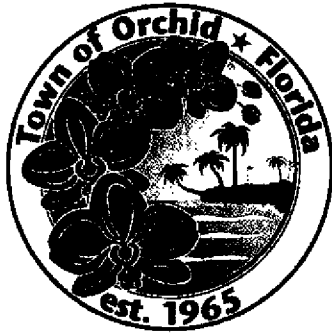




Town of Orchid

Wednesday, March 4, 2026, at 9 a.m.

Town Hall - 9301 Highway A1A, Suite 201, Vero Beach, FL 32963

Town Council Minutes

Regular Meeting

1. Call to Order

Mayor Gibbons called the meeting to order at 9:07 a.m.

2. Roll Call

Present

Mayor Robert Gibbons
Vice-Mayor Paul Knapp
Councilmember John Heanue
Councilmember James Raphalian

Absent

Councilmember Daniel McEvoy

Town Staff

Cherry Stowe, Town Manager
Jane Garcia, Town Clerk
D. Johnathan Rhodeback, Town Attorney

3. Preliminary matters; agenda additions, deletions, or modifications

There were none.

4. Public Participation

There was none.

5. Consent Agenda

Approval of the minutes of regular meeting of February 4, 2026

Vice-Mayor Knapp made a motion to approve the minutes of February 4, 2026.

Councilmember Heanue seconded the motion.

All Councilmembers were in favor.

6. Special Election Results

Results of the Special Election on the Comprehensive Update of the Charter held on February 24, 2026

The Town Manager announced the ballot measure passed successfully with 97.37% voting in the affirmative (129 Yes/3 No). A total of 133 ballots were cast including one blank ballot, representing 25% voter turnout – robust for this type of local election. Most

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(117) ballots were submitted by mail, the others in-person at Orchid's regular polling place on Election Day. The updated Charter has thus been adopted, and a copy was sent to the Florida Department of State, as required by state law, and to CivicPlus for coding. Mayor Gibbons expressed delight at the voter turnout and the persuasive result delivered by local voters.

7. Presentations

A. Presentation of Audited Financial Statements for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

- Christine Noll-Rhan of Carr, Riggs, Ingram

Ms. Noll-Rhan provided a brief overview of the recent financial audit of the Town of Orchid conducted by Carr, Riggs & Ingram. The Town, once again, received an excellent result, earning a clean audit opinion.

She noted that a new accounting standard under the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) was successfully implemented by the Town as required this year, which involved a new way of reporting accrued vacation and sick leave of employees. The financial statements were reviewed and compared against FY 2023-2024.

B. Presentation on nutrient reduction with nature-based filtration media for the Basin Management Action Plan

- Kenneth Kellum of Sustainable Water Infrastructure Group

Mr. Kellum, joined by Mr. John Green, both of Sustainable Water Infrastructure Group (SWIG) provided an overview of how SWIG can assist the Town in meeting its Basin Management Action Plan (BMAP) nutrient load reduction targets.

Mr. Kellum explained that SWIG has been operating since 2017 and is comprised of employees with backgrounds at Florida governmental agencies with a focus on water management and the environment. He described the innovative filtration media technology SWIG developed to treat water to remove harmful nutrients, as well as other unwanted contaminants. He outlined the treatment process and noted that the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) recognizes SWIG's approach as a nature-based solution.

Mayor Gibbons asked whether Mr. Kellum was confident that the system would work for the Town of Orchid. Mr. Kellum responded that he was confident it would be very effective and stated that no additional solutions would be required to meet the Town's annual nutrient reduction requirements. He anticipated that the filtration media would have a life of 15 years in Orchid, after which only the media would need to be replaced (the overall system would remain).

Mr. Rob Tench, General Manager of the Orchid Island Golf & Beach Club (OIGBC), expressed concern that the Town is being required to comply with the BMAP despite what he believes is a lack of solid supporting data from FDEP as well as a complete lack of real property owned by the Town on which to achieve its goals. He emphasized that the involvement of the OIGBC Board and/or Orchid Island Golf & Beach Community Association Board would be crucial due to that last point.

Mayor Gibbons and Vice-Mayor Knapp acknowledged the challenges of the BMAP and affirmed that this presentation was only of an introductory nature to determine



whether the solution was worthwhile pursuing with the Town's private partners. They appreciated Mr. Tench's presence at the meeting, as the Town Manager had specifically invited him to get his preliminary perspective on behalf of the entities he represents.

Mr. Kellum assured Mr. Tench he understood the local complexities and provided an example of SWIG's solution on the OIGBC's 510 commercial parcel as an example, underscoring that the shape of the area could be adjusted to minimize impact to the available space for future development. He also noted that the project could be broken up across different areas and could be implemented in phases to help lessen the impact of the overall cost. Other potential locations and options were also presented and discussed.

Mr. Kellum estimated the installation cost at approximately \$2 million. He added that the annual maintenance plan would cost several thousand dollars, though it was noted that golf course staff of OIGBC could likely handle the maintenance. He further explained that replacement of the treatment media would cost approximately 30% of the original installation cost.

The Town Manager explained that SWIG is experienced in permitting, grant applications, installation, maintenance, and securing nutrient reduction credits with FDEP. She also advised that the company was eager to leverage this summer's grant cycle (there is only one annually) to obtain outside funding for the project, but that SWIG would need the go-ahead from the community's stakeholders to pursue it.

Following discussion, the Town Council reached a consensus to request that SWIG develop a more detailed plan to be presented at a joint meeting of the Town Council and the aforementioned boards for further consideration.

To augment the conversation on solutions for the BMAP, the Town Manager noted that FDEP had recommended street sweeping as a popular approach. So, she had recently obtained a quote for such a service, however, because the Town has no curbs (which limits material and by extension nitrogen and phosphorus capture), the results would be minimal, removing only about five pounds of phosphorus and eight pounds of nitrogen per sweep at a cost of \$900. The Town Council agreed this was a low-reward option and determined not to pursue it at this time.

Mayor Gibbons called for a recess of the meeting at 10:18 a.m. which reconvened at 10:22 a.m.

8. Town Council Business

Item 8B. was taken out of order to accommodate Mr. Tench's participation as he was unable to stay for the entirety of the meeting.

B. Streetlights:

- Additional streetlight at end of Westwind Court

The Town Manager reminded the Councilmembers that at the February 4th meeting she had informed them of a resident who requested an additional streetlight on Westwind Court due to, in that resident's view, insufficient lighting around the cul-de-sac. The resident had cited residents crossing onto and off of the golf course at night in this area. The Town Manager shared that she had asked Mr. Tench about access to the golf



course after dark and he had responded that nobody should be on the golf course at night. He told the Town Council he was not aware of the prevalence of this issue, but Councilmember Heanue advised that in his neighborhood he had regularly seen people on cart paths after hours.

Councilmember Heanue added that he had inspected the area and observed that the street has no more or less lighting than other streets in the Town. Vice-Mayor Knapp expressed that the community was intentionally designed that way according to a lighting plan years ago and that the Town had just been charged with maintaining it. Mayor Gibbons agreed and expressed his reticence to set a precedent for changing the plan, particularly in light of the safety concern indicated by Mr. Tench, noting the Town does not want to encourage residents onto the golf course at night.

➤ Switching from fluorescent to LED bulbs

The Town Manager recommended a switch to LED bulbs for the Town's network of streetlights, as this was expected to result in a long-term cost saving on maintenance. She explained the color differences among the LED test bulbs in three streetlights installed in Orchid back in 2022 and advised of their continued performance. She presented the Town Council with the option to gradually replace all 109 fluorescent bulbs as the existing bulbs burn out – particularly if a bulb was selected that was similar in warmth and color to the current fluorescent bulbs. She noted that the OIGBC had already started switching to LED bulbs for the streetlights under their control in the parking lots. The consensus was to look to OIGBC's example and to make the replacement gradually.

A. Interlocal agreement with Indian River County on distribution of local option gas tax

The Town Manager provided an overview of the proposed agreement with Indian River County regarding the distribution of the local option gas tax among the County and the five municipalities therein. She noted that the Town currently receives about \$10,000 per year in this funding and explained that the proposed formula for distribution in the agreement was adjusted from the formula used for the past 30 years, which would result in a slightly higher percentage for the Town initially. She cautioned that, with a focus on lane miles and population, the Town's portion would slowly shrink over time, as growth in those metrics would take place outside of the Town and not within it. The agreement covers a 30-year period, with the County reviewing the distribution percentages annually.

Mayor Gibbons made a motion to authorize execution of the agreement, subject to approval of the formula by all the parties to be subject to it (i.e. Indian River County and the other four local municipalities).

Councilmember Raphalian seconded the motion.

All Councilmembers were in favor.

8. Councilmember Matters of Interest and Committee Reports

Councilmember Heanue provided his quarterly update on the periodic interest rates for the Town's investments. He reported that the FL STAR account has a balance of \$3.1 million earning 3.7%, while the Town's government checking account with Valley Bank was most recently earning 3.3%. He compared that against U.S. Treasuries earning 3.47%. He recommended transferring \$200,000 from the Valley Bank checking account to FL STAR's Government Fund, and all Councilmembers agreed with the proposal.



9. Town Staff Reports

The Town Manager advised that, according to the original quote, the dune project was expected to cost \$724,100. However, because the engineering estimate was prepared prior to the summer, before the beach naturally widened and the elevation increased, less sand was required, resulting in a reduced project cost. The final construction cost was 518,861. In addition, engineering services for the project totaled \$26,900, \$8,500 of which fell into the prior fiscal year already. The Town Council was in consensus to allocate the existing balance and this year's remaining allocation of Infrastructure Surtax (Discretionary Sales Surtax) to the project, which would be capitalized on the Town's books to depreciate over five years.

She advised that on March 5 at 3:00 p.m., the University of Florida (UF) will return to conduct follow-up measurements using a new piece of equipment to perform topographic mapping of the dunes and to document the current condition of the beach following completion of the dune project.

The Town Manager advised that the Morgan & Eklund contract, regarding biennial and post-storm surveying of the beach in Orchid, will expire on September 30, 2026. She had already reached out and received updated pricing and reported that the firm is proposing a 20% increase in the survey cost. She reminded the Council the rate had remained steady at \$1,930 for the first approximately ten years of the relationship, then increased to \$3,500 three years ago, and is now proposed to increase to \$4,200. The Town Manager said the Town gains a financial benefit from the company's coordination as Indian River County's surveyor. Mayor Gibbons, who had seen the recent survey work take place in Orchid and had been impressed by the effort it takes, requested the Town Manager to ask Morgan & Eklund to reconsider the proposed rate as 20% still felt like a big leap.

The Town Manager reminded the Council that the Town was awarded a grant from FDEP to enhance the Town's Vulnerability Assessment. She continued that FDEP had recently agreed to provide extra grant funding for the Town to incorporate the development of an adaptation plan. The Town Council was very pleased she and the consultant engineer on the project had pursued this extra benefit.

During a discussion regarding the upcoming Distinguished Speaker Series at the OIGBC Sandpiper Room on March 12, Councilmember Heanue asked how the presenter, Coastal Engineer Boehning, would address questions related to adaptation, prior to the development of a formal plan. The Town Manager explained that potential adaptation measures could include raising homes and increasing low-lying areas where flood water can safely accumulate, as well as identifying other ways to prevent or mitigate flooding.

The Town Manager reported that a third-party contractor for Verizon contacted the Town regarding the installation of a telecommunications pole along A1A on the east side, across from Condominium Building 30 (later discovered to be in closer proximity to Buildings 40 and 50) of the Ocean Residences. The proposed structure is a black, 45-foot pole inclusive of an antenna, approximately five feet lower than the height of the existing utility poles on the West side of Highway A1A. She explained that so far Verizon was only requesting an address for the facility to be used for 9-1-1 services. She noted the pole would be located within the right-of-way held by the Florida Department of



Transportation (FDOT), and that the Town does not have the legal authority to prevent the installation. However, she was working with the Town Attorney, Indian River County's Planning Department, and FDOT to evaluate the Town's jurisdiction. Mayor Gibbons expressed his serious concern about siting a tower in such close proximity to the only multi-level living, on this part of the barrier island, that would provide an eye level view of the facility.

The Town Manager reported on a Property Tax Reform meeting attended by local cities and Indian River County, which included City Managers, Mayors, and others in a roundtable discussion to address concerns and consider how to move forward in a coordinated effort to educate voters on how property taxes support important and valuable government services. She gave an overview of recent developments in the Florida House as well as the local discussion's highlights, including information on recent informational workshops by the Cities of Sebastian and Vero Beach. Mayor Gibbons, who had also attended the meeting, shared his impressions of the effects of drastic property tax reform, which were likely to be widespread and complicated. The Town Manager emphasized that the current House proposal is not necessarily a tax cut, but rather a tax shift that could have broader repercussions over time. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for Thursday to continue the discussion and work toward coordinated joint messaging.

The Town Manager advised that the, likely only, in-person Sunshine and Ethics training class will be held on April 23 at 9:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. at the Indian River State College in Ft. Pierce. If any Councilmember is interested in attending to meet their mandatory class hours this year, they may reach out to the Town Clerk to sign up.

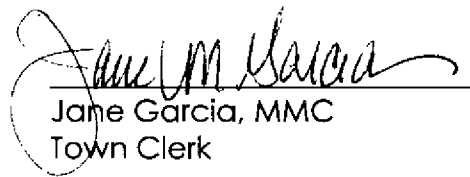
9. Confirmation of next meeting date and adjournment

Mayor Gibbons announced that the next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, April 1, 2026, at 9:00 a.m.

**Mayor Gibbons made a motion to adjourn.
Councilmember Raphallian seconded the motion.
All Councilmembers were in favor.**

The meeting was adjourned at 11:36 a.m.

These minutes were approved by the Town Council at the regular meeting of April 1, 2026.


Jane Garcia, MMC
Town Clerk

