



City of Margate

5790 Margate Boulevard
Margate, FL 33063
954-972-6454
www.margatefl.com

Meeting Minutes

City Commission Budget Workshop

Mayor Arlene R. Schwartz

Vice Mayor Antonio V. Arserio

Commissioners:

Anthony N. Caggiano, Tommy Ruzzano, Joanne Simone

City Manager Cale Curtis

City Attorney Weiss Serota Helfman Cole & Bierman

City Clerk Jennifer M. Johnson

Wednesday, July 9, 2025

3:30 PM

Commission Chambers and Zoom.us

Webinar ID: 885 2329 7632

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88523297632>

CALL TO ORDER

MOMENT OF SILENCE

The Moment of Silence was called before the Roll Call.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance followed after the Moment of Silence.

ROLL CALL

The Roll Call was read after the Pledge of Allegiance.

1) PRESENTATION(S)

A. [ID 2025-183](#) COMPENSATION AND CLASSIFICATION STUDY

CITY MANAGER, CALE CURTIS, thanked the staff for their attendance at this afternoon's City Commission Budget Workshop. He explained that last year, Margate engaged the services of the Gehring Group to perform a City-wide Compensation & Classification Study and that the Consultants, who were present, had concluded their report and had provided some recommended pay scales for consideration.

SENIOR DIRECTOR, HUMAN CAPITAL ADVISORY SERVICES OF THE GEHRING GROUP INC. (GGI) JOHN MULLER introduced himself and delivered a PowerPoint presentation where he provided a bullet point overview and described their methodology and approach. He explained that once all the information was collated, with the City's input, GGI would then conduct a complete overall assessment of the City's current plan and pay practices together with reviewing all of the job descriptions where this would be compared to 16 local municipalities based on percentiles. He advised that GGI analyzed that approximately 426 employees would need some sort of adjustment to place them into the new proposed pay plan which would cost approximately \$500,000 to implement. He said that this would equate to a 1% increase with the inclusion of insurance, taxes and pension.

HUMAN RESOURCES (HR) AND RISK CONSULTANT, GGI, KRISTEN BIAZAR confirmed that if the City implemented all of their recommendations, the numbers did take into account the Federation of Public Employees (FPE), non-bargaining, Police and Fire Departments.

Discussion ensued including a question and answer session.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS explained that implementing this meant slotting the employees into a certain pay grade and City-wide, this would amount to \$495,000 which would not account for future Cost of Living Adjustment (CoLA) and steps. He explained that the intent would be that the City would implement it first as the benchmarks were based on current year salaries and then CoLA and steps thereafter.

GGI MULLER explained that their recommendations were to adjust the pay grades and ranges, to present those proposed recommendations as needed to the collective bargaining and to apply the CoLA and steps in the next fiscal year.

Discussion ensued including a question and answer session with the City Commission.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS sought CONSENSUS to implement the pay grades for fiscal year 2025 and CoLA and steps going forward which would be part of the final budget that they would adopt in September. He explained that every employee would be part of the new pay grade and as implemented, it would be slotted into the next nearest step that they were at and would also affect employees that had topped-out for a number of years. He informed that the strategy for implementing this was fiscally responsible which was not over the top and it was important that every few years, the City reviewed their salaries and compensations and compare it with other municipalities in order to remain competitive and attract and retain good quality staff. He explained that this proposal would have to be negotiated with the respective collective bargaining groups.

COMMISSIONER, ANTHONY N. CAGGIANO, believed that the City always felt it was always important to ensure that the City was competitive and that it was less expensive to retain good employees then it was to hire new members of staff and have to train them. He confirmed that he had no problem with the proposal and thanked City Manager Curtis for looking into this.

VICE MAYOR, ANTONIO V. ARSERIO, had always been an advocate for their employees salaries and benefits and referenced paid maternity leave. He confirmed that he was in support of this and that a professional study was conducted.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS forewarned that the implementation was not going to put Margate at the top of those 16 municipalities but he wanted the City to be as competitive as possible whilst being fiscally responsible.

COMMISSIONER, JOANNE SIMONE thanked GGI for their study where she indicated that their research was thorough and that their findings appeared to be very fair for the City's employees. She said that Margate had tremendous employees and that she was fully in support of this initiative and how the City Manager wanted to implement the same. She liked the City to be competitive and retain staff rather than leave due to the pay and had noted that they had been dedicated to Margate and had stayed all these years.

MAYOR, ARLENE R. SCHWARTZ advised that there was no change to starting salaries.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS summed up by saying that there was no formal action at this meeting but he heard CONSENSUS that the City Commission was:

- Supportive of the new pay grades; and
- Supportive of the implementation plan.

He confirmed that the next steps would be for the City to incorporate that into the next round of budget which would be presented in September and he would begin contacting the unions to negotiate the implementation for them as well.

B. [ID 2025-148](#)

FY 2025-2026 BUDGET WORKSHOP

CITY MANAGER CURTIS introduced the next Item as the FY2025-2026 Budget Workshop. He thanked Finance Director Diaz and Budget Manager Smith-Burke and expressed gratitude to all the staff who was involved in preparing the proposed Budget (PB) which he said was a huge team effort and explained the extent of the preparation that was involved.

FINANCE DIRECTOR, ISMAEL DIAZ, welcomed everyone to the FY2026 Budget presentation which he said took six months to put together. He thanked the staff and informed that they prepared the budget in the new Enterprise resource planning (ERP) system and announced that they would be going live in the next couple of months.

BUDGET MANAGER, DECIA A. SMITH-BURKE, welcomed everyone to the FY 2026 PB Workshop where she provided a PowerPoint presentation. She explained that the PB was a Policy Document, Operations Guide, Financial Plan and a Communications Device which she analogized to a Global Positioning System (GPS). She referenced a chart and said that the millage rate had been stable for the last couple of years with it remaining at 7.1171 since FY2020 while the debt services millages have been declining over the last few years. She said that the total proposed millage for FY2026 is 7.5389 which was a reduction of 0.278 at approximately \$140,000. She advised that the taxable values and the operating millage rates were used to calculate the tax revenue and said that for FY2026, it included an increase of estimated revenue of 6.5% based Broward County Property Appraiser (BCPA) June 1st values. She advised that the City budgeted approximately \$2,200,000 in additional ad valorem revenue and that the change in property values due to an increase in the payment to the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) of approximately \$360,000 which means the net change in general fund budget was \$1,800,000. She outlined the overall property values of Margate was lower than the average of Broward County and that over 7% of Margate residents paid no ad valorem revenue taxes and over 30% paid less than \$500 for a year worth of services. She continued to go through the presentation by highlighting that Margate had one of the most reasonable tax burdens when averaging homesteaded single-family compared to other cities in BC. She also highlighted that Margate was in the lowest six when highlighting the Operating Revenue Per Capita Comparison and advised that the City did a lot with a lean budget and that they only made up 1/3 of the tax bill. She read through some of the budget items that were being deployed for the FY2026 PB year which included increasing funding in key areas such as public safety, infrastructure and trimming where needed. She informed that the FY2026 PB totaled \$255,000,000 which was a 11.63 decrease from the current amended budget which was probably attributed to the City's Department of Environmental and Engineering Services (DEES) Capital Improvement Fund. She said that the FY2026 General PB was \$85,300,000 and she highlighted that the biggest proposed revenue adjustment was in the Other Sources/Fund Transfers category as a result of their projected fund balance and that the Fire and Police took the lion share of expenditures at 55%. She said that the ad valorem taxes were increasing by 6.49% pending July 1st update of numbers. She continued to highlight the

General Fund and Improvement Program capita and Infrastructure projects. She summed up her FY2026 PB summary and repeated that the total millage rate would decrease 7.5389 as of June 2025 which was a reduction of .0278 and she asked for CONSENSUS to set the ceiling for the millage rate which was slightly lower than last year and advised that the rate could not increase.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ emphasized that this would be the seventh year in a row that the operating millage had not changed.

VICE MAYOR ARSERIO advised that legally, the City had to advertise it as an increase as they were not rollback but the reality was that the total millage collected from residents had decreased every year for the last seven years.

Discussion ensued.

COMMISSIONER CAGGIANO questioned Information Technology (IT) Director Garmon whether to the best of their ability, he had enough money in his budget to minimize against hackers. He said that it was also important that the City should ensure that the Wastewater treatment plant was going to be good for the next 40 years.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS said that IT Director Garmon did not have a microphone but believed that the City was covered in a way to mitigate their risks.

FINANCE DIRECTOR DIAZ confirmed to Mayor Schwartz that Margate had not increased the operating millage and commented that although the City would receive a DEES bond, it would not affect the millage rate.

COMMISSIONER TOMMY RUZZANO was curious as to where the figures derived from which were outlined in the FY2026 PB and referenced the average home sale price was \$200,000.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ explained to Commissioner Ruzzano that the information derived from the BCPA and was not what it necessary sold for.

Discussion ensued.

COMMISSIONER RUZZANO expressed that the Finance Department and the Directors did an incredible job. He hoped that the pedestrian bridge project could be accomplished and referenced that the estimated cost was far more economical 13 years ago. He said that the City should contact the Broward County School Board (BCSB) to see if they could do a matching grant. He commented that he heard about the City Commission Chambers for years. He referenced four/five day work week as well as setting up a daycare for kids for Margate employees.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS explained that the City rebudgeted the City Commission Chambers and said that ideally through City Center Development, they will get some form of reconstruction of a City Hall, if not, they will look at doing some upgrades starting with audio and visual.

Discussion ensued including a four/five day work week and a hybrid work schedule.

BUDGET MANAGER SMITH-BURKE explained the next steps were:

- The City Commission sets the millage rate ceiling;

- The Budget Message and PB submitted to the City Commission by August 15th;
- 1st Public hearing on Wednesday, September 10, 2025; and
- 2nd Public hearing on Wednesday, September 17, 2025.

She thanked the City Commission for their time, attention and dedication and opened the floor to questions.

VICE MAYOR ARSERIO repeated that the overall millage was decreasing for the seventh year in a row. He advised that there were many Homeowners Associations (HOA) that charge more than taxes and that it demonstrated how well the City budgeted their money and the services that they provided. He questioned the City Manager how much flexibility there was in the budget if they wanted to increase an item.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS explained to Vice Mayor Arserio that it was a difficult question to answer but the current budget had a \$4,500,000 deficit which was normal for the City. He advised that typically at year end when their actuals came in, they would typically amend and beat their revenue projections resulting in the City being under on their expenses and over the last few years, Margate had been fortunate where they were putting money back into fund balance. He said that in the \$4,500,000, that included the additional personnel for the Fire Department but did not include the implementation of the compensation and classification study which was a \$500,000 plus steps so that they would be looking at additional funds on top of that amount. He thought that the City was still in a safe area where at year end, they would break even or close to putting money back in. He confirmed that the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) deal with BC was finalized.

VICE MAYOR ARSERIO referenced the completion of the downtown area and questioned whether the City could stop payments to the CRA or drastically reduce what they were contributing at this point.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS advised that by law, the City had to contribute a minimum of 50% towards the CRA and currently, they were paying 100%. He explained that the CRA had projects they budgeted for that would require dollars and they were flushed with cash that had been used in negotiations for a downtown development to get certain amenities as needed. He advised that as the CRA continued, there were projects that were in there that they wanted to finish off and not whittle down on the fund balance that it had and the projects included property improvement and commercial grants and land acquisition. He believed that the City would be very safe to start reduction and decrease to paying 80% which would freeze up approximately \$1,500,000. He confirmed that this could not be effected immediately.

VICE MAYOR ARSERIO sought CONSENSUS to research reducing the Tax Increment Financing (TIF) contribution to around 80% based on the City Manager's recommendation.

COMMISSIONER CAGGIANO confirmed that both the CRA Chair and Director have spoken about this and they have come to a 20% drop which was still durable to maintain a good CRA.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS confirmed that if there were no further questions on the CRA, he would take that as CONSENSUS on the City's reduction to 80%.

Discussion ensued on the downtown and the CRA.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ polled the City Commission on whether the City should reduce its CRA contribution to 80%.

COMMISSIONER RUZZANO – Yes;
COMMISSIONER CAGGIANO – Yes;
COMMISSIONER SIMONE – Yes;
VICE MAYOR ARSERIO – Yes; and
MAYOR SCHWARTZ – Yes.

VICE MAYOR ARSERIO referenced home values in Broward County and Margate's aesthetic property improvements and said that he would like to see the budget increased to \$600,000 - \$750,000 pertaining to median/landscape/curb appeal improvements.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ commented that it would be really nice to look at particular cities and make Margate look as nice as they did.

Discussion ensued.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS explained that the \$500,000 was going to add a significant amount of tree canopy on Rock Island Road. He said that he would notate this for review and repeated that any changes that they make, they would incorporate into the budget amendment in November.

VICE MAYOR ARSERIO pointed out that their budget was less than 1% of the City's budget.

COMMISSIONER CAGGIANO was a big fan of not touching the general fund but just wanted to ensure that there was enough money in the same to cover a major problem such as a hurricane. He repeated that he liked and was thrilled with what they did with the budget and said that the presentation was awesome. He reminisced when the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) visited Margate last April.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ explained that the City Commission were having more in-depth conversations with individual departments pertaining to the budget and therefore, the meetings should not take as long as past Budget Workshops.

Discussion ensued.

COMMISSIONER SIMONE commented on the PowerPoint presentation and referenced that a 9% tax bill went to other entities such as the HCA Florida Northwest Hospital and also the Children's Services Council of Broward County (CSCBC) and asked what the latter entailed and whether it also incorporated the contributions made towards the Children's Village as well as CSCBC.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS responded to Commissioner Simone's questions and said that he believed that they were separate entities.

Discussion ensued.

COMMISSIONER SIMONE commented on the certificate frames increasing from \$5,000 - \$13,000 which she believed was an unnecessary expense and referenced that the children who received certificates for essay writing at the Memorial Day Ceremony were not presented in a frame. She also included the Students and Teachers of the Month commenting that some had received it more than once. She was not opposed to

providing frames for a very special occasion but thought it was an unnecessary expense for everybody to receive framed certificates. She questioned what events pertaining to membership, league, conferences, promotional activity and travel entailed as they were significantly increasing.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS referenced the subscription memberships and league dues. He explained that the membership events were based annually from the various organizations and the conference costs associated with them were based on how they were annually and how many City Commissioners traveled to the same and he also explained how it changed when they did not used to do so much traveling.

Discussion ensued.

COMMISSIONER SIMONE explained that she had an issue with the Mayor's Gala and asked that in the future, not to purchase tables of 10 and suggested that the City Commissioner who wanted to attend should utilize the revenue from their travel or office accounts. She expressed that annually, there was an issue as not all of the City Commission attended and were looking to find replacements to fill the table of 10.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ being advised that the reason why a table of 10 was purchased was due to the City being represented in one place at one time but she understood Commissioner Simone's sentiments.

Discussion ensued.

VICE MAYOR ARSERIO concurred with Commissioner Simone's comments pertaining to the big increase in the cost of the frames and suggested that discretion should be applied. He also commented on the Conference and fees. He indicated that it was a good job to everyone involved in the budget.

Discussion ensued on frames and Conferences.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ referenced Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds going from \$200,000 - \$950,000.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS referenced the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) that went into CDBG and went via BC.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF FINANCE, JACQUELINE CHIN-KIDD, said that Mayor Schwartz may have been looking at budgets versus actuals and that it was some residual funds that carried over from year to year and that the City did not necessarily spend them.

Discussion ensued.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ referenced the Seminole contract and said that the City used to receive money from the Casino.

DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF FINANCE CHIN-KIDD advised that the City received approximately \$140,000 this year from Seminole.

Discussion ensued.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ commented that the City should look for 100% of performance measures. She applauded the Finance Department for tightening their belts and

decreasing the percentage to 39.38%. She questioned if the City perused for new health insurance quotes. She referenced HR pertaining to payroll professional services medical, page 37.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS advised that the City reviewed health insurance policies every other year and 2024 was the last time this was conducted. He said that it was the physicals that were performed for pre-employment pertaining to HR's payroll professional services.

Discussion ensued.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ referenced Development Services (DS) and questioned a \$300,000 increase and personnel. She was curious of the car leasing program was saving the City money.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS said that you would compare the actual budgets to the amended or PB which include the salary for a vacant Assistant Director position in DS. He said that it remained to be seen if the City would save money on the car leasing program. He explained that the City was entering their fifth year which was when they would start to swap them out which would indicate if they would receive a significant return on those vehicles when they sold them back.

Discussion ensued.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ praised IT. She questioned whether the CRA paid for any of the positions that were in Public Works (PW).

CITY MANAGER CURTIS did not believe that the CRA paid for any positions in PW. She referenced PW's performance measures and commented on vehicle preventive maintenance performed on time.

FINANCE DIRECTOR DIAZ explained that those figures were included in the costs analysis.

Discussion ensued.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ sought explanation on the 6,550% increase on capital and referenced page 68.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS provided explanation via the PowerPoint slide.

Discussion ensued.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ referenced Parks and Recreation on page 75 and questioned if the increase in salary and wages was because the City was not taking the lease.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS advised that it was rebudgeted from the Administration budget to the Recreational budget.

Discussion ensued.

PARKS AND RECREATION DIRECTOR, MICHAEL A. JONES, did not have the specific page in front of him but did know that they were working with the Finance Department and HR as his department had many new positions that were not budgeted for last year that

were added but not necessarily in the right division.

Discussion ensued.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ referenced page 77 under operating expenses.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS explained that the City was increasing their level of service on irrigation maintenance as well as median maintenance for that item.

Discussion ensued.

CITY MANAGER CURTIS sought CONSENSUS on the PB on the maximum millage rate.

MAYOR SCHWARTZ polled the City Commission

COMMISSIONER RUZZANO – Yes;
COMMISSIONER CAGGIANO – Yes;
COMMISSIONER SIMONE – Yes;
VICE MAYOR ARSERIO – Yes; and
MAYOR SCHWARTZ – Yes.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:09pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Transcribed by Salene E. Edwards


Jennifer M. Johnson, City Clerk

Date: 8/21/2025

PLEASE NOTE:

If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the City Commission with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, the person will need a record of the proceedings, and for such purpose may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based. Anyone desiring a verbatim transcript shall have the responsibility, at his/her own expense, to arrange for the transcript.

[Unified Land Development Code – Section 40.300(C)] Any representation made before any City Board, any Administrative Board, or the City Commission in the application for a variance, special exception, conditional use or request for any other permit shall be deemed a condition of the granting of the permit. Should any representation be false or should said representation not be continued as represented, same shall be deemed a violation of the permit and a violation of this section.

Any person with a disability requiring auxiliary aids and services for this meeting may call the City Clerk's office at (954) 972-6454 with their request at least two business days prior to the meeting date.

One or more members of the City of Margate Boards may be in attendance and may participate at the meeting.

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