

CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF WILDWOOD, FLORIDA
WORKSHOP
July 20, 2026 9:00 AM
CITY HALL COMMISSION CHAMBER

(meeting taped)

1. Call to Order

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Ed Wolf	Mayor	Present
Dave Fountaine	Commissioner	Present
Joe Elliott	Commissioner	Present
Marcos Flores	Mayor Pro Tem/Commissioner	Present
Julian Green	Commissioner	Present
Jason McHugh	City Manager	Present
Joshua Bills	City Attorney	Present
Cassandra Smith	Assistant City Manager/CFO	Present
Jessica Barnes	City Clerk	Present
Randall Parmer	Police Chief	Present
Jason Martin	Utilities Deputy Director	Present

Mayor Wolf called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. and dispensed with the opening pledge and prayer to proceed directly to the presentations.

2. Item(s) for Discussion

A. First FY 27 Budget Presentation

City Manager McHugh presented the first budget presentation for fiscal year 2027. The commission received a draft budget workbook separated by department and fund, that showed fiscal years 2024, 2025, and proposed 2026 and 2027. The presentation focused on budget enhancements, personnel, equipment, programs, and extensive discussion of the five-year capital improvement project fund. The fiscal year 2027 budget would be the last year of the current strategic plan, with a new five-year strategic plan to be developed concurrent with fiscal year 2028 budget preparation. McHugh presented Development Services trends throughout the last several years. Commissioner Elliott requested information on activity outside versus inside The Villages, which McHugh agreed to provide. A chart was displayed that showed the city's taxable value had increased by \$1.8 billion.

An overview of property tax reform was presented. The ballot initiative on November 3rd, if passed, would increase the homestead exemption to \$150,000 and would set the stage for total elimination of property taxes. McHugh stated the city could survive a \$250,000 exemption, but property tax elimination could be problematic for the city. The budget required a full exercise of

examining ad valorem funds and their uses. Two options would be presented in the capital improvement project fund: one assumes property tax reform passed, and one assumes it does not.

An annual tax flyer was presented and showed that ad valorem taxes comprised between 45% and 51% of total general fund revenues. A chart was presented that showed the difference between the current millage rate and the rollback rate. McHugh also provided an example showing an average home with a \$250,000 assessed value, and that adopting the rollback rate would save approximately \$31.85 per year. Commissioner Elliott commented that the average price of a home in the City of Wildwood was \$299,000.

Information on salary and benefit items included within the budget was presented. Salaries included a cost of living adjustment of 3.8%, continuation of the performance evaluation system, and a longevity bonus. These items were currently in the budget, and the commission would need to remove any items they did not wish to fund. A 10% health insurance rate increase was anticipated but may be difficult to achieve. There was a projected 5% property liability increase. McHugh showed that 7.5 positions were cut due to general management rather than property tax reform. The budget added 11 full-time equivalent positions. Commissioner Green asked about a specific utility position for which Utilities Deputy Director Martin described the duties and responsibilities.

The topic of slowed and reduced spending was discussed. A chart was presented that showed the overall general fund expenditures by individual departments, and a second chart showed expenditures without personnel costs, revealing more significant spending reductions. Commissioner Fountaine questioned a 25% increase in the legislative budget, to which McHugh explained it was a small budget that primarily covered training and travel. The commissioners discussed their travel and training requirements, how to minimize their spending, and training requirements for staff.

An equipment presentation was provided that highlighted budget requirements for major equipment that primarily focused on the needs of Public Works, the Police Department, and Parks and Recreation.

Two separate capital improvement fund budgets were presented, with the first that assumed there was no property tax reform. The second presentation included property tax reforms. McHugh recommended the commission adopt the capital improvement project fund that assumed property tax reform did not pass, but advised not to engage on any projects until after the November vote. If the amendment failed, he would return to the commission to discuss moving forward with the projects. Current and future departmental projects were identified and discussed under both of the proposed scenarios.

McHugh then discussed the utility fund revenue. The presentation included updated revenue projections that reduced the planned utility rate increase to 5% for water, wastewater, and reuse services, instead of the previously anticipated 20% wastewater increase. It also provided an overview of the utility fund budget, ongoing infrastructure improvements, and upcoming capital projects.

The Commission discussed the upcoming budget, including the millage rate, property tax reform impacts, personnel costs, and future budget planning. McHugh recommended maintaining the current millage rate of 2.8287 mills, and the Commission reached consensus to keep the existing rate. Commissioners discussed potential impacts of property tax reform and possible future revenue options, including special districts and stormwater funding. The Commission reviewed personnel and benefit items, including COLA, merit increases, longevity bonuses, and health

insurance, and agreed to keep all items included in the current budget. McHugh provided an overview of upcoming budget workshops, capital improvement planning, required budget reduction exercises, and public hearing dates. The Commission also discussed the use of impact fees to support growth-related projects, including police vehicles, equipment, and the police substation.

B. Issue Campaign Advocacy

City Attorney Bills reviewed Florida Statute 106.113 regarding local government communications related to ballot initiatives, including property tax reform. He explained that the statute restricts the use of public funds for political advertisements or advocacy communications directed to voters and carries strict liability for violations. Bills noted that elected officials are exempt and may express personal opinions on issues, but cautioned against using city resources for advocacy. He advised commissioners and staff to separate personal speech from official city communications and avoid using public funds, equipment, or accounts for political messaging. Bills also stated that cities may provide factual, verifiable information through official channels, respond to public inquiries, and host informational forums, but materials must avoid opinions or persuasive language. He recommended carefully reviewing all communications to ensure they remain factual and reduce the risk of complaints or legal challenges.

C. Edelman Trust Barometer

The Commission discussed public trust and transparency. Mayor Wolf expressed initial concerns that addressed trust issues and could unintentionally create perception problems within the city, but stated he was satisfied with the discussion and explanations provided. Commissioner Elliott shared information from the Florida League of Cities regarding trust and distributed materials from the Edelman Trust Barometer for commissioners' review. McHugh noted that the city's limited number of complaints, public participation, and media presence indicated a generally positive level of community trust, while acknowledging there was always room for improvement. The Commission recognized that trust and transparency were ongoing topics of discussion among municipal organizations. After discussion, the Commission agreed that a workshop focused on trust was not necessary at this time.

3. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 10:43 a.m. Motion by Commissioner Flores, seconded by Commissioner Green, to adjourn. Motion passed unanimously.

RESULT:	Passed
MOVER:	Mayor Pro Tem/Commissioner Flores
SECONDER:	Commissioner Green
AYES:	Mayor Wolf, Commissioner Elliott, Mayor Pro Tem/Commissioner Flores, Commissioner Green, Commissioner Fountaine



SEAL

CITY COMMISSION
CITY OF WILDWOOD, FLORIDA

ATTEST: Jessica Barnes
Jessica Barnes, City Clerk

BY: Ed Wolf
Ed Wolf, Mayor