



CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE

APPROVED

**BUDGET ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
CITY OF FORT LAUDERDALE
August 13, 2025 – 5:00 P.M.
101 NE 3rd Avenue, Tower 101,
11th Floor Conference Room,
Fort Lauderdale, FL 33301**

**10/2024 through 9/2025
Cumulative Attendance**

Board Member	Attendance	Present	Absent
William Brown, Chair	P	9	0
Melissa Milroy, Vice Chair	P	8	1
Norbert Belz	P	8	1
Melinda Bowker	P	8	0
Olivier Cale	P	6	2
Ross Cammarata	P	6	3
Rich DeGirolamo	A	7	2
Desorae Giles-Smith	A	4	1
Prabhuling Patel	P	6	3

Staff

- Rickelle Williams, City Manager
- Ben Rogers, Assistant City Manager
- Yvette Matthews, Acting Assistant City Manager
- William Schultz, Police Chief
- Stephen Gollan, Fire Chief
- Susan Grant, Special Advisor
- Ron McKenzie, Director of Information Technology Services
- Brad Kaine, Director of Public Works
- Ashley Doussard, Director of Strategic Communications
- Laura Reece, Director, Office of Management and Budget
- Michael Dudley, Principal Budget Management Analyst
- Patrick Reilly, City Auditor
- Charmaine Crawford, OMB Department and Board Liaison
- J. Opperlee, Prototype Recording Secretary

Communications to the City Commission

None

I. Call to Order

The meeting of the Budget Advisory Board was called to order at 5:05 p.m.

II. Roll Call

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

III. Approval of Meeting Minutes – July 16, 2025

Motion made by Ms. Milroy, seconded by Ms. Bowker to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2025 meeting. In a voice vote, motion passed unanimously.

Mr. Rogers introduced Brad Kaine, the new Public Works Director.

IV. Floor Open for Neighbor Input

None

V. Old Business

None

VI. New Business

A. Summary of Community Input from “A Balancing Act”

Michael Dudley, Principal Budget Management Analyst, provided the presentation, a copy of which is attached to these minutes for the public record.

Chair Brown said the Board had recommended the Council of Civic Associations send a link to all members and Strategic Communications had also sent this message out.

Ms. Reece said data from the public input from the survey was refined and shared with the City Commission.

Ms. Matthews explained how they engaged the public in the budget process. Mr. Belz asked that departmental presentation videos before the City Commission be posted individually so one did not need to wade through entire City Commission meetings to find them.

Mr. Cammarata asked if the City used paid social media advertising that would allow them to specify who received posts. Ms. Doussard said they did some paid social media advertising, posted on the City’s website, and used email distribution lists.

Mr. Belz wanted to encourage more public engagement in the process. Mr. Cale thought the City should have a marketing plan for the tool, and perhaps it should be simpler for the general public.

Ms. Doussard said 5,298 people had been sent a link to the tool by email, 42% had opened the email and 79 had clicked on the link. The City had 40,000 followers on Instagram and 45,000 to 50,000 followers on Facebook.

Mr. Cammarata wished to build a larger database of residents’ emails and Ms. Doussard said they already had a plan for this.

Chair Brown said they needed to do a better job communicating to City residents the origins of the Fire Assessment Fee and how it was used as a full cost recovery tool.

Mr. Cale thought the tool could be more educational for the public. Ms. Milroy thought many people would not complete the exercise on the entire budget with the tool.

Mr. Reece noted the TRIM notices had just been mailed, so they could see if this encouraged people to visit the site. Mr. Belz advised citing the link to the tool on the TRIM notice.

Ms. Bowker asked about residents providing input on the budget and Ms. Reece said it depended on what was involved. The year the City implemented the increase in the Stormwater Assessment, they had received a lot of feedback, but when there were incremental increases, they received little input. If funds to a nonprofit were reduced or stopped, this usually resulted in input as well.

B. Discussion of Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Budget and Budget Advisory Board Recommendation to City Commission

Ms. Matthews said the Board members had been emailed a correction regarding the Budget In Brief section [Mr. Cale had noted that the print version contained an error].

Board member discussed their opinions on the City Manager's proposed budget. Ms. Milroy said Ms. Williams had done a great job but warned that the City needed to bear in mind that there would be a shortfall in coming years. Mr. Belz felt they needed a better community education plan for next year when there would be potential increases. He stated they also needed to do more regarding cleaning up the waterways. Mr. Cammarata thought the City had made a mistake not raising the millage in the last couple of years and said the Stantec model "scared the hell" out of him. He felt they must increase the millage rate next year. He also wanted to increase all fees. He was most concerned that the Fire Chief had indicated they were not prepared to fight a 40-story fire. Mr. Patel encouraged the City to increase the millage rate, noting the number of projects that were not getting done for lack of funding. Ms. Bowker was interested to see how the restructuring played out. She did not oppose raising the millage rate and appreciated the amount in the budget focusing on homelessness and the continued funding of the CRA. Mr. Cale thought the Board should be better prepared to make a recommendation to the City Commission. He suggested Board and explore more options earlier in the budget calendar. He suggested three or four Board workshops where they would discuss possible recommendations to the City Commission.

Chair Brown recommended the November meeting be a workshop to discuss strategic goal setting and developing the workplan for 2026. Ms. Reece said they usually discussed this in October when new Board members were seated. Chair Brown suggested waiting until November because new members would be seated in October.

Ms. Williams thanked Board members and said staff would bring back new ideas for raising revenue in the fall. She informed the Board that there was a significant budget amendment planned for October that would help as they navigated plans for fiscal year 2027.

Mr. Patel asked if the City Manager could submit a budget that called for a millage increase and Williams said she could.

Ms. Bowker felt Board members should engage the community more and the Board should meet 12 months per year to allow them extra time to think outside the box.

Motion made by Ms. Bowker, seconded by Mr. Cammarata to accept the City Manager's proposed budget for Fiscal Year 2026. In a roll call vote, motion passed 7-0.

C. Joint City Commission Workshop Preparation

- Tuesday, August 19, 2025 @ 11:30am – 1:00pm (*Broward Center for the Performing Arts - Mary N. Porter Riverview Ballroom - 201 SW 5th Avenue, Fort Lauderdale, Florida 33312*)

Mr. Belz wanted to encourage the City Commission to make their Board appointments. Chair Brown asked Board members to email any desired talking points to Ms. Crawford.

VII. Communications to/from City Commission

None

VIII. Board Member Comments

Ms. Williams thanked staff and Board members.

Ms. Matthews introduced Ron McKenzie, the new IT Director.

Chair Brown stated the sound quality of the Board's meetings on YouTube was terrible. Ms. Williams said the City Clerk's office was reviewing the room.

IX. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:33 p.m.



CITY OF
FORT LAUDERDALE

Proposed FY 2026 General Fund Budget Balancing Act Results

What is Balancing Act?

- Balancing Act is an online budget simulation software designed to help governments engage citizens in the budget process.
- It allows users to explore the complexities of city government by creating their own budgets, allocating resources, and experiencing the trade-offs involved in balancing revenue and expenses.
- Balancing Act aims to educate the public about government finances and gather valuable feedback on budget priorities.



CITY OF
FORT
LAUDERDALE

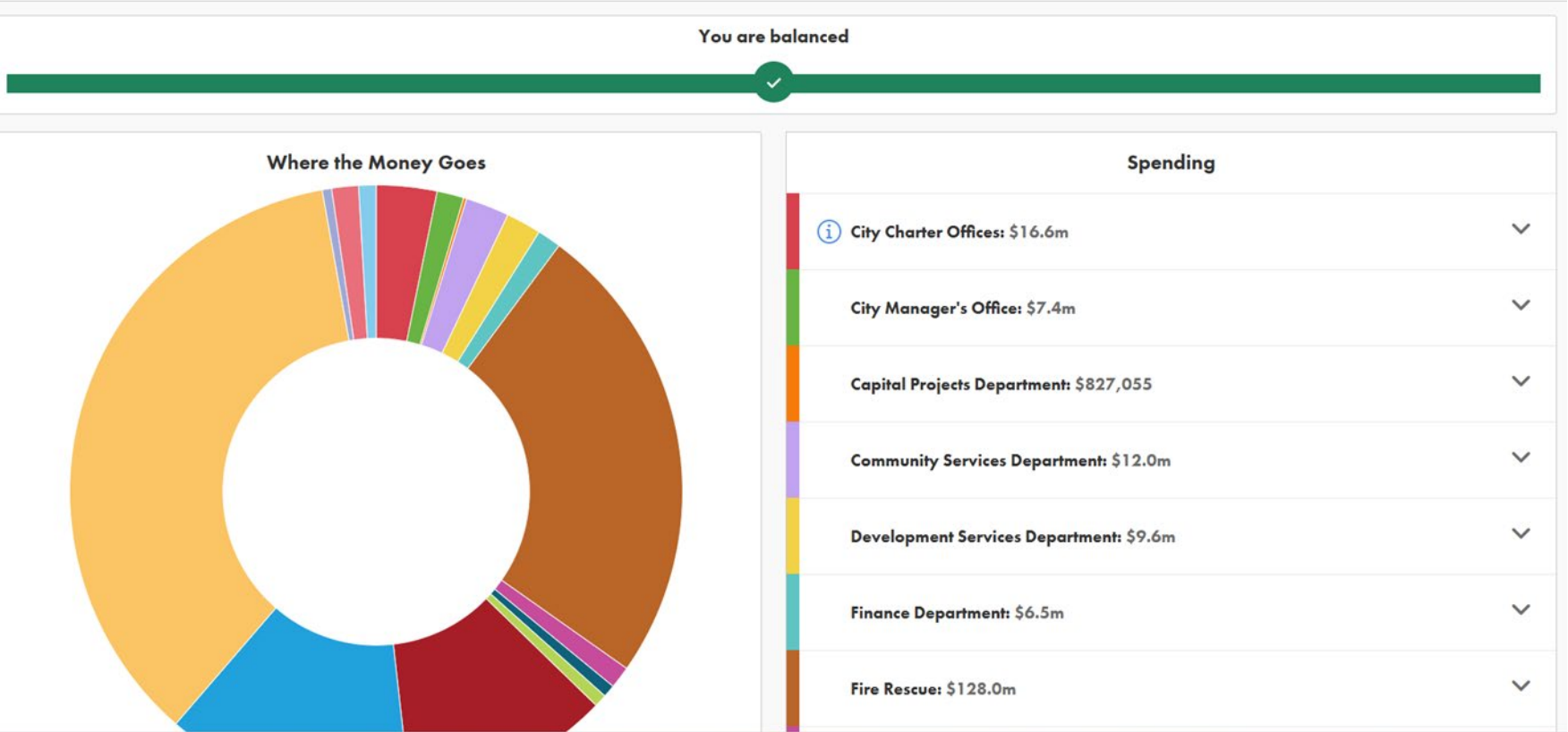
City of Fort Lauderdale Balancing Act



FY 2026 Proposed General Fund Budget



You are balanced



CITY OF
FORT
LAUDERDALE

<https://fortlauderdale.abalancingact.com>



FY 2026 Proposed Budget Simulation Engagement*



- 1,350 pageviews of the simulation tool
- 102 hours of total engagement time
- 26 completed budget submissions

Empowering Financial Transparency



- Makes complex financial decisions accessible
- Encourages financial transparency and education
- Only balanced or surplus budgets can be submitted



CITY OF
FORT
LAUDERDALE



Meaningful Public Participation

- 102 hours of active engagement equals deep community involvement
- Respondents explored trade-offs and funding priorities
- Responses were received from all four commission districts, with District 2 showing the highest level of participation



Revenue Adjustment Submissions



- Support for increasing or decreasing property taxes was evenly split among respondents.
- Most submissions did not include edits to the Fire Assessment, but a couple respondents recommended lowering the assessment.



Summary of Comments from Revenue Submissions



- **Fire Assessment/Property Tax Comments**

- Preference for funding fire services through property taxes to allow for federal tax deductions.
- Suggestion to replace fire assessment fee with property taxes to reduce resident and local business tax burden and improve fairness.

- **Miscellaneous-Rents and Royalties Comments**

- Concern that developers receive excessive incentives without providing adequate community benefits or compensation.



Expense Adjustment Suggestions



- Respondents expressed support for Public Safety, Public Works, and strengthening Finance operations.
- Support for increasing vs. decreasing funding for special events was evenly split among respondents.
- Respondents showed little support for including the transfer to the Community Investment Plan.



Summary of Comments from Expense Submissions



- **Transportation and Mobility**
 - Request to increase LauderGo driver wages and to improve bus frequency.
 - Suggestion to expand Beach-to-Las Olas service to operate daily.
 - Positive feedback on Fort Lauderdale's transit system compared to Broward County buses.
- **Community Services Department**
 - Prioritize funding for impactful homelessness solutions using all available discretionary resources.
 - Avoid allocating public funds to art installations—developers already include them in projects.
 - Reduce spending on repeated studies and consultants; focus on implementing actions instead.



Summary of Comments from Expense Submissions, continued



- **Police Department**

- Suggestion to request a free maintenance package from developers responsible for delays and cost overruns on the new Police Headquarters, covering the first two years of operation.

- **Other Government Operations**

- Strong recommendation to significantly increase CIP funding, citing urgent needs for traffic calming, sidewalks, and infrastructure improvements. Suggests prioritizing CIP over new programs or staffing.
- Recommend increasing the General Fund to prepare for potential reductions in federal support and uncertain leadership at the national level.



Summary of Comments from Expense Submissions, continued



- **Development Services Department**

- Recommend increasing funding for zoning and business tax administration to improve efficiency, support development, and promote a more business-friendly environment that enables infrastructure improvements like sidewalks and safer streets.

- **Capital Projects Department**

- Opposed funding for projects like Tunnel Top Park; recommends prioritizing basic infrastructure needs such as building sidewalks and repairing long-out streetlights at entrances and exits.



Closing Summary



- Balancing Act collected actionable data on resident priorities
- High engagement reflects participants' thoughtful exploration of options
- Combination of education, financial transparency, and interaction contributed to success