



**Florence City Council
Special Meeting
Tuesday, August 19, 2025
6:00 p.m.**

MINUTES

The City Council of the City of Florence, Kentucky, met in special session on Tuesday, August 19, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. at the Florence Government Center, 8100 Ewing Boulevard, Florence, Kentucky, with Mayor Julie M. Aubuchon presiding as chair.

CALL TO ORDER & WELCOME:

Mayor Julie M. Aubuchon called the special meeting to order and declared the meeting open for the presentation of items on the Special Meeting Agenda.

INVOCATION & PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Mayor Aubuchon and Members of City Council recited the invocation.

All attendees recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

ROLL CALL:

The roll was called, and the following five (5) members of council were registered present: Angie Cable, Lesley Chambers, David M. Schneider, Diane E. Whalen (Vice Mayor), and Patricia Wingo. Councilmember Gary Winn was absent.

Staff members present were: City Attorney, Thomas R. Nienaber; Finance Director, Jason Lewis; Fire/EMS Assistant Chief, Chris Miller; Chief of Police, Jeff Mallery; Director of Administration/City Administrator, Joshua J. Hunt; City Clerk, Melissa Kramer; Videographer, Perry Weber; and Police Lieutenant, Jason Reed.

The following were also present in the audience: NKyTribune Reporter, Trisha Scheyer; LINK nky Reporter, David Rotenstein; Resident of Florence, James Leach; Resident of Boone County, Roger Berger; and President/CEO of FIESTA Northern Kentucky, Theresa Cruz.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to approve the minutes of the August 12, 2025, business meeting. Councilmember Whalen motioned to approve the minutes with a second from Councilmember Schneider. **All councilmembers present voted aye.**

PRESENTATION – FIESTA NORTHERN KENTUCKY:

Mayor Aubuchon called upon Theresa Cruz, President/CEO of FIESTA Northern Kentucky.

Theresa Cruz, President/CEO of FIESTA Northern Kentucky, explained that FIESTA is a grassroots nonprofit founded in January 2024 to serve and uplift the region's growing Hispanic community. Ms. Cruz shared that FIESTA focuses on food assistance, resource coordination, and education/outreach, operating the area's only culturally relevant food pantry and offering services such as ESL classes, workforce development, and community events. Since opening, the organization has supported nearly 4,000 people through food distributions, referrals, and outreach programs, including securing employment for local residents. She announced FIESTA's first fundraiser, Fiesta at the Plate, on September 19, 2025, at the Florence Y'all's Stadium, with proceeds directly benefiting Hispanic families in Northern Kentucky.

Mayor Aubuchon opened the floor for questions.

Councilmember Whalen asked for FIESTA's location and the best contact method.

Ms. Cruz stated they were located at 7530 US 42, Suite 8 and provided their website - fiestanky.org.

Councilmember Chambers inquired as to how families that had been helped were giving back to the community.

In response, Ms. Cruz shared that 75% of FIESTA's volunteers are families previously served by the organization, creating a strong cycle of giving, with some even assisting in bookkeeping and data entry. Ms. Cruz also noted that the organization hosts a monthly volunteer food distribution on the last Friday of each month, where volunteers pack and distribute groceries to local families in need.

Mayor Aubuchon closed by thanking Ms. Cruz for her dedication and service to the community.

DISCUSSION - ELECTRIC FRANCHISE AGREEMENTS WITHIN THE CITY OF FLORENCE:

Mayor Aubuchon called upon Joshua Hunt, Director of Administration/City Administrator, to discuss Electric Franchise Agreements within the City of Florence.

Mr. Hunt explained that a franchise agreement is a contract between the city and a utility provider, allowing the provider to operate within the city's right-of-way while setting rules for their operations. Florence's agreement would be non-exclusive, permitting multiple providers to bid. The city's two primary providers, Duke Electric and Owen Electric, have already expressed interest. The agreement also requires utilities to restore any sidewalks or streets impacted during installation or repairs, and the proposed term would be 20 years.

He noted that while the agreement reserves council's right to impose a franchise fee of up to 5%, no fee is currently planned. Should a future council wish to impose one, it would require public discussion and a vote. Many cities use such fees to offset costly infrastructure projects, such as water main replacements. Mr. Hunt provided council with projections of potential revenue at both 3% and 5% fee levels.

Mr. Hunt explained that the ordinance would allow approval to advertise the franchise bid, after which Duke and Owen would submit proposals for review. The bids would be checked for compliance, then presented to council for consideration and a resolution.

Mayor Aubuchon clarified that council had not yet received a copy of the ordinance since it was still being drafted by the city's attorney, Linda Ain. Mr. Hunt confirmed this was correct.

Councilmember Whalen asked what the ordinance would accomplish beyond putting the franchise agreement out to bid and allowing for the option of a franchise fee in the future.

Mr. Hunt explained that utilities operating in the city's right-of-way must have proper documentation to avoid legal issues, noting past challenges with easements when he worked in Public Services.

He and Councilmember Whalen discussed the city's practice of replacing water mains during street projects to minimize costs, with Mr. Hunt emphasizing that space limitations in rights-of-way often force water lines under streets, leading to higher costs and potential future disruptions.

Mayor Aubuchon clarified that even if water mains are currently in the right-of-way, repairs may require relocating them under the street because utilities occupy much of the available space.

Mr. Hunt added that while easements are sometimes possible, they complicate projects. He also explained why replacement water mains cannot be installed in the same trench, as service continuity requires building a new line before switching over.

Additional discussion was held with regard to vegetation management. Mr. Hunt noted that the franchise agreement would include tree maintenance requirements to address frequent complaints about Duke Energy cutting trees unevenly, leaving them unsightly. Mayor Aubuchon stressed that without an agreement, the city would have no recourse in such situations.

Councilmember Wingo stated the city had other franchise agreements and inquired as to what other franchise agreements the city currently held.

Mr. Hunt stated the city currently has franchise agreements for cable, fiber line, cell phone, and gas. The gas franchise agreement expires in 2032 with Duke Energy.

Councilmember Chambers asked if companies would pass franchise fees on to customers.

Mr. Hunt confirmed they would, as permitted by the Public Service Commission, though many cities disagree with the practice.

Mayor Aubuchon concluded by emphasizing that the ordinance would only reserve the right to impose a fee, not mandate one, which Mr. Hunt confirmed.

RESOLUTION R-5-2025:

Mayor Aubuchon read Resolution R-5-2025. A Resolution authorizing an agreement between the Kenton County Fiscal Court and the City of Florence Kentucky, for the purpose of providing senior services.

Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to approve Resolution R-5-2025. Councilmember Wingo motioned to approve.

Mayor Aubuchon opened the floor for questions and discussion.

Mr. Hunt explained that the Skees Senior Center was originally developed with Community Development Block Grant funds issued by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. One of the requirements of the grant was that the facility remain open to all members of the public, regardless of residency.

He further stated that the city contracts with the YMCA to provide oversight of daily operations, with funding support from additional sources such as the Northern Kentucky Area Development District, which contributes \$40,000 annually. He explained that each year, the YMCA also submits funding requests to Boone, Kenton, and Campbell counties for programming and operations at the center. Boone County has historically provided support, and 2025 marks the first year Kenton County has agreed to contribute. Mr. Hunt clarified this was not a renewal or extension of an existing agreement, but rather the first agreement with Kenton County.

City Attorney Thomas R. Nienaber noted that, according to the YMCA's Executive Director, the Florence Senior Center offers stronger programming than the Erlanger/Elsmere Senior Center, which has led to a higher number of Kenton County residents utilizing Florence's facility. Only recently has participation from the Erlanger/Elsmere area grown enough to justify the YMCA requesting financial support from the Kenton County Fiscal Court.

Councilmember Whalen asked whether Kenton County's contribution would be evaluated annually based on resident usage and if their funding could increase proportionally. Mr. Nienaber confirmed that records are reviewed each year, and last year marked the first time participation numbers supported a contribution from Kenton County.

Following the prior motion by Councilmember Wingo to approve Resolution R-5-2025, Councilmember Chambers seconded the motion to approve.

Mayor Aubuchon requested a Roll Call Vote. Councilmember Wingo, yes; Councilmember Chambers, yes; Councilmember Whalen, yes; Councilmember Schneider, yes; Councilmember Cable, yes. **Roll call recognized five yes votes approving Resolution R-5-2025 by unanimous vote.**

CLOSED SESSION:

There was no need for Closed Session.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further business to come before the Council, Mayor Aubuchon called for a motion to adjourn. Councilmember Whalen so moved, with a second from Councilmember Wingo. **Councilmembers present voted aye**, the time being 6:32 p.m.

APPROVED:

/s/ Julie M. Aubuchon
Julie M. Aubuchon, Mayor

ATTEST:

/s/ Melissa Kramer
Melissa Kramer, City Clerk

