

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, February 18, 2026

6:30 PM

Regular Commission Meeting, Presentation No. 1 was pulled by Administration on 02/12/2026. Item Addendum 1 was added on 02/17/2026.

Commission Chambers

City Commission

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

6:30 PM REGULAR MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

ROLL CALL

Present 5 - 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 Gabriel Fernandez.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Jenna Channing.

NATIONAL ANTHEM

The National Anthem was performed by Jenna Channing.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Mayor Castillo spoke about the passing of Civil Rights leader Reverend Jesse Jackson and briefly discussed his story and legacy. A moment of silence was then held in his honor.

Mayor Castillo also briefly addressed the passing and legacy of Robert Duval.

Mayor Castillo discussed the state of restaurants within the city and addressed concerns raised by members of the restaurant community. The Mayor explained that he and Commissioner Good had met with representatives of the restaurant community to strategize on ways the City could assist and increase public awareness of the restaurants operating in Pembroke Pines.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF ITEMS TO BE PULLED FROM AGENDA

- PRE-1** PRESENTATION NO. 1: ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE JANUARY AND FEBRUARY 2026 WINNERS OF DISTRICTS 1 AND 2 NATALIE BELMONTE GREAT YARD AWARDS.

City Clerk Fernandez announced that presentation No. 1 was pulled by administration.

PRESENTATIONS:

Mayor Castillo sent well wishes to Vice Mayor Hernandez who called into the meeting by phone due to illness.

- PRE-2** PRESENTATION NO. 2: MAYOR CASTILLO WILL PRESENT A PROCLAMATION RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY 18, 2026, AS SHEN YUN PERFORMING ARTS DAY IN THE CITY OF PEMBROKE PINES.

Mayor Castillo proclaimed February 18, 2026, as Shen Yun Performing Arts Day in the City of Pembroke Pines. Mayor Castillo discussed the history and international acclaim of Shen Yun Performing Arts.

Mr. Ryan Derry, representing Shen Yun Performing Arts, received the proclamation, expressed appreciation, and shared information about the organization's mission, including its commitment to preserving history and culture.

- PRE-4** PRESENTATION NO. 4: MAYOR CASTILLO WILL PRESENT A PROCLAMATION TO DR. TODRA ANDERSON MD, CHIEF MEDICAL OFFICER AT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL WEST, RECOGNIZING FEBRUARY 2026 AS AMERICAN HEART MONTH IN THE CITY OF PEMBROKE PINES.

Mayor Castillo presented a proclamation to Dr. Todra Anderson, Chief Medical Officer at Memorial Hospital West, recognizing February 2026 as American Heart Month in the City of Pembroke Pines. Mayor Castillo read information regarding the prevalence of heart-related health conditions, including cardiac arrest. He acknowledged the role of the Memorial Healthcare System in the prevention and treatment of emergency and life-saving cardiac care. Mayor Castillo expressed concern about the growing incidence of cardiac conditions, emphasized the importance of early testing and awareness, and affirmed the City's commitment to promoting cardiac arrest preparedness.

Dr. Anderson expressed gratitude for the proclamation and recognition. She affirmed Memorial Health Care System's commitment to continuing to treat and care for patients experiencing cardiac arrest and to addressing concerning trends related to cardiac health. Dr. Anderson shared information on initiatives aimed at treating and preventing heart disease, such as: Memorial's Integrative Medicine Services, collaborations with better together and neighboring hospitals, and the One City at a Time program. Dr. Anderson expressed her and Memorial's appreciation towards the City of Pembroke Pines and emphasized the importance of the longstanding partnership between the city and Memorial to ensure the community is healthy.

Mayor Castillo also shared that he participated in a Broward County initiative, that was presented at a previous Commission Meeting by Broward County Mayor Bogen. The program offers free CT scans and Mayor Castillo highly encourages others to take advantage of the program.

PRE-3 PRESENTATION NO. 3: BROWARD COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER MARTY KIAR WILL PRESENT UPDATES ON BROWARD COUNTY PROPERTY TAXES.

Marty Kiar, Broward County Property Appraiser, presented an update on the financial impacts of several property tax initiatives recently discussed by the State Legislature in Tallahassee. Property Appraiser Kiar emphasized the potential effects on municipalities across Florida, including Broward County cities and the City of Pembroke Pines specifically. He described the background of the proposals and noted the issue's visibility, including social media discussions concerning the Governor.

Property Appraiser Kiar stated that studies evaluating the elimination of all property taxes in Florida estimate local governments could lose between \$55 billion and \$60 billion in revenue, affecting funding for public services. He noted that such studies suggest sales tax might need to be increased by approximately 12% to 15% to offset those losses. Mr. Kiar explained that polling indicated limited public support for total elimination; conversations have shifted toward proposals affecting only homestead property taxes. He noted that deliberations are ongoing in Tallahassee on approaches to homestead property taxes without diminishing funding for essential services, including proposals advancing in the House of Representatives, such as House Joint Resolution (HJR) 201.

HJR 201 - Elimination of Non-School Property Taxes for Homestead:

Broward County

Number of Homesteaded Properties: 424,899

Average Savings for Property Owners: \$3,387

Median Savings for Property Owners: \$2,421

Total Taxes Levied: \$1,804,017,327

Total Taxes Levied if HJR 201 in Effect for 2025: \$1,179,209,687

Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 201: \$624,807,640 (34.6% decrease)

Pembroke Pines

Number of Homesteaded Properties: 41,367

Average Savings for Property Owners: \$2,676

Median Savings for Property Owners: \$2,421

Total Taxes Levied: \$118,970,073

Total Taxes Levied if HJR 201 in Effect for 2025: \$65,907,721

Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 201: \$53,062,352 (44.6% decrease)

Property Appraiser Kiar also discussed HJR 203, which phases out non-school property tax for homestead properties.

HJR 203 - Phased Out Elimination of Non-School Property Taxes for Homestead:

Broward County

Number of Homesteaded Properties: 424,899
Average Savings for Property Owners: \$1,083
Median Savings for Property Owners: \$798
Total Taxes Levied: \$1,804,017,327
Total Taxes Levied if HJR 203 in Effect for 2025: \$1,610,324,106
Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 203: \$193,693,221 (10.7% decrease)

Pembroke Pines

Number of Homesteaded Properties: 41,367
Average Savings for Property Owners: \$1,047
Median Savings for Property Owners: \$1,241
Total Taxes Levied: \$118,970,073
Total Taxes Levied if HJR 203 in Effect for 2025: \$98,231,233
Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 203: \$20,738,840 (17.4% decrease)

Property Appraiser Kiar noted that the median assessed value in Pembroke Pines is currently approximately \$331,000. Mr. Kiar explained that because of this the median homeowner in Pembroke Pines would be exempt from property taxes within about three to four years.

Property Appraiser Kiar next discussed HJR 205, which eliminates non-school property tax for homesteaded property owners age 65 or older.

HJR 205 - Elimination of Non-School Property Tax for Homesteaded Property (Age 65+)

Broward County

Number of Homesteaded Properties: 163,590
Average Savings for Property Owners: \$2,260
Median Savings for Property Owners: \$1,128
Total Taxes Levied: \$1,804,017,327
Total Taxes Levied if HJR 205 in Effect for 2025: \$1,642,234,696
Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 205: \$161,782,631 (9.0% decrease)

Pembroke Pines

Number of Homesteaded Properties: 15,475
Average Savings for Property Owners: \$1,470
Median Savings for Property Owners: \$1,065

Total Taxes Levied: \$118,970,073
Total Taxes Levied if HJR 205 in Effect for 2025: \$108,052,336
Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 205: \$10,917,737 (9.2% decrease)

Property Appraiser Kiar then discussed HJR 209 (Property Insurance Relief Homestead Exemption for Non-School Property Tax), proposing a constitutional amendment to increase by \$200,000 the exemption for homesteaded property from all ad valorem taxation other than school district levies for homesteaded properties with property insurance. The proposal would prohibit local governments from reducing total funding for law enforcement, firefighters, and other first responders.

HJR 209 - Property Insurance Relief Homestead Exemption (Non-School Ad Valorem)

Broward County

Number of Homesteaded Properties: 424,899
Average Savings for Property Owners: \$1,830
Median Savings for Property Owners: \$2,217
Total Taxes Levied: \$1,804,017,327
Total Taxes Levied if HJR 209 in Effect for 2025: \$1,474,650,361
Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 209: \$329,366,966 (18.3% decrease)

Pembroke Pines

Number of Homesteaded Properties: 41,367
Average Savings for Property Owners: \$1,805
Median Savings for Property Owners: \$2,411
Total Taxes Levied: \$118,970,073
Total Taxes Levied if HJR 209 in Effect for 2025: \$83,202,718
Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 209: \$35,767,355 (30.1% decrease)

Property Appraiser Kiar also presented HJR 211 (Accrued Save-Our-Homes Property Tax Benefit for Non-School Property Tax) figures.

HJR 211 - Accrued Save-Our-Homes Benefit (Non-School Property Tax)

Broward County

Properties with New 2025 Portability Applications: 5,464
Properties with Portability in Excess of \$500,000 in 2025: 317
Average Savings for Property Owners: \$463
Total Taxes Levied: \$1,804,017,327
Total Taxes Levied if HJR 211 in Effect for 2025: \$1,802,913,960

Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 211: \$1,103,367 (0.1% decrease)

Pembroke Pines

Properties with New 2025 Portability Applications: 515

Properties with Portability in Excess of \$500,000 in 2025: 9

Average Savings for Property Owners: \$208

Total Taxes Levied: \$118,970,073

Total Taxes Levied if HJR 211 in Effect for 2025: \$118,919,001

Total Tax Dollar Impact of HJR 211: \$51,072

Property Appraiser Kiar discussed HJR 213 (Modification of Limitations on Property Assessment Increases) and stated that the resolution has gained traction in the Legislature. He explained that the measure would move to assessments occurring once every three years, with assessed value limited to a cumulative increase not exceeding 3% over that period.

HJR 213 (Modification of Limitations on Property Assessment Increases)

HJR 213 proposes an amendment to the State Constitution that would modify limitations on assessment increases for homestead and non-homestead properties. It also would prohibit counties and municipalities from reducing total funding for law enforcement.

HJR 213 provides that changes in assessments for individual properties will occur only once every three years for ad valorem tax purposes. It also limits assessment increases for homesteaded properties to 3 percent, or the change in inflation, over the three-year period.

HJR 213 limits assessment increases for non-homesteaded properties to 15 percent every third year, instead of the current 10 percent each year. HJR 213 applies to all ad valorem taxes other than school district taxes.

Mayor Castillo expressed his gratitude towards Property Appraiser Kiar for the detailed presentation and expressed concerns about misinformation regarding the purpose and use of tax revenues. He conveyed his skepticism about the proposals and noted his view that they may not garner broad public support. The Mayor affirmed interest in making government and the property tax process more efficient, but communicated that without replacement revenue, important city services would be affected, such as public safety.

Mayor Castillo expressed that he has not met any other Mayors who

would be able to find a way to operate their cities fully and efficiently with the resulting reduction in tax revenue due to the passage of the discussed tax proposals. The Mayor detailed research that he did personally in which he discovered that Louisiana has the highest sales tax rate nationwide, which is approximately nine percent. Mayor Castillo expressed how detrimental it would be for Florida as a tourist state if we surpassed Louisiana by having to raise sales tax to approximately twelve percent to offset the revenue lost from property taxes.

The Mayor noted that he was not surprised that seventy percent of people polled on sales tax increase as a result of the proposals responded negatively. Mayor Castillo expressed that this disdain towards the idea of raising sales tax is especially prevalent amongst seniors, who have to be more cognizant of their spending. Given the unlikelihood of raising the sales tax rate if the proposal the Mayor expressed concern about how vital public services like Police Officers and Firefighters will be paid as 63% of property tax revenue goes to public safety. Mayor Castillo is concerned about the extreme uncertainty regarding the entire property tax proposal situation.

Property Appraiser Kiar conveyed that many legislators are mindful of the proposals' potential budgetary repercussions for cities. Mr. Kiar expressed that in the state legislature, many legislatures on both sides of the political spectrum share the Mayor's concerns and are researching ways by which property taxes can be reduced without affecting critical public service funding. Mr. Kiar expressed that the attitude of certain legislators is correlated with whether or not they will continue to serve in the legislature. Mr. Kiar noted that those who are departing from the legislature tend to care less than those who are remaining. Property Appraiser Kiar expressed his hope that the legislature will make a sensible and rational proposal that does not diminish public services and yet reduce property taxes.

Mayor Castillo expressed his understanding of the desire to lower the cost of living and conveyed that he wants to reduce the burden felt by taxpayers. Mayor Castillo asked whether countywide property values would remain consistent or decrease and how that would affect budget planning. Property Appraiser Kiar responded that current data indicate property values are projected to increase, albeit less than in previous years. Mr. Kiar continued that early data suggesting that home buyers are paying more this year than previously, with properties tending to remain on the market longer than in the past. Mr. Kiar also reported that there is a slight decrease in the value of condos and locations such as Century Village as a result of the Surfside Law that passed in 2021.

Commissioner Good reflected that constituents often conflate property taxes with property insurance and observed that many residents pay more for insurance than for property taxes. Commissioner Good expressed appreciation to Property Appraiser Kiar for presenting relevant, credible information in digestible formats.

Vice Mayor Hernandez expressed appreciation to Property Appraiser Kiar for the information provided. He concurred with Commissioner Good that property taxes and property insurance are often misunderstood and requested that Mr. Kiar continue to send information on potential impacts of any prospective revenue reductions.

Commissioner Schwartz noted data indicating that Pembroke Pines has one of the largest numbers of homesteaded properties in Broward County. He communicated that residents who move to Pembroke Pines often elect to reside long term and expressed trust in residents to make informed decisions on the proposals. Commissioner Schwartz thanked Property Appraiser Kiar and his office for their work in Tallahassee over the past year.

Property Appraiser Kiar thanked the City Commission, staff, and residents.

Commissioner Rodriguez thanked Mr. Kiar and voiced concerns about the effect of potential tax shifts on renters and business owners, as well as properties not covered by homestead exemptions. Commissioner Rodriguez noted that discussions about homestead and property tax exemptions often exclude renters, who are also facing increasing costs. She expressed concern that adoption of certain homestead tax exemptions could shift burdens to renters, young families, seniors, and small businesses, and emphasized including those most likely to be affected in future discussions.

Property Appraiser Kiar responding to Commissioner Rodriguez's comments, referenced a study evaluating the effect of eliminating homestead property taxes on housing prices and reported that data indicate prices would become more expensive. He noted that because South Florida is already price-prohibitive for many, any factor increasing sale prices would make it more difficult for renters and prospective home buyers. Property Appraiser Kiar concurred with Commissioner Rodriguez that non-homesteaded property owners and renters are often not centered in these discussions and expressed appreciation to Commissioner Rodriguez for raising the issue.

ITEMS AT THE REQUEST OF THE PUBLIC

There were no items at the request of the public.

COMMISSION AUDITOR REPORT:**APPEALS OF BOARD OF ADJUSTMENT DECISIONS:**

City Clerk Fernandez indicated that there were no appeals of board of adjustment decisions.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF BOARD AND COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

- BA-1** BOARD APPOINTMENT: MAYOR CASTILLO WISHES TO ANNOUNCE THE APPOINTMENT OF CHANTAL OSBORNE AS AN ALTERNATE MEMBER OF THE DIVERSITY AND HERITAGE BOARD.

Mayor Castillo announced the appointment of Chantal Osborne as an alternate member of the Diversity and Heritage Board. Mayor Castillo introduced Ms. Osborne as a high school principal and a long-time resident of the City of Pembroke Pines.

Ms. Osborne thanked the City Commission and expressed her appreciation for the City and its residents, as well as for its diversity. She shared her enthusiasm for joining the board and noted her interest in learning, interacting, and working with residents to explore ways to further acknowledge and celebrate the City's cultural diversity.

With the appointment of Ms. Osborne, Mayor Castillo noted that all of his board positions are now filled.

CONSENT AGENDA:

PRIOR TO THE VOTE BEING TAKEN:

The mayor took a two-minute recess to ensure that the Commission would have a quorum to vote on the consent agenda.

Recess time: 7:36:26

Reconvene time: 7:39:26

Approval of the Consent Agenda

A motion was made by Commissioner Schwartz, seconded by Commissioner Good Jr., to approve the Consent Agenda. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye 5 - Mayor Castillo, Vice Mayor Hernandez, Commissioner Good Jr., Commissioner Rodriguez, and Commissioner Schwartz

Nay 0

1. MOTION TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF TWO (2) 2028 E-ONE MAINLINE TM CYCLONE CUSTOM CAB/CHASSIS FIRE ENGINE/PUMPER TRUCKS FROM MATHENY FIRE & EMERGENCY, IN THE AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$2,128,174, PURSUANT TO SECTION 35.18(C)(3) OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES.
2. MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE JANUARY 21, 2026, REGULAR COMMISSION MEETING.

A motion was made to approve on the Consent Agenda

3. MOTION TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE BODY ARMOR FOR THE POLICE DEPARTMENT FROM FEDERAL EASTERN INTERNATIONAL, LLC., FOR A TOTAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$112,286, UTILIZING THE STATE OF FLORIDA ALTERNATE CONTRACT SOURCE # 46151500-NASPO-25-ACS, PURSUANT TO SECTION 35.18(C)(5) OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES.

A motion was made to approve on the Consent Agenda

4. MOTION TO APPROVE THE PURCHASE OF FORTY (40) SETS OF BUNKER GEAR FROM BENNETT FIRE PRODUCTS COMPANY, INC., FOR A TOTAL AMOUNT NOT TO EXCEED \$148,223.60, UTILIZING PRICING ESTABLISHED BY THE LAKE COUNTY CONTRACT #22-730B, PURSUANT TO SECTION 35.18(C) OF THE CITY'S CODE OF ORDINANCES.

A motion was made to approve on the Consent Agenda

5. MOTION TO APPROVE REQUEST TO ADVERTISE SOLICITATION(S):

- (A) FI-26-01 "JANITORIAL SERVICES FOR THE FIRE DEPARTMENT"
- (B) RE-26-01 "EPOXY REPLACEMENT OF THE GREAT HALL OF CHARLES F. DODGE CITY HALL"

A motion was made to approve on the Consent Agenda

ADD-1 MOTION TO ACCEPT THE FY 2025/2026 VICTIMS OF CRIME ACT GRANT IN THE AMOUNT OF \$21,356 FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF VICTIM SERVICES.

A motion was made to approve on the Consent Agenda

QUASI JUDICIAL CONSENT AGENDA:

ORDINANCES AND RESOLUTIONS:

SECOND READING ORDINANCES:

FIRST READING ORDINANCES:

RESOLUTIONS:

REGULAR AGENDA:

6. DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION REGARDING RESCHEDULING THE APRIL 1, 2026 COMMISSION MEETING (PASSOVER OBSERVANCE).

It was agreed to move the April 1, 2026, Commission Meeting to March 31, 2026, without objection.

The City Commission discussed rescheduling the April 1, 2026, Commission Meeting due to the observance of Passover.

Commissioner Schwartz proposed holding the meeting on March 31.

Mayor Castillo asked City Attorney Goren whether the Commission would be permitted to hold the meeting on March 31 due to its proximity to the election.

City Attorney Goren responded that, based on the facts and historical information available to him, a Commission Meeting on March 31 would be permissible.

Commissioner Rodriguez excused herself from the chambers due to a family emergency.

Mayor Castillo proposed swearing in the Commission on March 31 and subsequently holding the organizational meeting on April 15, the date of the next regularly scheduled Commission Meeting.

Commissioner Schwartz questioned whether swearing in the Commission on a date other than the organizational meeting date would align with historical practice.

Mayor Castillo clarified that separating the meetings would be necessary due to the anticipated size of the agenda.

Vice Mayor Hernandez expressed his confusion with the proposed schedule and asked for clarification about the status of the meeting on March 18.

Mayor Castillo clarified that the meeting on March 18 will be held as well.

The Commission clarified that if certified election results were available by the meeting on March 18, then it would be legally appropriate to swear in the newly elected officials on that date; if not, the swearing in would occur on March 31.

City Attorney Goren explained that under the City Charter, if certified election results were available by March 18, that date would become the organizational meeting date.

REPORTS OF LEAGUE AND MPO REPRESENTATIVES

Commissioner Rodriguez was absent due to exigent circumstances; therefore, the report of League Representatives was deferred.

Commissioner Good reported that the park-and-ride lots for the I-75 Express bus service had been removed from the cost-feasible plan due to the project being merged with another program. Commissioner Good also reported that sidewalk improvements will be taking place on Douglas Road from Pines Boulevard to Taft Street.

REPORTS OF THE CITY MANAGER AND CITY ATTORNEY

City Attorney Goren had no items to report.

City Manager Dodge informed the Commission about a town hall meeting scheduled by Commissioner Schwartz for February 25. City Manager Dodge communicated that he had asked Commissioner Schwartz to consider rescheduling the meeting to an available date in March, but Commissioner Schwartz indicated that a rescheduling was not possible. City Manager Dodge expressed concern regarding what he described as the vagueness of the town hall meeting notice, stating that the topics listed did not clearly identify what would be discussed.

City Manager Dodge communicated his concern that, as Commissioner Schwartz would be the sole speaker at the town hall meeting, the accuracy of any statements made could not be addressed or clarified during the event. He further noted that the staffing and resources required to hold a town hall meeting for a single presenter could create the appearance of reduced objectivity and transparency. City Manager Dodge proposed establishing a protocol for future town hall meetings to ensure fiscal and visual consistency.

Vice Mayor Hernandez expressed his support for the City Manager's proposal. The Vice Mayor expressed his appreciation to the City Manager and Staff and voiced his desire for a policy that regulates the elected body as it relates to city halls and other functions. Vice Mayor Hernandez expressed he would be glad to contribute his thoughts and suggestions towards the development of the proposal.

Commissioner Good described his own approach to conducting district town hall meetings and discussed his understanding of the intended purpose of such events. He communicated that when he hosts town hall meetings addressing city-wide issues, he typically asks staff for support and invites the Mayor to participate as the representative of the City. Commissioner Good expressed discomfort with city-wide town hall meetings being held without the Mayor's participation. He added that he wished to continue hosting town hall meetings for his district and therefore did not support the creation of any process or policy that would hinder his ability to do so.

Commissioner Schwartz expressed discomfort that the issue was being addressed publicly without an opportunity for prior private discussion.

City Manager Dodge responded that he had briefly spoken with Commissioner Schwartz regarding the meeting, but that Commissioner

Schwartz did not wish to continue the conversation at that time. City Manager Dodge communicated he was concerned about staff being approached to provide items and services that, in his view, were not typically required for town hall meetings. He expressed frustration regarding his prior communication with Commissioner Schwartz.

Commissioner Schwartz commented that he did not believe further discussion with the City Manager in this format would be productive. He clarified that City Administration had contacted him on February 3 to confirm both the date of the meeting and the use of the Commission Chambers. Commissioner Schwartz communicated that City Administration also asked what accommodations he would require. He responded that he requested curtains, a podium, and audio support similar to what is provided to other public officials.

Commissioner Schwartz expressed his confusion and discomfort regarding the concerns raised by City Manager Dodge and voiced that he did not understand the basis for those concerns. He explained that his goal in holding the town hall meeting was to address issues affecting his district, particularly those involving utility projects that could eventually impact the entire City. Commissioner Schwartz affirmed that all residents were welcome to attend his town hall meeting and emphasized the value of the town hall format in helping him hear directly from the community.

Commissioner Schwartz expressed support for any policy the Commission may establish regarding locations and procedures for town hall meetings but reiterated his commitment to engaging with the public efficiently. He also noted his awareness of the workload placed on staff and communicated that this was one reason he sought to hold one city-wide town hall meeting rather than several smaller meetings.

Mayor Castillo voiced that at the previous City Commission meeting, Commissioner Schwartz informed him of his plans to host a town hall meeting. Mayor Castillo further expressed that when he asked about the subject of the meeting, Commissioner Schwartz responded that he had not yet worked out the details.

Commissioner Schwartz responded to the Mayor's comments; by clarifying that at that time, he did not yet have all the necessary information from all related parties to determine the exact topic of the town hall meeting. At Mayor Castillo's request, Commissioner Schwartz clarified that he had communicated with the City Engineer, who provided information to him.

Mayor Castillo commented on inconsistencies he observed between the

stated purpose of the town hall meeting and the topics listed on the distributed flyer.

Commissioner Schwartz clarified that he had created the flyer himself.

Mayor Castillo noted that the flyer did not reference FP&L installations, despite that being the stated purpose of the meeting.

In response to Mayor Castillo's questions, Commissioner Schwartz clarified that he had received no instructions beyond confirmation of the Commission Chambers' availability for the requested date.

Mayor Castillo described the standard procedure for town hall meetings, explaining that staff typically present the informational content and the commissioner or mayor moderates the discussion. He described distinctions between town hall meetings and political meetings and questioned the scope and method by which Commissioner Schwartz planned his meeting. Mayor Castillo expressed concern about holding a city-wide meeting without the consensus of the Commission and communicated that the public may perceive the meeting as political in nature.

Mayor Castillo expressed that new protocols may be needed and explained that traditionally, only the Mayor calls city-wide meetings or town halls, while commissioners hold meetings within their districts unless the Mayor and Commission agree otherwise. He noted that Commissioner Schwartz deviated from that tradition and cautioned against presenting information that has not been vetted by staff or subject matter experts, as doing so may result in the dissemination of incorrect or misleading information.

Commissioner Schwartz responded that he had consulted with the City Attorney to ensure that all information presented at the town hall would be accurate. He emphasized that he would only be presenting publicly available information that had already been discussed by the Commission.

Mayor Castillo communicated that had the Commission been consulted, many commissioners would likely have supported Commissioner Schwartz's efforts.

Mayor Castillo commented that the timing of the meeting appeared political in nature because there would be only one speaker and because an election was scheduled to take place in thirteen days.

City Manager Dodge agreed that the meeting date was too close to the election and reiterated that this was the reason he asked Commissioner Schwartz to consider rescheduling the meeting for a date in March.

Mayor Castillo affirmed that Commissioner Schwartz had every right to be heard within his district and by members of the Commission. He asked whether Commissioner Schwartz had requested that only he be allowed to speak at the town hall meeting, and Commissioner Schwartz responded that he had not made such a request.

City Clerk Fernandez, in response to questioning from Mayor Castillo, expressed that Commissioner Schwartz had never indicated that other Commissioners or the Mayor were prohibited from speaking at the town hall meeting. City Clerk Fernandez clarified that when he asked whether the meeting should be publicly noticed, Commissioner Schwartz responded that the meeting could be posted, but that he would be the only speaker.

Upon a request for clarification from Mayor Castillo regarding how he reached the conclusion that no other members were permitted to speak, City Manager Dodge communicated that he came to that conclusion because others were invited but only Commissioner Schwartz was designated to speak.

Mayor Castillo reiterated his desire to support Commissioner Schwartz and expressed his willingness to participate in a city-wide town hall meeting at Commissioner Schwartz's request. He also expressed support for the development of rules and procedures governing the planning and hosting of town hall meetings, as well as for improving public understanding of their purpose and the roles of officials during such meetings.

City Clerk Fernandez again clarified that at no time did Commissioner Schwartz state that the Mayor or other Commissioners were prohibited from speaking.

Commissioner Schwartz communicated that his plan to be the primary speaker at his town hall meeting was consistent with the format used by Mayor Castillo during the Mayor's previous town hall meetings.

Mayor Castillo responded that although he served as the primary speaker, all other officials were permitted and encouraged to speak at those meetings.

Commissioner Schwartz referenced the Sunshine Law and asked City

Clerk Fernandez whether the recent restaurant round table complied with legal requirements.

Mayor Castillo responded that the round table did not fall under the Sunshine Law because Commissioner Good arrived without prior coordination and did not speak at the meeting. Mayor Castillo added that the Sunshine Law is violated only when there is an exchange between two public officials and rejected the suggestion that any violation occurred, noting he could not have known Commissioner Good would attend.

Commissioner Schwartz expressed that under the Sunshine Law, public notice is required if one or more public officials may attend, and therefore the round table should have been publicly posted.

Mayor Castillo responded that he had announced the meeting in advance, did not know Commissioner Good would attend, and reiterated that Commissioner Good did not speak.

Commissioner Schwartz questioned why information about the round table was not shared with other Commissioners or the public who were not present when the Mayor announced it.

Regarding town hall meetings, Mayor Castillo acknowledged that no formal rules currently exist and encouraged allowing staff to develop reasonable procedures for their administration. Mayor Castillo expressed full confidence in staff to ensure accuracy of information presented to the public.

City Manager Dodge clarified that in his emails, Commissioner Schwartz referred to his request to reserve the Commission Chambers as a District 2 town hall meeting rather than a city-wide event. He emphasized the need for improved communication among elected officials.

Commissioner Schwartz disagreed with the City Manager's characterization.

City Manager Dodge expressed that he wanted to be supportive but was constrained by financial and resource limitations. City Manager Dodge reiterated his recommendation that staff develop procedures and rules for town hall meetings.

Mayor Castillo communicated that if such procedures were adopted, Commissioner Schwartz's meeting would need to be rescheduled.

Commissioner Schwartz expressed his desire to engage in dialogue with the public and expressed his frustration at what he described as the politicization of city business. He emphasized that he would continue to communicate with his constituents.

The Commission discussed possibly postponing the February 25 town hall meeting until formal procedures could be established; however, no action was taken.

Commissioner Schwartz communicated that he intended to proceed with the town hall meeting on February 25 as scheduled. Commissioner Schwartz then left his seat and exited the Chamber.

Mayor Castillo informed City Manager Dodge that the meeting had been canceled, and the Commission concluded its business.

COMMISSION ITEMS:

Commission Agenda Q&A to be forthcoming, as / if / and when available via the following link: <https://tinyurl.com/mtkmvsud>

NEW BUSINESS:

OLD BUSINESS:

ADJOURN - 8:36 P.M.

CITY OF PEMBROKE PINES

**Gabriel Fernandez
City Clerk**