

City of Delray Beach

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Minutes - Draft

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

5:00 PM

Special Meeting

Delray Beach City Hall or Watch on YouTube:

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City Commission

Mayor Thomas F. Carney, Jr.

Deputy Vice Mayor Angela Burns

Commissioner Tom Markert

Commissioner Juli Casale

Pursuant to Section 3.12 of the Charter of the City of Delray Beach the Mayor has instructed me to announce a Special Meeting of the City Commission to be held for the following purposes:

SP.1. PUBLIC COMMENTS

The February 18, 2026 Special Meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m. Alexis Givings, City Clerk, called the roll, and the following were present:

Terrence Moore, City Manager
Lynn Gelin, City Attorney
Alexis Givings, City Clerk

Mayor Carney confirmed that a quorum was present.

Mayor Carney stated that the sole purpose of the meeting was to discuss the situation regarding the banyan tree at the golf course. He opened the floor for public comment and advised that speakers would have three (3) minutes each.

Jim Chard, 33483

Stated that he had consulted with arborists who indicated that removing the banyan tree could potentially cause more damage to the canal bank than leaving it in place. He explained that the tree's root structure reinforces the integrity of the bank and provides additional environmental benefits.

He addressed concerns that the tree is invasive, stating that the banyan cannot reproduce in the United States because it lacks the specific wasp required for pollination. Therefore, he asserted it is technically incorrect to classify the tree as invasive. He further noted that its growth can be managed and directed through proper maintenance practices.

He concluded by encouraging the City to preserve and maintain the tree, suggesting it could continue stabilizing the bank for decades.

Gail Clark, 33483

Stated that the banyan tree had likely gone unnoticed for many years until surrounding trees were removed. She expressed concern that the tree is now being targeted despite its long-standing presence.

She referenced discussions with an arborist who supports preserving the tree through risk mitigation and ongoing maintenance. Ms. Clark also suggested that the tree could potentially qualify as a "legacy tree" if deemed one of the largest of its kind in the area, thereby warranting preservation and recognition.

She encouraged the Commission to seek additional expert input and

explore management options before making a final decision regarding removal.

Seeing no one else present, Mayor Carney closed public comment.

Present: 4 - Commissioner Tom Markert, Mayor Thomas F. Carney Jr., Deputy Vice Mayor Angela Burns, and Commissioner Juli Casale

SP.2.

DISCUSSION REGARDING THE BANYAN TREE AT THE DELRAY BEACH GOLF COURSE.

Commissioner Casale asked whether the arborist referenced by Mayor Carney had formally communicated with the Commission prior to the meeting. Mayor Carney clarified that he had an informal phone conversation with arborist Steven Davis, who, after reviewing photographs, indicated that the tree might be capable of being anchored and preserved. The Mayor acknowledged that no formal site visit or written report had yet been completed.

Commissioner Markert stated that he would prefer the arborist conduct an on-site inspection to evaluate the tree, surrounding canal conditions, and existing structural elements that may affect stability. Mayor Carney reiterated his request to obtain a professional evaluation for a nominal cost to determine whether a defensible argument could be presented to the Lake Worth Drainage District to delay removal.

Deputy Vice Mayor Burns expressed support for obtaining an arborist report but questioned whether sufficient time remained within the 30-day compliance window. City Manager Terrence Moore advised that approximately 23 days remained and that physical removal of the tree would require an estimated seven to ten days. He stated that staff had delayed initiating removal to allow for Commission direction but reiterated that communications from the Lake Worth Drainage District indicated their position remained firm.

Commissioner Markert suggested seeking dialogue with the Drainage District's board leadership before pursuing legal remedies. City Attorney Lynn Gelin advised that, because the Drainage District had already taken formal board action, the proper legal procedure would be to submit a motion for reconsideration supported by newly discovered evidence rather than engage in informal discussions outside the public process.

Ms. Gelin recommended obtaining a written arborist risk assessment and submitting it with a formal request for reconsideration, including a request for additional time for review. She cautioned that the City remains bound by

the existing 1994 agreement and its amendments, and that expectations regarding success should be managed.

Jim Chard indicated that the arborist was prepared to conduct a full risk management assessment, including site inspection and technical analysis, and could provide a written report within days. It was further stated that the arborist was willing to perform the work at minimal or no cost, subject to proper City contracting procedures.

The Commission reached consensus to:

- Authorize obtaining a formal arborist report evaluating the tree's condition, risk factors, and potential mitigation measures, including anchoring options.
- Direct that the report be delivered to the City Manager's Office by Friday.
- Present the findings at the February 24th Commission meeting.
- Direct the City Attorney to prepare a draft motion for reconsideration to the Lake Worth Drainage District, supported by the arborist's findings, and request additional time for review.

Mr. Moore advised that staff would concurrently prepare for potential tree removal in order to comply with the existing directive should reconsideration efforts prove unsuccessful. He emphasized the importance of maintaining the City's working relationship with the Lake Worth Drainage District, particularly given ongoing permitting needs related to the golf course renovation project.

Mayor Carney characterized the proposed course of action as a final good-faith effort to preserve the 78-year-old banyan tree while following proper legal procedures.

There being no further business to discuss, Mayor Carney adjourned the meeting at 6:06 p.m..

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