



**APPROVED**  
**BUDGET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**  
**CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE**  
**March 19, 2025 – 5:00 P.M.**  
**101 NE 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, Tower 101,**  
**11<sup>th</sup> Floor Conference Room,**  
**Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301**

<b>Board Member</b>	<b>Attendance</b>	<b>10/2024 through 9/2025 Cumulative Attendance</b>	
		<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
William Brown, Chair	P	3	0
Melissa Milroy, Vice Chair	P	3	0
Norbert Belz	P	3	0
Melinda Bowker	P	3	0
Oliver Cale	P	1	1
Ross Cammarata	P	2	1
Rich DeGirolamo	P	3	0
Desorae Giles-Smith	A	0	2
Mildred Lowe	P	2	1
Prabhuling Patel	P	3	0

**Staff**

Susan Grant, Acting City Manager  
Rickelle Williams, Incoming City Manager  
Laura Reece, Acting Assistant City Manager  
Yvette Matthews, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget  
Stephen Gollan, Fire Chief  
William Schultz, Police Chief  
Jerome Post, Director of Human Resources  
Linda Short, Director of finance  
Anthony Fajardo, Assistant City Manager  
Talal Abi-Karam, Acting Director of Public Works  
Carl Williams, Director of Parks and Recreation  
Alfred Battle, Acting Director of Development Services  
Milos Majstorovic, Acting Director of Transportation and Mobility  
Tamecka McKay, Director of Information Technology Services  
Christopher Cooper, Acting Assistant City Manager  
Ben Rogers, Acting Assistant City Manager  
Charmaine Crawford, OMB Department and Board Liaison  
J. Opperlee, Prototype Inc. Recording Secretary

**Communications to the City Commission**

None

**I. Call to Order**

The meeting of the Budget Advisory Board was called to order at 5:03 p.m.

Olivier Cale, new Board member, introduced himself.

**II. Roll Call**

Roll was called, and it was determined a quorum was present.

**III. Approval of Meeting Minutes – February 19, 2025**

Chair Brown noted a change to the minutes.

**Motion** made by Ms. Milroy, seconded by Mr. Belz to approve the minutes of the February 19, 2025 meeting as amended. In a voice vote, motion passed unanimously.

Ms. Bowker introduced new City Manager Rickelle Williams. Ms. Williams thanked the Board and said she looked forward to working with them.

**IV. Floor Open for Neighbor Input**

None

**V. Old Business**

None

**VI. New Business**

**Department Presentations**

- i. **FY 2026 Business Plans**
- ii. **FY 2026 Accomplishments and Challenges**

**Group A**

Stephen Gollan, Fire Chief

Chief Gollan said the SAFER grant had allowed them to hire an additional 28 firefighters. He remarked on how long it could take to train new personnel, to acquire new equipment and to build new infrastructure. He discussed the rapid growth in the City's residential downtown corridor and how the height of buildings affected response times and how support would be needed to maintain the level of service. He acknowledged the challenges responding to a mass casualty event or a high-rise fire because of the difficulty of devoting time to training for them. Another issue was the coming loss of experienced members and replacing them with adequately trained firefighters. Chief Gollan said they were doing well with recruitment, noting that people wanted to work in Fort Lauderdale because it was a destination and the pay was comparatively good. He noted the challenge a new firefighter faced trying to live in the City due to the lack of affordable housing and said this affected buy-in in the community. He described how staffing was calculated and stated they were a bit behind the growth of the community. Regarding using revenue from

tourism to help fund the Fire Department, Chief Gollan said they were looking at the fees charged to hold events in the City that could be used for public safety. Chief Gollan described how they anticipated increasing personnel and equipment. He later stated the Mobile Health Unit program was going very well.

William Schultz, Police Chief

Chief Schultz was pleased with their progress filing vacancies and thanked other departments for their collaboration in these efforts. He said foremost in his mind was the safety and wellness of officers and staff, including dedicating resources, including mental health support. He stated they needed to keep up with the City's rapid growth. He wanted to expand technologies addressing gun violence, such as shot spotter, the National Integrated Ballistics Information Network [NIBIN], real-time crime centers and license plate readers and cameras. Chief Schultz said their inability to house municipal ordinance violators impacted their ability to keep the City safe. He noted that BSO did not always enter local charges into the system or cooperate and accept people into the main jail. Chief Schultz said this was compounded by a lack of City resources that could have a meaningful impact on individuals and prevent recidivism, such as addressing medical and mental health conditions, substance abuse and housing for the homeless. He stated they were on a positive trajectory regarding crime rates. He stated he would continue to pursue communications with residents. He discussed how helpful shot spotter had been in increasing response times. He reported they had formed a project management committee toward building a City jail, which would take at least three years. They were also considering a temporary facility. Regarding adding a public safety fee to event fees, Chair Brown said the City Commission had directed the City Attorney to work with Parks and Recreation and their advisory board to consider suggestions. Chief Schultz acknowledged the issue of a lack of resources in the investigative bureau and said his budget presentation would address this.

Jerome Post, Director of Human Resources

Mr. Post said they had filled the positions that had been open and rebuilt the team. He stated they were utilizing the NeoGov tracking system to streamline the recruitment and onboarding processes. They had made progress in preventing vehicle accidents and audited the health care plan. He stated they were seeking new ways to train first line supervisors to improve recruitment and the hiring process. Mr. Post said he would be requesting a new classification and compensation system and a classification and compensation study. He noted they needed to be more competitive to attract and retain people with technical skills, wastewater operators, electricians and inspectors who could earn more in the private sector. They were also focusing on IT security training and accountability. Mr. Post said they needed to increase HR staff to maintain customer service levels, particularly in benefits and FMLA administration. Mr. Post discussed the difficulty the cost of living could present in attracting talent, but said they fared well compared to other municipalities. He then discussed flexible/remote work, which the City did not offer on an extended basis. He felt that people working together and work camaraderie were important.

Linda Short, Director of Finance

Ms. Short said the City Commission had issued a proclamation for Government Finance Officers Week and she thanked everyone working in government finance. She reviewed the transactions and funds managed by different Finance teams. Ms. Short said the ERP system they had implemented last year had not been optimized in time to provide timely financial reports, they must now complete the optimization and set-up, which would allow the system to automate as much as possible. She said there were issues they needed to address to better prevent fraud. She reported they had sourced a new utility billing system that would come online at the same time as the new AMI program and both would be ahead of schedule. This would bring great technology to the City. Ms. Short said the City was changing the ordinance so only property owners could open utility accounts. She noted \$7 million to \$8 million in utility bills were currently delinquent. They were also finalizing changes to procurement that would allow departments to procure small items faster and they were amending the procurement ordinance to facilitate the purchasing process. She remarked that overall, phase II of the payroll system implementation had been a great success. Ms. Short said they did not have a central location for the Finance offices and this was challenging.

The Board took a brief break.

**Group B**

Carl Williams, Director of Parks and Recreation

Mr. Williams remarked on the uniqueness of his department, which encompassed recreational programs, marinas, public facility and building management, streetlights and maintenance of open spaces such as medians. They also managed the “beach experience” and the cemetery system. He said they were in the midst of working through a \$200 million bond but price increases were making it difficult to complete projects that were planned for that bond issue. He informed the Board that the cemetery system was still a 100% manual operation. The marinas also still had some manual operations. Mr. Williams stated maintenance of the City’s public restrooms was a recurring challenge, and a big concern for him, since they were so public facing. He pointed out that some positions, such as electricians and plumbers, were challenging to fill. Mr. Williams was pleased with the median enhancement project over the past year. They had an agreement with the Orange Bowl to provide \$1.5 million over 10 years to help maintain the Jimmy Evert Tennis Center. He said they had discussed sponsorships with the City Commission and he was looking forward to identifying resources to find new sponsors. Mr. Williams described ways they advertised open positions in his department. Chair Brown asked about the anticipated cost increases for the Swimming Hall of Fame and said he wanted to consider naming rights for certain facilities. Mr. Williams acknowledged this was a possible option.

Talal Abi-Karam, Acting Director of Public Works

Mr. Abi-Karam noted how labor, cost, and maintenance intensive infrastructure was. He stated what kept him up at night were thoughts of “projects, people and money.” He

discussed the fact that a lot of the City's infrastructure was older and some was being affected by sea level rise and king tides. He described the programs that were in process to address flooding. They were also in the midst of a major Inflow and Infiltration [I&I] project. He acknowledged issues with recruitment and retention of employee, where the City competed with the private sector and other municipalities. He said all their projects would not be addressed by the 5-year Capital Investment Program and so they were considering a bond initiative. He then discussed the sharp increases in construction and equipment costs, which would be exacerbated by the Trump administration's tariffs, and increased competition due to there being fewer bidders. Mr. Abi-Karam talked about the City's new water treatment plant and the new AMI program for smart meters. He noted the increased level of demand the City was experiencing due to its growth. He discussed the department's high attrition rate and the need for more resources for the larger projects they were undertaking. Mr. Abi-Karam said they would provide a presentation to the City Commission regarding phase II of Fortify Fort Lauderdale that was benefitting 17 neighborhoods. Staff and the consultant were also conducting neighborhood outreach. He stated waterways had been a priority for the last five years and were tied to stormwater. Regarding bridge repair, Mr. Abi-Karam discussed the 2014 study and Bridge Master Plan, which had been updated recently. He wished they could get funds from the County surtax but had not been successful so far. Ms. Grant reported the County was working on another ILA related to the surtax that would make more funds available, possibly for bridges and transit. Mr. Majstorovic said there had been five funding cycles for the surtax monies and the City had already received approximately \$26 million.

Alfred Battle, Acting Director of Development Services

Mr. Battle reviewed the many groups within the department that started the development process, planned and shaped growth, and were involved in historic preservation and property maintenance. He reported that last year the City had amended the tree and landscaping ordinance to preserve the City's tree canopy; amended the noise ordinance; amended the land use plan for the Uptown Village area; fully implemented the digitalization of permit processing and code enforcement, and integrated the customer call center. They had also initiated a city-wide mixed-use zoning update that could be utilized for redevelopment. They were also focused on historic preservation and had recently completed a vision plan for Sailboat Bend. Mr. Battle said challenges include the coming retirement of experienced technical staff. There were also conflicting priorities among stakeholders. Mr. Battle noted the challenge affordable housing presented when hiring new employees.

Milos Majstorovic, Acting Director of Transportation and Mobility

Mr. Majstorovic described the departments' divisions and their responsibilities. He reported they had expanded the micro mover into the northwest community. His biggest concerns included competing interests and priorities, financing new projects, and traffic congestion due to new development. He said competing with other departments for funding was limiting their ability to move certain projects along and they were seeking local, County and Federal grants and had secured additional funding from the County surtax program. Mr. Majstorovic said they must better manage traffic and offer more

transit options. Their goal was to further expand the micro mover, expand projects funded by the County surtax program such as the community shuttle, expand the bus network, and coordinate with the County on traffic signal efficiency. They were coordinating with Development Services on improving transportation options and concentrating on improving conditions and safety for pedestrians and bikes. They would continue improving mobility by implementing the sidewalk master plan, and by continuing installation of traffic calming measures. Mr. Majstorovic stated they had already engaged consultants to consider mobility on Las Olas. Mr. Majstorovic described the cost per passenger for the community shuttle, Circuit and the Water Trolley. Chair Brown requested additional information regarding ridership and costs for those programs. Mr. Majstorovic said the Las Olas medians would be discussed as part of the current design planning.

Tamecka McKay, Director of Information Technology Services

Ms. McKay said the IT Department oversaw the City's comprehensive technology infrastructure and digital services, including public safety communications, the print shop and mailroom. She said their technology infrastructure, internal processes, and staff skillsets faced longstanding challenges with being fractured, siloed, outdated and underfunded. To address these issues, they had initiated a multiphase plan for technology modernization based on people, cybersecurity and modernization. In the past 30 months, they had updated or replaced 90% of the City's end-of-life hardware and were saving \$23,000 per year for backup and recovery alone. She listed several other accomplishments regarding staff professional development and customer service improvements. She acknowledged they still had a way to go. They must prioritize governance, risk and compliance to prevent a ransomware attack. Then they could capitalize on efficiencies. She planned to request additional funding for cybersecurity tools and professional services in the next budget. She stated they should shift to being proactive and strategic as they capitalized on advancements in technology.

**VII. Joint City Commission Workshop Preparation**

- i. Feedback requested on establishing a nonprofit funding process

Chair Brown said they would hear from the City Commission about this at the joint workshop.

- ii. Tuesday, April 15, 2025 @11:30am – 1:00pm (*Broward Center for the Performing Arts - Mary N. Porter Riverview Ballroom - 201 SW 5th Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312*)

Ms. Reece described the Board's preparations for this meeting. Board members wanted discussion to include:

- Support for increasing cybersecurity
- Ensuring proper project management oversight and procurement
- Streamlining for cost efficiency.
- Potential budget shortfalls in years two and three per the Stantec report.

Ms. Reece said she would set a meeting with Chair Brown to finalize the agenda.

**VIII. Communications to/from City Commission**

None

**VIII. Board Member Comments**

None

**IX. Adjourn**

The meeting was adjourned at 7:53 p.m.