

**REGULAR MEETING
DESTIN CITY COUNCIL
OCTOBER 20, 2025
ANNEX COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

The Council of the City of Destin met in regular session with the following members and staff present:

Destin City Council

Mayor Pro Tem Dewey Destin
Councilmember Kevin Schmidt
Councilmember Sandy Trammell

Councilmember Torey Geile
Councilmember Rodney Braden

Destin City Staff

City Manager Larry Jones
IT Director Andy Peters
Community Development Director David Prichard
Finance Director Krystal Strickland
Projects/Grants/Contract Manager Jeffrey Cozadd
Dep Comm Development Director Steve O'Connor
City Attorney Kimberly Kopp

City Clerk Rey Bailey
Public Works Director Michael Burgess
HR Director Jaime Haynes
City Engineer Robert Tomasek
Parks & Recreation Director Lisa Firth
Principal Planner Daniel Butler

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Pro Tem Dewey Destin called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Pastor Steve Farris of the First Baptist Church of Destin gave the invocation, which was then followed by the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion by Councilmember Schmidt, seconded by Councilmember Trammell, to approve the agenda passed 5-0 (Council members Hebert and Bagby were absent from the meeting).

1. PROCLAMATIONS / RECOGNITIONS / SPECIAL / PUBLIC PRESENTATIONS / ANNOUNCEMENTS

A. Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance - Annual NPDES/Water Quality Presentation

Ms. Kayla Wingard, Monitoring Program Manager for the Choctawhatchee Basin Alliance (CBA), provided an annual update on the organization's partnership with the City of Destin under the National Pollutant Discharge Elimination System (NPDES) program. She explained that the CBA is a nonprofit organization housed within Northwest Florida State College, focused on protecting and sustaining healthy waterways through monitoring, education, restoration, and research. Wingard noted that CBA's role in the NPDES program involves public education and outreach, public involvement, and pollution prevention—all aimed at reducing pollution discharged into local waterways.

Over the past year, CBA continued its *Grasses in Classes* program with Destin Middle School, engaging about 200 fifth-grade students in growing and planting salt marsh grasses as part of a hands-on environmental education curriculum. The organization also conducted presentations for the Destin Leadership class, the Rotary Club, and the Salt Strong Fishing Club, encouraging community engagement in environmental stewardship. CBA participated in cleanup events such as Earth Day at Noriego Point and the International Coastal Cleanup, during which approximately 100 pounds of trash were collected. Residents were encouraged to log independent cleanups through the Clean Swell app and contribute to the iNaturalist biodiversity project to support local ecological research.

Ms. Wingard reported on water quality monitoring conducted monthly at six sampling stations in Destin – two in the harbor and four around Joe’s Bayou and Indian Bayou. Results from 2024 showed that all stations met the Florida Department of Environmental Protection’s nutrient criteria for phosphorus, nitrogen, and chlorophyll, except for one Indian Bayou station that exceeded chlorophyll levels. She also highlighted CBA’s upgraded online water quality dashboard, which allows the public to view results by region or station and analyze trends, including the relationship between nutrients, chlorophyll, and rainfall.

In terms of pollution prevention, CBA collected approximately 25 miles of fishing line from five monofilament recycling bins located in the harbor and at Joe’s Bayou, keeping the material out of the landfill and waterways. The organization also partnered with four local restaurants – Back Porch, Boathouse, Brotula’s, and Johnny Grits – to recycle nearly 90 tons of oyster shells for use in shoreline restoration projects. Wingard noted that the oyster gardening program, which includes vertical oyster gardens at locations such as Luther’s Pontoon, continues to grow and aims to expand toward a “Million Oyster Project.” Looking ahead, CBA plans to introduce its *Seagrass Restoration* curriculum at Destin High School.

Following the presentation, council members thanked Ms. Wingard and CBA for their continued partnership and environmental stewardship. They discussed elevated chlorophyll levels in Indian Bayou and the Florida Department of Health’s role in monitoring bacterial levels through the Healthy Beaches program. Council members also expressed interest in promoting the vertical oyster gardening program and sharing sign-up information with residents, recognizing the ecological benefits oysters provide in filtering and improving water quality.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Ms. Frost Jones, a Harbor Landing resident on Gulf Shore Drive, expressed concern about the state’s proposed \$83 million purchase of land at Noriego Point. She questioned the lack of public input and transparency in the process, describing it as a “land grab” and noting the mayor’s limited involvement. They cited concerns about the property’s escalating value – from \$10 million seven years ago to over \$20 million per acre – and potential impacts if the land becomes a state park, including increased traffic and parking issues on the two-lane road to Holiday Isle. She asked what actions, if any, the public can take before the sale closes in about three months. The Mayor Pro Tem indicated that this session was only for listening, but public input opportunities are expected in the future.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Main Street Betterment Alliance of Destin Veteran's Day 5k
- B. Approval of minutes of October 6, 2025, Council Executive Session
- C. Approval of minutes of September 15, 2025, Regular City Council Meeting

Councilmember Braden made a motion to approve Consent Agenda items 3A through 3C, as printed above, seconded by Councilmember Trammell. Motion passed 5-0.

4. CITY MANAGER REPORTS

A. FDOT State Funded Grant Agreement G3G09 and Resolution 25-22

The City Manager explained that this item concerns a Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) state-funded grant agreement for the \$2 million Transportation Regional Incentive Program (TRIP) grant supporting the Destin Cross Town Connector project. The council's approval is needed to finalize and return the agreement to FDOT for their signature. Once FDOT signs and issues a Notice to Proceed, the city can move forward with the procurement process for the construction phase. Procurement documents are expected to be ready for the council's next meeting, and they will be presented for approval even if the Notice to Proceed has not yet been received. Tonight's action is specifically to approve the grant agreement.

Councilmember Trammell moved to approve the FDOT State-Funded Grant Agreement GEG09 and adopt Resolution 25-22, seconded by Councilmember Braden. Motion passed 5-0.

Councilmember Schmidt moved to adopt an amendment to the FY 2026 Budget to increase capital grant revenues and expenditures by \$2 million, seconded by Councilmember Geile. Motion passed 5-0.

B. Florida Retirement System (FRS) - Motion to Rescind Previous Action by the Council

The City Manager explained that this item concerns the Florida Retirement System and that council members have a chronology of related events in their packets. He reminded the council that at the previous meeting, Councilmember Braden had made a motion to place on the current agenda a motion to rescind the council's previous action regarding Ordinance 25-19-CC. He clarified that the council could choose to take no action or proceed with a motion to rescind the prior decision. If the motion to rescind were approved, the next step would be a motion directing staff to advertise the ordinance for its first reading at the following council meeting. He added that this process would involve two separate motions: one to rescind the previous action and, if that passed, another to instruct staff to bring the ordinance back for first reading on the next agenda.

Motion by Councilmember Braden, seconded by Councilmember Trammell, to rescind the council's previous action regarding Ordinance 25-19-CC – *Amending Chapter 2: Administration, of the Code of Ordinances relating to city membership in the Florida Retirement System, providing for membership in the Florida Retirement System for the benefit of city employees* – passed 4-1, with Councilmember Schmidt dissenting.

Motion by Councilmember Braden, seconded by Councilmember Trammell, to direct staff to advertise Ordinance 25-19-CC for first reading on November 3rd city council meeting passed 4-1, with Councilmember Schmidt dissenting.

Councilmember Braden volunteered to serve as the legislative sponsor for Ordinance 25-19-CC.

C. Short Term Rental Software RFP Results Update

The City Manager provided an update on the short-term rental software RFP process. He explained that the city had issued a request for proposals in August to help manage short-term rental registrations, particularly as these requirements are now being extended to condominiums. Although several proposals were received, only one met all the required service criteria. However, that proposal's cost was deemed unreasonably high, so staff recommended rejecting all bids. The City

Manager noted that some components of the proposals may prove useful in the future and could be brought back to council if beneficial. He also reported progress on identifying condominium units operating as short-term rentals, crediting IT Director and his team, for their work in refining the database, which will soon support the implementation of the registration process.

Councilmember Trammell moved to reject all bids received for the short-term rental software RFP, while continuing to research and evaluate viable software options during the interim period. Furthermore, if the newly implemented short-term rental program generates sufficient funding in the future, city staff may revisit and consider entering into a contract for such services at that time. Councilmember Braden provided a second to the motion, which passed 5-0.

D. Threadgill Parking Update

1. The City Manager reported on the proposed parking improvements at Threadgill Park, specifically concerning spaces identified in the right-of-way along Calhoun and Hickory. The consulting engineer's estimate placed surface work for 30 parking spaces at approximately \$200,000. However, due to delineated wetlands on the property, a Phase I environmental study (\$5,000) and likely a Phase II study (\$20,000–\$50,000) would be required. In addition, stormwater conveyance redesign or reconfiguration could add \$40,000 – \$50,000. Mitigation of wetland impacts – requiring an Army Corps permit – was estimated between \$200,000 to \$300,000 and could take two or more years to obtain. Altogether, the total cost per parking space was projected between \$15,000 – \$20,000.

No motion was taken on this item

2. Following the report, the discussion shifted to the appraisal value of the nearby property being considered for additional parking spaces. The City Attorney explained that the property owner had rejected the city's counter offer due to concerns about the city's level of interest. The current offer was \$400,000 with a 30-day closing period, but the seller had declined requests for an extended due diligence period. The City Attorney noted that rezoning and future land use amendments could not realistically be completed within 30 days.
3. Council discussed maintaining the 30-day closing period, potentially offering a slightly higher price within the appraised value range, and continuing negotiations to address the seller's concerns. The City Attorney will attempt to negotiate further staying within the city's appraised value parameters and seeking a 45-day period if possible, and will provide a report back at the next meeting.

E. Volunteer Committees/Boards Quarterly Attendance Report – Informational Only

F. Announcements

1. The city had received about a dozen public responses regarding unusual or concerning activities in the bayou. These submissions are being collected through multiple channels, and staff will compile a detailed report for the next meeting. The city expressed appreciation for the public's participation in sharing information.
2. The legislative delegation meeting originally scheduled for October 30th had been rescheduled to December 15th, which conflicted with the city council's regular meeting

date. Councilmember Sandy Trammell made a motion to move the council meeting from Monday, December 15th, to Tuesday, December 16th, at 6:00 p.m. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

3. Lisa Gunderson, who will facilitate the upcoming visioning session, has requested to meet individually with each council member. Sheri B. from the City Manager's Office will coordinate those meetings. The goal is to identify dates and prepare for holding the visioning session early next year.
4. Residents were also encouraged to assist with the Joe's Bayou effort by submitting anecdotal information, photos, or videos of bayou conditions to publicinfo@cityofdestin.com. The materials collected will be shared with the City Manager and City Attorney for review and reporting to the council.
5. The city's annual Open House will take place on Wednesday, October 22nd, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the Destin Community Center. The event will feature a free lunch, music, and an opportunity for residents to engage with staff and learn about ongoing city projects.
6. In partnership with the USDA Forest Service and the Florida Forest Service, the city received a grant that funded the planting of 12 trees – including Live Oaks, Willows, Hollies, and Maples – at Kell Air Nature Walk and the Nancy Weidenhamer Dog Park.
7. A QR code linking to the city's Parks and Recreation survey is available on the city's homepage. Residents are encouraged to complete the survey, which will remain open through the first week of November.
8. On Thursday, October 23rd, the Harbor and Waterways Board will meet at 5:30 p.m., followed by a combined session of the Harbor CRA Advisory Committee, Harbor and Waterways Board, and Public Works & Safety Committee at 6:15 p.m. or immediately following the earlier meeting. The purpose of the combined meeting is to discuss the Marler Bridge design, with Mr. Bradley Touchstone of Touchstone Architecture presenting input and ideas. Both meetings are open to the public, and community attendance is encouraged.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Destin Elementary School Addition – A Major Development Order (DEV-001522-2025)

The City Attorney presented the Destin Elementary School Addition, Major Development Order No. 001522-2025, submitted on behalf of the Okaloosa County School Board. The proposed project includes approximately 75,000 square feet of new construction consisting of classroom space, offices, and a teachers' lounge located at 633 Kelly Street. The city council's review was limited to determining whether the proposed development is consistent with the city's Comprehensive Plan, as school board projects are exempt from most local land development code regulations and are subject to their own permitting and inspection processes. City staff found the proposal to be consistent with the Comprehensive Plan and recommended approval.

The Mayor Pro Tem opened a public hearing to receive comments for or against the proposed project. Having none, the Mayor Pro Tem closed the public hearing and turned the matter over to the entire council for their discussion and consideration.

Councilmember Trammell moved to approve the Destin Elementary School Addition, a Major Development Order, as presented, seconded by Councilmember Braden. Motion passed 5-0.

B. The Shores at Crystal Beach – A Major Development Order (DEV-001655-2025)

The City Attorney presented the Shores at Crystal Beach project, Major Development Order No. 001655-2025, involving an expansion of parking facilities at the Shores at Crystal Beach public access. The proposed improvements include expanding the existing western parking lot to provide 19 standard parking spaces and one ADA-accessible space, as well as constructing a new eastern parking lot with 34 low-speed vehicle (LSV) spaces. Additional improvements include a new restroom facility, dune walkover, and associated infrastructure. The City of Destin was the technical applicant for the project in partnership with Okaloosa County, and that city staff recommended approval of the development order.

The Mayor Pro Tem opened a public hearing to receive comments for or against the proposed project. Having none, the Mayor Pro Tem closed the public hearing and turned the matter over to the entire council for their discussion and consideration.

Councilmember Trammell moved to approve The Shores at Crystal Beach, a Major Development Order, as presented, seconded by Councilmember Braden. Motion passed 5-0.

6. COMMENTS / PRESENTATIONS FROM MAYOR, COUNCIL, AND CITY ATTORNEY

A. Councilmember Braden

Councilmember Braden offered to serve as the legislative sponsor for a proposed ordinance discussed with the City Attorney, which would amend the code to remove the city's additional two-foot freeboard height requirement for existing homes undergoing remodeling or additions costing less than 50% of the home's current value or size.

B. Councilmember Trammell

Councilmember Trammell provided an update on the Parks Foundation, noting efforts to raise approximately \$200,000 to rebuild the pavilion at Clement Taylor Park to resemble the original schoolhouse structure, inviting donations to support the project.

C. Councilmember Destin

D. Councilmember Bagby

E. Councilmember Hebert

F. Councilmember Geile

1) Projects Status/Updates

G. Councilmember Schmidt

Councilmember Schmidt inquired about a recent hit-and-run near Beach and Kelly Streets, and Captain Fulghum from the Sheriff's Office explained that a driver fled a traffic stop, striking two deputies and another vehicle before being identified and having a warrant issued.

Councilmember Schmidt also raised concerns about parking congestion along the right-of-way near Destin Elementary School and the Duck Pond area, suggesting safety

issues during morning hours. The City Manager will coordinate with the Sheriff's Office to review the situation.

Finally, Councilmember Schmidt inquired about the Lee property on Indian Trail, where it was clarified that the Parks Foundation could not secure the property as a donation and that the owner's asking price was approximately \$345,000. It was also noted that portions of the property are unbuildable due to existing easements and stormwater drainage designations.

1) Charter Review Committee

Councilmember Schmidt requested that the City Attorney bring back a draft resolution for the next meeting outlining the process for establishing a charter review committee. He explained that the intent was to model it after the City of Fort Walton Beach's process, which clearly defines how the committee is formed. Under that model, each councilmember would nominate a citizen who has lived in the city for at least one year and is a registered voter. The resolution would also include details such as quorum requirements, the committee's selection of a chairperson, and a six-month deadline for the committee to return recommendations to the city council. He also noted that the council would have the ability to send specific items to the committee for review and that this schedule would allow enough time for any proposed amendments to be reviewed, discussed, and placed on the November 2026 general election ballot if the council chose to move forward.

Councilmember Schmidt moved to form a Charter Review Committee, seconded by Councilmember Geile.

Councilmember Trammell suggested an alternative approach, recommending that instead of forming a new committee, the city assign the charter review task to existing committees. She reasoned that many current committee members have not yet read the city charter and should do so as part of their service. Each committee could then review the charter from its own area of responsibility, allowing for multiple perspectives without the need to recruit new members or add to staff workload. She added that this would prevent the creation of another standing committee and reduce the number of meetings that staff would be required to attend.

Councilmember Schmidt stated that the charter review should be conducted by a group dedicated solely to that purpose. He expressed concern that existing committees are already overworked and often struggle with attendance, and he believed that forming a separate committee would ensure a focused and efficient review process. He also noted that, under Fort Walton Beach's model, staff participation was limited primarily to the City Attorney and City Clerk, minimizing additional burdens on city personnel.

Councilmember Destin shared his opposition to forming a charter review committee altogether. He commented that the city's current charter process was not broken and therefore did not require fixing. He also stated that such significant decisions about how the City of Destin operates should remain with elected officials rather than being delegated to unelected residents. He emphasized that the council already has the authority to propose and approve charter amendments, as any member can bring forward an amendment that can be placed on the ballot with the approval of four councilmembers. He added that in his experience, previous charter review committees produced recommendations that the council felt obligated to put on the ballot, even when those proposals did not reflect the views of the elected body.

Motion failed 2-3 (Council members Schmidt and Geile voted "yes" and Council member Destin, Trammell, and Braden voted "no").

H. Mayor Wagner

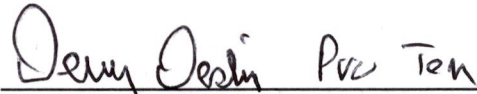
I. City Attorney

- 1) Pursuant to Section 286.011(8), Florida Statutes, the City Attorney desires the advice of counsel at an executive session on December 1, 2025, at 5:30 PM in the following litigation: F129 v. City of Destin (2023-CA-003643), in the Circuit Court of Okaloosa County, Florida. Present at the litigation will be the City Attorney Kimberly Kopp, Litigation Counsel William Warner, City Manager Larry Jones, the Mayor and all members of the City Council.

7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 7:10 PM.



Dewey Destin, Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST:



Rey Bailey, City Clerk