MINUTES
First Budget Hearing
September 10, 2026
6:30 p.m.
Government Center
6601 Main Street
Miami Lakes, Florida 33014

1. CALL TO ORDER:

The Town Clerk, Gina M. Inguanzo, called the roll at 6:30 pm. Councilmember Cuadra-Garcia, Councilmember Garcia, Councilmember Herzberg, Councilmember Sanchez, Vice Mayor Morera and Mayor Dieguez were present. Councilmember JC Fernandez was absent.

2. MOMENT OF SILENCE:

Vice Mayor Morera led the prayer.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Councilmember Garcia led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. ORDER OF BUSINESS (DEFERRALS/ADDITIONS/DELETIONS):

None.

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

(Phonetic spelling of each speaker's name will be used throughout the minutes unless correct spelling is known.)

The Town Clerk, Gina M. Inguanzo, welcomed everyone to the meeting and read the instructions of Public Comments. There were no public comments.

Town Clerk Gina M. Inguanzo stated for the record that there were no participants online.

There being no one else wishing to speak, Mayor Dieguez closed Public Comments.

6. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Vice Mayor Morera made a motion to approve the minutes, and the motion was seconded by Councilmember Garcia. The motion passed 6-0.

7. ORDINANCES – FIRST READING:

A. AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES, FLORIDA, ADOPTING THE MILLAGE RATE OF THE TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING OCTOBER 1, 2026 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2027, PURSUANT TO SECTION 200.065, FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR DIRECTIONS TO TAX COLLECTOR; PROVIDING FOR NOTICE; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The Deputy Town Attorney Lorenzo Cobiella read the title of the ordinance into the record.

The Town Manager, Edward Pidermann, read into the record the following statement: The proposed millage rate for the Town of Miami Lakes for Fiscal Year 2026-27 of 2.1577 mills. This rate is the same as the current fiscal year. The gross taxable value for operating purposes is five billion, five hundred twelve million, eight hundred five thousand and eight hundred and eighty-three dollars ($5,512,805,883). The proposed millage rate will generate eleven million, three hundred thousand, two hundred and ninety-two dollars ($11,300,232) in Ad Valorem revenue budgeted at 95% collection rate. The proposed millage rate of 2.1577 is 5.86% above the rollback rate of 2.0382.

Vice Mayor Morera moved Item 7A for consideration and the motion was seconded by Councilmember Sanchez. Then, Vice Mayor Morera moved to table Item 7A, the ordinance in first reading to be discussed after Item 7B and the motion was seconded by Councilmember Garcia. The motion to lay in the table, passed 6-0.

After discussion of Item 7B was had, Mayor Dieguez then moved to pick up Item 7A from the table, and it was seconded by Vice Mayor Morera. The motion passed 6-0.

Mayor Dieguez made a motion to adopt Item 7A, to adopt the flat millage rate. The motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Morera.

During discussion, Councilmember Garcia made an amendment to adopt the 2.0732 millage rate, which was a strike-all amendment. The motion died due to lack of second.

The Town Clerk called the roll, Item 7A, ordinance in first reading, to adopt the flat rate at 2.1577. The motion passed 4-2; Councilmember Cuadra Garcia and Councilmember Garcia voted in opposition and Councilmember Fernandez was absent.

Once Item 7A passed, Mayor Dieguez then moved to pick up Item 7B from the table and the motion was seconded by Vice Mayor Morera. The motion passed unanimously.

B. AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES, FLORIDA, APPROVING AND ADOPTING THE BUDGET OF THE TOWN OF MIAMI LAKES FOR THE FISCAL YEAR 2026-2027. COMMENCING OCTOBER 1, 2026, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2027; PROVIDING FOR APPROPRIATIONS; PROVIDING FOR EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS; PROVIDING FOR AMENDMENTS; PROVIDING FOR CARRYOVER OF FUNDS; PROVIDING FOR INCORPORATION OF THE ADOPTED BUDGET; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING OR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The Deputy Town Attorney, Lorenzo Cobiella read the title of the ordinance into the record.

Town Manager Pidermann presented the budget and stated that this budget is the same as what was presented to the Town Council at the Budget Workshop. Town Manager Pidermann stated that several things have surfaced since publication of the agenda, so he shared with the Town Council some potential budget savings, for the Town Council to consider preparation for the Second Budget Hearing.

The first information he shared was that Town staff finalized the negotiations with the health insurance provider, and he explained that the health insurance provider was able to give the TOML a zero-rate increase. Town Manager Pidermann explained that it really is a 2.5% increase, but he explained that the provider is giving the TOML credit, and he explained that for budget purposes, that is a flat increase from last year.

The second information Town Manager Pidermann shared was the Liability Insurance Savings. He stated that the Town Council will discuss the results of the RFP for the Liability Insurance item at the September Regular Council Meeting, and he stated that the estimated savings from the current year will be $198,178 compared to the FY2026-27 Proposed Budget for the General Fund.

Town Manager Pidermann then explained that there are some additional funding needs for Town Council to consider. These items are: Senior Citizen Relief Program, which is estimated at $85,000; Tree Trimming Cycle, which will require an additional funding of $298,757, to fully fund the cycle. He explained the three different subsets of the additional funding to be: Mini parks ($93,757), Green Space ($200,000) and Tree Removal ($5,000); and the Infrastructure Sinking Fund, to add $199,352, to make up for the amount that was not funded in the prior fiscal year.

After Town Manager Pidermann presented the potential budget savings and the additional funding needs, Councilmember Herzberg made a motion to move Item 7B, ordinance in first reading and it was seconded by Vice Mayor Morera.

Town Manager Pidermann answered questions posed by the Town Council regarding potential budget savings, and it was discussed that the Infrastructure Sinking Fund Budget was proposed to be funded at $426,000. Chief Budget Officer, Ms. Melissa Hernandez, answered questions posed by the Town Council.

During discussion, Councilmember Herzberg stated that he wanted to change the $426,000 to go down to $300,000; thus, reducing $426,000 by $126,000. He stated that his motion was to reduce the General Fund transfer from $426,000 to $300,000. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Sanchez.

Councilmember Sanchez stated that he had questions regarding the projects that are already earmarked for completion withing the Contingency Reserve. He asked for the list of projects earmarked to be shared with the Town Council. Public Works Director, Mr. Omar Santos, answered questions posed by the Town Council regarding the list of projects earmarked for completion and explained that every year the list gets updated, based on Town staff's inspections of Town Assets, including what has been completed and the respective costs.

Councilmember Garcia stated that he would like to lower the millage rate to the rate of FY2025, which was 2.0732. Councilmember Cuadra Garcia asked if that would take it to the rollback rate.

After further discussion, Town Clerk Inguanzo called the roll and the first amendment to the main motion passed 4-2; Councilmember Cuadra Garcia and Councilmember Garcia voted in opposition and Councilmember Fernandez was absent.

During discussion, Councilmember Sanchez mentioned that he had requested to improve Veterans Park during the July Regular Council meeting. He mentioned that Town staff provided different projects that could be done for this park, but that most of them are all six figures. He then asked if perhaps this park could be funded by Parks Improvement Park. He also asked how much money was earmarked specifically for Miami Lakes Optimist Park. Chief Budget Officer Hernandez stated that the amount that is in budget for MLOP Master Plan is $1.6 million, and Town Manager Pidermann stated that the $1.6 million came from Park Improvement Impact Fees. After further discussion, Councilmember Sanchez requested for Town staff to provide a list of all the MLOP projects (elements) at the September Regular Council Meeting. Town Manager Piderman stated that Town staff would email the Town Council with the list of MLOP projects (elements).

Councilmember Cuadra Garcia referred to the Public Safety Budget, and he stated that the Police contract needs to be negotiated and that Town Manager Pidermann and Mayor Dieguez should talk to Sheriff Rosie Cordero-Stutz to negotiate better. Town Manager Pidermann provided an explanation on this subject matter.

Councilmember Sanchez stated that he did a deep dive into the Police Budget and shared that he met with the Town Manager Pidermann and Major Ulloa, and that he had spoken with the PBA and requested the breakdown of how overtime is used in the Town. He explained that he thinks there are some things that perhaps may fit within the PTP 80 Fund, because they are transportation related. Specifically, he referred to the Town Wide Traffic Enforcement. He then requested from CITT, to see if it can fit into the PTP 80 Fund along with the Traffic Detail for the Mitigation of Traffic on Miami Lakes Drive on 77th and 79th Avenue.

Councilmember Sanchez also mentioned that article 35 and 36 of the Collective Bargaining Agreement refers to wages. He stated that as of this year, effective on September 1st of 2026, all FDLE officers received an increase of 10% to their salary. Councilmember Sanchez stated that the only way the TOML can get away from having to follow this PBA is if eventually one day, the TOML gets their own police department. He stated that we must abide by the PBA with Miami-Dade County. He emphasized that the police officers' salaries will not go down, because they are set in contract by the PBA, that if we can't pay any more than we did last year, we will end up with a smaller number of officers; thus, it's not about bringing down their salaries, and supplementing them somewhere else. We would lose officers and potentially more crimes. Councilmember Sanchez emphasized that by losing officers the town runs the risk of more traffic and more crime.

Chief Budget Officer Hernandez answered questions posed by the Town Council about the projects in PTP funds and she stated that PTP funds are utilized for the operations (utility streetlights, repair maintenance of bike paths) and what is not utilized for operations is a transfer into the capital fund, that is utilized for 59th Avenue Roadway Extension project and the $143,000 that is to cover the School Crossing Guards.

Public Works Director Santos answered questions posed by the Town Council regarding utility street lighting and repairs and maintenance street lighting and he explained the difference between the two different GLs.

Councilmember Garcia stated that the projected carryforward was expected to be a little over $400,000, that the projected savings regarding liability insurance and health insurance would be around $180,000, in addition to the $126,000 saving from the Infrastructure Sinking Fund. Councilmember Garcia mentioned that he would like to fund the Senior Citizen Relief Program and work on funding the Tree Trimming Cycle, but no motion was made.

He then stated that he believes there will be $400,000 in carryforward plus additional savings, so he emphasized that he believes there is money to go back to the 2025 millage rate of 2.0732, that there is a possibility to go back to that rate and still fund other things.

Councilmember Cuadra Garcia asked about the Town Administration regular salaries and mentioned that there was a big jump from year 2025 to year 2026 and about Administration, Health and Life Insurance. Town Manager Pidermann and Chief Budget Officer Hernandez provided explanations about salary savings from vacant positions and explained that when they prepare the budget on Health and Life Insurance, they include it as if everyone eligible was going to take the health insurance. It was also explained that during open enrollment, employees will make decisions and that is why the proposed budget includes projections. Town Manager Pidermann also explained that because we are getting back some credit, during second reading of the ordinance, the numbers will be less.

Councilmember Sanchez made the statement that when it comes to health insurance costs, the more people that are on a plan, the lower it can be and piggybacking off a larger municipality or Miami-Dade County could perhaps save TOML money. He asked if Town staff could explore that option and Town Manager Pidermann responded in the affirmative.

Councilmember Sanchez asked why the transfer from PTP80 for School Crossing Guards last year had a bigger budget and he asked why the transfer in Special Revenue Fund PTP80 was lower. Town Manager Pidermann said that they will look at the expense side.

Mayor Dieguez then stated that if the Town Council were to adopt the millage rate of year 24-25, it would be 2.0732 and that this would cut $442,540 of the Town Budget. Then he asked, if the Town Council were to adopt the solid waste franchise fee at 20%, what would be the amount of money collected. Chief Budget Officer Hernandez responded that it would be between $450,000 to $500,000 in potential revenue. It was discussed that second reading of Solid Waste Franchise fee would be needed to pass in a special call meeting after the Second Budget Hearing and implementation would take place in approximately 90 days. Mayor Dieguez explained that this would provide TOML at a revenue neutral place and he stated that he does not want to jeopardize more projects that already are at backlog.

Councilmember Herzberg spoke about the vehicle fleet renewal and explained that the Takoma truck is a great vehicle and that there is no need to replace it. To save get some savings, Councilmember Herzberg made a motion to reduce the vehicle fleet renewal by 1 car. Councilmember Garcia seconded the motion. The second amendment to the main motion passed 6-0.

Councilmember Garcia then stated that the liability insurance potential savings of approximately $180,000 should be put toward reducing the millage rate. He then made a motion to take the $180,000 or whatever amount it ends up being and subtracting it and adding it to the savings, to try to get the millage rate down to 2.0732. The motion was seconded for discussion by Vice Mayor Morera.

Vice Mayor Morera supported the idea, but not necessarily at this stage; he stated that he would rather just maintain a list of potential cuts and at the end, for them to determine what to cut and what to add; for example, he mentioned the Senior Citizen Relief Program. Nonetheless, Vice Mayor Morera stated that he will support the motion because it sends a message to the Town Manager and to the Chief Budget Officer that the identified savings should not be occupied. The motion passed 6-0.

Deputy Town Attorney Cobiella answered questions asked by the Town Council.

Town Manager Pidermann summarized that whatever amount bears out from the Liability Insurance, the Sinking Fund item and the reduction of the Vehicle Fleet will be put in a contingency line, for the Town Council to allocate towards whatever they find fit during the Second Budget Hearing.

Councilmember Herzberg asked what the current projected carryforward is and Chief Budget Officer Hernandez responded that the amount is $483,000.

Councilmember Garcia then stated that they are only $242,540 away to get to the millage rate. He then made a motion to take the $242,540 and put it in a tax savings bucket from the carryforward that is expected.

Councilmember Garcia explained that there will be about $250,000 to work with to pay for the Senior Rebate and other things; he stated that the Town Council is already at 2.0732. He emphasized that all that is needed is $242,540 savings to get to the 2.0732. He further stated that "we are going to have a $483,000 carryforward, so let's just take it out of there". Councilmember Garcia then stated that perhaps "we can vote on the 2.0732 now or vote to move that over and at the Second Budget Hearing, we can find more savings later on, that we can allocate what's left, we're already there, we've made it, we're at the 2.0732 and with a lot of money left over to play with for other things". After the explanation he provided, Councilmember Garcia made a motion to move the $242,540 over. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Sanchez for discussion.

Councilmember Sanchez stated that he understands the spirit of the motion but that there are things in the town that could be improved, such as Veterans Park, that perhaps buffer space is needed to see some improvements in the town.

During discussion, Councilmember Herzberg asked for clarification and asked if the motion made by Councilmember Garcia was "to move some of the money from the carryforward and just put in that surplus". He then stated that he wants to keep the millage flat and that at the Second Budget Hearing, is when they will have the opportunity to reduce the millage rate. Councilmember Herzberg then asked the Town Manager to provide the Town Council with the last 5 years of the predicted carryforward and what the actual carryforward that will come forward to the Town Council in spring will be. Town Manager Pidermann agreed to the request.

Town Manager Pidermann asked for clarification on the motion by Councilmember Garcia. Councilmember Garcia then stated that he wants these savings to be voted on and to go to reducing the millage rate.

Deputy Town Attorney Cobiella explained that at some point, the Town Council is going to table this item to go back to the millage ordinance. At that moment, Mayor Dieguez explained that the current motion on the floor is an intent item for the savings identified, but that the millage rate cannot be touched until we get back to that item. Town Clerk Inguanzo called the roll on the motion by Councilmember Garcia, and the motion passed 6-0.

Vice Mayor Morera then made a motion to table Item 7B and it was seconded by Mayor Dieguez. The motion to lay on the table passed 6-0.

Once Item 7A was passed, the Town Clerk called the roll on the motion to approve Item 7B, ordinance in first reading, which was moved by Councilmember Herzberg and seconded by Vice Mayor Morera, and the motion passed 4-2; Councilmember Cuadra Garcia and Councilmember Garcia voted in opposition and Councilmember Fernandez was absent.

8. ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Town Council, the meeting adjourned at 8:28 pm.

Approved this 13th day of October 2026.

Joshua Dieguez, Mayor

Attest:

Gina M. Inguanzo, Town Clerk