



City of Venice

401 West Venice Avenue
Venice, FL 34285
www.venicegov.com

Meeting Minutes City Council

Monday, February 2, 2026

8:30 AM

Community Hall Room 165

Strategic Planning Workshop

Council refreshments at 8:30 a.m. Meeting will start with agenda activities at 9:00 a.m.

Call to Order

Mrs. Frank called the meeting to order at 9:01 a.m.

Roll Call

Present: 7 - Mayor Nick Pachota, Vice Mayor Jim Boldt, Mrs. Rachel Frank, Mr. Ron Smith, Mr. Rick Howard, Mr. Kevin Engelke and Mr. Lloyd Weed

Vice Mayor Boldt attended the meeting remotely.

Also Present

City Attorney Kelly Fernandez, City Clerk Kelly Michaels, City Manager James Clinch, Deputy City Clerk Toni Gregory, Recording Secretary Amanda Hawkins-Brown and for certain items on the agenda: Fire Chief Frank Giddens, Fire Division Chief Matthew Tomer, Police Chief Andy Leisenring, Captain Louis White, Utilities Director Javier Vargas, Assistant Director Patience Anastasio, Finance Director Linda Senne, Planning and Zoning Director Roger Clark, Director of Public Works and Asset Management Rick Simpson, Solid Waste, Recycle, and Fleet Superintendent, Assistant Director of Public Works and Asset Management Ashlee Castle, Airport Director Nick Dumas, City Engineer Jon Kramer, Information Technology Director Roger Navarro, and Director of Human Resources Alan Bullock.

Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mr. Howard.

I. Introduction

[26-0478](#)

Adopted Strategic Plan for Fiscal Year Ending September 30, 2026

City Manager Clinch opened the strategic planning session stating that strategic planning centers around where we are heading for up to 10 years, as well as prioritizing the supporting goals and objectives.

[26-0479](#)

FY27 Strategic Planning

Doug Thomas, Facilitator, SGR, provided his background and history serving local governments.

II. Review of 2025 Strategic Goals and Initiatives

City Manager Clinch provided a review of 2025's accomplishments, noting that January and February were utilized recovering from the 2024 hurricanes. Beginning in March the accomplishment highlights were: Roberts Bay anchorage area signage, completion and adoption of the Seaboard Master Plan, Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) Greenways and Trail Town designation, Community Rating System (CRS) rating of five, completion of the renovation of Council Chambers, completion and presentation of the hurricane after action report and implementation, groundbreaking at the Northeast Park, held a joint meeting with Sarasota County Commissioners, opening of the Old Betsy Museum, the City Manager's retirement and new City Manager selection process, completion of the Tarpon Center Drive Seawall and flood mitigation project, groundbreaking for the new Fire Station 52, closed on the new Solid Waste and Fleet Facility, feasibility study for the City's potable Water Treatment Plant, opening of the pickleball courts at Hecksher park, closed on revenue bonds to fund Fire Station 52 and the new Fleet and Solid Waste facility, presented the Flamingo Ditch feasibility study and purchased the Golden Beach drainage easement, closed on the transfer of Wellfield to Sarasota County, adopted the 7-year Comprehensive Plan update, potable water booster pump station in Northeast Venice, kicked off the Centennial celebration with the annual holiday parade, completed Lord-Higel's Coffee House construction, hosted three public Centennial meetings, completed the Stormwater Master Plan and the Transportation Master Plan, received Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) reimbursements, selection and appointment of key staff: Police Chief, City Engineer, and Airport Director, added two properties to the local historic register, negotiated and ratified four union contracts, produced a new special events guide and permitted 42 special events, and partnered with local schools and other community partners on many events.

III. Preparing for Strategic Visioning

Facilitator Doug Thomas presented the art of strategic visioning, perspectives, strategic foresight, the Athenian Oath, the unique position of elected officials to make a difference in their communities, Strategic Vision alignment, roles of governing body versus staff, the importance of governing body being aligned to advance the priorities and objectives of the City, the questions that need to be addressed at a strategic visioning session, what Council wants to leave as their legacy, what Venice does

exceptionally well, what the City struggles with, successes, stalled projects/initiatives, SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats) Assessment Feedback, and the rebranding of the City and its logos.

IV. Review and Discuss Organizational Vision and Mission Statements

Facilitator Thomas reviewed the strategic plan; there are collectively 20 policies and 58 objectives.

He provided the current vision statement, components, and possible updates.

There was consensus to keep the current vision statement of "Maintain Venice as a vibrant, charming, historic community in which to live, learn, work, and play."

Recess was taken from 10:40 a.m. to 10:53 a.m.

Discussion took place regarding the current mission statement.

There was consensus to keep the current mission statement of "To provide exceptional municipal services through a financially and environmentally sustainable city with engaged citizens."

V. Discuss Establishing Organizational Values

Discussion took place around what organizational values serve as guiding principles in how the City will conduct business, and whether the City needs formal organizational values.

There was consensus to move forward without developing formal organizational values.

VI. Review of Current and/or Proposed Strategic Goals and Priorities

Discussion took place regarding Council's thoughts on the current strategic plan and goals.

[26-0480](#)

Goal One: Keep Venice Beautiful and Eco-Friendly

"Sense of Place Pillar"

Discussion took place regarding a sense of place, environmental issues, volunteer groups, taking environmentally-friendly actions without necessarily pursuing formal certifications or designations, financial impacts, current objectives, priorities that need to be on the list, and fine-tuning language.

Public Works Director Ricky Simpson and Assistant Director Ashlee Castle presented on changes due to the interlocal agreement, including the implementation strategy, increased park/facility maintenance, transition to maintaining the additional parks and the Venice Community Center, and

the Venice Community Center Request for Proposal (RFP).

There was consensus to continue moving forward with parks transition strategy and the Venice Community Center Request for Proposal.

Discussion took place regarding community partners, how we can include them in the goals, and further enhancing relationships with them.

[26-0481](#)

Goal Two: Provide Efficient, Responsive Government with High Quality Services

"Governance and Outstanding Municipal Services Pillar"

Discussion took place regarding wording, continuance of goals and priorities, defining "high quality services," accreditation options, unified City logo, and relationship with Sarasota County.

Recess was taken from 12:02 p.m. to 12:45 p.m.

Public Works Director Simpson and Fleet Manager Travis Hout discussed future goals and phased strategy of taking functions in-house, justification, management and organization, internal analysis, and customers.

Discussion took place regarding cost savings, ultimately the same cost, quality control, contractual agreements, proposed phased approach, and possible partnerships with Sarasota County.

There was consensus to proceed with the proposal for taking fleet functions in-house.

Information Technology Director Navarro presented on the history, present, and future of IT for the City of Venice, history and stabilization, goals, requesting feedback from Council.

Discussion took place regarding cost, benefits, how to proceed, the importance of technology, priority-driven, changes made and those still needing to be made, and potential outsourcing. The facilitator recommended placing IT under the Infrastructure Pillar instead of the Municipal Services Pillar.

There was consensus to proceed investigating advances in technology, with budget restrictions being considered.

[26-0482](#)

Goal Three: Ensure a Financially Sound City

"Fiscal Sustainability Pillar"

Discussion took place regarding goals and priorities.

Recess was taken from 1:33 p.m. to 1:40 p.m.

Finance Director Senne presented on budget development, property tax general fund, possible property tax reform, proposals being influx, worst case scenario being a \$10 million loss, revenue replacement within general fund, status of hurricane reimbursement, general fund reserves, and emergency financial plan.

Discussion took place on having a goal of reducing our reliance on property taxes, current budget is 52% of operating budget, fees for services, caution on growth/costs, avoid cutting the millage rate this year, and reserve policy.

[26-0483](#)

Goal Four: Upgrade and Maintain City Infrastructure and Facilities

Discussion took place on reviewing need, and financing partners.

Utilities Director Javier Vargas and Assistant Utilities Director Patience Anastasio presented on the water treatment plant resiliency, planning, protecting, and expanding, feasibility study, water plant master plan, water distribution master plan, electronic payments, potential savings on the removal of a water tower, and booster stations.

Fire Chief Giddens and Planning and Zoning Director Clark presented on Fire Station 52, the rationale for moving it, strategic alignment, potential future uses for the former property.

Discussion took place regarding the Baptist Church near the parcel, avoiding isolation of it, providing the church with an easement or property, size of the parcel, floodplain, demolition of the current building, housing aligning with the Seaboard Master Plan, the financial end of working with the housing authority, and conceptual planning.

There was consensus for staff to move forward with negotiations with the Venice Housing Authority for City property where the current Fire Station 2 resides, while limiting future funding requests, and accommodating the Baptist Church.

Discussion took place regarding the residential nature of the area, the potential to tie-in the water plant property once it is relocated, a regional master stormwater area for the Seaboard redevelopment plan, and the Baptist Church.

[26-0484](#)

Goal Five: Encourage and Support a Robust and Diverse Economy

"Economic Development Pillar"

Discussion took place on Venice MainStreet, Venice Area Beautification, Inc. (VABI), and the Venice Theatre, the policies/outcomes and objectives and priorities, opportunities, Seaboard, investment with governmental and other partners, airport, safety and security needs, property management, and the golf course.

Airport Director Nick Dumas presented on the Airport Master Plan update and future growth.

Discussion took place regarding an Airport Rescue Facility (ARF), enterprise fund funding, capacity for a medical helicopter, a potential road to Casperson Beach, the green space provided with keeping the golf course, public education, potential revenues for the enterprise fund, Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) ownership of the airport, the City managing it, perimeter fencing, T-hangar wait list, infield area 120 to 130 T-hangars, and status of the new administrative building.

There was consensus to direct staff to engage with the Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) to discuss the golf course lease, explore a road to Casperson Beach, continue with the master plan process, initiate discussions with the medical helicopter organization, and to continue the T-hangar process.

Recess was taken from 3:35 p.m. to 3:45 p.m.

[26-0485](#)

Goal Six: Preserve the Venice Quality of Life through Proper Planning

"Quality of Life Through Planning Pillar"

Discussion began regarding the policies/outcomes and objectives/priorities and policies, a plan for engaging youth, resiliency and sustainability, susceptible geographic areas, the Joint Planning Agreement (JPA), pace of growth, public education, and affordable/workforce housing.

Planning and Zoning Director Clark presented on the JPA, current conditions, additional areas to consider, negotiations to add land to the agreement, and advantages of having the JPA.

Discussion took place on potential areas to be considered for the JPA, there being few or no disadvantages of annexation for the City, utilities, JPA parameters, shape of city, and infrastructure for the current JPA.

[26-0486](#)

New Goals/Pillars

Facilitator Thomas reviewed points on what Council wants to address in Venice, reaffirmed the rebranding of the logo with a unified City brand representing the overall perception of Venice.

Discussion continued on raising City stormwater standards, Land Development Regulations (LDR) improvements, and Senate Bill 180

restrictions.

VII. Strategic Planning Journey

Discussion took place on the strategic visioning and planning process, City Council envisioning, staff planning, City Council reviews, staff adjusts, Council adopts, aligning budget with strategic plan, ongoing evaluation, and citizen input.

VIII. Next Steps and Wrap Up

City Manager Clinch stated a draft of the plan will be coming to Council in late March, and thanked staff for their participation.

IX. Audience Participation

There was no public comment.

X. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:41 p.m.