, meeting adjourned at 6:22 PM.**

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142 Minutes prepared by:

Minutes approved by:

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Ryan Smith, Deputy Town Clerk

Gray Leonhard, Mayor