

City Council Minutes
July 8, 2025
8:00 a.m.
Library Conference Room

1. Call to Order

The Special Budget meeting and retreat of the Crestview City Council was called to order at 8:00 a.m. by Mayor JB Whitten. Board members present: Mayor Pro-Tem Doug Capps. Council members: Ryan Bullard, Brandon Frost, Dusty Allison, and Shannon Hayes. Also present: Interim City Manager Jessica Leavins, City Clerk Maryanne Girard, City Attorney Jonathan Holloway, and various staff members.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Pro-Tem D. Capps.

3. Open Policy Making and Legislative Session

4. Approve Agenda

Mayor JB Whitten called for action.

Motion by Councilmember Shannon Hayes and seconded by Councilmember Brandon Frost to approve the agenda, as presented.

Roll Call: Ayes: Doug Capps, Ryan Bullard, Shannon Hayes, Brandon Frost, Dusty Allison. All ayes. Motion carried.

5. Consent Agenda – No items presented.

6. Action Items

6.1. Preliminary Budget Presentation

Interim City Manager Jessica Leavins provided an overview of the budget calendar and the Public Hearing requirements for millage and budget adoption.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins stated the budget presented is balanced but mentioned there is room for adjustment. She mentioned our revenues are trending above what was expected.

She went over the carry-forward projects for projects that span multiple years and provided the capital projects update. She went over the data on current projects, the completed projects, as well as the State appropriations in the amount of \$350,000 for the Redstone Sidewalks, \$375,000 for the bypass reuse line, and \$300,000 for the Garden Street and 85 signal.

Mayor JB Whitten reminded the City Council that the regular meeting rules are waived, as the meeting is set up as a workshop.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins spoke on the improvements in the Parks stating they include irrigation, as well as adding cameras. Discussion ensued on vandalism at Brookmeade.

Mayor JB Whitten mentioned the Senior Center is well-used. He added that we need a bigger parking lot and requested the project be moved up as a priority.

Discussion ensued on the high usage of the library, improvements at the golf course, including the need to repair the bridges to ensure safety for the patrons, the noise complaints, the backstops on Field 2, and the need for sidewalks at Durrell Lee.

PS Director Carlos Jones said bridge #17 needs to be replaced. He said they are checking the golf course to ensure maintenance is handled. He added that a new well is being put in.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins mentioned the total amount of the projects is \$727,462. She stated the golf course is starting to see higher revenues. She said we are looking at noise barriers to direct sound away from the houses. She said we can get a quote for the sidewalks to determine whether we can make it work within this budget. She will ask the insurance company whether a net is needed for the backstop.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins reviewed the general fund projects, totaling \$262,000. She said the Community Center is not a revenue generator. The fees are kept low as a service to our community.

Discussion ensued on whether capital funds are projected for the cemetery, replacing the damaged wall at the cemetery on Highway 85, the pros and cons of installing hard flooring or carpeting at City Hall, and replacing the HVAC at the Community Center.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins mentioned we receive restitution for some insurance-related events. She said carpeting muffles noise in some of the City Hall offices. She said there are safety issues for some of the offices. She added the intention is to get the lowest possible price for the HVAC replacement, but we look locally first.

City Attorney Jonathan Holloway explained we award points for a local company. It is price-based if it is for purchase of a commodity. PS Director C. Jones added we get local bids from Panama City to Pensacola.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins went over the utility projects for a total of \$5,545,866. The lift stations are directly related to our growth. She addressed the infrastructure and traffic-related projects for a total of \$1,616,455. Our stormwater fee does not cover all the projects. The 1/2 cent tax is being utilized to fund the projects.

In response to the concern about the Redstone funding mentioned by Mayor Pro-Tem D. Capps, Interim City Manager J. Leavins said she will check but it may be a carry-forward from what was awarded last year.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins went over the capital leases.

Discussion ensued on the lease and resale options for the next ladder truck. City Attorney J. Holloway explained the ladder truck is a different lease, as at the end of seven years, it belongs to the city. He also mentioned that the issue is how they respond, adding we have the ability to respond quicker.

Mayor Pro-Tem D. Capps spoke of his concern for ALS, and Interim City Manager J. Leavins said that Fire Chief Josh Vargason will bring an EMS plan back for Council review in about a year.

Councilmember R. Bullard said we need to increase police and fire budgets so we can retain staff. He added we need to pay the employees with the training in order to retain them.

Mayor Pro-Tem D. Capps called for a recess at 9:30 a.m. and Mayor JB Whitten resumed the meeting at 9:40 a.m.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins resumed the lease discussion on vehicle replacements. For our Public Safety division, we are at the five-year mark on many vehicles. Enterprise manages the program and advises us on the optimal time for replacement for the value. She added that an increase in the lease agreement is expected.

Discussion ensued on staggering the replacement of the vehicles, the drivability of some of the vehicles, replacing those sold at auction with leased vehicles, and the timing of their replacement.

In response to Councilmember Shannon Hayes, Financial Management Analyst, Wendy Tarpley replied the estimated cost is \$750,000.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins went over the CRA projects, which include sidewalk staining, grants, and the Arts and Learning Center projects. We plan to move the Fox Theater grant and sidewalk staining to next year. She asked for a consensus to use the remaining dollars for the Arts and Learning Center, as it is a three-year lease. She said of the \$325,000 fund, \$150,000 is from grants. She added improvements will be made to the current building.

After discussion, the consensus was to use the residual dollars. Interim City Manager J. Leavins said it will be brought up at the next CRA meeting.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins provided an update on the Total Project Management project with Ajax. Ajax was awarded the Fire Station 3 project for \$2 million. She mentioned the Public Safety building is estimated at \$25 million, and the Animal Control building is estimated at \$9 million. However, she is optimistic we can get the Animal Control building cost lowered.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins mentioned the Sports and Recreation Complex, came in at a cost of \$130 million dollars and includes property acquisition and fields.

Discussion ensued on the cost, which does not include an aquatic facility. Ajax said the required millage increase would be 4.4 for 20 years, which would have to go before a referendum.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins went over several options. She mentioned phases that could be done.

Discussion ensued on whether it would be practical to issue municipal bonds, increase the millage rate to pay the debt service, the lifespan based of 20-or30-year municipal bonds, starting the project in phases, utilizing property we currently own, the need for an indoor facility, a walking track, and the \$500,000 allocation from TDC of that can only be used for certain projects.

The City Council concurred they do not want to raise the millage rate.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins said the consensus is a phased approach starting with an indoor facility. She added we will try to be creative with the funding.

Councilmember B. Frost stated our citizens want us to come up with a solution as our main priority is our children, and Interim City Manager J. Leavins agreed that the primary goal is to meet the needs of our children.

Discussion ensued on utilizing the acreage at Spanish Trail. City Attorney J. Holloway mentioned we have thirty acres if Warrior's Hall is included. Interim City Manager J. Leavins said the community requested to consolidate the fields in one location.

In response to Councilmember Dusty Allison regarding whether the fields and gym could be placed on the same property, Parks Director Brady Peters said we need ten acres for five fields. Interim City Manager J. Leavins added we also need parking in conjunction with the fields. She added the timing of the building of the PS facility, as it will be on the same property as Spanish Trail.

Councilmember S. Hayes said the public perception is to build a sports complex, so we need to educate the public.

The City Council concurred they want to keep the millage rate down.

Mayor Pro-Tem D. Capps said he wanted to add another Town Hall meeting to update the public.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins said construction costs are high.

Discussion ensued regarding the age of the sixty-year-old gym, the pros and cons of tournament play, and not being able to rely on TDC money for a funding source, as it may dissolve.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins called for a recess at 10:53 a.m. and Mayor JB Whitten called the meeting back to session at 10:59 a.m.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins went on to the Personnel portion. She mentioned the new positions for the police and current position changes. She stated that a new Deputy PS Director is required, as Carlos is preparing to retire; three + one police officers, Dispatch leads, and an Animal Control Supervisor, which is an upgrade to the current position are needed. She will get the exact number to City Council, but the new positions are incorporated in the balanced budget. The Deputy City Manager position is also included in the budget.

She stated the HR Manager will oversee the HR department. The current position will be upgraded. The Public Information Officer role to ensure Shae's title and responsibilities are in line. The Special Events Coordinator position will be upgraded as the lead responsibilities should be compensated. She mentioned the change in Dispatch, as it is harder to fill.

She went over options for a 2% COLA, 4.5% merit, 3.5% Florida Blue, summer leave sell-back back and Dispatch negotiations. She explained we are looking at options for changing the broker for our insurance. We have some unspent personnel money to provide for the Summer Leave Sell Back, which is about \$100,000. This program will occur before school starts. We are in Union negotiations with the Dispatch personnel who have not been evaluated since 2020.

Discussion ensued on the benefits to the employee for the leave sellbacks, and the pros and cons of employees taking time off or selling leave back. The consensus was to keep the program.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins went over the employee benefits package stating it helps us compete with the private sector as well as the State, County, and Eglin Air Force Base. She said that we are looking at changing brokers to get better rates. Council agreed the benefits are good for the employees.

Interim City Manager J. Leavins brought up an additional benefit for a paid parental leave program. She explained the current process for general, fire, and police services.

Discussion ensued on the average time for parental leave under FMLA and the city leading the way with strong benefits, the impact on the departments and looking at employees taking time they have on the books and then adding the parental leave benefit.

The consensus from the City Council was that the city manager report back with numbers, as no cost factor was presented.

Mayor JB Whitten brought up the initial city manager recruitment. He stated the past process worked out very well with the assistance of the Florida City and County Management Association (FCCMA).

In response to what our budget is, Wendy Tarpley stated we have a \$72 million budget.

Discussion ensued on using the FCCMA again, utilizing a headhunter solution, advertising the position, continuing to evaluate Jessica, making a decision after a five- or six-month time frame, or offering the position to Jessica today.

Motion by Mayor Pro-Tem Doug Capps and seconded by Councilmember Ryan Bullard to offer Jessica Leavins the position.

Discussion ensued on advertising, being fair to candidates and retaining continuity by offering the job to Jessica.

Councilmember Ryan Bullard called for a vote.

Motion by Mayor Pro-Tem Doug Capps and seconded by Councilmember Ryan Bullard to amend the motion to remove the interim title and authorize the Mayor to negotiate a contract for Ms. Leavins.

Roll Call: Ayes: Doug Capps, Ryan Bullard, Shannon Hayes, Dusty Allison. Nays: Brandon Frost. Ayes: 4; Nays: 1. Motion carried.

Mayor JB Whitten called for a recess at 12:22 p.m. for lunch.

6.2. Proposed Millage Rate & Tentative Hearing

Mayor JB Whitten resumed the meeting at 12:35 p.m.

Interim City Manager Jessica Leavins said we do not have the number for the impact fee, as we are going to complete the study next year. She reminded the Council of the Utility Fee Schedule and factoring where the wastewater treatment plant needs to be. She explained the minimum average bill would go up \$5 for water and sewer and \$2 for water. The sanitation will go up 2%. The WWTP portion ensures it handles the upgrades. She mentioned fees, including vendor fees, will be brought back in the fee schedule resolution.

She added the stormwater fund does not generate the revenue to support it. We are looking at how we make the fund more self-sufficient. We have a cap on how much each commercial business will be charged, and we are looking at how it will impact a business if we remove the cap in stages. The charge is based on the impervious surface. She added the fee is not for residential units.

She presented the proposed millage rate and tentative Hearing information. She said the proposal is to lower the millage rate by one-tenth. We need to move forward to submit the rate of the TRIM to the property appraiser's office.

The prior year millage rate was 6.7466, and the current year's proposed millage rate is 6.6466.

She announced the tentative hearing date is September 15, 2025, at 5:15 p.m., and the final hearing date is September 22, 2025, at 5:15 p.m.

Motion by Councilmember Ryan Bullard and seconded by Councilmember Shannon Hayes to accept the proposed millage rate at 6.6466.

Roll Call: Ayes: Doug Capps, Ryan Bullard, Shannon Hayes, Brandon Frost, Dusty Allison. All ayes. Motion carried.

In response to Councilmember S. Hayes, Interim City Manager Jessica Leavins responded that there are no other meetings in July.

7. Comments from the Mayor and Council

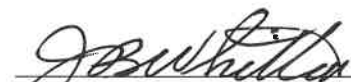
Mayor JB Whitten called for comment from the Council.

8. Comments from the Audience – No one from the public was present.

9. Adjournment

Mayor JB Whitten adjourned the meeting at 12:48 p.m.

Minutes approved this 25th day of August 2025.


JB Whitten
Mayor


Maryanne Girard
City Clerk

Proper Notice having been duly given

