Town Council Members Present
Zane Teeters, Jr. – Mayor
Cheryl Marinelli – Vice-Mayor
Kay MacQueen – Council Member
Susan Richert - Council Member
Kim Hanawalt – Council Member

Town Staff
Charles Jacien, Town Clerk
Wally Hoagland, Police Chief
David Langley, Attorney
Tom Harowski – Town Planner
Larry Story – Public Works Supervisor
Dawn Teeters-Community Events

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Zane Teeters called the Regular Town Council Meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Pastor Lane of Astatula Baptist Church delivered the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL: All Present

A quorum was present, and the meeting was properly noticed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Farmer Banks Helfrich spoke regarding America's history, diversity, religious freedom, and the importance of national unity. He identified himself as a candidate for Florida House District 25.

Ryan Wilbur commented on social media activity and alleged that personal information and photographs were being posted online. He stated that he intended to continue presenting what he believed to be factual information.

Miriam Gomes requested that acronyms and abbreviations that appear on Town agendas and documents be written out so residents could better understand the subjects being discussed. Mayor Teeters stated that staff would investigate the request.

Bob Grenier, Vice Mayor of the City of Tavares, introduced himself and the Mayor of Tavares. He discussed his family's historical connection to Astatula and stated that he had visited the area since the 1970s.

Brad Minger spoke at length regarding public safety, parking restrictions, police take-home vehicles, and proposed charter amendments.

Mr. Minger stated that no-parking signs were necessary to preserve access for fire trucks, sanitation vehicles, maintenance vehicles, and emergency responders. He also supported police take-home vehicles, stating that they could improve emergency response times, increase police visibility, reduce vehicle maintenance expenses, and assist with recruitment and retention.

Mr. Minger expressed concern that the proposed charter amendment could allow the Town Council to eliminate the Police Department. Mayor Teeters stated that the Town had not decided to eliminate the Police Department. He explained that he and the Town Clerk had met with the Lake County Sheriff's

Office as part of a fact-finding process to determine possible alternatives if proposed state property-tax changes substantially reduced Town revenue.

Mayor Teeters stated that the Police Department represented a significant portion of the Town's budget and that the Council had a responsibility to consider all options before a financial emergency occurred. He emphasized that any charter amendment would be presented to the voters for approval and would not, by itself, eliminate the Police Department.

Mr. Minger suggested that the Town consider changing to a council-manager form of government. Council and the Town Attorney discussed that such a change would require multiple charter revisions and voter approval. Mayor Teeters noted that similar proposals had previously been rejected by Town voters.

Discussion also occurred regarding Police Department staffing levels, fuel expenses, take-home vehicle policies, Town staffing costs, future ad valorem revenue, and the need to maintain public safety while balancing the budget.

AGENDA REVIEW

Council Member MacQueen requested that Item 7 be moved earlier on the agenda because of the amount of public interest. Mayor Teeters declined the request, stating that the matter had already been discussed extensively during public comment.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council reviewed the June 9, 2026 Regular Council Meeting minutes. A correction was noted on page 8.

Motion: Approve the June 9, 2026 Regular Council Meeting minutes with the stated correction, By S. Richert, Seconded by K. Hanawalt
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0.

STAFF REPORTS

Police Department and Code Enforcement

Chief Hoagland reported that Code Enforcement worked 13 cases during the month, closed seven cases, and had six cases remaining open. He stated that progress had been made on property cleanup along Madison Street.

The Police Department reported:

- 441 calls for service
- 22 citations
- 179 written warnings
- 6 arrests

Chief Hoagland stated that the school-zone speed cameras were inactive for the summer.

Chief Hoagland requested Council direction regarding a food distribution event proposed for September 19, 2026. He explained that the community building was available and that the distributor needed an answer promptly.

Council expressed support for the event and directed Chief Hoagland to proceed. Members noted that the event would benefit families shortly after the beginning of the school year.

Chief Hoagland also explained the school-zone camera enforcement process. He stated that an officer reviews each recorded violation before a notice is issued. A vehicle must generally be traveling at least 11 miles per hour over the posted speed limit before a violation is generated.

He explained that drivers may contest the notice before the Town's Special Magistrate and may later elect to proceed through traffic court. Chief Hoagland stated that some camera citations had been dismissed after a judge declined to hear certain cases.

Council also asked how much revenue the Town receives from regular traffic citations. Chief Hoagland explained that citation revenue is divided among numerous state, county, and other agencies, leaving the Town with only a portion of the total fine.

Public Works

Council Member Marinelli requested that Public Works contact Lake County regarding drainage and standing water near the southwest corner of the intersection adjacent to Town Hall. She stated that water collected near the accessible sidewalk ramp and remained for several days, creating a hazard.

Public Works agreed to contact Lake County.

Town Attorney

Attorney David Langley reported that he had prepared a K-9 transfer and hold-harmless agreement for the eventual placement of retired Police K-9 Louie.

He explained that the agreement could be used regardless of whether Louie was placed with his former handler, another qualified individual, or a K-9 retirement organization.

Town Clerk

The Town Clerk reported that he and Mayor Teeters met with Lake County planning officials regarding the establishment of an Interlocal Service Boundary Area around the Town. He explained that the boundary would help identify the areas in which the Town could pursue future annexations.

The Town Clerk stated that the Town's Comprehensive Plan would require an update and that the preliminary estimated cost was approximately $72,000.

He also reported that a proposed impact-fee study was estimated to cost approximately $42,000. He stated that both matters would require further financial discussion.

The first budget workshop was proposed for July 23, 2026, at 5:00 p.m., immediately before the Planning and Zoning Board meeting.

The Town Clerk reported that staff had completed four public-records requests and was continuing to work on three additional requests. He stated that some requests required only a few minutes, while others required days of staff time.

Staff continued working with the Town's website vendor. The projected launch date for the new website was late September, provided the Town completed the required content and document submissions.

The Town Clerk reported continued weekly meetings with the Town's accountants, review of the current budget, preparation of the next fiscal-year budget, and preparation for the annual audit.

He stated that the Town had more than three months of available operating funds and approximately 35 percent of the budget in reserves. He described the Town's current financial position as stable but cautioned that careful financial management remained necessary.

The Town Clerk also discussed gaps in code-enforcement and field-inspection services. He stated that Town code enforcement was complaint-based and that staff did not routinely inspect every new fence, shed, pool, or development improvement. He noted that an above-ground swimming pool had recently been discovered because of a high water bill rather than through an inspection.

He advised that the Town was reviewing enterprise resource planning systems, accounting software, utility-billing software, payroll systems, and electronic employee timekeeping options. He stated that QuickBooks did not provide all of the reporting required for municipal fund accounting.

Community Events

The Community Events Coordinator announced the annual backpack event for August 1, 2026, from 11:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m.

The event was expected to include:

- Backpacks and school supplies
- Hot dogs
- Bounce houses
- A dunk tank
- Child fingerprinting for parents' records
- Preliminary eye screenings
- Haircuts
- Snow cones

OLD BUSINESS

ORDINANCE 2026-04 – REZONING OF 14015 TENNESSEE AVENUE

The Town Planner summarized the request to rezone property located at 14015 Tennessee Avenue from Agricultural to R-1, Single-Family Low-Density Residential.

He stated that the requested zoning was consistent with the Town's Comprehensive Plan and with nearby residential zoning. The applicant intended to divide the property into two parcels of approximately four to five acres each.

The Planner explained that the rezoning was required before the applicant could receive approval of the proposed lot split. The lot-split application would be presented to the Planning and Zoning Board.

Motion: Read Ordinance 2026-04 by title only By S, Richert, Seconded by Z Teeters
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0, by Roll Call

The ordinance was read by title. No public comment was received.

Motion: Approve Ordinance 2026-04, By S. Richert, Seconded by K. Hanawalt
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0, by Roll Call

PROCLAMATION 2026-02 – RETIREMENT OF POLICE K-9 LOUIE

Council presented Proclamation 2026-02 honoring Police K-9 Louie for more than six years of service to the Town of Astatula and neighboring law-enforcement agencies.

The proclamation recognized Louie's participation in narcotics investigations, arrests, suspect apprehensions, and assistance to surrounding police departments.

Chief Hoagland reported that Louie's former handler was not able to permanently house him. He requested Council direction regarding placement.

Council discussed contacting organizations that specialize in evaluating and rehoming retired police dogs. Council members stated that Louie should be placed in an appropriate retirement setting rather than returned to active service.

Staff reported that an organization involved in placing a prior Town K-9 was willing to evaluate Louie and recommend a suitable placement based on his temperament and needs.

Mayor Teeters stated that it had never been his intention to harm or euthanize Louie. Council members agreed that Louie would receive the safe and comfortable retirement he deserved.

NEW BUSINESS

2024-2025 FINANCIAL AUDIT

Tammy Campbell of McDermott presented an overview of the substantially completed 2024-2025 financial audit.

Ms. Campbell reported that the Town's governmental and enterprise funds received unmodified audit opinions, which she described as the best type of opinion available.

The government-wide opinion remained modified because the Town had elected not to implement the accounting standard concerning potential other post-employment benefit liabilities. She stated that many small municipalities made the same decision because the required actuarial calculation would provide limited practical benefit.

Ms. Campbell reported:

- Assets increased by approximately $800,000
- Liabilities increased by approximately $150,000
- Revenues increased by approximately $640,000
- Expenses increased by approximately $380,000
- The unrestricted General Fund balance equaled approximately four months of expenditures
- The Water Fund had approximately $340,000 in unrestricted net position
- Prior reconciliation concerns had been corrected
- Most prior-year management comments had been resolved

Council asked whether the audit was late because it covered the 2024-2025 fiscal year. Ms. Campbell explained that the audit covered the fiscal year ending September 30, 2025, and that the Town remained within the required reporting period.

Mayor Teeters asked for a plain-language summary. Ms. Campbell stated that the Town had adequate savings, enough liquid funds to operate between revenue collections, and was in good overall financial condition.

She stated that the auditors found no missing funds or financial irregularities.

DEPARTMENT OF GOVERNMENT EFFICIENCY RECORDS REQUEST

Council discussed a records request received from the Florida Department of Government Efficiency.

The Town Clerk reported that staff spent more than 90 hours compiling approximately 2,000 pages of records. He stated that the request placed a substantial burden on the Town's small administrative staff but that the Town completed the response.

Council discussed whether the request was routine or resulted from complaints submitted to the State. Members questioned why the request focused heavily on administrative operations, volunteers, contracts, and financial records rather than the Police Department.

Discussion arose regarding volunteer records requested from Council Member MacQueen. Mayor Teeters and other members stated that elected officials were required to provide responsive public records in their possession.

Council Member MacQueen stated that she had sought legal advice and believed she was not required to participate in the response in the manner requested. Other members expressed concern that failing to provide records could place the Town out of compliance.

Members of the audience attempted to participate from the gallery. Mayor Teeters directed the audience to maintain order, and one attendee was instructed to leave after repeatedly speaking out.

A resident asked whether the State had been notified that some requested records were unavailable or had not been provided. Staff stated that the State had been informed.

No formal action was taken.

POLICY 2026-01 – BUDGET TRANSPARENCY POLICY

Mayor Teeters presented a policy establishing regular fiscal reporting and enhanced budget transparency.

He stated that the policy was intended to:

- Provide timely and understandable financial reports
- Increase public access to budget information
- Identify possible budget problems early
- Improve long-term planning
- Formalize Council oversight
- Support compliance with Florida law

The policy did not authorize new spending or create additional financial obligations.

Motion: Approve Budget Transparency Policy 2026-01, by S. Richert, Seconded by Z. Teeters
Vote: Approved, 4-1, by Roll Call, K. MacQueen voted No

WATER-SYSTEM UPGRADE PROJECT

The Town Clerk reported that four bids were received for the Town's water-system upgrade project.

The Town had been awarded $700,000 in Community Development Block Grant funding and was awaiting final approval of approximately $2.8 million in State Revolving Fund financing.

He stated that approximately $1.23 million would be repaid over 20 years at an interest rate of approximately 1.61 percent. Repayment would come from utility revenues rather than the General Fund.

The Town's engineer recommended awarding the project to SGS Contracting Services, Inc., for $3,038,700, contingent upon final loan approval.

The project would include:

- A 250,000-gallon concrete storage tank
- Improvements to existing wells and pumps

- A new high-service pumping system
- Electrical and control improvements
- Associated piping and infrastructure
- Lightning protection

A backup generator was not included in the grant or loan financing and would have to be funded separately by the utility system.

Council discussed current water-system capacity, the condition of the existing equipment, future customer growth, and the effect of loan repayment on water rates.

The Town Clerk stated that the current system was at or near capacity and that some components were nearing the end of their useful life. He explained that the improvements were necessary not only for new development but also to provide service to existing residents whose private wells had failed or experienced water-quality problems.

A resident questioned why the Town would incur a large loan while also discussing possible losses in tax revenue. Staff explained that the water utility was financially separate from the General Fund and that only utility customers would pay the debt through water rates.

Staff acknowledged that water rates would increase over time but stated that the project had been structured so that rates would not need to increase drastically solely because of the loan.

During the discussion, Council approved extending the meeting.

Motion: Extend the meeting, By S. Richert, Seconded by Z. Teeters
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0.

Motion: Award the water-system upgrade project to SGS Contracting Services, Inc., contingent upon final loan approval, By S. Richert, Seconded by Z. Teeters.
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0, by Roll Call

LAKE COUNTY CDBG COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

The Town Clerk explained that Lake County required the Town to approve a cooperative agreement in order to participate in the upcoming three-year Community Development Block Grant cycle.

He stated that participation would allow the Town to apply for future grant opportunities without preventing the Town from pursuing other funding sources.

Motion: Approve participation in the cooperative agreement with Lake County for the Community Development Block Grant Program, by Z Teeters, Seconded by S. Richert.
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0.

RESOLUTION 2026-13 – CDBG PARTICIPATION

Motion: Read Resolution 2026-13 by title only, by Z. Teeters, Seconded by S. Richert.
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0.

The resolution authorized participation in Lake County's Urban County Community Development Block Grant Program.

No public comment was received.

Motion: Approve Resolution 2026-13, by S. Richert, Seconded by C. Marinelli
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0, by Roll Call

ORDINANCE 2026-07 – POLICE DEPARTMENT CHARTER AMENDMENT

Council considered the first reading of Ordinance 2026-07, proposing an amendment to Section 5 of the Town Charter.

The current Charter states that the Town shall maintain a Police Department. The proposed amendment would remove that mandatory requirement and allow the Town to consider alternative methods of providing public safety services.

A resident questioned whether the ordinance should use the word "shall" rather than "must." Attorney Langley stated that the legal effect was substantially the same but agreed that the word "shall" would be clearer and more consistent with the existing Charter.

Council directed that the title and language be corrected before second reading.

Mayor Teeters reiterated that the ordinance would not eliminate the Police Department. If approved after second reading, the proposed amendment would be submitted to the voters for approval.

Motion: Read Ordinance 2026-07 by title only by S. Richert, Seconded by K. Hanawalt
Vote: Approved, 4-1 Roll Call with K. MacQueen voting No

Motion: Approve the first reading of Ordinance 2026-07, By S. Richert, Seconded by K. Hanawalt.
Vote: Approved, 4-1 by Roll Call with K. MacQueen voting No

NO-PARKING ORDINANCE – ASTATULA RESERVE

Mayor Teeters explained that the proposed ordinance applied only to the Astatula Reserve subdivision.

The Lake County Fire Marshal had originally required no-parking signs at frequent intervals because of the width of the subdivision streets and the need to maintain emergency access.

After discussions among the Town, the developer, the engineer, and the Fire Marshal, the Fire Marshal agreed that the number of signs could be reduced if the Town adopted an enforceable no-parking ordinance.

The proposed ordinance would prohibit parking on the fire-hydrant side of the street, allowing parking on only one side. Mayor Teeters stated that this would preserve two lanes of access for emergency vehicles and keep fire hydrants unobstructed.

The developer would purchase and install the signs. The Town would assume responsibility for future maintenance and replacement.

Attorney Langley requested additional time to review the ordinance.

Motion: Table the first reading of the no-parking ordinance until the next meeting, By S. Richert, Seconded by K. Hanawalt.
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0.

PARK IMPROVEMENT GRANT MATCH

Mayor Teeters reported that Lake County had awarded the Town $110,000 for improvements at Kirkwood and Swaffer Parks.

The grant was originally intended for improvements near the boat ramp, but that project did not proceed after the proposed property acquisition became too expensive. The County permitted the Town to reallocate the funds to the parks.

The grant required an equal $110,000 Town match.

Possible improvements included restrooms, community-building repairs, and other park upgrades. Mayor Teeters stated that restroom construction costs were expected to exceed $100,000 because septic improvements would be required.

The Town Clerk recommended using General Fund reserves for the local match. He stated that the reserve balance was sufficient and would remain above the recommended level after the expenditure.

Motion: Approve the $110,000 local match for the Park Improvement Program, by S. Richert, Seconded by K. MacQueen
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0, by Roll Call

PROPOSED ADDITION OF PAID HOLIDAYS

Council Member Marinelli proposed adding Juneteenth and Columbus Day as paid Town employee holidays.

The estimated annual cost was approximately $8,568.

Council Member Marinelli stated that Town employees worked hard, received modest salaries, and deserved the additional days off.

Other members stated that many employers did not close for every federal holiday and questioned whether the additional cost was fiscally responsible given the Town's current financial concerns.

Members also noted that the holidays were not mandated by Lake County or the State of Florida.

A motion was made to approve the additional paid holidays, by C. Marinelli

Result: The motion failed for lack of a second.

G-WORKS, POWERDMS, AND EMPLOYEE TIMEKEEPING

Council Member Marinelli requested an update on G-Works and PowerDMS, which she understood had been purchased to provide multiple administrative functions.

The Town Clerk explained that the Town had purchased utility-billing and accounting software from G-Works after being advised that the existing UBMAX program would be phased out.

He stated that the Town had not received the promised accounting system and that the software presented by G-Works did not meet the Town's needs.

The Town Clerk reported that the Town had paid a substantial amount toward the system but continued to receive delays, changing onboarding dates, and limited responses from the vendor.

Council members expressed concern that the Town had paid for a system it had not received. Attorney Langley was directed to review the contract and determine the Town's legal options.

Chief Hoagland reported that PowerDMS was operational. The system would be used to distribute Town and Police Department policies, maintain current policy versions, and record employee acknowledgment.

Council then discussed employee timekeeping. Members expressed concern regarding handwritten timesheets, excessive overtime, employees failing to record meal periods, and the absence of reliable electronic verification.

Chief Hoagland explained that the Police Department's computer-aided dispatch system recorded when officers entered and left service, but members stated that the system was difficult for payroll staff to review.

The Town Clerk reported that staff was reviewing Paychex and other systems that would allow employees to clock in and out electronically and integrate time records directly with payroll.

Council directed the Town Clerk to obtain pricing and recommendations for an electronic payroll and timekeeping system and return the information at the next meeting.

ORDINANCE 2026-05 – ELECTION YEARS AND VACANCIES

Attorney Langley explained that Ordinance 2026-05 would clarify the election years for Town Council seats and the length of appointments made to fill vacant seats.

Motion: Read Ordinance 2026-05 by title only by S. Richert, Seconded by K. MacQueen
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0.

Motion: Approve the first reading of Ordinance 2026-05 by S. Richert, Seconded by C. Marinelli
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0.

ORDINANCE 2026-06 – COUNCIL LIAISON DUTIES

Attorney Langley explained that Ordinance 2026-06 would remove Town Council liaison duty from Section 1 of the Town Charter.

Motion: Read Ordinance 2026-06 by title only by K. Hanawalt, Seconded by C. Marinelli
Vote: Approved, 4-1, with K. MacQueen voting No

Motion: Approve the first reading of Ordinance 2026-06, by K. Hanawalt seconded by C. Marinelli
Vote: Approved, 3-2, with S. Richert and K. MacQueen Voting No.

RESOLUTION 2026-14 – CHARTER REVIEW COMMITTEE

Attorney Langley explained that Resolution 2026-14 would create a Charter Review Committee to conduct a detailed review of the Town Charter and return recommendations to the Council.

Council discussed whether the committee should consist of five, six, or seven members.

Council agreed that the committee would consist of six members. Each Council member and the Mayor would appoint one member, and the Council would collectively select one additional member.

Council also directed the Town Attorney to correct typographical and grammatical errors before execution.

Motion: Read Resolution 2026-14 by title only by S. Richert, Seconded K. Hanawalt.
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0.

Motion: Approve Resolution 2026-14, changing the committee membership to six and authorizing the Town Attorney to correct typographical and grammatical errors, by Z. Teeters, seconded by S. Richert.
Vote: Approved unanimously, 5-0.

LIAISON AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

Council Member Richert announced that the Planning and Zoning Board would meet on July 23, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

The first budget workshop was scheduled for July 23, 2026, at 5:00 p.m.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Council Member MacQueen reported on activities at the Senior Gathering and the Patriot Project.

She stated that the care package had arrived in Africa but had not yet been delivered to its intended recipient because of travel restrictions.

She reported that the plant exchange program had been successful and requested approval to coordinate the distribution of free books during the August 1 backpack event.

Staff confirmed that the proposed book giveaway could be included.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 9:55 p.m.

Mayor: ______________________
Zane Teeters

Attest: ______________________
Town Clerk

Date Approved: 8-11-2026