

City of Pembroke Pines, FL

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



Meeting Minutes - Final

Tuesday, August 26, 2025

10:00 AM

City Commission Workshop

Commission Chambers

City Commission

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

10:00 AM CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Castillo opened the Workshop meeting and reviewed the order of the meeting.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Angelo Castillo, Vice Mayor Michael A. Hernandez, Commissioner Thomas Good Jr., Commissioner Maria Rodriguez, and Commissioner Jay D. Schwartz

Also present: City Manager Charles F. Dodge, City Attorney Samuel Goren, and City Clerk Debra E. Rogers.

WORKSHOP ITEMS:

1. WORKSHOP ITEM #1: COMMUNICATION PLAN PRESENTATION

City Manager Dodge introduced the workshop agenda, explaining the three parts: first on communications, second on procurement, and third on the strategic plan, which would review what had been proposed before and what staff had revised for consideration.

Marianne Wohlert, Communications Director, began the presentation by expressing excitement about discussing the city's communications efforts. She emphasized that effective communications should be timely, correct, transparent, and clear. She noted that Mayor Castillo had previously emphasized the importance of having "one voice, one brand, one community," which had been a catalyst for the communications plan that started in 2012.

The presentation provided a comprehensive overview of the city's communications platforms including:

- Social media platforms - Presented by Laura Villa, Social Media Specialist.
- YouTube channel - which has grown significantly and has more subscribers than most local cities except Hollywood.
- Website - which is due for a refresh or redo next year.
- PEG TV - which livestreams commission meetings and provides programming including popular exercise classes for seniors.
- Digital signs - seven throughout the city (not including schools).
- City Connect and News Flash - digital publications.
- Media relations - proactive approach with press releases.

Lauren Villa provided detailed analytics on social media performance, showing:

- A 6,785% increase in views from 2022-2023 to 2024-2025.
- Growth from 75,985 to 111,500 followers across platforms.
- Significant increases in engagement and reach.
- Strong performance compared to neighboring cities like Coral Springs and Fort Lauderdale.

Ms. Villa explained how social media algorithms work and how the city has adapted its strategy to increase engagement. She highlighted a specific case study about a mosquito prevention post that went from 103 views in 2023 to 1.6 million views in 2024 by changing the format from a static image to a looping video.

The presentation emphasized several recommendations including:

- Website improvements to serve as the central hub for all communications
- Need for analytics to track user behavior and conversion

- Need for more mobile-friendly interfaces
- Standardized branding across platforms
- Increased staffing for the communications department

Vice Mayor Hernandez expressed strong support for the communications team, noting their strong reputation in the social media community and the dramatic improvements seen in the past 14-15 months. He advocated for additional budget and staffing for the department.

Commissioner Rodriguez emphasized the importance of website improvements, suggesting A/B testing and suggesting more focus on educating residents about property taxes and city services. She also expressed interest in a one-stop payment portal for city services.

Commissioner Schwartz discussed the need for fact-checking and the importance of accurate information going out to the public. He stressed the need for consistency in professional communication.

Commissioner Good asked questions about social media evaluation metrics and expressed concerns about the rating system used for vendors.

Mayor Castillo recommended developing robust surveys to better understand what residents want and emphasized that communications is a two-way street that requires listening as well as telling. He suggested focus groups for testing website changes and advocated for better promotion of city events.

The commissioners agreed that the communications department has made significant improvements and needs additional resources to continue its progress.

City Manager Dodge said the meeting should be recessed for lunch.

The meeting **recessed** at 11:49 AM.

The meeting **was reconvened** at 12:30PM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Angelo Castillo, Vice Mayor Michael A. Hernandez, Commissioner Thomas Good Jr., Commissioner Maria Rodriguez, and Commissioner Jay D. Schwartz

Also present: City Manager Charles F. Dodge, City Attorney Samuel Goren, and City Clerk Debra E. Rogers.

2. WORKSHOP ITEM #2: PROCUREMENT PRESENTATION

Mark Gomes, Assistant City Manager/Procurement Director, presented on the city's procurement processes. He outlined the current thresholds:

- Under \$5,000: departments can purchase without multiple quotes
- \$5,000-\$7,500: three oral quotes required
- \$7,500-\$25,000: three written quotes required
- \$25,000+: sealed formal solicitations required (IFBs, RFPs, RFQs)

Mr. Gomes noted that the current \$25,000 threshold had not been updated since 1998. He presented data showing that many Florida cities, including both larger and smaller municipalities, have significantly higher thresholds, typically \$100,000.

The procurement department recommended:

- Increasing the formal solicitation threshold to \$100,000
- Adding CPI increases to thresholds moving forward
- Removing the requirement for commission approval before advertising solicitations

Assistant City Manager Gomes explained the different types of solicitations:

- Invitation for Bids (IFBs) - awarded to lowest price
- Request for Proposals (RFPs) - evaluated on various criteria including experience, approach, and price
- Request for Qualifications (RFQs) - no pricing component, mainly for engineering/architectural services

Mr. Gomes also provided information on:

- Bid bonds and securities
- The public bid opening process
- The cone of silence provisions
- Owner's contingency amounts (typically 10%)
- Evaluation committee processes
- Local vendor preferences
- Bid protest procedures
- CCNA (Consultants Competitive Negotiation Act) requirements
- Sole source purchases
- "Best interest of the city" exemptions
- Recommended contract lengths for different types of services

The presentation sparked a robust discussion among commissioners about maintaining fiscal responsibility while increasing efficiency:

Commissioner Rodriguez supported raising thresholds but expressed

concern about the frequency of bidding, noting feedback from the Budget Advisory Board about vendors not requesting increases regularly because the city doesn't go out to bid often enough.

Commissioner Schwartz strongly opposed increasing the threshold, noting the commission had frequently provided valuable input on bids before they went out. He argued that the current system provided important checks and balances and expressed concern about losing fiscal controls.

Commissioner Good questioned how population size related to procurement thresholds and had concerns about how evaluation committees score proposals.

Vice Mayor Hernandez indicated he was open to a higher threshold than \$25,000 but wanted to discuss middle-ground approaches.

Mayor Castillo suggested that procurement rules should serve the city rather than the city serving the rules. He supported raising thresholds but emphasized the need for better justifications in agenda items to explain why certain recommendations were being made.

3. WORKSHOP ITEM #3: STRATEGIC PLAN PRESENTATION

City Manager Dodge presented a revised strategic plan that took into account the unsuccessful bond referendum from earlier in the year. The original strategic plan totaled approximately \$296 million, including:

- \$110 million for public safety facilities
- \$86 million for community facilities and recreation
- \$30.5 million for purchase and development of future space
- \$69 million for roadway and infrastructure improvements

The revised plan focused on what could be accomplished with existing funds:

- \$66.4 million from fund balance reserves
- \$3.3 million from surtax proceeds (year 1)
- \$14 million potentially leveraged through revenue bonds using surtax proceeds

The new prioritized list totaled approximately \$97 million:

- \$47 million for community facilities (reduced from \$86 million)
- \$51 million for roadway improvements (reduced from \$69 million)

City Manager Dodge explained that the public safety building was not included in the revised plan because sufficient funding was not available. The city would need to consider either a general obligation bond which would require voter approval in November 2026 or a revenue bond which would require commission approval of a tax increase.

The roadway and infrastructure improvements would focus on:

- Widening SW 196th Avenue from Pines Boulevard to Pembroke Road (from 2 lanes to 4).
- Construction of SW 208th Avenue from Pines Boulevard to Pembroke Road.
- Various drainage improvements, multi-use pathways, road resurfacing, and safety improvements.

The community facilities improvements would include:

- Playground and exercise equipment
- LED lighting upgrades
- Parking lot improvements
- Renovations to restrooms, concession stands, pavilions, and clubhouses

Commissioner Rodriguez asked about alternate funding options for the police department building, including public-private partnerships, and suggested holding town halls once more information is available to

engage the community. She also advocated for including the senior center expansion in the plan.

Commissioner Schwartz asked about potentially using the \$30 million expected from the Hayden Glades sale for the public safety building rather than for affordable housing as previously designated.

Mayor Castillo commended the work done to prioritize projects and develop a plan that could move forward without a tax increase. He supported studying the revised plan and making adjustments as needed.

Vice Mayor Hernandez expressed support for the roadway projects, particularly the 196th and 208th Avenue improvements, and emphasized the importance of the public safety complex.

Commissioner Good expressed skepticism about using revenue bonds backed by surtax funds, suggesting the city should ensure the oversight board would approve such a plan.

City Manager Dodge indicated he would bring an agenda item up at a future commission meeting to begin implementing the first year of the plan, which would cost approximately \$9 million.

ADJOURN - 3:12 PM

CITY OF PEMBROKE PINES

Debra E. Rogers, CMC
City Clerk