



City of Starke

"Forging Tomorrow's Small Town, Today"

Regular Meeting of City Commission Minutes

Tuesday, March 3, 2026 at 5:30 PM

Vice Mayor Mortimer called the meeting to order at 5:30 PM.

Vice Mayor Mortimer opened the meeting with a time of ²Voluntary Prayer and the ³Pledge of Allegiance.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked that the record reflect Mayor Redding's absence. She asked City Clerk Allen-Thompson for ⁴Roll Call. Vice Mayor Janice D. Mortimer was present, Commissioner Danny Nugent was present, Commissioner Bob Milner was present, and Commissioner Dimple Overstreet was present. Additionally, City Clerk Chrissy Allen-Thompson was present, City Manager Drew Mullins was present, and City Attorney Scott Walker was present. Also in attendance were Executive Assistant Cathy Bradley, Executive Assistant Lisa Heeder, Grants Coordinator Becky May, Code Enforcement Officer Nick Krahl, Building & Zoning Office Manager Lance Campbell, Captain Kevin Mueller, and Assistant City Manager-Utilities David Sparks.

Vice Mayor Mortimer entertained a motion for the ⁵Approval of the Agenda. Commissioner Milner made a motion. Commissioner Overstreet seconded the motion. Motion passed 4-0.

Vice Mayor Mortimer entertained a motion to approve the ⁶Consent Agenda. The Consent Agenda consisted of: ^{6.a}Minutes of the February 17, 2026 Commission Meeting, ^{6.b}Resolution 2026-23 Approving That Certain Directive Confirmation and Addendum to the All Requirements Gas Services Agreement with Florida Gas Utility for Participation in the Black Belt Energy Transaction 2026, ^{6.c}Resolution 2026-24 Approving Amendment Three to Grant Agreement Number HL211 Between the Florida Department of Commerce and the City of Starke, Florida, and ^{6.d}Commissioner Bill Review: Commissioner Milner. Commissioner Nugent made a motion. Commissioner Milner seconded the motion. Vice Mayor Mortimer confirmed that Commissioner Nugent was making a motion to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed 4-0.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ⁷Emergency Items. There were none.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ⁸Citizens Request. *Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for Alvin Hunter. Mr. Hunter stated his address as 455 West Pratt Street in Starke. Mr. Hunter said a couple days ago, when checking his mail, he found an unaddressed sealed envelope in his mailbox. He handled it with kid gloves because of his military and law enforcement background. To his surprise, he found a very derogatory letter addressed to the Mayor and Commissioners, which he stated had not become public record, and was full of lies. Mr. Hunter said that he wanted to know who wrote it and if the Commissioners received the same letter. Commissioner Nugent stated he wasn't sure what letter that he was talking about. Vice Mayor Mortimer confirmed that she received one. Mr. Hunter said then she could understand why he was upset, and she agreed. He said after contacting his lawyer who read the letter, verified that none of the items in the three-page letter were true. Mr. Hunter stated that he did not know who wrote it, but has reason to believe there were two

individuals that could have written it: one is on the Charter Review Committee and the other is not but has been present at the first three meetings. He had input into them, which he had a right to do because he is a citizen of the City of Starke, but not to tell out and out lies. Mr. Hunter said if they can find out who wrote this, it opens up not only that individual but the City of Starke to a multi-million-dollar class action lawsuit, which he intended to follow up with. He asked Captain Mueller if he could pass this on to Sheriff Smith to be investigated. He stated that he wants to know who wrote it and if Florida Sunshine Laws have been violated. He thanked the Commission. Vice Mayor Mortimer thanked Mr. Hunter. She asked Attorney Walker to advise the Commission on how best to handle Mr. Hunter's request. Attorney Walker said he received a copy of the letter around a couple of months ago. Vice Mayor Mortimer said she was out because of surgery and when she came back there was a letter, but she didn't know when the other Commissioners received it. Commissioner Nugent asked if Mr. Hunter got the letter in the mail. Mr. Hunter said it was in his mailbox. Vice Mayor Mortimer asked if the letter was about the Charter Review Committee and accusations about City Clerk Allen-Thompson. Mr. Hunter said it was, and had accusations against him and Chief Jeff Johnson. Vice Mayor Mortimer asked Attorney Walker to give the Commission some direction. Attorney Walker said that because it was an anonymous letter it seemed to be a non-issue. He stated that to his recollection, the letter spoke to procedural issues. Even if there were procedural issues on the Charter Review Committee, his conclusion was that those procedural issues had long been cured and whatever the grievance was, it was a non-issue. Vice Mayor Mortimer confirmed that Mr. Hunter has asked Sheriff Smith to investigate. Mr. Hunter stated that he trusts Captain Mueller will speak with the Sheriff. If not, he will call him himself.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ⁹New Business. There was no New Business.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ¹⁰Old Business: ^{10.a}Charter Review and ^{10.b}Impact Fees. She called for ^{11.a}Charter Review. City Clerk Allen-Thompson said it is going well. They met today and will give the attorneys a couple of weeks to finalize the last bit of language. All ten members were present. They will have a final draft at the beginning of April. Vice Mayor Mortimer called for ^{11.b}Impact Fees. City Manager Mullins had no update.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ¹¹Public Hearings. There were none.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ¹²Quasi-Judicial Hearings. Attorney Walker said there was an article that was authored by Judge Scott. It was a Florida Law Review, but he posited that these annexations should be done in a quasi-judicial manner, so they always do them as quasi-judicial. He asked anyone who intends to speak on this matter to stand and raise their right hand, come to the podium, and announce their name. Building & Zoning Office Manager Lance Campbell came to the podium and raised his right hand. Attorney Walker asked if he swears or affirms to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Mr. Campbell said he does. Attorney Walker asked the City Commission if they had any ex parte communication. Commissioner Nugent said no sir. Commissioner Milner said no sir. Vice Mayor Mortimer said no sir. Commissioner Overstreet said no sir. Attorney Walker read ^{12.a}Ordinance 2026-06 by title. An Ordinance of the City of Starke, Florida, pursuant to petition number ANX 26-01, by Starke Express Wash LLC, relating to voluntary annexation; making findings; annexing certain real property located in Bradford County, Florida, which is reasonably compact, and contiguous to the boundaries of the City of Starke, Florida, into the boundaries of the City of Starke, Florida; providing severability; repealing all

Ordinances in conflict; providing an effective date. Attorney Walker advised the appropriate motion is to pass Ordinance Number 2026-06 as read by title only at the appropriate time. Mr. Campbell introduced himself and explained that this was a voluntary annexation to join the City of Starke. It is on the southern part of US Highway 301, right across from Walmart. It's just under two acres. He stated their intent is to annex to utilize utilities. This is a Snappy Car Wash that already exists. Staff recommendation and the North Central Florida Regional Planning Council agree this should be approved. Vice Mayor Mortimer said they've heard the report from Mr. Campbell with Planning & Zoning on Ordinance 2026-06. She asked for the wishes of the Commission. Commissioner Nugent made a motion to approve. Vice Mayor Mortimer said Commissioner Nugent made a motion to approve Ordinance 2026-06 on first reading. Commissioner Overstreet seconded the motion. There were no further questions. Motion passed 4-0. Vice Mayor Mortimer thanked Mr. Campbell.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ^{13.a.}City Manager Report. ^{13.a.i.}City Manager Mullins welcomed Darris Friend with 1898 & Co and Joel Bernsten with Noteworthy AI. Last year he had mentioned that they were GIS Mapping the electric system. Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks said when he came into the system, they didn't have much mapping just a few paper maps of the City's electric system. They went on a venture to try to get up to speed and up-to-date with GIS Mapping. He reached out to long-time friend and ex-coworker Darris Friend who started them on the road to getting GIS Mapping in the system along with Joel Bernsten with Noteworthy AI who worked with their system using some cutting-edge technology. Mr. Friend thanked the Commission for the opportunity to present their project today. They used cloud-hosted services and AI technology to do the data collection. Darris Friend introduced himself. He stated that he works for 1898 & Co, which is part of Burns and McDonnell. They offer a host of services, one of them that the City of Starke has utilized is modern GIS Geospatial Platform Modernization to create the GIS Data Model. He introduced Joel Bernsten with Noteworthy AI. Mr. Bernsten said they are based in New Haven, Connecticut and are about a five-year-old company focused on bringing new technologies to utilities. They work with a lot of large investor-owned utilities. This was actually a very exciting project for them to see a smaller utility benefit from their technology as part of the project. Mr. Friend showed a screenshot of a map of the City's electric system in an older digital format only showing the overhead primary, not the secondary services down to the house, the poles, and the equipment such as the transformers and lights. There was a limited budget and projects like this usually involved lots of IT staff and field data collection. Fortunately as a member of FMPA Member Services, the City could contract with 1898 & Co to provide services for this project. The linemen had the information in their heads, but they had to get it into a digital format because there was quite a bit of risk if they left the City and the knowledge left as well. Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks had a vision and strategy to implement a Geospatial Information System to establish the Asset Management Program for system planning for their electric needs. It will also improve the City's liability, because they know where the assets are and will be managing those assets. They have more accurate reporting through a GIS system. He stated that a big benefit of the system is recovering revenue. Now that the City has mapped the entire electric system, Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks is more aware of third-party pole attachments. The final strategy there was to reduce overall costs by using a lineman. Mr. Friend detailed the processes, operational constraints and challenges, and general priorities they had for the data collection. 1898 & Co researched alternative cost-efficient ways of collecting the data. With AI being new in the news recently, they looked at some ESRI business partners, did some interviews, and then they introduced Noteworthy AI to Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks and the City of Starke. Mr.

Bernsten explained that what Noteworthy AI does is put cameras on utility fleet vehicles, and the camera is able to automatically collect information about all the overhead distribution assets. They did a full-service collection by having one of the linemen to join them in the vehicle and guide them. He reiterated saying that as Mr. Friend mentioned, when they field collect data, they're trying to get an inventory of all the components and make sure they've got an accurate location. One of the benefits that the City of Starke has with the solution that they provided is not only the location and the components listed on the pole, but the imagery of the pole, auto-detection of the components, and inspection of those components for various types of damage and conditions. They also did a lighting audit so the City can better understand where the lighting assets are that the City is powering. Another opportunity to potentially recover costs for the system is to help manage vegetation. There were a bunch of vines that were detected on poles that have been proactively maintained as a result of this. The bigger picture is they can help patrol after extreme weather events and find where the damage is and help restore power faster. Having a baseline of the system is key to that as well. As Mr. Friend had mentioned they performed a joint-use attachment inventory, which can help recover costs and generate revenue for the City of Starke as well. They were very cost effective and time efficient compared to conventional approaches for collecting the data and did a much more comprehensive service than the City would typically get for a project like this. While showing a slide, Mr. Bernsten showed the Starke City limits and all the poles that are part of the system. The City of Starke will be able to recover a lot of the cost from this project through the joint use of audit. All of the data they've collected gets populated into the GIS system that 1898 & Co helped configure and set up. They can see all the different components from a reporting perspective. If the City ever needed to do long-term planning for replacing the different types of assets, they've got a great catalog of all that and also for the lighting side. Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks is able to click on any point in his map, pull up a picture that has a reference quality photo, and see the breakdown of everything that's there allowing him to more proactively maintain the system. Mr. Bernsten turned the presentation back over to Mr. Friend to show how that integrates into the GIS. Earlier, he had mentioned liability and asset management and showed an actual photo from the City of Starke that Noteworthy AI was able to identify damaged or transformers that need maintenance or special attention. He stated that Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks has better insight into the assets that make up the City's electric system. Now he can deploy his team and address these issues. He showed an example of a web map that Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks has access to and can share it with anybody who wants to see it. He showed a screenshot from the Field Map App. The linemen have a mobile app on their phone or tablet, and they can also see the same map that anybody in the office sees. They can also update information. If the pole information is incorrect, can add a pole or remove a pole. They have the ability to update the system in real time. The City of Starke went from no GIS capability to a fully operational GIS complete with asset management, system planning, field mobile apps, the entire system not just the poles, but the transformers, the switches, the fuses, the lights, third party revenue. Now the City of Starke can leverage that investment for ongoing routine work. Throughout the year and whoever might be attaching to the City's poles, the City can continually do audits, because now they know what was there before with Noteworthy AI's data and know what's new and what's been removed. They can do those comparisons on a regular basis. Additionally, they can continue building out this GIS so it's not just electric. Now the City has opportunities to put their water, wastewater, and gas in the same system, and have a very broad overview of what's going on throughout all utilities in the City of Starke. Mr. Friend thanked the Commissioners for their time. Vice Mayor Mortimer thanked Mr. Friend and Mr. Bernsten. She asked for any questions. Commissioner Nugent asked if they could take videos showing how many

poles need to be replaced and if they could track the LED light system and see which lights haven't been replaced so they know how many they need to purchase. City Manager Mullins said it gave a condition of the poles. Commissioner Nugent inquired about the LED lights specifically. City Manager Mullins said when it comes to streetlights it was an on-going task. Mr. Friend said he spoke with Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks to view it as a point in time exercise, and at some point over a period of time they're going to want to recollect because that ultimately gives the City the ability to see changes to the system over time. He said the system can do a number of different categories of things that can be reviewed, such as lighting intelligence. He showed in the system all the fixtures were non-LED when they did an analysis and a much higher resolution picture that they can zoom in on. He can tell from the dome that it was a non-LED fixture. He explained that the information can be exported as a list of coordinates for every pole shown on that list. Looking at the GIS map, they can click on a pole and the information about the pole comes up and then in another location they can look at the Google Street View. Vice Mayor Mortimer recognized Commissioner Milner. Commissioner Milner said he was excited, there were a lot of people waiting on this for a long time, and it is generally prohibitively expensive for a small city, even with FMPA contracts to get it. He was very impressed. He continued that when the vehicle was coming around that day, he asked City Manager Mullins about the vehicle with the thing pointing up in the air. City Manager Mullins advised him it was Noteworthy AI and the details. Commissioner Milner said the amount of data that they have specific to exactly what the City needs (i.e. arrestors, animal guards, whether or not the City has cable companies that have put attachments up without approval, etc.) is astounding. He stated he was really looking forward to what this will allow the electric line crew to do compared to what they've had to do manually in the past. This is literally light years away. Mr. Bernstein said they do a lot of work with large investor-owned utilities, but the City of Starke was the first in the nation to have done this for this type of utility, and they're very proud of the work they did with the City and 1898 & Co. He said he thinks there are a lot of other smaller utilities, municipal utilities that are facing very similar challenges. So, they're excited to have Starke as an example of what can be done with the technologies. Vice Mayor Mortimer recognized Commissioner Overstreet. Commissioner Overstreet said this was fantastic and thanked Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks. Vice Mayor Mortimer confirmed they had a limited budget but was able to piggy-back off of their FMPA Membership. City Manager Mullins agreed stating it was through FMPA Member Services and expanded that there was a wide array of services that were offered not necessarily through FMPA itself, but they have contracts for cities to be able to do this. He continued that rather than having to go out for an RFQ or an RFP, they can go off of that list and get these type services. Vice Mayor Mortimer said she was going to assume that it was at a substantial savings. Mr. Friend said their price was about 60% or 70% lower because of the group buyer comparable to larger utilities. Vice Mayor Mortimer asked the amount of savings to show what a benefit the partnership with FMPA is to the City. City Manager Mullins said \$38,000 times 60%. Vice Mayor Mortimer asked Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks how long he has been with the City of Starke. Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks said counting the part-time work, right at two years. Vice Mayor Mortimer thanked him for having the vision to bring this together. She asked if there was an amount of staff training to be able to work this system. Assistant City Manager-Utilities Sparks said it was not that cumbersome and was navigated with a computer. He stated that he's not the most computer literate person, but he can navigate through that fairly easily. The information that they've gained off of this, and at the relatively low cost, the Commission would be astounded at how cheap it was when they look at the total cost of the project. He said the Commission would think it was 1000s of dollars, and it was just over \$12,000. He really liked the ability for them to

add the other services in. He stated he was talking to City Manager Mullins about the water and sewer lines and the outdated infrastructure, and the need to bring that in and explained this was an opportunity for that. He thanked Mr. Friend and Mr. Bernsten. City Manager Mullins said the City of Starke was the oldest municipal power provider in the state and here today with this type of technology. *Vice Mayor Mortimer asked if City Manager Mullins had anything else. City Manager Mullins called for the Building & Zoning Report from Building & Zoning Office Manager Lance Campbell. Mr. Campbell said this was for the month of February. Residential permits issued were 21. Commercial permits issued was one. Contractor registrations were 8, which was surprisingly high, but the department is starting to do more and more. Inspections performed were 35. The revenue from those permits was \$16,235.64. Code Enforcement Officer Krahel opened six cases and closed two, including a demo at 312 Church Street by Jones Gallagher. There was a home that was torn down. Public contacts educating people on code violations were 13. Vice Mayor Mortimer asked how the Contractor Registrations are managed. Mr. Campbell said they have software that keeps track of the contractors as they register and verifies people applying. Vice Mayor Mortimer said she knows they opened up the contracts for the bids for the RJE Project and there were four or five that bid on that, and asked if those people would have been included in this if they weren't already contractors on our list. Mr. Campbell said any and all trades registered would have been included and advised that when they apply for the permit they would register.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ^{13.c}Public Safety Report. Captain Mueller provided the Commission with the report for the month of February. He's here if they have any questions or requests from the Sheriff's Office. Vice Mayor Mortimer said the Baker Act seemed high. Captain Mueller said it was high, but it was consistently normally high. Commissioner Nugent said keep up the good work.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ^{13.b}City Clerk Report. Vice Mayor Mortimer advised she'd like to move the City Clerk Report first, and that she would talk to the Mayor about that change. City Clerk Allen-Thompson said Audrey Myers, from the Allen Chapel Church, does an annual prayer walk that has been going on for five years. She advised Ms. Myers was unable to attend the meeting, but wanted to get the blessing of the Commission for the event. The 3K walk/run/ride will start on Old Lawtey Road going by a couple of churches and City Hall while praying for everyone and the City. It will be held on March 28th starting at 8:00 AM at Allen Chapel Church. Vice Mayor Mortimer explained that they have been doing this for the last five years and what they do is start at the church and strategically have people stationed at various locations along the walk. Participants stop and pray, and then they move on. She said it's really an uplifting experience. Unfortunately, she wasn't able to attend all of the years before, but last year she was able to attend. Due to her ankle issue she had to be stationary, so they put her at one of the stations to pray. She was very honored to be able to do that, but this year she plans on participating with City Clerk Allen-Thompson. It's just a way of trying to keep one's self centered on what's really important, get outside of all this noise, and kind of focus on what one is supposed to be doing, praying for each other and helping each other. She welcomed all to attend on March 28th at 8:00 AM advising that they'll have refreshments, snacks, and beverages at each station.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ^{13.d}Attorney Report. Attorney Walker said they had a meeting at their office that Assistant City Manager-Finance James Hughes attended to help with budgetary things having an open dialog with the finance people from each of the cities that their firm

represents about what happens if ad valorem taxation goes away. The general consensus, according to Attorney Danielle Adams, your budget is going to be okay and should be able to survive if it does come to pass.

Vice Mayor Mortimer asked for ^{14.}Mayor and Commissioner Reports. ^{14.a.}Commissioner Overstreet said she is just thrilled with everyone and thanks everyone. ^{14.b.}Commissioner Milner said as Attorney Walker pointed out on the ad valorem, it appears the governor and the legislature are set to have a special session at an unknown date at this point to bring it back. The good news for the City is the House and the Senate can't agree on anything with the Governor at this point, but it is not a dead issue by any means. There are some elected officials that are up for election and are adamant about passing some semblance of tax ad valorem relief as they see it. So, he thinks unfortunately it will be seen again sometime between now and July. ^{14.c.}Commissioner Nugent said the Northeast Florida League of Cities Dinner will be March 19th in Green Cove Springs at 6:00 PM. ^{14.d.}Vice Mayor Mortimer said she thinks the City of Starke did a fantastic job hosting the Northeast Florida League of Cities Dinner last month. She thanked City Clerk Allen-Thompson, Commissioner Nugent, Ms. Bradley, and everybody that was involved in putting that on. Last week she attended the APPA Congressional Conference with City Manager Mullins in Washington, DC. There was a really good turnout and some good information. They had some good meetings with their legislators. She stated that she didn't attend the one with Senator Rick Scott because it was freezing. She said she stayed at the hotel and attended some of the in-house meetings while City Manager Mullins did the politicking. She did attend the meeting with Congresswoman Kat Cammack and the reception. Congresswoman Cammack is always thrilled to see the City of Starke. There were several major issues that APPA did present to the elected officials, and the one that was really sticking in mind is the data centers and the impact that's going to have on the grid and on electric providers. There's a lot that's going to be coming down the pipe, and since the City of Starke is one of the few municipalities in the state, probably in the nation, that actually provide their own power, the City is going to be definitely impacted. The City is going to try to stay on top of that legislation. She said the last thing she had to say was to that what Mr. Hunter brought up about this anonymous letter was that transparency is very important and should be for those people in public office. She stated that they shouldn't have anything to hide and everything that they do needs to be done out in the sunshine, because they are representing their constituents and always wants to represent them in the most ethical way. She has been asked over the years from people to deliver anonymous letters to the Commissioners and her response was always no. There's a process that needs to be followed to make sure that it's done right so she's protected, they're protected, and her colleagues are protected. She'll read anonymous letters out of curiosity, but doesn't give them a lot of credence because if somebody's going to tell something but not sign their name to it then how much credence does one give. It doesn't diminish the information that they're trying to share, but thinks it's important to know that if people want to be heard and they want their issues to be addressed then they should be able to sign their name to it. She just wanted to ask this board to make sure that they always represent their constituents, city, selves, and families, in the highest and most ethical manner. Transparency is important, because when one starts to do things that are a little shady, then it makes all look like they're trying to hide something. She stated that she doesn't have anything to hide and that it's been a pleasure being the Commission's Mayor.

Vice Mayor Mortimer entertained a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Nugent made a motion to adjourn. Commissioner Overstreet seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 6:19 pm.

