

**REGULAR MEETING
DESTIN CITY COUNCIL
DECEMBER 1, 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 Bobby Wagner
Councilmember Jim Bagby
Councilmember Kevin Schmidt
Councilmember Sandy Trammell

Councilmember Dew Destin
Councilmember Terésa Hebert
Councilmember Torey Geile
Councilmember Rodney Braden

Destin City Staff

City Manager Larry Jones
IT Director Andy Peters
Community Development Director David Prichard
Public Information Director Tamara Young
Dep Comm Development Director Steve O'Connor
Projects/Grants/Contract Manager Jeffrey Cozadd
City Attorney Kimberly Kopp

City Clerk Rey Bailey
Public Works Director Michael Burgess
HR Director Jaime Haynes
Finance Director Krystal Strickland
City Engineer Robert Tomasek
Planner Sherry Burney
Parks & Recreation Director Lisa Firth

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bobby Wagner called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM. Pastor David J. Butler of the Faith Assembly Christian Church gave the invocation, which was then followed by the recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion by Councilmember Hebert, seconded by Councilmember Trammell, to approve the agenda passed 7-0.

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

A. Destin Pee Wee Tackle Football PYFA Champions

The mayor and council honored the Superbowl winning 2025 Destin Dolphins Pee Wee Tackle Football Team.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Ricky Lyn Grant, Jr. spoke broadly about his background and interests in real estate, pursuing additional licensure, entrepreneurship, and building connections within the community. He shared that he is working on advertising and launching his website, enjoys attending council

meetings as a way to stay engaged and meet people, and remains focused on staying positive and professional while pursuing future business and personal goals.

Mr. Michael Leech expressed concerns regarding plans to designate Pine Street as a through street. He stated that he was under the impression, based on prior discussions in 2023, that Pine Street would not be opened and would instead remain a cul-de-sac. He explained that making it a through street would increase traffic in front of his home without providing meaningful connectivity and would worsen existing traffic backups in the area. He also raised concerns about the high cost of constructing the road segment, estimating it could exceed \$1 million, and questioned whether the expense is justified. He urged the city to reconsider and remove Pine Street from the list of proposed through streets.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Miscellaneous Asphaltic Concrete Services, authorization to renew contract
- B. Median/ROW Landscaping Maintenance, authorization to renew contract
- C. RFB 25-11-PW, Debris Monitoring Continuing Services, authorization to execute contracts
- D. RFB 25-13-PW, Mattie Kelly Outfall Project, consideration of contract
- E. Approval of minutes of November 3, 2025, Regular City Council Meeting

Councilmember Hebert moved for the approval of Consent Agenda items 3A through 3E, as printed above, seconded by Councilmember Trammell. Motion passed 7-0

4. CITY MANAGER REPORTS

- A. Six-Month Extension of Tyler Technologies SaaS Contract (January 1 – June 30, 2026)

The City Manager requests council's approval of a six-month extension of the Tyler Technologies contract. The city has been transitioning from Tyler to UKG, Aclarian, and MGO for financial, permitting, and HR/payroll functions, but several issues have delayed a full exit from the Tyler platform. These include an active IRS payroll audit requiring continued access to Munis data, incomplete development and code cases in Energov, and the need to ensure public records are fully protected during the transition to MGO. Based on these factors, staff and the IT Director recommend the six-month extension, noting that funds are already budgeted and no budget amendment is required.

Councilmember Bagby moved to approve a six-month extension of the Tyler Technologies Software as a service contract in the amount of \$46,804.54, as outlined in the staff report, was seconded by Councilmember Hebert and passed 7-0.

- B. CRA Advisory Committee CY2025 Motions

The City Manager presented an overview of this item, addressing prior council discussion regarding recommendations from the Harbor and Town Center CRA Advisory Committees. Staff identified potential backlog items from the Harbor CRA, including utility undergrounding phasing, a proposed breakwater at Clement Taylor Park, exploring TDC funding for Harbor One seawall repairs, development of a used-oil collection partnership, and appointments to the East Pass Bridge Committee. Staff recommended that these items first be vetted by the CRA Board before advancing to city council to clarify scope, funding sources, and priorities. The City Manager suggested scheduling a CRA Board meeting to review these requests and further recommended establishing a standing CRA Board meeting once per quarter to improve coordination and predictability.

Councilmember Bagby emphasized the need for the CRA Board to clearly identify funding sources – whether CRA funds or general revenue – and to establish priorities among requested projects. He noted that some items are administrative and straightforward, while others involve significant financial commitments. He requested that the CRA Board present prioritized recommendations and explain why each item represents the most efficient use of funds before

Councilmember Trammell stressed the importance of providing full background and context for each recommendation coming from the CRA Advisory Committees. She cited the used-oil disposal proposal as an example, noting that additional information is needed regarding need, legal requirements, feasibility, and potential locations. She requested that this background be presented at the CRA Board meeting so the council can make informed decisions.

Councilmember Destin moved to schedule a CRA Board meeting on January 5, 2026, at 5:30 PM, seconded by Councilmember Schmidt. Motion passed 7-0.

Motion by Councilmember Trammell, seconded by Councilmember Hebert, to appoint John Stephens and Guy Tadlock of the Harbor CRA Advisory Committee to the Destin East Pass Bridge Committee passed 7-0.

Mayor Wagner informed the council that Mr. Rodney Chamberlain was recently appointed FDOT District 3 Director and expressed Mr. Chamberlain's interest in meeting with the Destin Bridge East Pass Committee. The mayor requested that staff verify the status of FDOT permits for the bridge underpass project and coordinate with District 3 to confirm current permitting and project status, particularly as it relates to future Harbor CRA discussions and projects.

C. FY 2026 Budget Amendment – FRS

The City Manager presented Agenda Item 4C, which concerns a proposed FY2026 budget amendment to fund the Florida Retirement System (FRS) plan that was approved by the council at a prior meeting. He explained that staff had been directed to return with a formal budget amendment to provide the necessary funding for the program, in an amount not to exceed \$532,570. The amendment would increase the personnel taxes and benefits line accordingly.

Councilmember Bagby moved to amend the FY 2026 Budget to increase personnel taxes and benefits by the amount not to exceed \$532,570. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Hebert and passed 6-1, with Councilmember Schmidt dissenting.

D. Consideration of Letter Opposing Oil Drilling and Energy Exploration in the Eastern Gulf of Mexico (America)

The City Manager requests the council consideration of issuing a letter opposing oil drilling and energy exploration in the eastern Gulf of Mexico. He explained that Okaloosa County's Board of County Commissioners had approved a similar letter at its November 18 meeting, supporting permanent protection of the Eastern Gulf Test and Training Range (also known as the Eglin Gulf Test and Training Range) from oil drilling and energy exploration. The request originated from the Okaloosa County Economic Development Council, which asked that the City of Destin adopt and support a comparable letter. The City Manager noted that a draft of the county's letter was included in the council's packet and advised that, if approved, staff would prepare a similar letter for the mayor's signature on behalf of the city.

Councilmember Destin expressed his strong support for the overall intent of the letter, particularly its support of military activities. He emphasized, however, the importance of also

clearly stating that the natural resources that define Destin and the Gulf Coast – specifically the water and beaches – must be protected. He requested that language be added to the letter recognizing these resources as vital and a national treasure. Staff will incorporate this additional emphasis on water and environmental protection into the letter before it is finalized and submitted.

Councilmember Trammell moved to approve the issuance of a letter of support, authorize the mayor to sign and execute the letter on behalf of the city, and to incorporate into the letter a statement emphasizing the city’s commitment to protecting military activities as well as Destin’s natural treasures – its waters and beaches – that define the city and the Gulf Coast. Councilmember Hebert seconded the motion, which passed 7-0.

E. Annexation Timeline

The City Manager presented an overview of the proposed annexation timeline for areas east of the city, explaining that staff reverse-engineered key statutory deadlines tied to the August ballot language submission and the November election date. He outlined a preliminary plan to gauge resident interest through a city-controlled survey, supported by a fact sheet describing potential benefits of annexation, distributed by direct mail with QR-code responses organized by geographic area, before committing resources to more costly statutory steps.

Councilmember Schmidt suggested leveraging existing HOA communication channels to help distribute information electronically, while emphasizing efficiency. Mayor Wagner discussed the importance of a clear, neutral fact sheet that explains taxation and benefits without advocacy and stressed compliance with statutory limitations. Councilmember Bagby raised concerns about the initial survey being tainted if routed through HOAs or property managers who might discourage annexation or apply their own spin, and emphasized the need for the city to control messaging.

Councilmember Geile asked about potential funding impacts of incorporation, including population-based revenues; the City Manager responded that revenues would largely be ad valorem-based and that assessed values were still being researched.

Councilmember Destin expressed a preference for using a professional survey firm to ensure credibility, noting the city would likely have only one opportunity to do this correctly,

Councilmember Destin moved to direct the City Manager to obtain a cost estimate from a professional surveyor for administering the proposed survey, seconded by Councilmember Hebert.

Councilmember Schmidt cautioned against wasting time and supported relying on capable staff to move quickly.

Councilmember Bagby supported Councilmember Destin’s position, citing the holiday season as a poor time for meaningful participation and reiterating concerns about survey design and timing.

Finally, Councilmember Geile noted potential increases in bed tax and state-shared revenues such as gas tax, which the Finance Director confirmed, estimating overall shared revenues could increase by roughly 10–15 percent depending on annexed areas and population characteristics.

The mayor called for a vote on the motion, which passed 7-0.

F. First Amendment to the Four Prong Lake ILA

The City Manager explained that this item concerns a first amendment to the Four-Prong Lake Interlocal Agreement with Okaloosa County. He reported that the county has agreed to contribute \$1 million in surtax funds toward the project. The action requested of the council is to approve the amendment to the interlocal agreement in order to formally accept the county's \$1 million contribution.

Councilmember Bagby moved to approve the First Amendment to the Interlocal Agreement from Okaloosa County and direct the mayor to execute, passed 7-0.

G. Announcements

- 1) The legislative delegation meeting will be held on Monday, December 15th in Shalimar, and as a result, the city council meeting has been moved to Tuesday, December 16th.
- 2) Special thanks were extended to Katie Birmingham from Senator Scott's office and Duncan Morrison, a U.S. Coast Guard fellow, for their assistance with navigational issues at East Pass and the West Jetty.
- 3) The City's annual tree lighting will take place Thursday, December 4th, at 6 p.m. at the Destin Community Center.
- 4) The Christmas parade is scheduled for Saturday, December 13th at 10:00 a.m., with floats starting from Destin Methodist Church on Beach Drive; attendees are reminded to stand on the north side of Harbor Boulevard (US 98).
- 5) On Sunday, December 14th, the Holly Jolly at the Harbor event will run from 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with more details available on the city's website under News & Information. That same evening at 6 p.m., the Destin Museum will host the annual boat parade.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. A public hearing regarding the submittal of a Major Development Order (DEV-001643-2025) for the construction of The Drury Plaza Hotel, located at 1001 East Highway 98 (Parcel ID: 00-2S-22-0000-0013-014A). The application includes the construction of a six (6) story building with 225,615 square feet of hotel and conference room space. This project will include a total of 320 hotel rooms, site stormwater improvements, parking, internal and external pedestrian networks, and associated infrastructure.

Staff introduced the item by explaining that the proposed Drury Destin Hotel project consists of approximately 225,615 square feet of hotel space, including 4,000 square feet of conference space. Staff noted that the project has undergone a full technical review and is in compliance with the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code (LDC), meeting all minimum requirements.

The mayor opened the public hearing to receive comments in support of or opposition to the proposed development. With no members of the public wishing to speak, the mayor closed the public hearing and turned the matter over to the city council for discussion and consideration.

Mr. Eddie Robinson of Drury Destin, LLC, along with Mark Siner, the project manager, were present to answer questions and clarify project details throughout the discussion.

The city council engaged in an extensive discussion of the proposed project, focusing primarily on parking reductions, landscaping, traffic impacts, and constraints imposed by the current LDC.

Councilmember Destin expressed concern regarding the approximately 30 percent reduction in required parking, noting that the reduced parking ratio results in less than one space per hotel room and does not fully account for employees or conference center activity. Mr. Siner and city staff responded that the parking count complies with applicable code provisions, including allowable reductions.

Councilmember Trammell raised concerns about the absence of a designated pet walking and relief area on the preliminary plans. Mr. Robinson explained that while such an area was not shown on the conceptual drawings, a designated pet relief area with appropriate amenities would be provided as part of the building permit requirements.

Traffic and safety issues were discussed, particularly related to left-turn stacking, pedestrian conflicts, and potential future congestion. Councilmember Destin questioned whether a left-turn stacking lane would be provided. Mr. Siner confirmed that an FDOT-approved stacking lane would be constructed, meeting required lengths and accommodating multiple vehicles.

The mayor expressed concerns regarding the proposed landscaping, specifically requesting the use of native trees rather than palm trees for environmental, aesthetic, and heat mitigation purposes. Mr. Robinson indicated a willingness to discuss the request internally and with staff, emphasizing the applicant's intent to be a good long-term neighbor.

Several council members also raised concerns about traffic impacts along Highway 98, including the proposed full-access median and congestion at an already challenging location. Questions were raised as to whether closing the median could improve safety and traffic flow. The City Engineer explained that the project proposes full access with left-in and left-out movements, noted that FDOT controls the roadway, and stated that FDOT was not inclined to close the median despite earlier concerns raised by staff.

The discussion also addressed mobility and impact fees. Council members noted that the applicant submitted the project during a statutory vesting window that exempted it from recently adopted mobility fees, which could have resulted in several million dollars in additional costs had the application been filed later. While staff confirmed that the application was legally vested, some council members expressed frustration regarding the timing and its implications for future infrastructure funding.

Council members further discussed a roof pitch waiver granted administratively by staff. It was clarified that the approval was a waiver rather than a variance and therefore did not require review by the Board of Adjustment. It was explained that the waiver was granted because the hotel is based on a national prototype design and requiring a redesign would impose a financial burden, while still complying with the maximum building height requirements of the Comprehensive Plan. Although council members acknowledged that the waiver met code requirements, several questioned the broader policy implications of maintaining roof pitch standards if waivers are routinely granted for prototype developments.

A proposal was raised to require a condition that 80 percent of the trees be native species. Mr. Robinson stated that he did not have the proper authority to commit to a specific percentage. Staff confirmed that the submitted landscaping plan meets current code requirements and noted that the MMTD overlay district allows reduced buffering and landscaping standards. Council members expressed broader concerns that the overlay district and existing code result in technically compliant but undesirable outcomes.

The council also discussed the presence of three potential outparcels shown on the site plan. It was explained that subdivision into outparcels is permitted under the code and that these parcels could be developed in the future if zoning and dimensional requirements are met, at which point additional landscaping would be required. Some council members expressed concern that the layout prioritizes future outparcel development over safety, buffering, and cohesive site planning.

Throughout the discussion, it was emphasized that the applicant had complied with all existing regulations and that many of the concerns raised stem from the city's ordinances rather than the project itself. Council members expressed frustration that longstanding issues related to parking, traffic, and landscaping persist due to outdated or overly permissive code provisions, and several reiterated the need to accelerate the LDC rewrite process.

Further discussion focused on landscaping enhancements, including voluntary conditions related to increasing native vegetation. Councilmember Bagby expressed dissatisfaction with the proposed landscaping plan stating that an 80/20 ratio of native oak trees to palm trees was a reasonable request. Mr. Siner explained the logistical challenges of planting approximately 200 oak trees due to site constraints but committed to working with staff to improve the landscaping beyond the minimum code requirements.

Councilmember Bagby recommended allowing additional time for staff to review the landscaping plan and for the applicant to revise it to incorporate more native vegetation.

At this time, Mr. Robinson requested a brief recess to make a phone call regarding the requested landscaping ratio. The mayor subsequently called a five-minute recess.

Following the break, Mr. Robinson announced that the applicant agreed to an 80/20 ratio of native trees to palm trees and also committed to providing a designated pet walking area on site.

Councilmember Destin moved to approve the Major Development Order for The Drury Plaza Hotel, subject to the following conditions: 1) at least 80% of the trees planted must be native species, and 2) a designated pet walking/relief area will be included. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Bagby and approved unanimously, 7-0

B. Second reading of Ordinance 25-17-LC - Relating to platting, requiring administrative review, processing, and approval of plats pursuant to Chapter 177, Florida Statutes.

The City Attorney read Ordinance 25-17-LC by title, and then presented it to the council on second reading.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF DESTIN, FLORIDA RELATING TO PLATTING; REQUIRING ADMINISTRATIVE REVIEW, PROCESSING, AND APPROVAL OF PLATS PURSUANT TO CHAPTER 177, FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR FINDINGS OF FACT; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The mayor opened a public hearing to receive comments for or against the proposed ordinance. Having none, the mayor closed the public hearing and turned the matter over to the council for discussion and consideration.

Motion by Councilmember Trammell, seconded by Councilmember Hebert, to adopt Ordinance 25-17-LC on second reading passed 6-1, with Councilmember Destin dissenting.

C. Second reading of Ordinance 25-23-LC - Deleting Article 1, "General Provisions/Legal" of the Land Development Code to remove and replace the existing Article 1 in its entirety, providing for title, jurisdiction and intent, containing regulations related to vested rights, code compliance and enforcement.

The City Attorney read Ordinance 25-23-LC by title, and then presented it to the council on second reading.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF DESTIN, FLORIDA, DELETING ARTICLE 1, "GENERAL PROVISIONS/LEGAL" OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE TO REMOVE AND REPLACE THE EXISTING ARTICLE 1 IN ITS ENTIRETY; PROVIDING FOR TITLE, JURISDICTION AND INTENT; CONTAINING REGULATIONS RELATED TO VESTED RIGHTS, CODE COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT; PROVIDING FOR AUTHORITY; PROVIDING FOR FINDINGS OF FACT; PROVIDING FOR INCORPORATION INTO THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTING PROVISIONS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The mayor opened a public hearing to receive comments for or against the proposed ordinance. Having none, the mayor closed the public hearing and turned the matter over to the council for discussion and consideration.

Motion by Councilmember Trammell, seconded by Councilmember Hebert, to adopt Ordinance 25-23-LC on second reading passed 7-0.

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

- A. Councilmember Braden
- B. Councilmember Trammell

Councilmember Trammell advocated for an ordinance requiring all hotels and motels to designate on-site pet walking areas with appropriate amenities, citing personal experience with pet waste problems caused by nearby hotels.

Councilmember Trammell moved to introduce an ordinance requiring hotels and motels to designate an on-site pet walking area for guest use. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hebert and passed unanimously by a 7-0 vote.

Councilmember Trammell suggested consulting an engineer with experience serving on advisory councils to review future development proposals. She requested trimming of trees along Mountain Drive, noting the city's responsibility for maintaining rights-of-way, and suggested increased sidewalk and litter maintenance due to growing pedestrian use. She supported collaboration between Public Works and the CRA boards on planning for landscaping and maintenance improvements.

- C. Councilmember Destin

Councilman Destin asked about the status of the Pine Street extension referenced during public testimony. He acknowledged that the project is included in the mobility plan but noted that no capital improvement project has been initiated and confirmed that any future action would require council approval.

D. Councilmember Bagby

Councilman Bagby clarified that the Pine Street project is not scheduled within the next five years and is only one of many long-term mobility options. He also requested that the city's TDC representative inquire about potential funding assistance for seawall improvements.

Councilmember Bagby moved to advance the review of Article 6 in the Land Development Code to the first or second city council meeting in January 2026. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hebert.

Councilmember Bagby stated that an earlier review could have avoided extended discussions on multimodal districts and parking. He expressed frustration with unintended consequences of past code decisions and stressed the importance of carefully reviewing the LDC to prevent future development and traffic issues.

Motion passed 7-0.

Councilmember Bagby raised the topic of the upcoming State Delegation meeting on December 15th, noting the importance of establishing a clear plan for who would speak on behalf of the city and what key points would be presented. He emphasized that the city has significant funding needs from the state and that the presentation should be well-prepared to ensure the top priorities are effectively communicated within the allotted two-minute timeframe.

Councilmember Bagby moved to designate Councilmember Hebert as the City of Destin's representative at the December 15th State Delegation meeting. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Destin and passed 7-0.

- E. Councilmember Hebert
- F. Councilmember Geile

Councilmember Geile moved that the council authorize him to meet with Fire Control District Chief Sasser to explore potential enhancements to life-safety measures for residential properties, including short-term rentals, and to return to the council with any recommendations for consideration. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Hebert and passed unanimously, 7-0.

G. Councilmember Schmidt

Councilmember Schmidt thanked Parks and Recreation and Public Works departments for their work on the Christmas decorations, noting that some displays were already lit and receiving positive feedback from the community.

Councilmember Schmidt moved to direct the City Manager and staff to work with the Town Center CRA Advisory Committee and the Harbor CRA Advisory Committee to begin planning landscaping and maintenance improvement concepts for Airport Road, Main Street, and Mountain Drive medians, with the goal of bringing forward a plan in time for next year's budget cycle. Councilmember Trammell provided a second to the motion, which passed 7-0.

- H. Mayor Wagner
- I. City Attorney

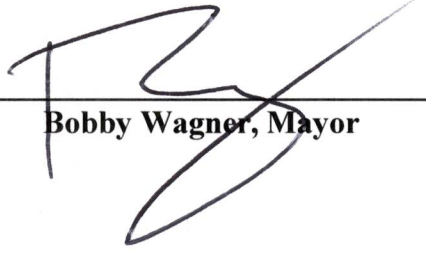
7. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. John Stephens addressed the council regarding traffic and parking concerns. He noted that parking was a major topic of the evening and expressed concern about the reliability of parking studies and the concept of shared parking. He encouraged the city council and staff to continue discussing and closely evaluating shared parking issues in future deliberations.

Mr. Michael Leach, who spoke earlier in the meeting, reiterated his concern about traffic safety and the proposed connection involving Pine Street. He described long-standing traffic issues in his neighborhood, particularly the impact on children living there, and emphasized concerns about safety. Mr. Leach opposed creating a through-street connection, instead advocating for maintaining or creating a cul-de-sac to limit traffic. He stated that nearby residents supported this approach and questioned the cost and necessity of the proposed roadway improvements, urging the council not to move forward with that portion of the plan.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 9:00 PM.



Bobby Wagner, Mayor

ATTEST:



Rey Bailey, City Clerk