

**MINUTES
CITY OF INDIAN ROCKS BEACH
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
TUESDAY, MAY 13, 2025 @ 6:00 P.M.
CHURCH OF THE ISLES**

200 24TH AVENUE INDIAN ROCKS BEACH, FLORIDA 33785

Mayor-Commissioner Houseberg called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance and a moment of silence.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor-Commissioner Denise Houseberg, Vice-Mayor Commissioner Janet Wilson, Commissioner Jude Bond, Commissioner John Bigelow, and Commissioner Hilary King.

OTHERS PRESENT: City Manager Gregg Mims, City Attorney Randy Mora, Finance Director Dan Carpenter, and City Clerk Lorin Kornijtschuk.

For continuity, items are listed in agenda order, although not necessarily discussed in that order.

1 A. REPORT OF Pinellas County Sheriff's Office.

- The Pinellas County Sheriff's Office submitted a written crime analysis report for April 2025.
- A representative of the Pinellas County Sheriff's Office confirmed all deputies assigned to Indian Rocks Beach are expected to be knowledgeable of city ordinances. A recent incident involving a deputy unfamiliar with city protocols was addressed; the deputy was a temporary fill-in. The city followed up post-incident, including sending photos to the department. The property owner was cited and issued a court date.

1 B. REPORT OF Pinellas Suncoast Fire & Rescue District.

Fire Chief provided a comprehensive update:

- **Calls for Service:** 58 emergency calls in the last month.
- **Training:** Over 160 hours of emergency medical training completed by firefighters.
- **Community Ties:** The Chief discussed his connection to barrier island communities.
- **Northern District Plans:**
 - Temporary fire base targeted for activation near the Church of the Isles by October 1, 2025.
 - Long-term goal: A new permanent station in the northern district.
- **Facility Updates:**
 - Station 27 remains under repair from hurricane damage.
 - South Station in Redington Shores is operational.

- Station 28 (Oakhurst/Mainland) will be demolished this summer and rebuilt to meet storm-hardening requirements.

2. PUBLIC COMMENTS.

Mayor Commissioner Houseberg opened the floor for public comment, reminding speakers to address the Commission as a whole respectfully.

Rev. Wesley Snedeker – Requested a proclamation for June as Pride Month and a related display in the City library.

Elizabeth Flynn, 914 Harbor House Drive – Expressed gratitude for outgoing Commissioners and discussed the Friends of the Library's activities.

Ron Christaldi, 1900 Beach Trail – Commended the Commission's service and introduced himself as a part-time resident.

Don House, 2104 Beach Trail – Raised concerns over short-term rentals and urged the City to repeal its ordinance in favor of County regulations.

John Pfanstiehl, 448 Harbor Drive South – Thanked the Commission for getting together the RFP for City Manager and City Attorney.

Cathleen Major, 439 Harbor Drive South – Spoke in defense of yard signage as a First Amendment right.

Ms. Mulling, 461 20th Avenue – Raised pedestrian safety and visibility concerns at 20th Avenue intersections.

Alicia Harris, 208 10th Avenue – Shared personal experience at past meeting and called for realistic expectations in a changing beach town.

Teresa Pruchniewska, 316 6th Avenue – urged the city to protect residential neighborhoods from short-term rentals, citing noise, safety concerns, and loss of community.

Beth McMullen- 481 Harbor Drive South - reminded residents that April 1–October 31 is manatee season, requiring slow speeds (5–10 mph) in local waterways to protect manatees.

3. REPORTS OF:

A. City Attorney- Randy Mora

- **Legislative Update:** The 2025 session is extended through June 6 due to a budget impasse.
- **Bill Highlights:**
 - SB 1570 (sovereign immunity increase) failed.

- SB 180 (Emergency Response) passed; major implications for land use and permitting.
- SB 954 mandates municipal recognition of certified recovery residences by Jan. 1, 2026.
- **Clarification on STRs:**
 - Cities may not ban or regulate STR frequency due to state preemption.
 - City ordinances must be consistent with the law as of June 1, 2011.
- **Contract Status:** Mr. Mora confirmed he has not resigned but will complete his contract through June 1 and is open to assisting on an hourly basis until a successor is named.

B. City Manager- Gregg Mims

- Thanked Church of the Isles and Friends of the Library.
- Acknowledged City Attorney Mora's years of service.
- **Operational Updates:**
 - Launch of "Text by Gov" alert system on May 27 for customized resident updates.
 - FY26 budget preparation is underway; the goal is to continue rebuilding reserves.
 - Return to City Hall projected in July/August; request made for aqua fence state funding.
- **Code Enforcement:**
 - Fully staffed and active post-hurricane.
 - Monthly reports are now available online.
- Noted resident input on visibility and manatee zone concerns.

C. City Commission.

Commissioner King

- Praised Friends of the Library.
- Encouraged residents to sign up for "Text by Gov."

Commissioner Bigelow

- Thanked City Attorney Mora for a decade of dedicated service.

Vice Mayor Wilson

- Appreciated Mr. Mora's guidance and shared positive feedback from the "Taste of IRB" event.

Commissioner Bond

- Requested that parking issues be revisited at a future meeting.
- Thanked Mr. Mora for his professionalism.

Mayor Houseberg

- Reflected on post-hurricane recovery and housing displacement.
- Shared real estate and elevation updates for Beach Cottages.

4. ADDITIONS/DELETIONS. None

5. CONSENT AGENDA:

City Attorney Mora read Consent Agenda items 5 A – 5 G by title only.

- A. APPROVAL OF** the April 8th, 2025 City Commission Meeting Minutes.
- B. ACCEPT/FILE** March 2025 Year-to-Date Financial Report.
- C. ACCEPT AND FILE** the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for Fiscal Year Ended September 30, 2024.
- D. DESIGNATING** Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson to serve as the City's voting delegate at the Florida League of Cities Conference on August 13 – August 15, 2025, and approving the budget for travel.
- E. REAPPOINTMENT** to the Board of Adjustments and Appeals. (3-year term)
 - 1. David Watt
- F. RESOLUTION 2025-04** A Resolution of the City of Indian Rocks Beach, Florida, adopting the Pinellas County Local Mitigation Strategy as required every 5 years by FEMA.
- G. APPROVAL OF** May 9, 2025, Special City Commission Meeting Minutes.

Motion made by Commissioner Bond, seconded by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson to approve the consent agenda, consisting of agenda items 5 A – 5 G.

Unanimous approval by acclamation.

- 6. PUBLIC HEARINGS:** None
- 7. OTHER LEGISLATIVE MATTERS:** None
- 8. WORK SESSION ITEMS:**
 - A. DISCUSSION OF RFP** for Municipal Legal Services.

City Attorney Mora opened the discussion by stating that the City Attorney position is one of three charter officer positions appointed by the City Commission, along with the City Manager and City Clerk. He explained that per Section 6.4 of the City Charter, the Commission is required to appoint a city attorney who is a licensed attorney in the State of Florida, with at least three years of legal experience and two years of experience in municipal law. He clarified that these are baseline requirements, and the Commission may set higher standards in the RFP.

He added that the RFP draft had been reviewed and was in suitable form, including compliance language related to public records and affidavits. Updates to the RFP included clarified language around the attorney's role in representing the City in special magistrate hearings and ensuring the scope of work was clearly defined. He also mentioned the RFP includes the provision that allows the Commission to retain specialized legal counsel for certain projects, with approval from the City Attorney.

City Manager Mims reviewed the proposed timeline. If the Commission approved the RFP that evening, it would be released the following day. Questions from interested parties would be accepted until May 29, with proposals due by June 6. The Commission could consider holding a meeting on June 10 to review applications and determine a shortlist for interviews. Depending on the number of responses, a preliminary review session might be necessary to narrow down the field.

City Manager Mims noted that in 2014, only one law firm contacted the city with clarifying questions during the RFP process

City Attorney Mora emphasized the importance of setting clear expectations for the selection process early on. He recommended that the Commission determine how interviews will be conducted and whether decisions will be made at the interview meeting or afterward. Drawing from experience, he warned that unclear expectations could derail the process or discourage applicants. He advised keeping qualification requirements broad to avoid excluding capable candidates.

City Attorney Mora disclosed that his contract ends June 1 but confirmed he is willing to continue serving in a limited hourly role through June or until a replacement is hired. He clarified he would be available for the July meeting but would not take on new or complex legal matters during that time.

Mayor Commissioner Houseberg opened Public Comment.

Kelley Cisarick, 448 Harbor Drive S. recommended including a brief city overview in the RFP to attract appropriate candidates.

Mayor Commissioner Houseberg closed Public Comment.

Commissioner King expressed support for the RFP draft. She also supported resident Cisarick's recommendation. She raised questions about the selection process and whether the Commission should establish evaluation criteria and standardized interview questions. She suggested a work session might be needed to define the process.

Vice Mayor Commissioner Wilson stated support for the RFP, noting that it had worked well in the past. She believed the Commission could set the next steps that evening. Proposing a few days for members to read the proposals individually and reconvene for group discussions, possibly with input from the City Attorney.

Commissioner Bond supported moving forward with the RFP. He believed the RFP was workable as written.

Commissioner Bigelow also supported the RFP and believed that questions could be addressed during the interview process. He stressed the importance of moving forward quickly.

Commissioner King asked how familiar outside law firms might be with Indian Rocks Beach and its municipal structure. Mora responded that firms typically do their research, and the City is not particularly obscure. He noted that applicants are likely to come from outside the immediate area and mentioned that he had already informed some of his peers in the legal community about the upcoming opportunity. He also emphasized that his firm would not be applying.

He explained that the scope of work includes representation at special magistrate hearings and that legal firms would understand the implications of such requirements. He advised against overly strict minimum qualifications, as excellent candidates may not meet every box on paper but can still offer strong legal services.

City Attorney Mora concluded with acknowledgment that City Manager Mims would not be involved in the attorney recruitment process, in accordance with professional ethical guidelines.

Motion was made by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson and seconded by Commissioner Bigelow to Approve RFP as drafted.

Unanimous approval by acclamation.

City Attorney Mora agreed to assist past his contract end on an hourly basis.
Unanimous approval by acclamation.

City Manager Mims left at 7:42 p.m.

B. DISCUSSION OF Recruitment of a New City Manager.

City Attorney Mora reviewed the two recruitment options presented at the May 9, 2025 Special City Commission meeting:

Option 1: Hiring a Recruitment Firm

- Would require issuing an RFP (Request for Proposals).
- The city's procurement code requires bidding for purchases over \$10,000.
- No suitable existing contracts were found for piggybacking.
- Estimated cost: \$30,000–\$50,000, likely around \$35,000.
- Timeline would involve several steps:
 - Drafting, advertising, and reviewing the RFP.
 - Waiting for firm submissions (2–3 weeks suggested).
 - Selection and hiring.

City Attorney Mora emphasized that using a recruiter could be costly and invite legal challenges if not done transparently and properly.

Option 2: FCCMA Senior Advisors Program

- Retired city managers volunteer to guide the hiring process.
- No direct fee, but administrative costs (background checks, advertising, etc.) still apply.
- City qualifies (population under 10,000).
- The regional senior advisor is currently traveling but will be available to assist shortly.
- The program previously helped recruit the current City Manager and was deemed successful.
- Timeline is faster and more flexible than the RFP process.

City Attorney Mora emphasized that FCCMA does not function like a recruiter with a list of ready candidates, but they do have access to Managers in Transition and can help identify good fits.

Mayor Commissioner Houseberg opened Public Comment.

Kelley Cisarick, 448 Harbor Drive S., stated that FCCMA offers a strong resource list for job ads, reducing the need for a recruiter. If background checks can be handled elsewhere, the FCCMA route should work well.

Mayor Commissioner Houseberg closed Public Comment.

Commissioner Bigelow:

- Preferred a recruiter initially.
- Concerned about cost but agreed FCCMA is a practical path.
- **Vice Mayor Wilson:**
 - Favored FCCMA for its past success and quicker turnaround.
- **Mayor Houseberg:**
 - Supported FCCMA now that its availability is confirmed.
 - Highlighted cost savings and time efficiency.
 - Asked about the previous timeline for hiring City Manager Mims.

Decision & Next Steps:

Commissioners will submit interview questions to City Clerk Kornijtschuk.

- A timeline for the recruitment process will be created.
- Discussion will continue at the June 10th meeting, particularly concerning the City Attorney RFP.

Additional Notes from City Attorney Mora:

- Background check will be reviewed.
- City Manager Mims' departure is scheduled for July 25th.
- A 60-day timeline from job posting to hiring is realistic.
- Encouraged realistic expectations: average tenure for city managers is 4–5 years.
- Cautioned against over-involving the City Attorney in candidate selection for the sake of neutrality.

**Motion was made by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson and seconded by
Commissioner King to proceed with the FCCMA Program.
Unanimous approval by acclamation.**

9. OTHER BUSINESS. None

10. ADJOURNMENT.

**Motion was made by Vice-Mayor Commissioner Wilson and seconded by
Commissioner Bond to adjourn at 8:25 p.m. Unanimous approval by acclamation.**