

# City of Port St. Lucie

## Informal City Council

### Meeting Minutes

121 SW Port St. Lucie  
Blvd.  
Port St. Lucie, Florida  
34984

Shannon M. Martin, Chairman

Jolien Caraballo, Vice Chairman, District IV  
Stephanie Morgan, Councilwoman, District I  
Dave Pickett, Councilman, District II  
Anthony Bonna, Sr., Councilman, District III

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**Tuesday, February 18, 2025**

**2:30 PM**

**City Hall, Room 366**

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1. Meeting Called to Order

An Informal Meeting of the City Council of the City of Port St. Lucie was called to order by Mayor Martin at 2:30 PM on February 18, 2025, at Port St. Lucie City Hall, 121SW Port St. Lucie Boulevard, Port St. Lucie, Florida.

2. Roll Call

Council Members Present:

Mayor Shannon M. Martin  
Vice Mayor Jolien Caraballo  
Councilwoman Stephanie Morgan  
Councilman Dave Pickett  
Councilman Anthony Bonna

3. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Martin led the assembly in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Department Discussion Items

**4.a** St Lucie County New Tipping Fees

**[2025-148](#)**

George Landry, County Administrator, Port St. Lucie County, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the new solid waste rates for St. Lucie County. He also introduced Rebecca Olson, Director of Public Utilities, Port St. Lucie County.

Mr. Landry reviewed the tip fee analysis and stated the goal is to put the landfill on a sustainable track. He provided a historical overview of the tipping fees and the impacts experienced since Covid. Vice Mayor Caraballo and Mr. Landry discussed the contracted tipping fees and invoicing process utilized by Waste Pro and other haulers.

Mr. Landry spoke to the County's current financial needs and discussed the cost of Cell IVB, which was brought online in 2021 and has a projected life span of seven years. He stated this prompted the County to accelerate efforts to implement Cell V at a cost of \$34 million and a 15 year life span. Mr. Landry showed and explained aerial photos of Cell IVA-2019 and Cell IVA-2025. He noted the life expectancy of the landfill in its entirety is to year 2065-2070 and discussed the opportunities to expand utilizing the land next to Tropicana, which could maximize the life span to the year 2100.

Mr. Landry reviewed the current gate rates and resident rates for solid waste as well as the proposed fee adjustments and unincorporated solid waste assessment.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired if the County budget was subsidizing the landfill. Mr. Landry stated the landfill was not being subsidized currently, but they would need to start subsidizing it next year without the tipping fees at a cost of \$3-\$5 million per year. Vice Mayor Caraballo asked about utilizing other landfills in the area to lower costs and avoid a substantial increase. She also suggested separating the solid waste and tipping rates on the tax bill in the ad valorem section. Mr. Landry discussed the challenges and costs with utilizing other local landfills.

City Manager Merejo asked Mr. Landry to elaborate on the recycling rate increasing from \$0/ton to \$35/ton. Mr. Landry explained the recycling process was being subsidized, as it costs \$4.5 million per year and only generates \$3.2 million to \$3.5 million per year in revenue, but 25% less waste is going to the landfill. He noted they were trying to sustain the recycling at the rate of \$35/ton plus the revenue. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she did not like the fact that the Waste Pro contracts for the City and County were negotiated at the same time.

Mr. Landry discussed the projected revenue and cash flow. Mayor Martin inquired about increasing the CPI adjustments in the future, to which Mr. Landry indicated the current proposal included a 4% CPI adjustment every other year to maintain the allowable fund balance.

Mr. Landry further elaborated on the recycling process, including the revenue sharing rates and process.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired about the level of service or reduction in bulk waste and yard waste with the FCC limits. Mr. Landry indicated he did not have those numbers, but they could send the City a report.

Mr. Landry concluded his presentation by stating they were taking the City into consideration with the regard to sustaining the landfill, so the City does not have to provide a transfer station or undertake long-term hauling.

Mayor Martin explained there was a current interlocal agreement between the City and the County for tipping fee rates, and that the City was notified by the County that there would be new rates. She indicated they have revenue sharing for recycling at \$1.2 million and inquired if there was an opportunity to offset that if they no longer do the revenue share, to make it easier on the residents with regard to cost.

Mr. Landry stated with the termination of the interlocal agreement, the revenue share goes away and the rates are the rates. He indicated it was a 10-year interlocal with a 5-year checkpoint, which could be extended if both parties agreed. However, it is not sustainable for the County to keep the current agreement. Mariana Feldpausch and Mr. Landry discussed if there were other options to the revenue share for recycling.

City Manager Merejo inquired if there was an ordinance in place that prevents having an enterprise fund for the landfill, and not have anything subsidized by the County, to ensure all fees, etc., are collected in one fund. Mr. Landry stated he would check on this. He indicated that historically all of the funds going into the enterprise fund have stayed there. Mr. Landry explained that only GNA comes from the solid waste fund back to the County, which is about \$500k throughout the year and they were talking about getting rid of that. He stated they can include language in the agreement to ensure the City is not paying for something that is being kicked back to the County.

Vice Mayor Caraballo asked City Manager Merejo if he was looking at other options rather than doing an interlocal with the County, to see if there are lower costs elsewhere. City Manager Merejo indicated the City was considering all options, but they wanted to have this conversation first. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated they needed to consider everything for the residents.

Vice Mayor Caraballo requested a future discussion regarding times of service for the landfill and solid instructions for emergency situations, as she wanted these items addressed in the interlocal agreement. She stated her concern was post storm cleanup.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated, regardless of what happens with the landfill, there needs to be a broader conversation with the public with regards to education on the level of trash they create and recycling. Mayor Martin

stated recycling was more of a feel good thing, but the recycling is not being done properly and it is being taken to the landfill. She agreed better education is needed, but they should be open and honest with the residents with where the recycling ends up when the process is not done correctly. Mayor Martin hoped the City and the County could continue the discussion on this.

Mr. Landry explained they currently receive 5,000 tons of recycling a month and get rid of about 3,000 tons in various ways. He agreed with the education aspect and suggested a joint message would be more impactful than several messages.

Councilman Pickett inquired about incinerators. Mr. Landry stated they have been talking with FPL who is proposing a potential facility at a cost of \$800 to \$900 million to the City and County. He explained it works in Palm Beach County, because they have a solid waste budget of approximately \$400 million.

Mr. Landry stated the Vice Mayor touched on the potential of having an authority to where they would have a collection line item for their annual assessment and for their disposal, which is how it is in Palm Beach County. He stated they have a collection line item for each city, because they each have different vendors, but there is one fixed charge for disposal countywide and it is the same on everyone's assessment so they all know. Mr. Landry indicated this would be a conversation to have at the will of both boards, if they want to see that separation. He stated if they could do one fixed charge, it would be a game changer for the residents, so they were missing the mark.

Mayor Martin thanked Mr. Landry for his attendance today, as the City is fostering better relations with the County. She indicated they will be holding quarterly meetings, so they can continue to work better together. Mr. Landry thanked the City and stated if the County decides to venture down the path, understanding the City's concerns, even though they have historically had 10-year agreements with a 5-year checkpoint, the County would be willing to propose an easier out year-after-year, in case the City finds a better way to go, as they do not want to lock the City down for 10 years. He stated he would be willing to return at a future meeting to address this further or any other concerns. Mr. Landry expressed his appreciation for their partnership, as things have never been better between the City and the County. He stated the City has a great team.

(Clerk's Note: Mayor Martin called for a five minute break at this time.)

Thierry Boveri, Vice President of Raftelis, provided a PowerPoint presentation on possible scenarios for an In-House Solid Waste Collection Service for the City of Port St. Lucie. He discussed and reviewed a desktop analysis which included levels of service, funding requirements, revenue sufficiency, as well as key costs and assumptions. He noted that for the current level of service, the annual fee would be \$444 for approximately eight years, with an initial cost of service in year one of \$38 million.

Mayor Martin noted that their current contract ends in year 2029, so the annual fee of \$444 would be the cost today. Mr. Boveri explained inflation and other factors, such as the trash carts/bins, were included in the analysis to be conservative. He suggested thinking about this as not only a cost savings to the City, but that it also empowers them to control the operations and provides flexibility. Mayor Martin stated this was important to consider, because they are not going to know the true costs. She cautioned that whatever decision is made, it will be a huge undertaking and take a substantial amount of time.

Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired if the whole City had to be converted at once. Mr. Boveri stated it could be split 50/50, where the City could ease into it, and it would not be a bad strategy to consider. Mayor Martin thought there was an opportunity for different options, but the challenge would be to ensure everyone is treated the same and pays the same amount, while still focusing on building the facilities for a full implementation and not just half.

Mr. Boveri reviewed the breakdown of residential collection fees based on level of service. Council discussed if there was a need for increased collection days for bulk and other options, such as pick up by appointment. They also discussed the cost and availability of trucks, as approximately 77 vehicles would be needed based on the current level of service, and 92 trucks by year 2032.

Jeff Sabin with Waste Management, Government Affairs, discussed truck procurement and stated the lag time can be up to three years. Mayor Martin stated the City needed to consider the safety equipment as well to reduce potential employee injuries and costs long term.

Mr. Boveri reviewed and discussed the residential cashflow forecast through year 2033, based on the projected contractor's rates and the estimated City rates. He noted this same information for commercial accounts was available upon request, as they were trying to be conservative with this analysis.

Mr. Boveri concluded his presentation by reviewing the pros and cons of the different levels of service. He stated the in-house estimate results are close to the current contracted rate, but the City could consider in-housing a portion of the services. He explained the key benefit was having more control over their service levels.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated the residents only care about cost. She thought more exploration was necessary and suggested discussing phasing options, cautioned putting all eggs in one basket, continuing the conversation while keeping in mind time constraints, and considering a pilot study. Vice Mayor Caraballo agreed it should not be just about cost, as there is a convenience factor and the ability to control their own destiny. She stated it comes down to what level of service the residents want and what they want to pay for. Vice Mayor Caraballo indicated the numbers show that the residents can get more service for less money over the long run.

Councilwoman Morgan stated she was against collection at 2x/week, because it is not fair to charge everyone a fee and there would be more truck traffic and trash carts/bins on the road. She thought with the predicted growth of the City, it might be best to put the service out for bid, as the cost will be astronomical to all departments.

Councilman Pickett believed the proposed numbers would actually be double or triple. He indicated with a 3-year lead time, the trucks would have to be ordered within the next six to twelve months. Councilman Pickett explained FCC's contract ends in year 2029, and if FCC finds out the contract is not going to be renewed, they can tell the City to take the service back. He stated he was not a fan of growing government, as they would need more employees and this would perhaps add another union to the City.

Councilman Bonna stated it was about cost to him, and he was not a fan of growing government. He indicated it is about the most efficient way to deliver a service that meets the needs of most residents.

Mayor Martin stated, from a study standpoint and a reality standpoint, the numbers are not going to be this low. She explained the City needed to study or answer this question, because they experienced a horrible situation years ago. Mayor Martin expressed she was not a fan of growing government, but she wanted to look at the real issue or concern, which is bulk waste. She stated the Cameo site was a temporary solution and is costing the City significantly more than anticipated. Mayor Martin indicated

she agreed with Councilman Pickett's comments. She stated more analysis needs to be done and thought through, as Port St. Lucie is the 6th largest City and there are reasons why other larger cities are not providing this service. She believed at the end of the day, the costs were not going to be that much different.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated cost was not the number one factor, but the study shows in year 2030, the CPI goes to \$610 in the upper range and to \$565 in the lower range, which is a significant cost difference. She indicated the City will have more control and is a not-for-profit entity, as the private sector has to make a profit. She stated she wants to look at this further, before they say no or put it aside. Vice Mayor Caraballo noted that utilities was a heavy lift and they have no regrets today. She stated this is a heavy decision and it is not just about bulk waste.

City Manager Merejo agreed the transition would be a huge undertaking, but it could be done. He stated the decision has to be made soon and cannot be taken lightly. He indicated there are many variables to consider, such as hiring employees, if it is determined in-house will benefit the residents long term. He stated the Cameo site plays a big role as well, as it is not sustainable. He believed the transition would be much easier than the water and sewer conversion.

Mayor Martin stated it would be smart to look at all options, so she would like to see what the phasing would look like in terms of staffing, as things would need to start happening by the end of this year with the budget.

City Manager Merejo stated he will work with the County regarding the possibility of joining together on the facility. Vice Mayor Caraballo asked about creating a true Solid Waste Authority with the County and Ft. Pierce where they all have board seats, get trucks, provide service, and work on the landfill together. She stated the Solid Waste Authority would have its own bonding power, buying power, credit line, and it would take the City and the County out of the day-to-day trash business.

Mr. Boveri indicated that Broward County was trying to set up a Solid Waste Authority and that Palm Beach County currently has a Solid Waste Authority. He stated he thought it could be good if there is an economies of scale and efficiency of purpose that everyone could benefit from. He believed it was about what is best for the community. Mayor Martin stated they should have that conversation, as the City's population will be well over 400,000 before build out, not to mention the County's growth.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated she would like to have that conversation with

the County, as there is strength in numbers and it provides a lot of options, or do they provide their own service or contract it out, as it changes the paradigm for both sides.

Mayor Martin asked City Manager Merejo to provide an update at the next quarterly meeting with the County regarding joining together to establish a Solid Waste Authority.

(Clerk's Note: Mayor Martin called for a five minute break at this time.)

**4.c** Convenient Drop-Off Center Update

[2025-157](#)

Mariana Feldpausch, Director of Solid Waste, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the City's Drop-Off Center located on Cameo Boulevard in Port St. Lucie. She reviewed the history of the site and discussed how the drop-off center has been utilized since 2021. Ms. Feldpausch presented photos of the debris, different staging areas, and types of items collected. She stated in September 2023 they started making changes to the site to improve the operation, make it more efficient, enhance the safety aspects, and garner control of what was being collected or dumped.

Ms. Feldpausch reviewed the total number of annual users, budget amounts, and costs since 2022. She noted there was no budget in 2022, because the vendor was covering the cost due to curbside issues and performance. She stated that use and costs were going to continue to increase.

Councilman Pickett stated the drop-off site always closes on Saturday when it is full. He inquired if a second set of containers could be provided to prevent the traffic from backing up onto the road, which is a safety hazard. Ms. Feldpausch stated they could add containers, but they would also have to add service and increase ground maintenance.

Ms. Feldpausch proposed new operating hours for the drop-off site of Wednesday through Saturday from 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM and Sunday from 9:30 AM to 2:00 PM. She explained this would reduce closures, align with the landfill hours of operation, improve ground maintenance, and reduce contractor use.

Ms. Feldpausch also proposed new regulations for the drop-off site with the goal of reducing costs, closures, contraband, and contractor use. She stated they will revisit limiting the number of trips per month per resident at a future meeting. Ms. Feldpausch also explained how the in-house discussion will directly impact the future of the City's drop-off center.



Councilwoman Morgan stated the drop-off site was supposed to be temporary, that it is unsightly, and that many landscapers use it. She questioned why recycling was on the site and people are not using their bins. She stated that construction debris should not be hauled to the site, as the contractors should be utilizing roll offs at their job sites. Councilwoman Morgan expressed that the residents need to play by the rules. She stated the center has served its purpose, but it is time to close it.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated the \$2.1 million is being subsidized by the general fund and taking tax money that could be used for roads, sidewalks, or other needs. She stated if the site stays it has to break even, so they will have to start charging people. Mayor Martin indicated the residents already feel they are being taxed. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated the subsidy is only going to increase and other services will be decreased or cut.

Mayor Martin asked the Council/Staff if they were comfortable with taking away the drop-off site without increasing their bulk service to offset it. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated they will have to increase costs for larger bulk pick-up or for demand bulk pick-up. She stated the drop-off site is not the solution. Vice Mayor Caraballo noted the City did not have an issue with bulk when it was unlimited. She stated they now have the site cost and piles of bulk sitting out for weeks, which is a huge issue.

Ms. Feldpausch stated it would cost another \$31.80 on top of \$69.00 for FCC to provide biweekly bulk service. She stated the longer they wait, the higher the price will be because of the cost of the trucks. Mayor Martin inquired about the appointment only scenario. Ms. Feldpausch stated she would have to ask FCC, as they would have to implement software to provide that service. Mayor Martin noted that not everyone requires bulk service, but everyone would be charged \$31.80.

Ms. Feldpausch stated residents can call right now to have debris removed at a cost of \$15.50 per yard, so they could try to work it in that way through FCC. Mayor Martin stated she would rather look at that than have everyone pay extra for a service they do not need or want.

Mayor Martin stated they need to consider the full picture and not just cost. She stated she needs to know what "appointment only" looks like. She asked how the residents are going to respond if the drop-off site is taken away.

Vice Mayor Caraballo stated if the residents have to call for bulk pick-up

and the City closes the drop-off site, there will be dumping all over the City because the residents do not want to pay for it. She asked how they could stop that from happening. She indicated the two issues with bulk are size and service.

Mayor Martin requested data on illegal dumping. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated it was probably controlled to a certain point right now, but if the site is closed and people cannot dump for free, the illegal dumping will increase. She said they need to figure out the cost of the on-demand service and if the City wants to offer that. She stated they need to normalize their costs right now and provide a service to the residents they are not receiving, as they are losing \$2.1 million regardless of what they do. She indicated the \$2.1 million could be used to subsidize a second pick-up per month, which would be their response to the residents.

Councilman Bonna stated they could shutdown the site and save the \$1.6 million. Council discussed different ways to look at the cost, subsidizing, and overages and how to reduce or stop the bleeding.

City Manager Merejo stated they could shutdown the site or phase into it, by getting rid of each service one at a time and bulk would be the last to go. He stated they could monitor how it is working and look at the numbers. Vice Mayor Caraballo stated it would be good to know how many residents are using the site. City Manager Merejo noted they were subsidizing the dumping from the contractors.

Councilman Pickett stated there was no consistency across the board, as some can dump a truckload and others are restricted from dumping a few tree limbs.

City Manager Merejo stated Staff will bring back different options, so Council can decide how much they want to subsidize.

Vice Mayor Caraballo asked how much residents pay for bulk collection, to which Ms. Feldpausch stated it was \$18.08 for the year. Vice Mayor Caraballo inquired if the City should just charge a fee.

Ms. Feldpausch stated, per 1PSL, the number of entries for illegal dumping is 182.

City Manager Merejo stated they will look at collecting bulk twice a month and by calling in. Mayor Martin reiterated she was not in favor of making everyone in the City pay another \$31.80 when not everyone needs bulk. She asked that their next discussion be held at a Special Meeting and not

a Regular City Council Meeting.

5. Council Discussion

(Clerk's Note: Council discussion was included in the items above.)

6. Adjourn

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

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Sally Walsh, City Clerk

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Traci Mehl, Deputy City Clerk