

City of Pembroke Pines, FL

*City of Pembroke Pines
Charles F. Dodge City Center
601 City Center Way
Pembroke Pines, FL 33025*



Meeting Minutes - Draft

Wednesday, April 29, 2026

4:00 PM

Budget Visioning and Municipal Solid Waste Workshop

Commission Chambers

City Commission

*Mayor Angelo Castillo
Vice Mayor Michael A. Hernandez
Commissioner Thomas Good Jr.
Commissioner Maria Rodriguez
Commissioner Jay D. Schwartz*

4:00 PM WORKSHOP CALLED TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Also present: City Manager Charles F. Dodge, City Attorney Samuel Goren, and City Clerk Gabriel Fernandez.

WORKSHOP ITEMS:

MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor Castillo held a moment of silence for the former chair of the board of adjustments, Israel Rodriguez-Soto, who passed away on April 28. The mayor wished his family well and expressed appreciation to him for his service to the city.

CITY MANAGER'S REMARKS

City Manager Dodge noted that this meeting is the first year that the administration has presented a preliminary budget overview so early in the year. The city manager shared that with the exception of the general fund, every department and fund's budget is balanced. The city manager noted that there are many unknowns regarding the general fund, but the administration fully expects to balance by June, when the millage rate will be set for advertisement purposes.

City Manager Dodge noted that Assistant City Manager Chong would lead the presentation.

BUDGET VISIONING

Assistant City Manager Chong introduced herself and acknowledged any members of the Citizens' Budget Advisory Board present for the presentation. Assistant City Manager Chong noted that today will be the starting point of the budget process and that her department is eager to hear the Commission's feedback, as well as any projects, plans, special policies, or considerations that the Commission would like administration to focus on.

Assistant City Manager Chong shared that the agenda for the meeting consists of an all-funds overview, a major funds overview, as well as reviews of property tax reform, the general fund, the road and bridge fund, and the utility fund. Assistant City Manager Chong shared that, as the city manager mentioned, all the funds except for the general fund, which is unbalanced by \$8.2 million, are balanced. Assistant City Manager Chong noted that the city manager has met with all of the department heads to review their budgets and any requests that they may have. Assistant City Manager Chong emphasized that because so much of the budget is balanced, they are able to focus on the general fund in case legislation comes out of Tallahassee that affects the budget.

Assistant City Manager Chong noted that some grant funds are not included in the presentation because the numbers have not been finalized or provided by the state or federal government.

Assistant City Manager Chong addressed the property tax reforms being proposed in the state legislature, noting that the regular session ended without a consensus being reached. Assistant City Manager Chong shared that while the legislature was deliberating, city staff and administration analyzed the potential effects and costs of those bills on the city and its budget. Assistant City Manager Chong noted that she met with the citizens' budget advisory board and informed them of the potential impacts. Assistant City Manager Chong explained that the legislature is currently in a special session that does not include property tax reform.

Assistant City Manager Chong shared that there will be another special session to finalize the budget from May 12 through May 29, noting that there is a chance that property tax reform could be discussed there. Assistant City Manager Chong noted that, alternatively, the Governor could call a third special session to specifically address property tax reform, so there is no guarantee that the bills will not pass.

Assistant City Manager Chong noted that she and the finance

department have released an infographic to the public as well as created a webpage and video to inform the public on the status of property tax reforms and the expected impact of their implementation. Assistant City Manager Chong explained that her department is being very careful to only provide information and not to advocate for or against policy.

Assistant City Manager Chong detailed that in the General Fund, revenue has increased by \$5.6 million, and the city is being very conservative. The assistant city manager explained that the main driver is the city's property tax values, as they are assuming a 5% increase in property tax values. Assistant City Manager Chong noted that the actual values from last year were 6.87%, reiterating that the city is trying to be conservative and will receive the final numbers from the property appraiser in July. Assistant City Manager Chong detailed that city expenses were so far going up by 13.8 million dollars, representing a 4.8% increase over the previous year.

Assistant City Manager Chong explained that this increase includes any and all collective bargaining agreements that have been approved, any CPI increases built into existing city contracts, any additional positions that have been added to the budget, as well as some planned capital purchases within the general fund. Assistant City Manager Chong illustrated where the city's revenue money comes from, and noted that 38% of revenues come directly from ad valorem taxes, whereas 17% come from charges for services, which the assistant city manager explained include several different items. Assistant City Manager Chong elaborated that charges for services included everything from soccer fees and golf fees to reimbursements for SROs from the county and payments from insurers for emergency rescue transports.

Assistant City Manager Chong noted that 12% of the revenue comes from special assessments, specifically the city fire protection special assessment. Assistant City Manager Chong indicated that intergovernmental revenues and franchise fees accounted for 7%, clarifying that intergovernmental revenues mainly referred to sales tax revenues. Assistant City Manager Chong detailed that rents, royalties, and utility taxes were each contributing 6% of the total revenue, while the remaining 7% came from investment income and other miscellaneous revenue sources. Assistant City Manager Chong explained how the city spends its money, highlighting that 37% of the proposed general fund budget goes to police and 26% goes to fire and rescue. Assistant City Manager Chong calculated that police and fire together used 63% of the total general fund budget. Assistant City Manager Chong noted that 10% goes to public services, which includes smaller departments like grounds maintenance and general government buildings.

Assistant City Manager Chong explained that 9% goes to recreation and cultural arts, 5% goes to technology services, 4% goes to general government and community services, and 2% to finance. Assistant City Manager Chong reported that the general fund personnel budget was currently sitting at \$176 million, which is approximately 60% of the general fund budget. Assistant City Manager Chong shared that there is a proposal to add five new positions, including one assistant division chief and three lieutenants in the fire department, and a real-time crime center crime analyst to the police department. Assistant City Manager Chong outlined the capital purchases currently included in the budget, noting that the police department is using \$5.4 million, \$3.8 million of which is dedicated to the replacement of vehicles and equipment. The assistant city manager noted that the purchase consists of approximately 37 patrol vehicles.

Assistant City Manager Chong mentioned that \$600,000 is allocated for the purchase of software, specifically noting software that is necessary for live feed data analytics. Assistant City Manager Chong detailed that \$800,000 is allocated for different types of equipment, including radios, drones, ballistic armor, and other items. Assistant City Manager Chong explained that the fire department has \$4 million allocated, \$1.1 million of which is for a tactical support unit, \$1.2 million for two fire engines, and \$600,000 for other types of equipment, including self-contained breathing apparatuses. Assistant City Manager Chong added that the fire department is allocated \$500,000 for a new ambulance, \$300,000 for other vehicles, and \$300,000 for changes to the fire training facility. Assistant City Manager Chong reported that technology services have been allocated \$600,000, \$300,000 of which is for the replacement of Cisco edge and core switches.

Assistant City Manager Chong noted that \$400,000 has been allocated for general government buildings, including \$200,000 for the installation of security fencing around the public services building. Assistant City Manager Chong shared that recreation and cultural arts have been allocated \$400,000, with \$200,000 directed toward a loft extension for the SMG storage room and some other related items. Assistant City Manager Chong detailed that for the road and bridge fund, the year-over-year value has essentially remained the same, with only a very minor change of \$85,000 from the previous year. Assistant City Manager Chong explained that the fund covers contracts for road maintenance, street and sidewalk cleaning, and street lighting, noting that there are no strategic plan projects regarding roads included at this time. Assistant City Manager Chong reiterated that the utility fund is balanced, highlighting that it was likely the only fund decreasing by \$9.2 million.

Assistant City Manager Chong credited the utility department's review of their capital budget and the scaling back of projects to accurately reflect what they could realistically accomplish during the upcoming year.

Assistant City Manager Chong emphasized that the 2026 to 2027 fiscal year would be the very first year that the utility fund would carry no debt, noting that they were currently discussing when the time would be right to borrow again. Assistant City Manager Chong shared that under the utility fund, which is \$14 million, \$7.8 million is allocated to sewer treatment plant projects. Assistant City Manager Chong detailed that of the \$7.8 million, \$3 million is for two emergency blower replacements, \$2.5 million for phase two of electrical equipment, and \$2 million for rehabilitation for unit four. Assistant City Manager Chong mentioned that \$2.9 million was allocated for water distribution projects, with \$1.8 million allocated for the AMI buildout currently underway and \$1.1 million for utility infrastructure improvements at the Howard C Forman campus. Assistant City Manager Chong described that \$2.4 million has been assigned for water plants, with \$1.2 million being used for rehab treatment for unit C and \$1 million used as additional funding to replace the Biscayne Aquifer well number six.

Assistant City Manager Chong noted that under sewer collection, there was \$1 million designated for the replacement of a 30-inch diameter pre-stressed concrete cylinder piping for the force main. Assistant City Manager Chong concluded her presentation and noted that this was where they stood right now, and invited questions and input from the commission.

Assistant City Manager Chong noted that the millage rate has remained unchanged at 5.6690. Assistant City Manager Chong clarified that they typically receive the taxable value tables from the property appraiser by June 1st.

Vice Mayor Hernandez thanked Assistant City Manager Chong and her team for the presentation and for always being readily available. Vice Mayor Hernandez apologized for looking down at his notes, explaining that he wanted to comment on some of the items mentioned. The vice mayor thanked City Manager Dodge for ensuring the team was accessible for direct calls and shared that it was just announced by the governor that a special session on property tax reform would not happen before June at the earliest. Vice Mayor Hernandez noted that this delay would not make the city's financial projections any easier, and he expressed concern about implementation details, given the differing fiscal calendars of the state and the local governments. Vice Mayor Hernandez noted that the state fiscal year begins on July 1st while the

city begins on October 1st, and questioned how accurate projections could be made based on a state budget that might drastically alter property taxes. Vice Mayor Hernandez further asked if a property tax reform measure voted on in November would take effect during the next fiscal year.

Assistant City Manager Chong explained that if a measure was voted on in November, it would not take effect until the next fiscal year. Assistant City Manager Chong clarified, however, that the city would have to start preparing more or less immediately for how they would handle that financial situation, meaning it would functionally affect the planning for the upcoming budget as well.

Vice Mayor Hernandez noted the House passed something in line with what the governor was asking for, but the Senate does not seem poised to do the same. Vice Mayor Hernandez mentioned that the governor had indicated he was going to propose something more concrete as opposed to speaking abstractly about eliminating taxes. The vice mayor shared that the governor indicated that he was looking at a phased approach, although he admitted that he often does not understand what the governor means. Vice Mayor Hernandez pivoted to the general fund, sharing that he was not very concerned about the \$8.2 million gap, expressing that he believes that it could be easily fixed. Vice Mayor Hernandez asked for clarification on whether the preliminary taxable values from the property appraiser were expected to come in on June 1st.

Assistant City Manager Chong confirmed that the preliminary values will definitely arrive on June 1st, and she added that the final, certified numbers will be delivered on July 1st.

City Manager Dodge explained that the charter school budget runs on a fiscal year from July 1st to June 30th. The city manager elaborated that they have to present estimates for the charter school budget on June 17th, but they do not know what kind of education dollars the governor is planning to allocate. City Manager Dodge noted that the uncertainty surrounding state education funding makes the task more difficult for the city administration.

Vice Mayor Hernandez acknowledged that although this was a conversation for another day, he never understood why school district budgets launch on July 1st while municipal budgets launch on October 1st. Vice Mayor Hernandez recognized that he was not planning to resolve that issue at the workshop, and that it was not the fault of the city staff.

Vice Mayor Hernandez credited Commissioner Rodriguez for advocating for the education of the city's residents so that they understand where their property taxes go and what services they fund. Vice Mayor Hernandez shared his love for the dollar bill graphic that the city releases, showing a breakdown of tax revenue and how much goes to city services. Vice Mayor Hernandez applauded all the communication that the city releases, sharing that he is frequently asked by residents where all their tax money goes, and the city's graphics are helpful. Vice Mayor Hernandez shared that he is committed to consistently sharing any provided information on his personal platforms or speaking at town halls to help clear up the widespread confusion regarding property taxes as well as the city's budget and fees.

The vice mayor emphasized that the administration should not wait to provide him with information and that they should email him personally with any information so he could get ahead of the game and educate residents. Vice Mayor Hernandez reiterated that he was not very concerned about the \$8.2 million deficit, but asked about the timeline for the fire department and when they expected the five additional positions to be filled.

City Manager Dodge clarified that the fire department positions would be filled at the beginning of the fiscal year, explaining that they would be internal promotions occurring right around October 1st or shortly thereafter.

Vice Mayor Hernandez asked if the new role in the police department's real-time crime center was also a promotion or if they were bringing in a brand new hire.

City Manager Dodge responded that he believed the real-time crime center role was a new position, expressing that he was unsure if the department could promote someone.

Vice Mayor Hernandez commended Assistant City Manager Chong for paying down \$3.1 million in debt service within the utility fund. Vice Mayor Hernandez wanted to put on the record his understanding that the city tries to reduce the overall aggregate millage and keep certain individual millages flat to maintain a well-budgeted and well-run municipality. Vice Mayor Hernandez requested that the administration consider finding any available wiggle room to modestly reduce not just the aggregate millage, but some of the specific individual rates, given the severe affordability crisis affecting residents.

Vice Mayor Hernandez criticized Tallahassee for ignoring property tax reform, asserting that the legislature did nothing during the session and failed to even bring the issue up for a vote in either the House or the Senate. Vice Mayor Hernandez noted that like Mayor Castillo, he knew the struggles of residents in Century Village, emphasizing that residents often struggle with monthly fees, and therefore any modest relief the city could offer without jeopardizing essential services would be appreciated by them.

Vice Mayor Hernandez shared his appreciation and gratitude for the work done by Assistant City Manager Chong and her team.

Commissioner Good echoed the comments made by the vice mayor and complimented the vice mayor's haircut. Commissioner Good thanked Assistant City Manager Chong for the presentation and for her many years of dedicated service to the city, ensuring that the city remains financially capable and stable. Commissioner Good sought clarification on whether the millage rate was expected to change and asked whether that referred to the aggregate or the general rate.

Assistant City Manager Chong clarified that the unchanged rate referred specifically to the operating millage, which affects the general fund only, confirming that the general fund rate would stay exactly the same.

Commissioner Good suggested to City Manager Dodge that, given the sizable solid waste budget and future environmental concerns, the city needed to hire an additional staff person at the director or administrator level specifically for solid waste. Commissioner Good praised the staff who are currently taking on the solid waste concerns for doing an extremely great job, but expressed that he believes staff would benefit from having another level of in-house expertise to strategically manage and direct the city's solid waste future. Commissioner Good acknowledged that the current presentation was high-level and lacked specific details, but noted that from a high-level, it was acceptable. Commissioner Good emphasized that a major concern of his constituents was ensuring they received the service level they were paying for and expected. Commissioner Good observed that the city had been doing a very reasonable job and urged the administration to continue the good work, noting that his comments were relevant assuming a status quo legislative environment moving forward.

Mayor Castillo thanked Commissioner Good for his valuable input and then formally handed the floor over to Commissioner Rodriguez for her remarks.

Commissioner Rodriguez noted that she emphasized the visioning part of the presentation and wanted to explore some broader concepts and ideas. Commissioner Rodriguez expressed her desire for the commission to keep the options that she proposes in mind, despite the property tax conversation in Tallahassee. Commissioner Rodriguez shared her optimism that perhaps nothing negative would happen at the state level, but argued that preparing for both the worst and best-case scenarios would allow the city to be prepared regardless of whatever may come. Commissioner Rodriguez stressed that even if property tax reform did not happen soon, it very likely might in the future, and therefore, managing their resources together was important, especially as things will inevitably become more expensive in the future.

Commissioner Rodriguez noted that they increased the purchasing threshold requiring commission approval to \$100,000, freeing department staff from constantly having to prepare agenda items. Commissioner Rodriguez suggested that departments and staff use this time to be more innovative, proposing the allocation of seed funding for departments, especially IT, to test out new innovations and technologies.

Commissioner Rodriguez sought confirmation on whether the \$60 million specifically designated for the strategic plan was maintained separately from the items presented in the general budget overview.

Assistant City Manager Chong confirmed that the \$60 million for the strategic plan was separate and not included in the presentation.

Commissioner Rodriguez emphasized that she wants to make sure the city parks are as beautiful and accessible as possible. Commissioner Rodriguez shared that she had recently visited Weston Regional Park and noticed that all of their signage was uniform and presentable, noting that even their trash cans featured a beautiful, uniform branding that clearly identified the location. Commissioner Rodriguez argued that this visually pleasing uniformity is tied to a broader, ongoing conversation about city branding and ensuring that people are always aware of the services that the city of Pembroke Pines offers, including its parks. Commissioner Rodriguez observed that currently, Pembroke Pines parks desperately lack uniform signage, pointing out that older signs, like those at Flamingo Park, need a visual upgrade. Commissioner Rodriguez advocated for implementing uniform, visible signage across all parks. Commissioner Rodriguez recognized that building new parks would be expensive, but insisted that investing in visible details like uniform branding and good signage would be worthwhile.

Commissioner Rodriguez addressed a previous conversation about the

need for additional positions within the communications department. Commissioner Rodriguez asked if those positions had been budgeted into the current proposal or if there was an explanation for any changes.

Assistant City Manager Chong responded that they had added one position to the communications department the previous year, but the particular budget presented did not yet include an additional new position.

Commissioner Rodriguez indicated that she desperately wanted to have a much broader discussion with the manager regarding the communications department, referencing a joint meeting she actively attended with IT and the communications department about the city's new website. Commissioner Rodriguez emphasized that the website needs a fair amount of work, noting that it was not a one-time job that could be completed with a new software program, but would rather require continuous, specialized updates. Commissioner Rodriguez stressed the necessity of investing money to enhance online accessibility for residents, acknowledging that software contracts are often large but necessary in an increasingly digital age where companies frequently charge for updates.

Commissioner Rodriguez argued that the website updates should be part of a much bigger communications plan, asserting that having only three or four people on the communications staff was insufficient for the second-largest city in the county. Commissioner Rodriguez compared the city's staffing to that of Coral Springs, noting that Coral Springs employed about ten people for communications, which easily allowed them to produce far more robust internal and external communications beyond just basic social media communications. Commissioner Rodriguez stated she did not want to place more of a burden on the current staff working on communications, but insisted the city needed to scale up its communications department to fit its size and branding needs.

Commissioner Rodriguez reiterated the importance of creating a user-friendly, one-stop-shop website where frustrated residents could easily complete all their city-related tasks, such as paying their water bills, paying business tax receipts, and other obligations, using a single login. Commissioner Rodriguez acknowledged that the IT department indicated this would be difficult, but noted that the city needed to invest now because residents are increasingly preferring to do business online rather than physically coming into City Hall. Commissioner Rodriguez advocated for the creation of a dedicated intergovernmental affairs position, pointing out that other large, successful cities like Fort

Lauderdale, Coral Springs, and Sunrise have that position.

Commissioner Rodriguez explained that while staff currently operate as quasi-intergovernmental affairs representatives within their own departments, a city of Pembroke Pines' size needs a specialized position. Commissioner Rodriguez noted that when she attends conferences, she has to independently research legislative issues, while representatives from other cities are guided into meetings by their dedicated intergovernmental affairs staff who know what is happening in Tallahassee. Commissioner Rodriguez noted that while the city lobbyists are helpful, they represent multiple other cities as well and do not have the time to be exclusively focused on Pembroke Pines.

Commissioner Rodriguez argued that an intergovernmental affairs person would be valuable for researching policies implemented by other cities and translating those ideas into projects for Pembroke Pines. Commissioner Rodriguez acknowledged that hiring for this specialized position would require a fair amount of money, but that she believed the long-term investment was worth it for a city of Pembroke Pines' size.

Commissioner Rodriguez shared that she would like the interns, a part of the city's internship project, to be compensated, even if it was just a small amount, somewhere between \$500 and \$1,000 the summer. Commissioner Rodriguez argued that in an era where everything is so expensive, it is genuinely unfair to expect free labor, even if interns do gain experience. Commissioner Rodriguez also noted that offering a paid official capacity would ensure lower-income students were not bypassed.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked about the plans for capital investments in the general budget regarding roads and speed calming measures, especially in the western parts of the city. Commissioner Rodriguez explained that she frequently receives calls from homeowner associations complaining about the speeding, noting that while expanding roads temporarily alleviates traffic, it often results in people driving even faster during off-peak hours. Commissioner Rodriguez suggested reaching out directly to the homeowner associations to identify the specific trouble spots in their neighborhoods so the city could coordinate targeted police patrols or implement small traffic calming measures.

Commissioner Rodriguez addressed the city's transportation system, noting that the contracts for the transportation authority and school buses had recently been extended but are due for a review soon. Commissioner Rodriguez asked the commission to consider bifurcating

or splitting up that transportation contract to explore modern micro transit options like Freebie and Circuit. Commissioner Rodriguez argued that investigating micro transit vendors could reveal some cost-saving measures or justify paying a little bit more for technology that allows residents to order rides quickly from their phones, similar to Uber. Commissioner Rodriguez emphasized the importance of public transportation, pointing out that the current infrastructure is built for cars, creating accessibility barriers for seniors and teenagers. Commissioner Rodriguez explained that it would take her approximately an hour with a bus transfer to travel from her house to City Hall.

Commissioner Schwartz acknowledged that Commissioner Rodriguez raised some extremely good points and shared that there are two progressive cities, Key West and Lakeland, that operate free public transportation systems. Commissioner Schwartz described the Duval Loop in Key West, noting it was originally designed to prevent local employees from taking parking spots in front of businesses, but miraculously turned out to be a popular service operated through an app that tourists often use. Commissioner Schwartz mentioned that Lakeland operates a similar transportation service called the Squeeze. Commissioner Schwartz acknowledged that Pembroke Pines is stretched out from the turnpike all the way to the Everglades, making citywide transit difficult, but suggested exploring options to connect specific economic centers. Commissioner Schwartz warned that fuel prices would continue to rise as electric vehicles become more popular, explaining that gas station owners have to make rent, regardless of declining gasoline demand.

Commissioner Schwartz referenced a scandal in Miami-Dade County where millions of taxpayer dollars were wasted on electric buses that sit unused. Commissioner Schwartz stated that while there is a proper time and place to explore new technologies and learn from other cities, he firmly believed Pembroke Pines already possessed plenty of talent. Commissioner Schwartz declared he was far more interested in using city funds to send staff to seminars and conferences rather than paying for elected officials to attend single-night social affairs. Commissioner Schwartz argued that social affairs provided virtually zero return on investment other than a few pictures on social media, insisting he would rather invest those exact dollars in developing the city's hard-working staff. Commissioner Schwartz highlighted that the city currently has a planning and zoning board where no one is certified, noting there has not been education on the board since the removal of a past member. Commissioner Schwartz argued that the board of adjustment and other dedicated volunteer boards would benefit from educational seminars.

Commissioner Schwartz expressed that he shares the frustrations of the volunteer board members who serve at the pleasure of the commission, noting they could not even get a basic glass of water during meetings. Commissioner Schwartz insisted that it would cost the city virtually nothing to provide fresh water and branded polo shirts for these volunteers, emphasizing that they are the voice of the citizenry and must be recognized for their value.

Commissioner Schwartz shifted his focus to local small business owners, observing that they are currently struggling. Commissioner Schwartz expressed a desire to work collaboratively with the Chamber of Commerce to correctly identify business needs and explore innovative public-private partnerships, stressing he was not interested in providing handouts that exposed tax dollars to waste. Commissioner Schwartz readily recognized that the city administration is in a difficult position, trying to draft a budget without knowing what the state legislature or the electorate would ultimately decide regarding property taxes. Commissioner Schwartz shared that he was satisfied with the clear commitment to fully funding public safety within the proposed budget, but stressed that the city needs to find a way to resolve ongoing exterior issues and get start moving forward on matters regarding revenues.

Commissioner Schwartz apologized to Assistant City Manager Chong for making her stand at the podium for so long and thanked the building department for implementing a policy he had long advocated for. Commissioner Schwartz explained this policy was one that ensures that the city hauler is directly integrated into the permitting process to attempt to stop the loss of revenue. Commissioner Schwartz cited a recent example where he saw a major franchise restaurant using an unauthorized vendor directly in their parking lot. Commissioner Schwartz commended the recent investment in code enforcement, asserting that constantly monitoring economic sectors and busy shopping centers seven days a week is imperative for maintaining high city standards.

Commissioner Schwartz fondly recalled a time when code enforcement provided him with comprehensive weekly reports on every shopping center east of Flamingo Road, which allowed him to immediately answer questions from residents. Commissioner Schwartz explained that he firmly believes that there are untapped revenue sources the city could easily capture through code enforcement and building department oversight, noting that unpermitted weekend construction projects are commonplace. Commissioner Schwartz declared that he desires to keep the cost of living in Pembroke Pines as economically viable and livable as possible, especially as the country faces challenges.

Commissioner Schwartz suggested exploring innovative procurement strategies, directly asking the city manager if there was an opportunity to intelligently buy fuel ten years out, similar to how major airlines manage their fuel costs to avoid feeling an economic hit regardless of whatever the current economic situation may be. Commissioner Schwartz indicated he was open to partnering with other cities to achieve goals, but expressed his concern about regionalization efforts that needlessly duplicate services due to a refusal to cooperate.

Commissioner Schwartz shared that he recognizes that Pembroke Pines' staff are tasked to do far more with much less help than their counterparts in other cities. Commissioner Schwartz emphasized that the city should be leveraging modern technology to drastically improve efficiency and customer service happiness, sharing that the city's efficiency and effectiveness should be based on the happiness of the residents. Commissioner Schwartz noted that an \$8 million deficit is a big number, pointing out that the presentation made no mention of Pines Place or whether it fits into the general fund. Commissioner Schwartz acknowledged the impending reality of a retiring workforce, and stressed that the city needs to start thinking about preparing new employees as experienced, long-term employees retire. Commissioner Schwartz asked City Manager Dodge if he plans on holding another workshop once the state makes its final decisions in June, or if the manager intends to provide the Commission with a budget on August 1st based on assumptions.

Commissioner Schwartz insisted there must be a method by which they can provide the public with reasonable certainty of how the city will spend its money. Commissioner Schwartz noted that he is open to the conversation on how the addition of an aide would be executed, sharing that he is offering a summer internship and that he has an office account, so it is possible for his intern to be paid. Commissioner Schwartz shared his concerns about non-profits being hurt due to changes in state law, but maintained that he would like the city to implement a strict, transparent application window for funding tables of ten to ensure a true, measurable return on investment. Commissioner Schwartz communicated to City Manager Dodge that the presentation was fantastic, and that seeing a mostly balanced budget this early was great, confirming that the city is in a good position. Commissioner Schwartz warned city vendors and staff to protect publicly purchased assets as if they owned them, insisting that the breaking of equipment, as well as the loss of inventory, had to stop.

Commissioner Schwartz shared that for any vendor contract, renewals would be based on how well those vendors took care of the assets purchased with public dollars. Commissioner Schwartz advocated for assigning one or two police officers to work directly with the property appraiser's office, arguing it pays for itself with a return on investment by capturing previously unrecorded property improvements.

Mayor Castillo asked the commissioners if there was anything else they wanted to add or if they had any final thoughts they wanted to share. Mayor Castillo asked City Manager Dodge if he had collected

enough direction and input from the commission to confidently proceed with the drafting of the final budget.

City Manager Dodge confirmed that he had indeed collected enough information and clear direction from the commission.

Mayor Castillo thanked Assistant City Manager Chong very much for her detailed presentation and asked the manager what the next item on the agenda was.

City Manager Dodge stated that the next item was the workshop focused on solid waste management. City Manager Dodge formally announced that Assistant City Manager Gomes would begin the presentation and that Environmental Engineer Mr. Cooper would also be presenting important technical information. City Manager Dodge warned the commission that, due to the complexity, the solid waste presentation was going to take a little bit more time to complete than the previous budget overview.

MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE WORKSHOP TO BEGIN IMMEDIATELY AFTER BUDGET VISIONING

WORKSHOP ITEM NO. 2: MUNICIPAL SOLID WASTE.

Mayor Castillo asked City Manager Dodge if, for planning purposes, they had a hard stop schedule requiring them to prematurely end the meeting at six o'clock.

City Manager Dodge replied that that was not the case and indicated that he did not believe that they had a hard stop at six, and instructed the presenters to begin.

Assistant City Manager Gomes greeted everyone and introduced himself as the assistant city manager and director of procurement and sustainability. Assistant City Manager Gomes presented the RESOLVE project, which stood for the Recycling Energy and Sustainable Organics Lifecycle Value Enhancement project. Assistant City Manager Gomes outlined the agenda for his presentation, which included reviewing the history of the city's waste management, detailing the brand new Waste Management recycling facility located in the city, and analyzing the controversial Broward County Solid Waste Authority regional efforts. Assistant City Manager Gomes added that he would then dive into the specifics of the RESOLVE project, which would be followed by the recommendations.

Assistant City Manager Gomes began with a historical perspective, explaining that more than 40 years ago, Broward County established the solid waste disposal district, which would later be called the resource recovery board, which sought to bring cities together and build large-scale incinerators. Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that at that time, Pembroke Pines was very opposed to using incinerators and chose to instead explore clean, alternative recycling options by partnering with Dania Beach, Hallandale, and Pompano Beach to bring a Minnesota company down to build the Reuter Recycling Facility out west.

Assistant City Manager Gomes recounted that a composting component at the Reuter facility failed because the original engineering was not suited for the humid South Florida environment, causing severe odor concerns that eventually led to the facility being sold to Waste Management. Assistant City Manager Gomes reported that the city's contract with the Reuter Recycling Facility ended in January 2022, at which time the city was paying a rate of \$86.92 per ton for both solid waste and separated recycling. Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that they were unable to negotiate a new agreement with Waste Management due to declining global market conditions for selling recyclables, increasing processing costs, and concerns regarding high

contamination levels in the collected recycling materials.

Assistant City Manager Gomes stated that this combination of factors ultimately forced the city to suspend its blue cart curbside recycling collection program in early 2022. Assistant City Manager Gomes outlined the city's current interim solution, noting that the city has an active agreement with Waste Connections through September 30th, 2026, which included flexible one-year renewal options. Assistant City Manager Gomes detailed that under this agreement, all residential waste goes directly to the Deerfield Beach Transfer Station at a controlled rate of \$60.60 per ton, from where it is hauled to the JED Landfill in St. Cloud.

Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that the JED Landfill incorporates a functional form of resource recovery by capturing methane gas from the decomposing waste and selling it back to the grid to power approximately 8,000 homes. Assistant City Manager Gomes discussed the new \$90 million Waste Management recycling facility, highlighting it as a 127,000 square foot expansion situated right next to the old Reuter facility, directly in West Pines. Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that this facility replaced the previous, manual sorting operations, serving multiple counties by processing 275,000 tons of paper, plastic, metal, and glass per year at a rate of 60 tons per hour.

Assistant City Manager Gomes highlighted that the facility utilized advanced optical sorters equipped with artificial intelligence to increase the material recovery rate from approximately 85% to 95%, ensuring less than 20% of residual material ends up in landfills. Assistant City Manager Gomes offered a clarification about the statistics, noting that the facility exclusively accepts source-separated single-stream recycling, meaning general municipal solid waste would still need to be sent somewhere else for final disposal. Assistant City Manager Gomes calculated that if the city restored its recycling program to its 2021 levels, the 95% recovery rate would only yield 8,400 tons of recycled material, representing only 6.7% of the city's total waste stream.

Assistant City Manager Gomes briefly highlighted community outreach efforts, describing how charter school AP students and environmental advisory board members participated in a microhabitat planting event at the Waste Management facility.

Assistant City Manager Gomes analyzed the typical contract model Waste Management offers to other cities and explained that it uses a blended average market value currently set at \$178.43 per ton. Assistant City Manager Gomes detailed that this rate is based on composition

audits, where the company dumps and subsequently analyzes samples of a city's waste to determine what materials are valuable. Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that the actual cost for recycling fluctuates every month based directly on the commodity index and that Waste Management recovers its processing fee first. Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that having an abundance of high-value items like aluminum effectively lowers the cost, while having excess, less valuable materials like glass increases the price paid by the city.

Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that because the price is volatile, it is possible that there will need to be true-ups to determine the method by which they will assess rates to the city's residents. Assistant City Manager Gomes highlighted that the contract structure includes uncapped transportation and disposal fees, which are applied whenever a municipal load exceeds a 10% contamination threshold. Assistant City Manager Gomes emphasized that Waste Management retains the right to reject materials, offering no guarantee that the materials will be recycled.

Assistant City Manager Gomes compared the historical and proposed rates for context, reiterating that the old Reuter contract cost \$86.92, the current landfill agreement costs \$60.60, and the new Waste Management recycling proposal costs a fluctuating rate of approximately \$178.43 per ton. Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that when setting rates for residents, they have to factor in both disposal and collection, which could impact rates if haulers have to drive much farther or wait in long lines at slow processing facilities.

Assistant City Manager Gomes reviewed the Broward County Solid Waste Authority and its regional efforts to establish a comprehensive master plan. Assistant City Manager Gomes reported that 28 of the 31 cities in Broward County joined the authority, representing roughly 83% of the county's total population, while Pembroke Pines, Hallandale, and Pompano Beach opted out. Assistant City Manager Gomes detailed the city's reasons for not joining, which included concerns regarding the potential use of incineration, concerns that landfills or incinerators might be built next to the city, and the estimated annual cost of up to \$232,000. Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that the city had passed a resolution in May 2024 opposing incineration, urging the authority to prioritize non-combustion technologies. The assistant city manager noted that the city also had concerns about the impact incinerators have on health and provided financial support to Miramar to fight a proposed Miami-Dade incinerator project.

Assistant City Manager Gomes provided an update on the current status

of the Solid Waste Authority, noting they approved their facilities amendment on April 17th and granted all participating cities 120 days to approve the plan to continue with the ILA. The assistant city manager noted that the deadline is August 14th, 2026, and requires the representatives of the ILA to approve the 40-year plan. Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that if members of the ILA, representing 80% of the population, fail to approve the agreement, the Solid Waste Authority will terminate and cease to exist. Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that any entity choosing to approve the agreement will be locked into a 40-year commitment until the year 2063, limiting their flexibility. Assistant City Manager Gomes described the 1,200-page master plan produced by the authority, explaining that after evaluating five distinct scenarios, they selected Scenario A as their preferred approach, which targets a 62% waste diversion rate. Assistant City Manager Gomes clarified that the term diversion means keeping material out of a landfill, warning that it does not guarantee the material is recycled, leaving the door open for other controversial disposal methods. Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that the SWA projects are sending 2.7 million tons of material to landfills by the year 2045.

Assistant City Manager Gomes outlined the programs proposed in the SWA Scenario A, including those that reduce residential trash collection to just once a week, restore countywide curbside recycling, and establish brand new food waste and hazardous electronic drop-off sites. Assistant City Manager Gomes cautioned the commission that joining the SWA would require the city to adopt its uniform rules. Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that flow control would be done by the SWA, warning that they would possess the authority to dictate where the city waste is sent, overriding any local opposition to specific disposal methods or facility locations. Assistant City Manager Gomes added that the SWA would negotiate all facility rates on behalf of the cities, meaning Pembroke Pines would lose its ability to independently negotiate and would need to amend agreements with the city's haulers.

Assistant City Manager Gomes highlighted that the SWA's plan would make commercial collection non-exclusive, noting that the impact on the city's rates as a result is unknown. Assistant City Manager Gomes summarized the infrastructure requirements proposed by the authority, noting it includes a 640-acre landfill to contain 3 million tons a year, three transfer stations, two single-stream recycling facilities, multiple mulch and biochar operations, and several permanent drop-off centers.

Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that all five of the SWA's plans require a new landfill, sharing that the SWA has yet to find a suitable site for the landfill. Assistant City Manager Gomes expressed his concern

regarding the disposal of wet class one putrescible waste, given that they currently may not collect it. The assistant city manager shared that there was a settlement at the Monarch Hill Landfill that seemed to prohibit them from accepting wet residential garbage next year.

Assistant City Manager Gomes detailed the funding structure the SWA plans to implement, explaining that they will utilize flow control and build a capital reserve to construct their proposed infrastructure and future expansion programs.

Assistant City Manager Gomes displayed a comprehensive timeline that for 2027, the city would pay for an annual fee based on the city's population. The assistant city manager shared that after 2027, there will be a facility surcharge with flow control. Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that the city would be told where to take the waste, where a surcharge of \$2.22 would be added per ton at those facilities. Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that this would occur from 2028 to 2030. Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that in 2031, a non-ad valorem property assessment of \$2.72.

Assistant City Manager Gomes highlighted a data discrepancy found in a presentation from the SWA on March 17th, highlighting that their presentation claimed Pembroke Pines generated 429,612 tons of waste, contradicting the city's own verified data detailing only 128,444 tons of waste. Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that the SWA maximum service charges, such as \$110 per ton specifically for recyclables and \$57.49 for class one waste, explaining that the rates could easily be increased by the SWA board and executive committee with the approval of municipalities representing two-thirds of the population.

Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that, depending on negotiated rates, costs may be unavoidable and subject to price increases. Assistant City Manager Gomes reiterated that the cost the city pays is based on both collections

Assistant City Manager Gomes warned that if the authority dissolved after 40 years, the remaining valuable assets would likely be fully transferred directly to the county or divided up among participating cities, leaving independent non-participating cities with zero valuable assets. Assistant City Manager Gomes summarized the risks of joining the authority, reiterating the loss of flow control, the 40-year commitment, the uncertainty regarding the landfill location, incineration, and the loss of flexibility. Assistant City Manager Gomes concluded his section of the presentation and invited Environmental Engineer John Cooper to the

podium to present the city's proposed RESOLVE project.

Mayor Castillo announced a brief five-minute recess.

Mr. Cooper greeted the commission and explained that he has been an environmental engineer for the City of Pembroke Pines for many years. Mr. Cooper detailed that his presentation would cover what the RESOLVE project is and what is being proposed, as well as how long it will take to be implemented. Mr. Cooper defined various terms related to his presentation, including Waste-to-Energy, which he defined as a combustion process, which includes incineration and gasification. Mr. Cooper also defined resource recovery as a non-combustion process, which includes landfill gas recovery, pyrolysis, and anaerobic digestion.

Mr. Cooper explained that the RESOLVE project is not proposing incineration and defined incineration as a process by which waste goes into a facility, where it is burned, after which the energy is recovered in the form of steam, which drives the generator and supplies energy to the grid. Mr. Cooper noted that although this sounds good theoretically, the downside is that the waste that is used is both recyclables and garbage. Mr. Cooper explained that in order for the incinerator system to operate, it needs to be provided with enough fuel to make it work financially. Mr. Cooper elaborated that flow control is making sure incinerators have enough fuel so they can produce enough energy to generate a profit.

Mr. Cooper noted that the incineration system produces pollution in the form of top ash (air pollution) and bottom ash (solid pollution), which is often land filled, containing heavy metals. Mr. Cooper explained that gasification is just a hotter form of incineration where ash is turned into burnable gas.

Mr. Cooper said that the City of Pembroke Pines is already sending waste to a landfill that does gas recovery. Mr. Cooper noted that the system essentially installs a grid of pipes under the landfill that collects and utilizes the gas from the landfill. Mr. Cooper emphasized that resource recovery by way of landfill gas recovery is not a terrible thing, but it is not efficient and results in gasses that are less refined and less concentrated. Mr. Cooper added that gas recovery is also not endorsed by the Sierra Club. Mr. Cooper defined pyrolysis as a form of steam treatment for garbage that produces methane gas as well as a bottom ash known as biochar, describing it as charcoal that can be used for soil. Mr. Cooper shared that there are other emerging technologies that are not currently on the EPA list, noting that they will not be addressing those in this presentation.

Mr. Cooper explained that new legislation across the country is seeking to prevent organic waste from entering landfills because they produce valuable greenhouse gases. Mr. Cooper explained that anaerobic digestion is a form of resource recovery that captures and creates gas. Mr. Cooper displayed a graphic of the Monarch Hill landfill, noting that its planned expansion presented a problem for everyone. Mr. Cooper showed a graphic, explaining to the commission that it is a controlled fire called a flare, and it burns day and night continuously. Mr. Cooper explained the science behind the flare, describing how microbes naturally eat organic garbage and produce a byproduct gas, similar to the way a fallen tree rots in the woods or a kitchen trash can smells. Mr. Cooper clarified that the byproduct produced has multiple names, all of which refer to the same thing, including landfill gas, methane, biogas, and renewable natural gas (RNG), explaining that they are all the exact same chemical substance. Mr. Cooper noted that other gases are mixed in with landfill gas, so it does require some refinement.

Mr. Cooper noted that raw landfill gas is not very concentrated and often mixed with other gases, which means that it must go through a cleaning process known as scrubbing before it becomes valuable. Mr. Cooper emphasized that once scrubbed, this renewable natural gas is valuable, as it is the exact same high-quality fuel that major energy providers pump across the country to power residential gas stoves and heaters. Mr. Cooper argued that there is no reason to waste this valuable resource by releasing it into the atmosphere when it can be efficiently captured through the process of anaerobic digestion. Mr. Cooper explained the mechanics of an anaerobic digester, describing it as a tank where waste is deposited and subsequently consumed by microbes, which produce collectible gas that is then refined and used on-site or transported to be sold by a gas company. Mr. Cooper displayed multiple photographs to highlight that the facility does not need to look like a wastewater plant, but rather would resemble commercial buildings. Mr. Cooper explained the odor-control engineering, detailing how garbage trucks would drive inside the building, which would operate under negative pressure, so that the odorous air would be captured and scrubbed before leaving the facility.

Mr. Cooper provided statistics from the American Biogas Council to prove the technology's reliability, reporting that there are currently over 2,300 fully operational digesters functioning across all 50 states. Mr. Cooper shared an example from Des Moines, Iowa, where farmers built an anaerobic digester and deposited their agricultural waste into it, using the resulting methane gas to dry beans before selling the remaining gas directly back to the state gas provider. Mr. Cooper noted that Florida currently operates 65 digesters, primarily located at wastewater

treatment plants, including a successful one operated in the neighboring city of Miramar. Mr. Cooper noted that for those operating in Florida, 36 were at wastewater treatment plants, 22 at landfills, 8 used agriculturally, and 1 used for food waste.

Mr. Cooper emphasized that food waste is ideal for producing gas, noting that many European countries collect food waste at home and separate it from the rest of the garbage, describing it as the organic fraction, which is then used to feed digesters. Mr. Cooper shared statistics detailing that if Florida fully used its potential for anaerobic digestion, it could produce enough electricity for 650,000 houses while simultaneously providing the climate benefit of removing the equivalent emissions of 70,000 cars from the road and diverting 5,140,000 tons of food waste from landfills.

Mr. Cooper addressed concerns about odors produced by anaerobic digesters, explaining that modern anaerobic digesters that are designed to capture and sell biogas do not smell because it is being collected, not burned or released, unlike older models that flared off their excess gas into the open air. Mr. Cooper reiterated that anaerobic digestion is a natural biological process and does not require combustion, but instead reaches bug-generated temperatures around 150 degrees. Mr. Cooper explained that this approach is renewable as garbage is always being generated, reduces emissions from landfills, and recovers recyclables. Mr. Cooper shared another benefit of the project, explaining that it would solve the statewide issue regarding the regulation of biosolids. Mr. Cooper detailed how recent state legislation prohibits biosolid land application unless it is class AA, meaning that the entire state has a few years to convert to class AA.

Mr. Cooper noted that the state action will help, but won't solve the biosolids issue, as rain will inevitably wash the fertilizers directly into local waterways, causing issues like algae blooms. Mr. Cooper introduced the concept of co-digestion, explaining that with co-digestion, there is a blending of organic waste, yard trash, and biosolids together into an anaerobic digester, which removes waste from the trash cycle and contributes to the city's green plan. Mr. Cooper quoted an engineering report produced for the Solid Waste Authority, claiming that anaerobic digestion offers the greatest potential for increasing diversion rates while remaining cost-effective and low-risk. Mr. Cooper clarified information on diversion rates and explained that even a 70% diversion rate still leaves 30% of the original garbage heading to a traditional landfill. Mr. Cooper noted that when reports show high divergence rates such as a 95% rate, it is likely that they are referring only to organics or only to plastics, explaining that it is the total diversion rate that is most

important.

Mr. Cooper displayed a chart highlighting the success of anaerobic digestion across Europe and parts of the U.S., noting that Europeans often utilize the solid byproduct, called digestate, as compost. Mr. Cooper noted that if implemented here compost would likely end up in a landfill, but explained that he believes the city could make better use of it by drying it and using it as combustible solid fuel or as a landfill cover, as seen in other parts of the U.S. Mr. Cooper highlighted a recently awarded 150,000-ton digester project in Ulster County, that would be of similar size to the one proposed, noting they would use their digestate for landfill cover and sell the excess to a gas company.

Mr. Cooper explained why this technology is not commonly seen, noting that it has only recently become viable, pointing to recent technological advancements in efficient high-solids digesters and pre-treatment processes that make the material more digestible and productive. Mr. Cooper summarized the process, explaining that waste goes into pre-treatment and the RNG is processed and scrubbed, where it is then sold to gas providers. Mr. Cooper noted that the digestate would turn to compost, which could be used as solid fuel or land filled. Mr. Cooper noted that through this process 70% of the total land filled waste is reduced.

Mr. Cooper announced a collaboration with Florida Atlantic University (FAU), detailing a study where researchers would mix digestate with biosolids to scientifically prove the concept from a high technical standpoint. Mr. Cooper noted that FAU has already published multiple studies on anaerobic digestion and noted that the Sierra Club supported its use, which he considered an endorsement of the environmental integrity of the proposed project.

Mr. Cooper walked the commission through the proposed daily workflow of the plant, starting with a standard single-cart collection that would be delivered to a pre-treatment sorting facility. Mr. Cooper explained that this first step would function like a miniature Reuter facility, utilizing sorting technology to pull out all valuable materials for recycling. Mr. Cooper detailed that everything else would go through pre-treatment, then a series of digesters, where the gas would be scrubbed. Mr. Cooper added that the facility would require power to operate, presenting an opportunity to integrate solar power. Mr. Cooper explained that the produced gas would go where it could be used, whether that is the gas grid, natural gas-fueled power plants, or city trucks and vehicles. Mr. Cooper continued that the digestate could also be used as fuel, or go to landfill, compost, or other locations. Mr. Cooper elaborated that woody

and yard waste, as well as biosolids, could be added without needing to be separated.

Mr. Cooper outlined the project roadmap, highlighting two parallel paths required to make the project a reality. Mr. Cooper noted that the first of those is to buy the land and prepare it, and the second is to buy the system. Mr. Cooper explained that the city has identified the perfect location for the facility, pointing to a 59-acre parcel of land situated directly next to the existing Waste Management facility and noted that the city would likely only need to purchase about 24 acres.

Mr. Cooper explained that they do not expect the project to interfere with the planned Pembroke road expansion project. Mr. Cooper noted that it would likely follow the completion of Pembroke Road, allowing for there to be east-west connectivity, with two lanes going both ways for trucks, sharing his hope that it could attract other businesses to the area as well.

Mr. Cooper described that the city is in the process of purchasing the land, explaining that the chosen site was currently a managed and permitted mitigation site. Mr. Cooper explained that they are working to secure government approvals to release a portion of the mitigation site and replace it somewhere else, essentially mitigating the mitigation. Mr. Cooper explained that they would need to create a plan to prepare the site for the vendor, requiring the excavation and development of the land so that it would be ready for the vendor to build and develop on it. Mr. Cooper noted that when all the approvals are received, they can begin building and developing the off-site mitigation as well as the site itself.

Mr. Cooper explained that they did a Request for Letters of Interest (RLI) and are now ready to proceed with a Request for Proposal (RFP). Mr. Cooper displayed a schedule and projected that the construction and mitigation will occur around fiscal year 2027-2028. Mr. Cooper estimated that if they moved forward with issuing the Request for Proposals immediately, they could align all the moving parts by the end of fiscal year 2028 and begin construction approximately one year later.

Assistant City Manager Gomes presented the recommended actions staff was asking the city commission to consider. Assistant City Manager Gomes requested authorization to move forward with the next step, which involved issuing an RFP for the design-build project. Assistant City Manager Gomes recommended that the city continue evaluating the Solid Waste Authority and noted that if Pembroke Pines builds this facility, the city could be an asset to the SWA and the SWA could direct waste from neighboring municipalities to the city. Assistant City Manager Gomes advised the commission to maintain active

dialogue with the SWA about the city's resolution against incineration and advocating for the exploration of alternative recycling and disposal opportunities. Assistant City Manager Gomes recommended that the commission maintain flexibility and keep their options open to explore interim recycling agreements with Waste Management. Assistant City Manager Gomes ended his presentation and invited the commission to ask questions and share their opinions.

Mayor Castillo thanked staff for the presentation, the white paper, and the work that has gone into analyzing the issue over the past several years. Mayor Castillo acknowledged that it has been a difficult journey requiring a great deal of patience from everyone involved, noting that the county's solid waste working group had been holding meetings long before the COVID pandemic. Mayor Castillo explained his past opposition to joining the SWA, indicating that he voted against it because the organization had no strategic plan, yet they expected the city to pay. Mayor Castillo reminded his colleagues that by law, the county is the responsible for disposing waste, while the city is only obligated to collect it and deliver it to the proper location. Mayor Castillo noted that Pembroke Pines had a long history of taking additional steps beyond its basic legal requirements to find smarter, more cost-effective solutions that served its residents better. Mayor Castillo recalled the alternative process the city used for a long time that avoided burning trash and saved residents money, as the associated fees were much lower compared to what they would have been had the city joined the county's system.

Mayor Castillo acknowledged that the economics of the situation had changed, and the city began searching for the next iteration of its waste management journey. Mayor Castillo admitted that while he did not necessarily oppose the theoretical proposition of joining a regional system, the specific way the Solid Waste Authority presented its system violated his fundamental business sense. Mayor Castillo articulated that the commission decided to wait and established a list of deal breakers, which he described as his list of hell no's. Mayor Castillo explained that these hell no's include the regional plan being too expensive, it involving any form of incineration, it producing foul odors, or it attempting to reopen a closed landfill near the Everglades, noting that if these were present, the city would refuse to participate. Mayor Castillo pointed out that the city's support for Miramar in its legal battle against a Miami-Dade incinerator project proved that Pembroke Pines was prepared to stand up and protect the environment. Mayor Castillo asserted that his list of deal breakers applied equally to the city's newly proposed digester project.

Mayor Castillo explained that he does not care if they have to build a giant glass dome over the facility, and emphasized that generating any foul odor was intolerable. Mayor Castillo asserted that he requires a crystal-clear, bulletproof guarantee that the facility would not smell, noting that he needed to be able to tell residents that with absolute certainty. Mayor Castillo added another guarantee asserting that the facility must not blow up, as that would be disruptive. Mayor Castillo reminded that the old Reuter facility operated for over 40 years without being seen, heard, or smelled, and insisted that the new digester facility has to be the exact same kind of neighbor. Mayor Castillo instructed the staff to locate a similarly sized digester facility operating in an urban environment surrounded by homes, declaring his intention to personally travel there to verify its success, even if he had to bring along an interpreter. Mayor Castillo described his plans to knock on the doors of the surrounding families and hear their experiences in order to confirm whether or not the technology truly works and has not impacted their quality of life.

Mayor Castillo clarified that while he was okay moving forward with the project conceptually, it had to cost the residents less money than the prices he saw in the presentation. Mayor Castillo asked for confirmation regarding whether plastics would be processed in the digester system or only organic material.

Mr. Cooper clarified that some specific plastics can be used and some cannot.

Mayor Castillo asked if the sludge would be put into the digester.

Mr. Cooper affirmed that they hope to process the sludge, which is why they are actively conducting the study with FAU to prove the concept.

Mayor Castillo reiterated his condition that the processing could not produce any foul smells.

Mayor Castillo questioned what the outputs of the process would be, asking for clarification on whether the facility would produce both solid pellets and combustible gas to sell or if it would only generate gas.

Mr. Cooper clarified that the main and most valuable output would be the scrubbed gas, noting that he is still unsure what specific physical form the remaining solid digestate would take after processing, but it would be used to generate revenue to sustain the facility.

Mayor Castillo questioned whether the administration and Mr. Cooper were just not sure as of yet.

City Manager Dodge explained to the Mayor that since they were preparing to go out for an RFP, they had to wait and see what responses they got first.

Mayor Castillo asked if there would be EV gas and asked if the city could use this gas for its vehicles.

City Manager Dodge repeated that they do not know yet and would have to wait for the proposals.

Mayor Castillo thanked City Manager Dodge for his blunt honesty. Mayor Castillo explained that he was willing to give the proposal a fair opportunity to convince him it was a workable solution for the city's future. Mayor Castillo shared that based on his discussions with residents citywide, the public wants to have a recycling program return as soon as possible. Mayor Castillo noted that most residents would accept reducing bulk garbage pickup to just once a month. Mayor Castillo explained that if a family genuinely needed more frequent recyclable collection, they could get an additional can or mix their waste, arguing that restoring recycling was something the majority of residents desired. Mayor Castillo informed City Manager Dodge that residents would like to return to recycling as quickly, efficiently, and cost-effectively as possible, even if it costs them a few extra dollars a month.

Mayor Castillo reasoned that since, at least in his house, most organic, edible food waste goes down the garbage disposal and is sent to the sewage treatment plant, most of the waste would go to the digester location and be repurposed. Mayor Castillo summarized his position, making it crystal clear that while he was not yet 100% convinced this specific project was the answer, he appreciated the innovative direction the staff was heading. Mayor Castillo reminded everyone that there is no such thing as a 100% environmentally perfect way to dispose of garbage, but he argued that the city could no longer rely on primitive methods like burning or burying it. Mayor Castillo concluded his remarks by expressing his excitement for this proposal and reiterated that the

project must adhere to his hell no's regarding safety, odor control, and in-person verification before moving to final approval.

Vice Mayor Hernandez thanked City Manager Dodge and his team for consistently providing answers to his many questions throughout this process. Vice Mayor Hernandez shared that he read the document and returned to staff with multiple questions because he is not an industry expert, while noting that Commissioner Good is the expert in this subject matter. Vice Mayor Hernandez expressed appreciation that both the city administrative staff and outside industry experts answered his questions. Vice Mayor Hernandez confidently declared that, based on everything he reviewed, the staff proposal is a very well-thought-out plan and that he agreed with Mayor Castillo regarding the necessity of physically visiting a similarly sized facility located near a residential neighborhood to verify its impact. Vice Mayor Hernandez highlighted a residential community located just south of the proposed West Pines soccer park, noting that he visits them frequently to address drainage and other municipal matters.

Vice Mayor Hernandez emphasized that while today was merely a first step, if the project is implemented, it would require an unprecedented level of communication and engagement with those residents and many others. Vice Mayor Hernandez argued that if the city ever felt they were over-communicating the details of this project, they needed to keep communicating even more, because residents would undoubtedly have questions. Vice Mayor Hernandez asked for the exact estimated buffer distance between the edge of the proposed recycling facility and the property line of the neighboring homes.

City Manager Dodge replied that the buffer distance from the property line was approximately 500 feet, but clarified that the actual industrial building and the truck circulation routes would be situated much further to the west. City Manager Dodge noted that storm water, drainage, and lakes would be to the east, and that the active portion of the facility would likely be 600 or 700 feet away from the homes, noting that they would have to verify that on the site plan.

Vice Mayor Hernandez requested an invitation to the location in the event that the administration visits the site and asked if it is possible to walk in that space.

City Manager Dodge indicated that he does not believe that you can walk in that area.

Vice Mayor Hernandez explained that he needs to see the distance

himself, as there is a neighborhood not far from the site, and he wants to be able to confidently look residents in the eye and assure them that their quality of life would not be impacted. Vice Mayor Hernandez stressed that to him, this level of community engagement was a hell yes requirement. Vice Mayor Hernandez noted that he had become a commissioner two years prior, and that he approached the controversial topic of the Solid Waste Authority with an open mind. Vice Mayor Hernandez acknowledged that while regional approaches often work well, he has also seen them fail, but reiterated and emphasized that he is keeping an open mind. The Vice Mayor explained that everything he has read and heard relating to the Solid Waste Authority has been concerning and dissuades him from supporting the city's participation in the SWA at this time.

Vice Mayor Hernandez expressed his concern at the prospect of being locked into a 40-year interlocal agreement, pointing out that 40 years represented most of his life, making such a long-term commitment very concerning. Vice Mayor Hernandez expressed concern about the SWA failing, noting that if it were to fail, the city could be forced to pay higher fees in excess of \$130 per ton within a single day of the SWA's failure, noting that there is precedent. Vice Mayor Hernandez shared that he believes the current proposal is decent and expressed his desire to provide the 47,000 residents in his district with confidence that the city will keep their long-term interests as its central focus. Vice Mayor Hernandez argued that providing certainty to ratepayers for garbage and recycling will instill more faith in the municipal administration.

Vice Mayor Hernandez shared that he is glad that the Sierra Club supports anaerobic digestion, and communicated that he supports the idea of integrating solar power in and around the facility area. The vice mayor suggested that the city explore the use of innovative floating solar panels on the surrounding lakes, similar to projects implemented by Florida Power and Light.

The vice mayor shared that he is interested in joining the mayor and administration if they travel to visit one of these anaerobic digestion facilities.

Vice Mayor Hernandez addressed the complex issue of mitigating the mitigation site, acknowledging that he doesn't imagine that updates on the mitigation will be solely in the final proposal, but that the commission will continuously be updated as the city proceeds. Vice Mayor Hernandez reiterated his appreciation to staff, noting that he spent his Friday and Saturday nights reading the documents that they produced. Vice Mayor Hernandez thanked staff and industry experts he contacted

for bringing him up to speed on an issue that he previously felt uninformed about. Vice Mayor Hernandez shared that while the Miami-Dade incinerator is no longer being proposed at the formerly Opa-Locka West site, a new proposal led by Florida Power and Light is seeking to build another waste-to-energy facility just a few miles further south. Vice Mayor Hernandez explained that he was putting this on the city's radar, and reminded everyone how seriously the region took the matter the last time.

Commissioner Good thanked the Mayor and expressed his appreciation to Vice Mayor Hernandez for recognizing his awareness and expertise in this subject matter. Commissioner Good highlighted his background, detailing his 30 years of executive experience dealing with solid waste management within municipal government. Commissioner Good noted that he had served as an active member and eventually the chair of the resource recovery technical advisory committee for many years prior to its eventual sunset. Commissioner Good commented that based on his expertise, he was very impressed and pleased with the white paper and the presentation. Commissioner Good admitted that he was initially concerned that the report would be unfairly skewed to manipulate the commission into supporting an outcome favored by the administration. Commissioner Good praised the staff, asserting that the final document was a thorough and fair representation of the pros and cons associated with both the Solid Waste Authority plan and the city's independent digester project.

Commissioner Good congratulated and thanked staff for all of their efforts, noting that the document was so thorough that he does not feel the need to give a lengthy dissertation or analyze it page by page. Commissioner Good assured everyone that anyone who reads the document or reviews the presentation would clearly understand what was before the commission tonight for decision. Commissioner Good provided historical context regarding the resource recovery board, pointing out that what's occurring today is not terribly different from how it was nearly 40 years ago. Commissioner Good explained that decades ago, the county declared a solid waste crisis and pressured cities to hurry and sign contracts immediately. Commissioner Good noted that a few cities, including Pembroke Pines, resisted and refused to join. Commissioner Good questioned City Manager Dodge and asked him to explain why Pembroke Pines chose not to join the resource recovery system back in the 1970s.

City Manager Dodge explained that the city commission at that time felt the regional proposal was being rushed without nearly enough review or information. City Manager Dodge added that the proposal did not

provide guarantees on what the costs would be, drawing a parallel to the current situation the city was facing today with the SWA. City Manager Dodge elaborated that because of the uncertainty, Pembroke Pines and three other cities explored and implemented another option, which was the Reuter Recycling Facility.

City Manager Dodge noted that the Reuter facility processed municipal solid waste using a series of conveyor belts and technology to effectively separate metals, paper, and cardboard. The city manager explained the failure was with the composting at that facility, noting that while the compost produced was great, the Minnesota engineering firm failed to account for the high water table in Florida. The city manager detailed that the underground tunnels built under the compost floor were filled with water, choking off the air that could go through, causing the odor issues that ultimately forced the composting element to close.

Commissioner Good highlighted that years later, as the 30-year county resource recovery agreement neared its expiration, the participating cities suddenly realized the regional authority had no master plan for what to do next. Commissioner Good pointed out that the regional authority eventually dissolved because it offered no additional benefits over the independent methods utilized by Pembroke Pines, while the costs skyrocketed to over 100 dollars per ton by 2013. Commissioner Good recalled that the cities inside that old regional agreement were angry because the contract offered no exit clause, making it functionally similar to the 40-year proposal currently being offered by the Solid Waste Authority.

Commissioner Good credited City Manager Dodge directly, praising him as someone who understood the history, took a calculated risk decades ago to secure a better disposal solution, and was guiding them to do the exact same thing again today. Commissioner Good expressed that he has a great deal of confidence in City Manager Dodge, noting his 50 years of municipal experience, and arguing that when a manager with that much experience recommends an alternative path, the commission should listen. Commissioner Good characterized the proposed bio-digester project as progressive, disruptive technology that elevated waste management beyond where it is currently. Commissioner Good clarified that any decision the city made on its own project would not impact the trajectory of the Solid Waste Authority, because that organization relies on securing 80% approval from its current membership, which excludes Pembroke Pines.

Commissioner Good observed that there are many uncertainties surrounding the Solid Waste Authority that were fundamentally similar to

the uncertainties surrounding the new digester technology, and commended the presentation for doing a good job of presenting both the pros and the cons. Commissioner Good highlighted that the city's digester project could be operational years before the SWA's proposal, based on their timeline. Commissioner Good projected the SWA needing five years just to build basic transfer stations, while noting that the city is three or four years away from having a fully operational disposal process. Commissioner Good argued that there would be another opportunity for the city to join the SWA, noting that the SWA needs volume, and therefore there would likely be a chance to join later. Commissioner Good supported the staff recommendation, declaring that moving forward with the recommendations puts the city in a win-win situation that will satisfy the residents' desire for leadership in environmental stewardship.

Mayor Castillo noted that the staff would need a plan B in case the technical digester plant ever broke down or needed to be turned off. Mayor Castillo expressed his confidence that the administration could secure an interim arrangement to continue making use of transfer stations in an unexpected occurrence.

City Manager Dodge confirmed that the city possessed an active disposal contract that they can renew, assuring the Mayor that they were actively preparing to bring it before the commission for approval. City Manager Dodge added that they were exploring interim recycling components and hoped to deliver a report detailing those options by the second commission meeting in May.

Mayor Castillo noted that the agreement would take care of the municipal waste, but asked if staff will also have a plan for sludge disposal, to prevent it from building up.

City Manager Dodge assured the Mayor that they had a plan for the sludge and were actively looking at multiple options.

Mayor Castillo apologized for taking up time, explaining he wanted to ensure the backup plan existed.

Commissioner Rodriguez thanked the Mayor and referred back to her earlier budget comments about thinking outside the box and embracing innovative future technologies. Commissioner Rodriguez expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to learn and look into the topic, noting that her background is in communications, not waste. Commissioner Rodriguez praised staff for creating a white paper that was easily digestible, but shared that she had a different perspective on the issue.

Commissioner Rodriguez challenged the room, asking the attendees to raise their hands if they believed the effects of climate change or the fumes from an incinerator stopped at city boundaries. Commissioner Rodriguez argued that because pollution does not respect borders, the city must view trash and recycling as a regional issue and from a regional perspective. Commissioner Rodriguez warned that even if Pembroke Pines achieved a 110% recycling rate, the residents would still be affected by the actions of neighboring cities.

Commissioner Rodriguez explained that this is why the city helped Miramar fight a Miami-Dade incinerator because toxic fumes travel across county lines. Commissioner Rodriguez revealed that she previously worked for the county, explaining that is why she can see this issue from the county's regional perspective. Commissioner Rodriguez asked whether a city representative or staff member had attended every single one, or at least the majority, of the SWA's meetings.

City Manager Dodge answered affirmatively, confirming that the city had a dedicated representative present at those meetings.

Commissioner Rodriguez noted that the SWA is currently traveling to multiple cities and giving presentations. Commissioner Rodriguez argued that even if the city had representatives present, they were not there to be a part of the conversation and claimed that this may have contributed to the administration not knowing the reason for the discrepancy. Commissioner Rodriguez pointed out that instead of participating in the conversation to fix the errors, the city did nothing, failing to even send a letter correcting the estimates.

Mayor Castillo respectfully interjected and explained that the SWA's higher tonnage number may be accurate, as he believes that they included amounts of commercial and multi-family condo waste that fall outside the strict parameters of the city's residential collection program. The mayor stressed that, depending on how you look at it, the tonnage number differs. Mayor Castillo explained that despite this, their number is not representative of the city's program.

Commissioner Rodriguez acknowledged the mayor's point. Commissioner Rodriguez recalled sitting in the audience at a town hall when the city was discussing incineration, and shared that she understands why the city did not join from the historical perspective, as the SWA did not have a plan. Commissioner Rodriguez noted that although the city did not join last time because there was no plan, now they are refusing to join because they simply do not like the plan. Commissioner Rodriguez expressed her frustration that the city is not

engaging or participating in the discussions or in the formation of the plan. Commissioner Rodriguez noted that the city's lack of participation is the common denominator.

Commissioner Rodriguez expressed her frustration that the city has developed an innovative plan for anaerobic digestion and is choosing not to present the technology to the county. Commissioner Rodriguez argued that solving the issue of trash and recycling requires a united, regional approach, asserting that the city's mindset prevented it from sharing a solution that could improve the environment for all of Broward County. Commissioner Rodriguez requested that the director of the SWA be invited to present directly to the city commission, arguing that Mr. Gomes' presentation contained informational gaps that only the authority could address.

Mayor Castillo defended the city's posture, noting that despite Pembroke Pines being the 11th largest city in the state of Florida, the SWA has never contacted him. Mayor Castillo asserted that if he were running a regional project and had a hesitant customer, he would invite them in for a meeting. Mayor Castillo reminded Commissioner Rodriguez that the city sent a delegate, sending the city engineer to every single meeting, and emphasized that the city never refused to work with the SWA, but merely declined to join an organization that is not offering a concrete plan. Mayor Castillo communicated that he is happy to invite the SWA leadership to present to the commission.

Commissioner Rodriguez acknowledged the mayor's point, but noted that had the city viewed its plan as a regional solution, perhaps the city would have reached out first as opposed to waiting to be reached out to by the SWA. Commissioner Rodriguez explained that just because someone does not call you does not mean you don't call them, noting that the phone works both ways.

Mayor Castillo noted that the SWA asked the city to join and explained that since the time the city made its decision, there has been no executive contact between the SWA and the City of Pembroke Pines. Mayor Castillo shared that the SWA decided to turn their backs from the city and move along.

Commissioner Rodriguez countered that the SWA did not move along, explaining that they mention it at the League of Cities constantly.

Mayor Castillo noted that the executives of the SWA, some of whom he is well acquainted with, have never reached out or come to speak to the city. The mayor noted that if they wished to speak, they are more than

welcome to come, and he is more than happy to invite them.

Commissioner Rodriguez noted that she has personally been in contact with the SWA to try to understand their perspective as well as their deadlines. Commissioner Rodriguez disputed the narrative presented by the staff that joining the SWA meant surrendering to their authority. Commissioner Rodriguez communicated that by joining them, the city would become a part of the SWA, noting that they have an executive board consisting of elected colleagues from neighboring cities, meaning Pembroke Pines would have a hand in creating the rules that governed them.

Mayor Castillo rejected Commissioner Rodriguez's claims and argued that by joining the SWA, Pembroke Pines would just be a participant, and decisions regarding its waste would be made by those outside the city's borders. Mayor Castillo stated that ceding local control to an external board was a prospect that the prior commission vehemently rejected, and that he suspects the current commission had no desire to do either.

Commissioner Rodriguez countered, arguing that, like the commission, the SWA uses a democratic process.

Mayor Castillo interjected and declared that the city was not interested in participating in that type of process.

Commissioner Rodriguez requested that she be allowed to finish her comments.

Mayor Castillo apologized for the interruption and invited her to finish her thoughts without interruption.

Commissioner Rodriguez argued that as a large city, Pembroke Pines would have a say, especially if the city were bringing and proposing innovative technology like the anaerobic digestion technology to the SWA for analysis. Commissioner Rodriguez recognized that the city would only have one vote, but noted that they would be able to discuss and convince others to vote with them. Commissioner Rodriguez asked if incineration was part of the SWA's Plan A.

Assistant City Manager Gomes clarified that incineration was not part of their Plan A and noted that anaerobic digestion had been considered in one of the five different scenarios and that the authority ultimately chose not to pursue it, electing to move forward with a different plan.

Commissioner Rodriguez questioned why the SWA decided not to move forward with anaerobic digestion, despite considering it. Commissioner Rodriguez explained that questions like this are why the SWA needs to be invited to speak to the commission. Commissioner Rodriguez questioned whether the rate of \$178 per ton, mentioned in the presentation, was a maximum rate, noting that the City of Hollywood recently received a bid for \$110.

Assistant City Manager Gomes clarified that the \$178 rate was the waste management contract that the SWA offered to other municipalities and noted that the rate could easily fluctuate based on commodity indexes and contamination rates.

Commissioner Rodriguez questioned whether that \$178 was a maximum.

Assistant City Manager Gomes reiterated that it is not a maximum and noted that it could be more or less than that amount.

Commissioner Good made a point of clarification, noting that Hollywood did not secure its contract with Waste Management.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked if there were cheaper options and what that range would be.

Assistant City Manager Gomes clarified that disposal rates and distance from the facility could increase or decrease collection costs.

Commissioner Rodriguez reiterated that refusing to consider cooperating with the SWA does not make sense to her, as the waste issue is undeniably a regional issue. Commissioner Rodriguez explained that she is concerned that the SWA may have discovered a flaw in anaerobic digestion that the city may not be aware of. Commissioner Rodriguez noted that the presentation only identified one single, functioning facility of comparable scale in the United States.

Assistant City Manager Gomes noted that the list provided in the presentation is not an exhaustive list.

Commissioner Rodriguez requested that the assistant city manager provide an understanding of how many other facilities there are that are scaled similarly to the city.

Mr. Cooper explained that the facility that he listed there was included due to its pre-treatment technology. Mr. Cooper explained that he would

review the Mayor's list and identify the facilities that make the most sense.

Commissioner Rodriguez explained that she wants to ensure that the city will be able to accomplish this plan, especially given the city's size. Commissioner Rodriguez emphasized that she wants to be fully aware of the risks. Commissioner Rodriguez volunteered to personally travel to any facility to ensure the city was making a sound investment. Commissioner Rodriguez reiterated that the city needed to actively participate with its municipal neighbors to craft a regional solution.

Commissioner Rodriguez explained that it would be ideal for the city to have an employee who handles intergovernmental affairs, explaining that the city is missing a lot of information that can be provided by other municipalities. Commissioner Rodriguez also stressed that she would like for the city and the commission to keep their minds open to the idea of cooperating with the SWA and shared that if the commission would like to eventually invite other municipalities to join the project, it would be prudent to start conversing with them now.

Assistant City Manager Gomes agreed with the concept of inviting the authority to present and to join the project, but advised that they were not yet at the proper stage to begin pitching regional partnerships. The assistant city manager communicated that the city would need to complete its RFQ process first, so that they have a concrete facility plan before inviting others to participate.

Mayor Castillo emphasized that even before continuing the process, the SWA should be invited to present its information so the city can better understand its proposal. Mayor Castillo reiterated that if they'd like to speak with the commission or the city, the city's door is always open.

Commissioner Rodriguez suggested taking the proactive step of publishing the city's documents on the city website to publicly signal their intentions to the SWA and the surrounding municipalities.

Mayor Castillo endorsed the idea and asked staff to publish the white paper on the website.

Commissioner Rodriguez asked how the city planned to address the numerous resident requests for the return of recycling until the new facility is created.

Assistant City Manager Gomes explained that the city has been actively engaging with Waste Management and exploring various opportunities

and options to present to the city commission in the near future.

Commissioner Rodriguez noted that residents constantly ask about the city's recycling program on social media platforms like Facebook and Nextdoor. Commissioner Rodriguez explained that she is growing impatient waiting for a concrete answer that she can provide to her constituents. Commissioner Rodriguez noted that she has asked the city manager numerous times for updates on the city's recycling efforts and communicated that his answers have not provided much insight.

City Manager Dodge responded and reminded Commissioner Rodriguez that they would be bringing a comprehensive report on recycling on May 20th.

Commissioner Rodriguez requested that the city have a robust community engagement and communication plan to combat any misconceptions, rumors, or concerns that the community may have. Commissioner Rodriguez shared that she would like to educate residents on what the plan means for them and what they can expect. Commissioner Rodriguez warned that failing to educate the residents properly about the facility could lead to chaos, which could potentially derail the project, referencing a previous town hall on incineration.

Commissioner Good expressed his satisfaction at the fact that Commissioner Rodriguez is interested in this topic and offered her a resource. Commissioner Good suggested that Commissioner Rodriguez seek out the audio recordings of the solid waste working group on the Broward League of Cities website to gain a deeper understanding of the history and the conversations that contributed to much of what was discussed today.

Commissioner Schwartz praised the discussion and shared that seeing Mr. Cooper back in the building was the highlight of the meeting. Commissioner Schwartz reminded his colleagues that Mr. Cooper had guided the city through a very challenging time in the past and restored the public's confidence through his work product. Commissioner Schwartz expressed relief that Mr. Cooper was involved in the drafting of the white paper, indicating it gave him confidence that the document was impartial and was stripped of political bias. Commissioner Schwartz vigorously defended the prior commission's decision to walk away from the county working group, explaining that the county wanted cities to pay a fee to secure a seat at the table even though they effectively stripped the municipalities of their leverage and decision-making abilities. Commissioner Schwartz addressed a factual error highlighted by Assistant City Manager Gomes, noting that the SWA's figures on the

city's waste generation numbers were off by 75%. Commissioner Schwartz requested that the SWA rigorously audit every single number for every single city in their presentation, before they speak to the commission.

Commissioner Schwartz expressed his curiosity as to how the SWA came up with their figures. Commissioner Schwartz requested that City Manager Dodge meet with the executive director of the SWA to get the accurate figures before any presentation occurs.

City Manager Dodge confirmed that he would make contact with the new executive director to understand how they arrived at those numbers.

Commissioner Schwartz noted that the City of Pembroke Pines has had a culture of independence for 66 years, noting that the city started a charter school system, funded school resource officers long before the tragedy at MSD, and established a waste ILA. Commissioner Schwartz emphasized that the prior commissions' vision is what he loves most about the city, insisting that the historical knowledge is important. Commissioner Schwartz revealed that this is the reason he previously filed a motion to prohibit any elected official from serving on the regional working group, wanting to keep politics out of waste disposal. Commissioner Schwartz argued that providing a clean environment and safe waste disposal is a fundamental public safety responsibility, declaring it the single most important service a government provides next to first responders, and insisting it must never be fully privatized. Commissioner Schwartz shared that he sees an opportunity for Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach counties to pursue a tri-county solution to solve what he views as primarily a South Florida waste issue.

Commissioner Schwartz requested to see the list of anaerobic digesters that are operating in the United States, asking if there were any successful examples located outside of Fulton, Georgia. Commissioner Schwartz shared his suspicions that the industrial facilities were likely situated on unincorporated, or industrial county land, far from residential neighborhoods. Commissioner Schwartz asked the city administration to set up Zoom meetings with the town managers or mayors of those specific jurisdictions to question them on how they built their facilities, how long the permitting took, and what the community surveys revealed. Commissioner Schwartz asked City Manager Dodge to confirm whether he had personally toured one of these facilities.

City Manager Dodge confirmed that the only facility he had personally visited was the one located in Cordell, noting that it is not a good comparison for Pembroke Pines because it was situated in a very rural area. The city manager shared that they would search for successful examples located directly in denser environments, potentially looking toward Europe for viable models.

Commissioner Schwartz noted that the SWA's master plan does not currently include incineration, which he commended, but noted that he is actively receiving phone calls from elected officials in non-SWA member cities. Commissioner Schwartz explained that these officials want to understand the history of Pembroke Pines independent strategy, noting that the city is not operating in a vacuum. Commissioner Schwartz acknowledged the amount of work the Broward League of Cities put into moving the process forward. Commissioner Schwartz recalled the controversy surrounding deep well injection in the mid-2000s, noting how rapidly environmental technology evolves, pointing out that threats like PFAS contamination were not even on the public radar a decade ago. Commissioner Schwartz declared that he could not find anything disagreeable or uncomfortable with the white paper and asked that it be shared with the public.

Commissioner Schwartz theorized that Pembroke Pines' discussion on this could ignite a statewide conversation revolutionizing how governments work together to solve complex issues. Commissioner Schwartz noted that the commission had to get this 40-year decision right. Commissioner Schwartz warned that he did not want the city to be rushed into a bad deal, as it had in the past with a 911 disaster. Commissioner Schwartz declared that he needs the SWA to work but does not believe that they are ready yet, noting that he would lean on the expertise of Commissioner Good for guidance.

Mayor Castillo joked that he would definitely still be alive in 40 years because his wife refuses to take the garbage to the curb. Mayor Castillo refuted Commissioner Schwartz's criticism of the 911 service. The mayor declared that the city had never enjoyed a better, more efficient 911 service than the system that is currently in place. Mayor Castillo argued that the audited, verifiable metrics proved the regional 911 system is a success that has freed up municipal tax dollars to improve the city's own police and fire departments.

Mayor Castillo cited the successful HOME consortium as another example of a functional countywide program, proving that Pembroke

Pines never stubbornly walked away from a regional program that worked. Mayor Castillo recounted the history of a previous town hall meeting, noting that the meeting fell apart because the residents of Pembroke Pines are adamant that they did not and do not want to live in the shadow of an incinerator smokestack. Mayor Castillo firmly defended the prior commission, insisting they were elected specifically to protect that fierce anti-incineration point of view, and shared that they rejected the regional authority because it demanded money without ruling out incineration or providing a concrete plan.

Mayor Castillo reiterated that the city has never shut the door on the Solid Waste Authority, explaining that the SWA chose not to pursue a customer, a business decision that offended no one in the city. Mayor Castillo directed City Manager Dodge to personally handle any inquiries from other elected officials and asked if he had been contacted by any other city managers.

The city manager communicated that he has received no calls of concern from other city managers.

Mayor Castillo expressed pride in the conversation and noted that the city was on a path of exploration, and asked City Manager Dodge if he needed anything further.

City Manager Dodge requested confirmation that the staff was authorized to move forward with drafting the RFP and stressed that they needed to avoid wasting any more time.

Mayor Castillo asked City Attorney Goren if the commission was legally allowed to draw a consensus during a workshop, or if that question had to be posed as a motion at a city commission meeting.

City Attorney Goren advised the Mayor that the consensus is not a motion and that the city manager has good hearing and understands the consensus of the commission. The city attorney emphasized that the consensus is not a legal vote.

Mayor Castillo acknowledged the city attorney's statement and noted that he did not hear anyone express any opposition to continuing the exploration of the RFQ process. Mayor Castillo asked if there were any public comments. Upon observing none, he adjourned the meeting.

ADJOURN - 7:58 P.M.

CITY OF PEMBROKE PINES

Gabriel Fernandez
City Clerk