

A Workshop Meeting of the Apalachicola City Commission was held on June 17, 2025 at 4:00 PM at the Commission Meeting Room located at 74 6th Street, Apalachicola, Florida.

Present: Mayor Brenda Ash, Commissioner Anita Grove, Commissioner Despina George, Commissioner Donna Duncan, Commissioner Adriane Elliott, City Manager Michael Brillhart, Finance Director Lee Mathes, City Clerk Sheneidra Cummings, Legal Assistant to Attorney Hartman Josh Pascalone, Sergeant Ashley Webb, Officer Kevin Shuman.

Meeting was called to order by Mayor Ash followed by invocation and pledge of allegiance.

Agenda Adoption

A motion was made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Duncan. None opposed. Motion carried, 5-0.

Public Comment

LaRaela Coxwell commented.
Krystal Hernandez commented.
Joan Stanton commented.
Lynn Wilder commented.
Toni McIntosh commented.
Caroline Kienzlie commented.
Trae Ross commented.
Donna Knutson commented.
Allen Palmer commented.
Ken Justice commented.
Shan Raetzloff commented.
Karen Kessel commented.
Lisa Thorpe commented.
Alexandria Aitken commented.
Johnny McLaurin commented.
Kristen Mills commented.
Bobby Johnson commented.

New Business: State of Emergency Discussion

City Manager Brillhart provided an update on the water situation. He explained the city has three drinking wells (5, 6, and 7), with well 7 currently being worked on. He described ongoing efforts to address hydrogen sulfide issues causing the odor and color problems.

Commissioner George asked whether improvements to well 7, draining the water storage tank, and replacement of the mixer would improve water quality before the aerator is installed in August. Mr. Brillhart confirmed these measures would help somewhat, as the water storage tank would be cleaned and chlorinated to better address the hydrogen sulfide issue.

Mayor Ash mentioned that the hydrogen peroxide injection process had been submitted that afternoon as a potential pilot project for additional water treatment.

Mr. Miller cautioned about using hydrogen peroxide, warning it could destroy silicon beads in residential water softeners. Mr. Brillhart acknowledged the concern but noted the hydrogen peroxide would be added at the beginning of the treatment process.

Ms. Wilder provided technical information about the water issues, explaining that the hydrogen sulfide from the well would normally be dispersed by the aerator, and that when water sits in the holding tank without aeration, bacteria produce hydrogen sulfide gas, causing the odor problems.

Unfinished Business: Forgotten Coast Fitness and Wellness Center Proposal

Representatives from Forgotten Coast Fitness Center presented an update on three outstanding issues with their proposal:

1. They received test results showing the building received a "clean bill of health" regarding mold after remediation.
2. Additional mitigation measures were recommended, including 3 scrubbers, 3 dehumidifiers, and sealing work.
3. They agreed to change their policy to only allow members 18 and above, addressing Commissioner Duncan's concern about minors.

The fitness center representatives requested approval of their Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to avoid litigation and ensure continuity of operations beyond June 30th. They expressed concern that the city would lock them out of the building.

City Attorney Josh Pascalone advised the commission that the city needed additional time to review the recently submitted documents, particularly regarding insurance coverage

and mold remediation reports. He clarified that the city could not simply lock the doors without going through proper eviction procedures in court.

The Fitness Center representatives requested withdrawal of the city manager's letter demanding they vacate by June 30th. The commission indicated they would take no action at this time, pending review of the documentation.

Interim City Manager Discussion and Appointment

The commission discussed the need for an interim city manager following Mr. Brillhart's resignation effective July 3rd.

Commissioner Grove suggested Chris Holley, who had previously served as interim city manager. She noted his qualifications as a former president of the City Manager Association in Florida and his experience with the city.

Commissioner Elliott supported this recommendation and explained that without a city manager, the city charter would require each commissioner to take responsibility for different city departments, creating logistical and communication challenges due to Sunshine Law restrictions.

Various citizens expressed support for bringing in an experienced professional rather than having commissioners attempt to manage city departments.

Commissioner George noted they had already lost time in posting the job advertisement for a permanent city manager and emphasized the city's current challenges would make recruitment difficult.

The commission discussed that Mr. Holley was willing to serve in 30-day increments at a rate of \$10,000 per month, which falls within the current budgeted amount of \$138,000 annually for the city manager position.

A motion was made by Commissions Grove to appoint Chris Holley as Interim City Manager for 30 days with a 30-day extension at \$10,000 a month, seconded by Commissioner Elliott. No further discussion. Motion carried, 5-0.

Commissioner Grove requested scheduling another meeting for further discussion, and the commission agreed to meet on Tuesday, June 24th at 6:00 PM.

She also asked for the legal team to work with Ms. Escobar regarding the food pantry's potential use of space in the field house building.

Mayor Ash noted she was working on possible concessions for residents regarding water bills during the crisis and meeting with the finance director and lobbyists to explore options.

A motion to adjourn was made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Grove. Motion carried, 5-0.

Meeting adjourned.

Brenda Ash, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sheneidra Cummings, City Clerk