



# TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

**TUESDAY, MAY 6, 2025 – 6:30 P.M.  
PIERSON TOWN CENTER**

## **1. Call meeting to order**

Mayor Gray Leonhard called the meeting to order at 6:30 P.M. 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

Also present were Town Attorney Scott Simpson, Town Planner Mark Karet, Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith, and a Deputy from the Volusia Sheriff's Office.

## **3. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

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

## **4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES – Mayor Gray Leonhard**

- |                    |                |
|--------------------|----------------|
| a. Regular Meeting | April 15, 2025 |
| b. Workshop        | May 1, 2025    |

Mayor Leonhard read the titles and asked if there were any additions and/or deletions, if not he would entertain a motion for approval.

**Councilmember Linnie Richardson made the motion to approve the above listed minutes as written; seconded by Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund. All agreed; motion carries.**

## **5. NEW BUSINESS**

- a. Water dispute at 985 & 995 E. Washington Avenue – Lewis Sexton, Jr. and Mike Braddock

Mayor Gray Leonhard said that Lewis Sexton came by his home to inform the Mayor that he

would not be able to attend the meeting. Mayor Leonhard asked Town Attorney Scott Simpson if the item should be tabled until Mr. Sexton could be present. Mr. Simpson said it would be best to wait until Mr. Sexton was present if he was the one to put himself on the agenda. Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund asked if Mr. Sexton had put himself on the agenda. Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith said he advised Mr. Sexton to be put on the agenda because Mr. Sexton often complains to staff that his neighbors are stealing his water and he was informed that staff could not address this issue.

Mr. Smith explained that Mr. Sexton's water line currently runs through Mr. Braddock's property and the only possible solution would be to install a new water meter near Phelps Lane and allow Mr. Sexton to run his own service line from his house to the new meter. Mr. Smith explained Mr. Sexton lived in the unincorporated section of Washington Avenue and he did not know if the County maintained Phelps Lane or had an easement there.

Resident Mike Braddock stated that Phelps Lane was a platted road but was not maintained. Mr. Braddock said the water line was installed by a previous owner of the property. Mr. Braddock said that Mr. Sexton had been cited for code violations by the County because multiple people were living in recreational vehicles on Mr. Sexton's property. Mr. Braddock felt this could be why Mr. Sexton's water usage was high.

Councilmember Linnie Richardson asked if Mr. Braddock still had water when Mr. Sexton's meter was shut off for non-payment. Mr. Braddock said that he did. Mayor Gray Leonhard said it sounded like the issue would be a civil matter.

Vice Mayor Greenlund said the item should be removed from the agenda until Mr. Sexton was present. The Vice Mayor said Public Works could accompany Mr. Sexton to his residence and turn off the water meters to illustrate that Mr. Braddock's home is not running on Mr. Sexton's water meter.

**Councilmember Linnie Richardson made the motion to remove this item from the agenda until Mr. Sexton agreed to accompany Public Works to the site to inspect the water meters; seconded by Councilmember Jimmy Anderson. All agreed; motion carries.**

b. Updates from the Community Traffic Safety Team (CTST) meeting – Lester Pulley

Resident Lester Pulley provided the Council with an update. Mr. Pulley said speeding is an issue County-wide with multiple agencies and there are not enough law enforcement personnel to work all the speeding-related issues.

Mr. Pulley said there is a surge in traffic around schools; parents are arriving early for student pick-ups at the end of the school day and it is causing traffic issues in multiple parts of the County, including Pierson.

Mr. Pulley discussed the school zone speed cameras mentioned at the previous Council meeting. Volusia County Sheriff's Office ultimately has to do the enforcement for the

cameras and the Sheriff's Office said they are "not there yet" with regards to the enforcement of the cameras. Town Attorney Scott Simpson said Lake Helen had passed an Ordinance and signed an agreement for the school zone cameras, but that it hadn't been implemented yet.

Mayor Leonhard said the Town had a significant problem with high school students speeding on Town streets after school.

Mr. Pulley said there were complaints from the Principal of Pierson Elementary School at the School Advisory Council meeting regarding the speed limit coming into the school zone. Pierson Elementary is supposed to be a "no-walk" school, but buses are no longer picking up students who live within two miles of the school. Children are now walking to school. Mr. Pulley said he was not aware of crosswalks across US Highway 17.

Mr. Pulley said he was told that Taylor Middle-High School was handling the drainage issue at the school.

Councilmember Brandy Peterson asked why there were no crossing guards. Mr. Pulley said because Pierson Elementary was considered a "no-walk" school, there was no need for crossing guards. Deputy Carvajal of Volusia Sheriff's Office said to his knowledge there was one student who rode her bike to school and crossed US Highway 17.

c. Airport status discussion – Mayor Gray Leonhard

Mayor Gray Leonhard said he spoke with David Smith at Florida Department of Transportation and was told the Town did not need to install the 75-foot segmented circle required on the 2024 inspection report.

Mayor Leonhard discussed a plane making a forced landing on US Highway 17 due to equipment failure. Mayor Leonhard said Deputy Carvajal was on the scene and handled it well. Deputy Carvajal said it was called in by Lieutenant Galarza who spotted the plane.

Councilmember Linnie Richardson said the airport liability insurance premium was due tomorrow. Town Clerk Yvonne Braddock said the insurance quotes were in the agenda packet. Councilmember Richardson said the airport had been running at a \$12,000 deficit and the insurance was increasing, and she did not know any Pierson residents who used the airport. Councilmember Richardson said she could not personally justify continuing to operate the airport. Mayor Leonhard said only two renters were paying for the use of the airport and it was a long way from making enough money to cover the expense.

Vice Mayor Greenlund said he did not want to see the airport closed and he felt there was a way to alleviate the cost. Vice Mayor Greenlund said the insurance was only a \$400 increase with the minimum required policy. Mayor Leonhard asked if the Council should allow the airport to remain open for twelve more months to explore other options.

Resident Denise Colflesh said if people were not paying their bills, it was an administration problem and not a budgeting one. Ms. Colflesh said she has always been proud that Pierson has its own airport. Ms. Colflesh said she enjoyed that Embry-Riddle used the airport for

touch-and-goes. Councilmember Linnie Richardson said the Town had been sued in the past due to touch-and-goes after a woman flipped her plane during one and received a pay-out.

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith explained that the Town had been working to notice and evict non-paying renters at the airport, and that the legal process to do so takes time.

Mayor Leonhard said the abandoned aircraft would be auctioned to recoup the unpaid hangar fees.

**Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund made the motion to keep the airport open for an additional twelve months to explore options; seconded by Jimmy Anderson. Motion carries 3-2 with Councilmembers Linnie Richardson and Brandy Peterson dissenting.**

**Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund made the motion to approve the renewal of the Ace Property and Casualty airport liability insurance policy with an annual premium in the amount of \$3,143.12; seconded by Councilmember Jimmy Anderson. All agreed; motion carries.**

d. Proposal to install hangar at airport – Douglas Karlsen

Douglas Karlsen of 919 Biscayne Blvd in Deland spoke to the Council regarding building a hangar at the airport. Mr. Karlsen said he rebuilds helicopters; he does not need to be on the airport but it is more convenient for him. Mr. Karlsen said it would be a pretty sizeable investment of up to \$1 million for a hangar. Mr. Karlsen said he was looking for five to ten acres to build his business.

Vice Mayor Greenlund suggested that Mr. Karlsen should contact Town employees to find out if there was an available property that worked. Mayor Leonhard said Mr. Karlsen should also meet with Town Planner Mark Karet to discuss the development of his business. Mr. Karet said it sounded like major development which would need stormwater, parking, and so on. Mr. Karet said the airport property would also need to be surveyed.

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith asked if that would be a long-term lease scenario. Mr. Karlsen said he was looking to lease or buy, depending on what the Town wanted.

Charles Suroski, President of Embry-Riddle's Barefoot Flying Club, said he came to the meeting because the club was interested in either building a smaller hangar at the airport, or potentially acquiring the airport. Mr. Suroski said the club currently has three hangars at Daytona International Airport which costs about \$18,000 a year.

Town Planner Mark Karet suggested issuing a Request for Proposal so that interested parties could submit proposals for leasing the airport.

Councilmember Brandy Peterson asked if a workshop needed to be scheduled. Vice Mayor Greenlund agreed.

e. Resolution 2025-06 to declare surplus equipment – Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith

Town Attorney Scott Simpson read the title. Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith said an additional surplus Resolution had been prepared for the paint striping machine because it was left off the previous Resolution.

**Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund made the motion to approve Resolution 2025-06; seconded by Councilmember Linnie Richardson. Motion carries on a roll call vote 5-0.**

- f. Ordinance 2025-02 proposing amendments to the Ordinance regarding the regulation of alcoholic beverages within the Town – 1<sup>st</sup> Reading – Linnie R. Richardson – Councilwoman

Town Attorney Scott Simpson read the title. Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith said this Ordinance was amending the current Town regulations prohibiting the sale of alcohol on Sundays to allow for alcohol sales after 12:00 P.M. The consensus is that the Ordinance was not preventing residents from purchasing alcohol because they could drive to Seville or Barberville.

**Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund made the motion to approve Ordinance 2025-02 on its first reading; seconded by Councilmember Linnie Richardson. Motion carries on a roll call vote 5-0.**

- g. Volusia Sheriff's Office contract discussion – Linnie R. Richardson – Councilwoman

Councilmember Linnie Richardson said the Council had previously discussed the Volusia Sheriff's Office contract and she had asked the Town Attorney to investigate whether the Town Charter required Pierson to have the contract for enhanced services.

Town Attorney Scott Simpson said the Town was authorized but not mandated to provide law enforcement. Mr. Simpson said the discussion at the workshop on this subject centered around the amount of the contract increase, in addition to the amount that Town residents already paid on their County property taxes. The Council discussed the \$345,000 projected cost for the upcoming fiscal year, which would be approximately one-third of the Town's operating budget. Mr. Simpson said the Town fell under the Sheriff's jurisdiction as part of Volusia County, but if the Town did not contract with the Sheriff then it would not receive enhanced services. Mr. Simpson said the Town would get the same level of service as the unincorporated areas of the County and it would be up to the Sheriff's Office how they allocated their resources. Mr. Simpson said the current contract provided for a 180-day written termination. Mr. Simpson said the Town would write a letter to terminate the contract with the intention of being able to sit down with the Sheriff's Office during that time and attempt to negotiate a new contract. Mr. Simpson said the intention would be to bring the cost of a new contract down by changing the level of service, number of deputies, etc.

Councilmember Linnie Richardson asked Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith how much the contract had increased. Mr. Smith said it had gone up eight percent from last year. Mr. Smith said the estimated annual contract amount for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 had been roughly \$304,000, but

that had increased to \$319,000 once the actual costs were calculated by the Sheriff's Office. Mr. Smith was concerned that the actual number might be higher than \$345,000.

Mayor Leonhard said the Town was trying to work on a solution to lessen the cost of the contract so that the Town could fund other projects.

Deputy Clerk said other municipalities were expecting increases to their tax bases due to growth, but noted that Pierson did not have the same influx of new residents and businesses that other cities were experiencing.

Councilmember Brandy Peterson said the Sheriff's contract states that the Town has two deputies for a 12-hour shift but that it only has one.

Resident Denise Colflesh asked if the Town could research what it would cost for Pierson to have its own deputy. Ms. Colflesh said she did not want Pierson to be without a deputy because of potential lags in response time from a County deputy. Mayor Leonhard said there had been issues where the Pierson deputy was sent to assist with calls in neighboring unincorporated areas and was not available when Pierson residents needed service.

Town Attorney Scott Simpson drafted a letter to the Volusia Sheriff's Office highlighting some of the unique challenges in Pierson, such as thirty percent of the property in Pierson being in an exemption category for property taxes.

**Councilmember Brandy Peterson made the motion to approve the letter to Sheriff Michael Chitwood at the Volusia Sheriff's Office; seconded by Councilmember Linnie Richardson. All agreed; motion carries.**

h. Tree roots near Records Room at Town Center – Mayor Gray Leonhard

Mayor Leonhard said he was concerned about the roots of a large tree behind the Records Room causing issues with the foundation of the building. Councilmember Jimmy Anderson said the roots hadn't reached the foundation yet but they were not far from it.

Town Planner Mark Karet asked how large the tree was. Mr. Karet said there were other mitigation methods besides removing the entire tree. Councilmember Linnie Richardson said she had heard bad things about trees falling after having their roots trimmed.

The Council agreed to instruct staff to obtain quotes for the removal of the tree.

i. George Gideon Auctioneers contract and scheduling – Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith provided a piggyback agreement drafted by the Town Attorney which allowed the Town to piggyback on Volusia County's agreement with George Gideon Auctioneers. Mr. Smith noted that the auction company would catalog and list all the equipment for auction and keep a percentage for each item sold. Mr. Smith discussed potential auction dates but said nothing had been confirmed by the company.

Charles Suroski asked where the auction dates would be posted and if there would be reserve prices set. Mr. Smith said the auction dates would be published on the Town website and Facebook, as well as being noticed in the paper. Mr. Smith said the Clerk's office would e-mail the dates to everyone who had expressed interest in bidding on the planes. Mr. Smith said he did not think there would be a reserve price set on the planes.

**Councilmember Linnie Richardson made the motion to waive bidding requirements and approve the piggybacking of the Volusia County contract with George Gideon Auctioneers; seconded by Councilmember Jimmy Anderson. All agreed; motion carries.**

j. Speed limit signs on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue – Linnie R. Richardson – Councilwoman

Councilmember Linnie Richardson talked about the speeding on W. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue in front of the Town Center. Councilmember Richardson said she realized there are no speed limit signs on W. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and said she would like to see it set at 25 miles per hour. Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith said there were 30 MPH speed limit signs on E. 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue. Mr. Simpson said the speed limit is set by the jurisdiction; Town Planner Mark Karet agreed. Mr. Simpson said he thought the speed limit could probably be set by Resolution, but he would investigate it with Mr. Karet.

The Council agreed that a Resolution should be brought to a future meeting.

k. Water rate increase discussion – Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith presented the Council with a spreadsheet highlighting the projected Fiscal Year 2024-2025 income and expenses in the Water Fund. Mr. Smith included four percentage increase options to illustrate the differences in revenue if the Town were to increase its water rates. Mr. Smith noted that a Florida Rural Water Association rate study prepared in 2021 had recommended automatic annual increases based on the Florida Public Service Commission's Consumer Price Index (CPI), but said the Town failed to include that provision in its last rate increase Ordinance. Mr. Smith went over the various options for increases. Mr. Smith noted that between Pierson's last increase in 2021 and the current year, the Town had missed a total of 17.1% in annual CPI increases.

Mr. Karet noted that the Town's water operator contract with CWS also had a baked-in increase.

Vice Mayor Greenlund said he felt these increases were necessary and they should be done now rather than waiting until the new fiscal year.

Town Attorney Scott Simpson noted there was a State law on the advertising requirements for utility rate increases and said he had forwarded that information to the Clerk's office. Mr. Simpson said an Ordinance could be passed to increase the current rate and establish an automatic annual increase.

Resident Mary Kay Hansen said she agreed with the increase but did not feel the Town should wait eighteen months for its next increase. She felt the Town should do an increase now and another in January.

**Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund made the motion to proceed with the necessary legal notices to increase the water rates by 17.5% and prepare an Ordinance for automatic annual utility rate increases; seconded by Councilmember Brandy Peterson. All agreed; motion carries.**

l. Closing gate at Community Center – Linnie R. Richardson – Councilwoman

Councilmember Linnie Richardson said she felt the gate needed to be closed and Public Works needed to box blade the area. Councilmember Richardson said the area looked horrible and was full of ruts. Mayor Leonhard asked if grass seed could be spread as well.

m. Removing damaged playground equipment at Chipper Jones Park – Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith

Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith said residents had expressed concerns on Facebook regarding the safety of the playground equipment at Chipper Jones Park. Mr. Smith said there was rusty decking and old equipment. Mr. Smith reminded the Council that he had applied for a FRDAP grant but those awards would not be announced until the end of June. Mr. Smith said that commercial playground equipment was very expensive, with prices ranging from \$40,000 for small pieces to large combination sets that cost \$180,000. Mr. Smith said residents had suggested using money generated by Vendor Market donations to fund the playground, but the Vendor Market only generated \$3,300 in the previous year which was not enough to purchase equipment.

Mr. Smith said he had spoken with the Mayor about the possibility of refurbishing some of the existing equipment. Mr. Smith said he reached out to local playground specialist companies. One company said the Town had too much equipment to maintain in Chipper Jones Park and suggested only having four play zones. The company suggested it would not be worth the money to attempt refurbishment of such old equipment. Mr. Smith said he was meeting with the company next week to have the existing equipment inspected and identify pieces that were dangerous and needed to be removed.

The Council agreed that any equipment deemed unsafe should be removed by Public Works.

Mayor Gray Leonhard said he received a text message from Sheriff Mike Chitwood at 8:20 P.M. The message stated:

“Hey Mayor, thanks for the heads up on what you were about to do tonight. I don’t need 180 days. I’ll terminate the contract in 30. You need to figure out what to do with all your property and evidence as well because I’m not storing it without charging you. Feel free to give me a call and discuss this but as far as I’m concerned, relationship is over. Good luck.”



Vice Mayor Greenlund said the Council had discussed during its workshop how best to handle negotiating the Sheriff's contract. Vice Mayor Greenlund said the Sheriff hadn't seen the letter yet and he was disappointed in the remarks. Town Attorney Scott Simpson said he would decline the 30-day offer and tell the Sheriff that the Town would adhere to the terms of the contract.

Resident Denise Colflesh asked if the letter stated that the Town was cancelling the contract or requesting to amend the contract. Mr. Simpson said it was both – the Town could not negotiate a new contract while it was still under the terms of the existing one. Mr. Simpson said the letter was a notice to terminate the existing contract with a request to sit down and negotiate a new one that is mutually agreeable to both parties.

Ms. Colflesh said she felt the Town should send a letter asking to negotiate the terms before it cancelled the existing contract. Ms. Colflesh asked how much it would cost for the Town to have its own police department and was upset that the Town had not budgeted the numbers to determine a cost.

## **6. OLD BUSINESS**

### **a. Irrigation at Chipper Jones Park rear ball fields (tabled 4/15/2025) – Jimmy Anderson – Councilman**

Councilmember Jimmy Anderson said Little League would purchase the pipe for the irrigation main line to the rear ball fields, but the Town needed to install the valves for the individual fields. Councilmember Anderson said he obtained a labor price from Adam Braddock in the amount of \$900.00 to dig the trenches and install the lines, as well as the materials from Pierson Supply in the amount of \$2,121.01.

Councilmember Brandy Peterson said Little League had spent \$3,000.00 at Better Fence Company on chain link fence repairs at the ball fields.

**Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund made the motion to approve the irrigation of the rear ball fields at Chipper Jones Park in the amount of \$3,021.01; seconded by Councilmember Jimmy Anderson. All agreed; motion carries.**

## **7. OTHER BUSINESS (Mayor, Council, and Staff Reports)**

### **a. Updates and reports by Mayor Gray Leonhard**

Mayor Leonhard had no updates at this time.

### **b. Updates and reports by Council Members**

Vice Mayor Robert Greenlund:

Vice Mayor Greenlund asked if there was a status update on the culvert replacement at North Road. Town Clerk Yvonne Braddock said the repairs would begin on Monday.

Councilmember Linnie Richardson:

Councilmember Richardson said the new John Deere Tractor broke down and had to be sent to the dealership for repair. Councilmember Richardson said Ag-Pro was charging approximately \$1,300 for the repair and questioned why it was not under warranty. Councilmember Richardson instructed staff not to send the check until the Town Attorney could review the contract.

Mr. Simpson said it would be best for staff to send a letter to Ag-Pro and ask why this repair was not covered under the platinum warranty purchased by the Town.

c. Updates and reports by Town Attorney – Town Attorney Scott Simpson

Mr. Simpson researched Lake Helen's police department and found they had a Chief, an administrative assistant, and six officers with an annual budget of \$852,000. Mr. Simpson said the total cost of an officer is higher than their hourly wages when you factor in retirement, FICA, etc.

Mr. Simpson spoke briefly about budgeting and the restrictions on raising revenue. Mr. Simpson said budgets can be amended as the year progresses. Mr. Simpson said most cities have purchasing ordinances to outline how budgets are spent and who can spend that money. Mr. Simpson said, for example, some items could be approved by staff, some by the Mayor, and some by the full Council depending on the dollar thresholds. Mr. Simpson said it would be a good idea for the Town to have a purchasing ordinance in place.

Mr. Simpson asked Town Planner Mark Karet about the letters to the four property owners on US Highway 17 regarding obtaining utility easements for the wastewater main line. Mr. Karet said he was waiting for the engineers to provide a written explanation to use in the letters.

Mayor Leonhard said he wanted to note that it was Professional Municipal Clerks Week and recognized the Clerk's office for their work.

Resident Paul George asked if the Town having its own police department would increase the Town's liability insurance. Mr. Simpson said it would.

Mr. Simpson said the Town had two ways to increase revenue – increase the millage rate or the tax base. Mr. Simpson said the millage rate is capped due to the Town being within the County fire district. Mr. Simpson said increasing the tax base would require existing land to be developed, or unincorporated land to be annexed into the Town.

d. Updates and reports by Town Planner – Town Planner Mark Karet, Zev Cohen

Mr. Karet said he would be available to meet with residents regarding their zoning and land use questions on Thursday, May 15, 2025.

Mr. Karet stated that the final test results at the new wells were in the hands of the engineer

and contractor for certification by the Volusia County Department of Health. Mr. Karet said he anticipated that the new system could be put into operation very soon.

Mayor Leonhard said he and Mark Karet had a meeting scheduled with AdventHealth to discuss a possible location in Pierson.

e. Updates and reports by Staff

There were no staff reports.

**8. GOOD AND WELFARE (Public Participation)**

Resident Sue Elliott said the Welcome to Pierson sign on the north side of Town looked shabby and could use painting. Ms. Elliott said there was also no sign indicating the location of the Town Center building. Deputy Clerk Ryan Smith said he had obtained quotes for signage above the door, but he felt it would be best to wait until the new fiscal year when the budget would allow it.

Town Attorney Scott Simpson said the first Charter Review Committee meeting took place and went very well.

**9. PIERSON EVENTS**

- a. Free Pet Microchips and Rabies Vaccines hosted by Volusia County Animal Services – Monday, May 12, 2025 @ 9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.
- b. Pierson Vendor Market – Saturday, May 17, 2025 @ 9:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.

**10. ADJOURNED**

**Hearing no further business, meeting adjourned at 9:22 P.M.**

Minutes prepared by:

Minutes approved by:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Ryan Smith, Deputy Clerk

\_\_\_\_\_  
Gray Leonhard, Mayor