



MINUTES

BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS SPECIAL MEETING MARCH 27, 2026 1:00 P.M.

The City of Madeira Beach Board of Commissioners held a special meeting at 1:00 p.m. on March 27, 2026, in the Patricia Shontz Commission Chambers at City Hall, located at 300 Municipal Drive, Madeira Beach, Florida.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayor
David Tagliarini Commissioner District 1
Charles “Chuck” Dillon, Commissioner District 2
Eddie McGeehen, Commissioner District 3
Housh Ghovae, Commissioner District 4

MEMBERS ABSENT: None.

CHARTER OFFICERS PRESENT: Clint Belk, Acting City Manager
Clara VanBlargan, City Clerk

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Brooks called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

City Clerk Clara VanBlargan called the roll. All were present.

3. PUBLIC COMMENT

Greg Chassin, 14080 W. Parsley Drive, Madeira Beach, on behalf of Killius and Chassin Development, LLC, read a letter from Joseph Petraglia in Community Development before purchasing the property located at 14140 East Parsley Drive, confirming that no foreseen challenges with redevelopment were anticipated. They could demolish the existing structure and construct a new duplex, provided they complied with the setbacks. Based on that information, they purchased the property on February 4, 2026, for \$276,000. After closing on the property, they were notified by the Building Department that a duplex would not be permitted because a prior owner allegedly had not maintained a business tax license, something they had no knowledge of and no ability to control. He said they were seeking a reasonable solution.

4. CITY MANAGER CANDIDATE PRESENTATIONS

- A. **Stanley Hawthorne**
- B. **Michael Helfrich**
- C. **Adrian Jones** (withdrew application)
- D. **Lynne Ladner**
- E. **Debbie Manns**
- F. **Timothy Owens**
- G. **Raymond Palmer** (withdrew application)

Adrian Jones and Raymond Palmer had withdrawn their applications.

Mayor Brooks said they will hold all public comments until the city manager candidate presentations are complete.

Renee Narloch, with Narloch & Associates, said the one-on-one candidate interviews were held yesterday with each commission member, and a meet-and-greet with the candidates was held last night. Each candidate will be allotted about 15 minutes to make their case for why they are the candidate for the City's city manager. There will be an additional five minutes for the Commission to thank each candidate and express appreciation for their participation, followed by public comment.

The following five city manager candidates presented and responded to questions and comments by the Commission:

- A. Stanley Hawthorne
- B. Michael Helfrich
- C. Lynne Ladner
- D. Debbie Manns
- E. Timothy Owens

Lynne Ladner and Timothy Owens presented using a PowerPoint.

Mayor Brooks opened to public comment. She asked that they speak on the positive. The negative will speak for themselves by not speaking.

Tim Johnson, owner of Waterfront Realty in Madeira Beach, commented in favor of Michael Helfrich being a potential candidate for city manager.

Sam Perone, 15208 Gulf Blvd., commented in favor of Michael Helfrich and Debbie Manns being potential candidates for city manager.

Mayor Brooks called a recess at 3:04 p.m. and reconvened the meeting at 3:15 p.m.

5. SELECTING FINALIST(S) FOR THE CITY MANAGER POSITION

Ms. Narloch guided the Commission through the selection process, explaining that Commissioners would rank candidates with 1 being the top pick. She emphasized this was a working document

and rankings could change through discussion. The goal was to achieve a 5-0 vote in support of a candidate to move to the negotiation phase. If the Commission feels strongly about the second candidate and all agree, they could automatically move to the second candidate if they cannot reach an agreement with the number one candidate. If they only want to work with the first candidate, that is fine.

Mayor Brooks asked if they needed to rank all five or just the top three. Ms. Narloch said it was okay to only rank their top three. If they do not have three, they could list their top two. If the top two candidates are neck and neck, there needs to be more discussion. She will give them both 1.5 points, ranking them equally.

When Ms. Narloch was collecting the ballots from each Commission member, the City Clerk asked Ms. Narloch to read each Commission member's selection into the record and identify which member made each selection, so the public would know. They would need a motion and a roll call vote on the final candidate. Ms. Narloch collected the ballots, tallied the selections using her rating scoring system, and announced that the same two candidates were the top choices: Michael Helfrich with 8 points, and Debbie Manns with 7 points.

The Commission engaged in extensive discussion about both candidates. Commissioner Dillon, going first, noted both were excellent candidates and acknowledged the difficulty of choosing, especially as a new commissioner seeking guidance on decision-making.

Commissioner Ghovae emphasized the importance of experience, stating that Debbie had 12 years as city manager in New Port Richey, with a proven record and professionalism. While acknowledging Mike's expertise in public works and utilities. He preferred someone who could "hit the ground running," though he rated Mike 0.999 compared to Debbie's 1.0.

Commissioner McGeehan highlighted the respect for Mike among employees and his emphasis on key performance indicators. He noted the Board's cohesiveness in selecting the same top two candidates and referenced his own learning curve as a new commissioner three years ago. He emphasized Mike's knowledge and potential for long-term commitment, noting his close ties to Madeira Beach.

Commissioner Tagliarini expressed excitement and expressed support for both candidates. He appreciated Mike's local connections, engineering and construction experience, and municipal public works background. He specifically asked candidates how they would interact with the current public works director, given that they are a public works director themselves and that the City outsources its recycling while managing sanitation in-house. Mike believed outsourcing was better for sanitation but would do whatever the Board wanted. Commissioner Tagliarini said he would not judge the decision. There are many good reasons to outsource it. Debbie Manns had mentioned there are pros and cons to outsourcing and keeping services in-house, and she would support either option. He praised Debbie's 12-year record as a city manager and testimonials from friends about New Port Richey's downtown growth credited to her leadership. He highlighted her active grant-writing skills, hotel renovation accomplishments, sidewalk grant successes, and the story of the Kaiser University acquisition. He noted that both candidates are decisive but valued

Debbie's proven city management experience and her relevance to the city's new property development needs.

Mayor Brooks detailed her initial opposition to considering non-city manager candidates and explained how her opinion changed during the interviews. She emphasized Mike's engineering background as valuable for working alongside departments that need that knowledge, and his potential to be both a supporter and a boss. She shared specific interview responses, including Mike's management approach of listening extensively to understand and evaluate staff, determine successes and issues, and improve performance. She noted that both candidates came very well prepared, having watched the meetings and referenced specific discussions.

Mayor Brooks quoted Mike saying, "underperformance is often not having clear direction," and that "bad morale and bad performance are often based on not having clear direction." She appreciated his quick recognition of shortcomings and his willingness to admit them, even while knowing what he would do differently. She mentioned receiving phone calls from residents supporting Mike and being surprised by the large turnout at the previous night's mixer, including the attendance of city staff. She observed all candidates mingling with attendees and tried to eavesdrop on conversations.

Mayor Brooks added that she asked candidates how they deal with aggressive residents, noting Mike's emphasis on listening without speaking much, letting residents talk, and not getting frustrated because it is situational, not personal. She valued his understanding of listening and finding resolution through compromise. She emphasized Mike's unique understanding from losing everything in the hurricane, creating another layer of what he could bring to dealing with residents and understanding their situations. She concluded that while both would be great, Mike really had the opportunity to shine in the City.

Following the discussion, Ms. Narloch said they needed an agreement on a number one candidate. She asked each Commission member to write down their top candidate choice. While collecting the ballots, the City Clerk asked Ms. Narloch to read the final selections into the record and identify which Commission member made each selection so the public would know. They would need a motion and a roll call vote on the final candidate. Ms. Narloch collected the ballots and announced that there were 4 votes for Michael Helfrich and 1 vote for Debbie Manns. She congratulated the Commission on a decision.

Ms. Narloch asked the Commission whether they were interested in moving forward with a second candidate if they were unable to reach an agreement with the first candidate. The Commission said yes.

Mayor Brooks said they needed a motion and a vote.

Commissioner McGeehen moved to hire Michael Helfrich as the new city manager. Commissioner Dillon seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Commissioner McGeehen | “YES” |
| Commissioner Dillon | “YES” |
| Commissioner Tagliarini | “YES” |
| Commissioner Ghovae | “YES” |
| Mayor Brooks | “YES” |

The motion carried 5-0.

Ms. Narloch said she needed a point person to negotiate. The Mayor said if the Commission is okay, she will be that person

Commissioner Tagliarini moved to appoint Mayor Brooks to serve as the point person for negotiations. Commissioner Ghovae seconded the motion.

ROLL CALL:

| | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| Commissioner Tagliarini | “YES” |
| Commissioner Ghovae | “YES” |
| Commissioner Dillon | “YES” |
| Commissioner McGeehen | “YES” |
| Mayor Brooks | “YES” |

The motion carried 5-0.

Ms. Narloch then detailed negotiation terms. She explained five basic negotiable items: salary, car allowance, severance, paid time off, and relocation. Severance was limited by state law to a maximum of 20 weeks for "without cause" termination. Paid time off typically included banked PTO (2-3 weeks upon starting) plus higher executive-level accrual rates. Regarding relocation, since Helfrich lived locally, this was less relevant, though some transitional allowance might be considered. She shared market data from 16 Pinellas County cities showing salary ranges of \$190,000-\$200,000, with indefinite contract terms or two- or three-year terms with an option to renew, and annual performance reviews.

Ms. Narloch said Mr. Helfrich's preliminary request included a salary of \$195,000-\$205,000, a car allowance of \$600-\$750 per month, 20 weeks' severance, 5 weeks' annual vacation accrual, and a possible transition allowance.

The Commissioners debated the starting salary extensively. Commissioner Ghovae advocated starting at \$170,000, arguing Mr. Helfrich was essentially a "manager trainee" who would become more experienced over 2-3 years. Commissioner McGeehan supported this with performance-based increases. Commissioner Dillon suggested \$180,000, acknowledging the lack of relocation costs, with 90-day and 6-month reviews. Commissioner Tagliarini preferred at least matching the Acting City Manager's \$200,000 salary, emphasizing paying for qualifications rather than potential future raises.

Mayor Brooks supported the \$175,000 - \$200,000 range with performance reviews, noting the importance of being competitive rather than cheap, as had been done previously. Final consensus reached on a \$180,000 starting salary, with 3- and 6-month performance reviews, and some flexibility for negotiations if Mr. Helfrich declines certain benefits, such as insurance. Regarding car allowance, commissioners preferred clarity on usage versus city vehicles to avoid previous issues in which residents saw both car allowance payments and city vehicle usage.

The Acting City Manager assured the Commission that failure was not an option and that all departments would provide a warm handoff to help Michael Helfrich come up to speed faster than expected.

Ms. Narloch explained her remaining work would take 7-10 days to do the references and background checks, with comprehensive reference comments provided. She noted that everything discussed was contingent on clearing all background requirements and any city onboarding procedures.

6. RESPOND TO PUBLIC COMMENT/QUESTIONS

Mayor Brooks addressed the earlier public comment from Greg Chassin regarding his property development issue, stating that she would work with the city manager and community development to investigate the matter and bring it back to a Commission meeting for clarity.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Brooks adjourned the meeting at 4:45 p.m.

Anne-Marie Brooks, Mayor

ATTEST:

Clara VanBlargan, MMC, MSM, City Clerk

1st place
Selection

Renee - Consultant

HG Margy Jagy McChesley Dillon
DM MF 1.5 1 DM MF DM 1.5
2 MF DM 2 MF 2 DM MF 1.5
3 SH 3 TD

Debbie - 1.0, 1.5, 1.0, 2.0, 1.5 = 7.0*

Michael - 2.0, 1.5, 2.0, 1.0, 1.5 = 8.0

Search 3/27/26 (*lower # is better)

P.T.

- 1 Debbie Manns
- 2 Michael Helfrich
- 3 Stanley Hawthorne

A.B.

Helfrich ^{ra} (1.5)
 Manns ^{ra} (1.5)

(1.5)ra (1.5)ra
 Debbie & Mike

Paul M

^{JG}
 MICHAEL
 HELFRICH

(2)

^{JG}
 (1) ~~(2)~~ Debbie
 MANN

2/2/11

City of Madeira Beach, FL
City Manager
Ranking Sheet

Presentation to the Board
~~One-on-Ones with Board Members~~

| (Column 1) Candidate Name | (Column 2) | (Column 3) | (Column 4) | (Column 5) | Rank |
|------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------------|-------------|
| <i>Stanley</i> | <i>Mike</i> | <i>Mike</i> | <i>Mike</i> | <i>Mike</i> | <i>Mike</i> |
| | <i>Stanley</i> | <i>Stanley</i> | <i>Debbie</i> | <i>Dab</i> | 2 |
| | | <i>LYNNE</i> | <i>Stanley</i> | <i>MIKE</i> | <i>FIN</i> |
| | | | <i>LYNNE</i> | <i>Stanley</i> | 4 |
| | | | | <i>LYNNE</i> | 5 |

Instructions For Ranking Sheet

You will place the name of the first candidate you interview (Candidate #1) in the far left, single box. After interviewing Candidate #2, you will move right to Column #2 where you will place your preferred candidate, of the two you just interviewed, in the top box of Column 2 and the other candidate in the second box. Repeat after each interview. When you finish, the last column will show your ranking of all candidates.

MICHAEL
HELFRICH

WJH

M.
Michael Helfrich

2nd
selection

D. MANN

H.G.

"Mike"

Chuck D

A.B.

Helfrich