

**REGULAR MEETING
DESTIN CITY COUNCIL
DECEMBER 16, 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 Dewey Destin
Councilmember Sandy Trammell

Councilmember Terésa Hebert
Councilmember Rodney Braden

Destin City Staff

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

City Clerk Rey Bailey
Finance Director Krystal Strickland
HR Director Jaime Haynes
Parks & Recreation Director Lisa Firth
IT Director Andy Peters

CALL TO ORDER, INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Bobby Wagner 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 Hebert, seconded by Councilmember Destin, to approve the agenda passed 4-0 (Council members Destin, Hebert, Trammell, and Braden voted “yes”; Council members Schmidt, Geile, and Bagby were absent from the meeting).

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

A. 2025 Christmas Parade Winners

The mayor presented award plaques to the following winners of the 41st Annual Destin Christmas Parade:

- *Noel Award/Band Award:*
Fort Walton Beach High School and Destin Middle School Band
- *Elf Award/Children's Service:*
Destin High School

- *Santa's Helper Award / Children Commercial:*
U.S. Gold Gymnastics
- *Angel Award / Religious Award:*
Knight of Columbus Council 11893
- *Chamber Award/Commercial*
Destin Water Users
- *Civic Club/Civic Award*
Am Vets Post 29
- *Crowd Pleaser*
Grace Lutheran Church

B. Destin Youth Council - Workplan Presentation

Estella Scoma, Chair of the Destin Youth Council, presented a proposed initiative to the Destin City Council requesting approval to move forward with planning and partnerships under city guidance. The proposed Youth Labor Rights Project is the Youth Council's primary initiative for the current term and supports the City of Destin's strategic goal of enhancing quality of life while also directly benefiting the local business community.

The project addresses the reality that many Destin employers rely on teen workers, particularly in the retail and food service industries. At the same time, both teens and employers may not be fully familiar with Florida's child labor requirements, which can unintentionally lead to scheduling challenges or compliance issues. The Youth Labor Rights Project is a volunteer-led educational initiative with no budget impact and is not intended to regulate or penalize businesses. Instead, its purpose is to provide clarity, support, and education while strengthening the local workforce.

The initiative includes three main components: a young workers fair in partnership with local schools focused on job readiness and workplace expectations; a voluntary youth safe employer recognition program that highlights businesses committed to lawful and safe youth employment; and simplified resource guides designed to help both teens and employers better understand youth labor laws. Together, these efforts aim to create a more prepared and reliable workforce, reduce the risk of accidental labor law violations, and offer positive public recognition to businesses that prioritize safe and responsible youth employment. The Youth Council emphasized that a first job should be a positive learning experience and expressed its commitment to supporting both young workers and local businesses through this initiative.

Councilmember Trammell made a motion to approve the Destin Youth Council's request to pursue the Youth Labor Rights Project as their primary initiative for this term, seconded by Councilmember Hebert. Motion passed 4-0.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Dan Dulles of Snapper Drive described ongoing flooding problems affecting his home and neighboring properties for nearly four years. He expressed frustration that drainage improvements, such as deeper swales, pipes, and metal grates used elsewhere in the city, have not been adequately implemented on his street. He stated that recent city-directed work reduced

drainage depth, worsening flooding, and that promised flood mitigation efforts and grant opportunities have not materialized. Mr. Dulles emphasized the personal impacts of repeated flooding, including property damage, health concerns, and the physical burden of flood prevention at his age, and urged the city to secure funding and take action to fix the drainage issues.

Mr. Sid Potter of Juanita Drive thanked the council for repairing a damaged intersection but noted that nearby sidewalks remain in poor condition and are repeatedly damaged by delivery trucks. He raised concerns about neighborhood conditions following utility and construction work, describing damage to sidewalks, landscaping, and irrigation systems. Mr. Potter also questioned continued large-scale development in Destin, including new hotels, citing concerns about building height limits, parking capacity, traffic congestion, and the city's infrastructure being unable to support further growth. He urged the council to consider a building moratorium to manage over-development.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Amendment to interlocal agreement between Okaloosa County and the City of Destin for the dredging of Destin Harbor.
- B. Appointment of two Public Works/Safety Committee members to the East Pass Bridge Advisory Committee
- C. Miscellaneous Concrete Continuing Services, authorization to renew contract
- D. Reimbursement to Mayor Wagner for expenses incurred while attending the 2025 Florida League of Cities Legislative Conference from December 3–5 in Orlando, Florida
- E. Reimbursement to Councilmember Trammell for expenses incurred while attending the 2025 Florida League of Cities Legislative Conference from December 2–5 in Orlando, Florida.
- F. Resolution 25-24 - Publishing the Dates of the Regular City Council Meetings in Calendar Year 2026.
- G. Approval of minutes of December 1, 2025, Council Executive Session

Councilmember Hebert's motion to approve Consent Agenda items 3A through 3G, as printed above, was seconded by Councilmember Trammell and passed 4-0.

4. CITY MANAGER REPORTS

- A. Destin Optimization of Government Efficiencies (DOGE) Initiative Update

The City Manager reported that staff has been reviewing operations under the Destin Optimization of Government Efficiencies (DOGE) initiative and has identified approximately \$625,000 in savings over the past few months, including reductions in health insurance costs, direct purchasing of materials, and various departmental efficiencies. Staff will continue these efforts moving forward.

- B. Update on 4th Street ROW Improvements, funding, authorization to issue a Purchase Order

The City Manager requested that no action be taken at this time so staff can further evaluate alternative approaches and return to council with a recommendation at a later date.

- C. Minutes of Standing Boards and Committees – Informational Only

D. Announcements

- 1) Staff explored hiring an outside firm to conduct an annexation survey. Of the four firms contacted, one declined, two did not respond, and one – Cherry Communications of Tallahassee – expressed strong interest. Cherry Communications will conduct live, one-on-one phone interviews to gather survey data, at an estimated cost of less than \$5,000, which is within the City Manager’s spending authority. Staff will ensure the annexation survey questions are neutrally worded and not a push poll.
- 2) A CRA Board meeting is proposed for the second city council meeting in January (Tuesday, January 20th), along with an executive session requested for the first January meeting. The CRA Board meeting would serve as the first quarterly rollup to address pending items between the Harbor CRA and Town Center CRA.
- 3) Bids for the Crosstown Connector project were opened and came in at approximately half of the engineer’s estimate, resulting in significant anticipated cost savings. The Crosstown Connector bid recommendation will be submitted to FDOT for review due to their funding participation, with the item expected to be returned to council at a future meeting.
- 4) The city was awarded a \$450,000 FDEP grant to update its vulnerability assessment, supporting ongoing and future grant applications.
- 5) The Annual Visioning Session is scheduled for Friday, January 23, at 9:00 a.m.
- 6) FDOT will take another look at potential improvements to the Airport Road and U.S. 98 intersection, including possible lane realignments to reduce conflicts and improve bicycle safety.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. First reading of Ordinance 25-26-LC - Deleting Section 7.13.00, "Nonconforming Uses and Structures", and Section 16-08-00, "Nonconforming Signs" of the Land Development Code; creating a new Article 3 of the Land Development Code entitled "Nonconformities"; providing for title, jurisdiction and intent, containing regulations related to nonconformities within the City of Destin.

.The City Attorney read proposed Ordinance 25-26-LC by title, and then presented it to the council on first reading.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF DESTIN, FLORIDA, DELETING SECTION 7.13.00. "NONCONFORMING USES AND STRUCTURES" AND SECTION 16.08.00. "NONCONFORMING SIGNS", OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AND CREATING A NEW ARTICLE 3 "NONCONFORMITIES"; AMENDING AND UPDATING REGULATIONS RELATING TO NONCONFORMITIES; CREATING AN EXCEPTION FOR STRUCTURES LOCATED WITHIN THE SOUTH HARBOR MIXED USE DISTRICT (SHMU) THAT ARE DAMAGED BY NATURAL DISASTERS OR CERTAIN OTHER FORCES MAJEURE BY GREATER THAN FIFTY PERCENT AS SET FORTH HEREIN; 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.

Community Development Director Update: A draft of Article 3 was presented to the city council at the December 3, 2024 workshop. Based on council input and subsequent reviews by staff, a final draft was prepared with additional refinements. Article 3 addresses “Nonconformities.” General changes include clarifying language, improved organization, and relocation of existing code sections into the new Article 3. Key substantive changes include clarification that nonconforming uses may not be enlarged; a requirement that structures destroyed by catastrophe with repair costs exceeding 50 percent of replacement value must be brought into compliance with the LDC; and the addition of a new section addressing nonconforming site elements such as access, parking, and landscaping.

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 city council for their discussion and consideration.

Councilmember Destin expressed concern that applying the 50-percent destruction rule to properties within the South Harbor District could prevent historic and longstanding harbor structures from being rebuilt after a major hurricane, thereby altering the historic character of Destin’s harbor. He stated support for restrictions on expansion and relocation of nonconforming uses but recommended exempting the South Harbor District from the 50-percent rule related to catastrophic damage.

Councilmember Destin made a motion to amend Article 3 to exclude the South Harbor District from the requirement that nonconforming structures destroyed beyond 50 percent of their replacement value be required to come into full compliance with the LDC. Motion was seconded by Councilmember Hebert and passed 3-1, with Councilmember Braden dissenting.

The City Attorney announced that proposed Ordinance 25-26-LC will be brought back for first reading at the city council meeting scheduled for January 5, 2026

- B. First reading of Ordinance 26-03-LC - Deleting Section 7.08.00, Regulation of the Subdivision of Land of the Land Development Code, replacing Section 7.08.00 by creating a new Article 5, Subdivision Regulations, of the Land Development Code.

The City Attorney read proposed Ordinance 26-03-LC by title, and then presented it to the council on first reading.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF DESTIN, FLORIDA, DELETING SECTION 7.08.00, REGULATION OF THE SUBDIVISION OF LAND, OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE; REPLACING SECTION 7.08.00 BY CREATING A NEW ARTICLE 5, SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS, OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE; 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 Community Development Director presented Ordinance 26-03-LC as part of the ongoing Land Development Code (LDC) rewrite. The ordinance focuses on general updates to subdivision regulations, including revisions for clarity, improved organization, and internal consistency. Several sections were relocated into a new Article 5. Key changes include simplifying and consolidating requirements for common ownership associations, increasing the maximum block size from 660 feet to 800 feet, and adding a requirement for midblock pedestrian crossings for blocks exceeding 400 feet. The ordinance also establishes a minimum utility easement width of 15

feet, requires utility easements to be non-exclusive, clarifies that developments must connect to the local sewer system, and requires any access variances to be recorded as a public record.

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 city council for their discussion and consideration.

Councilmember Trammell moved to approve proposed Ordinance 26-03-LC on first reading, seconded by Councilmember Hebert. Motion passed 4-0.

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

- A. Councilmember Braden
- B. Councilmember Trammell
- C. Councilmember Destin

Councilmember Destin noted receiving feedback about buildings being constructed closer to roadways rather than set back behind parking areas, citing examples such as AutoZone. He explained this approach stemmed from a prior council vision intended to improve aesthetics but questioned whether it is producing the desired results, particularly along the harbor. He suggested revisiting this element of the Land Development Code at a later time to evaluate its impact.

- D. Councilmember Bagby
- E. Councilmember Hebert
- F. Councilmember Geile
- H. Councilmember Schmidt
- I. Mayor Wagner

Mayor Wagner raised a public safety concern regarding large, non-conforming signs in Destin, including rotating and stationary signs. He referenced reports and photos of debris falling from some signs and asked whether there is a mechanism to require inspections to ensure they meet engineering and safety standards. He suggested this topic could be discussed further outside the meeting as a follow-up item.

- J. City Attorney
 - 1) Litigation. Executive Session to be held on Monday, January 5, 2026, at 5:30pm7.

City Attorney Announcement:

Pursuant to Section 286.011(8), *Florida Statutes*, the City Attorney desires the advice of the City Council in the case of CLAUDE PERRY ENTERPRISES, LLC and MARLER HARBOR PROPERTY, LLC, v. CITY OF DESTIN, Case No. 2025-CA-002694-F Okaloosa County, Florida Circuit Court 2025), and as such, is calling for an Executive Session to be held in the City Council Chambers at the Destin City Hall Annex, 4100 Indian Bayou Trail, Destin, FL 32541, on Monday, January 5, 2026, at 5:30 PM Central, or as soon thereafter as the issue may be heard.

Present at the Executive Session will be a court reporter, Mayor Bobby Wagner; City Council Members Kevin Schmidt, Torey Geile, Terésa Hebert, Jim Bagby, Dewey Destin, Sandy Trammell, and Rodney Braden; City Manager Larry Jones; William Warner, Litigation Attorney for the City of Destin; and City Attorney Kimberly Romano Kopp.

ADJOURNMENT

Having no further business at this time, the meeting was adjourned at 6:45 PM.



ATTEST:

Rey Bailey, City Clerk

Bobby Wagner, Mayor