



ORLAND CITY COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING

Tuesday, October 7, 2025

ALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Matt Romano at 6:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Councilmembers Present: Councilmembers Brandon Smith, John McDermott, Terrie Barr, Vice Mayor JC Tolle and Mayor Matt Romano

Councilmembers Absent: None

Staff Present: City Manager Joe Goodman, City Attorney Scott Drexel, Deputy City Clerk Meagan Mondragon

Arrived at 6:30 pm: Police Chief Joe Vlach, Officer Roenspie, Officer Sanchez, Officer Lowery

CITIZENS COMMENTS ON CLOSED SESSION - None

MEETING ADJOURNED TO CLOSED SESSION AT 6:01 PM.

CLOSED SESSION ENDED AND RECONVENED TO REGULAR SESSION AT 6:30 PM.

REPORT FROM CLOSED SESSION - *Mayor Romano announced that Council met with City Staff and City Attorneys Scott Drexel and Greg Einhorn in Closed Session to conference with real property negotiators, as noted on the Closed Session agenda, Mayor Romano shared that there was no reportable action.*

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

ORAL AND WRITTEN COMMUNICATIONS

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

County resident Valerie Johnson provided an update on the newly approved feline surgery center at Hidden Sanctuary. Marjorie Palmer expressed her support for the project.

Jake Hackett shared concerns regarding fair representation and voting rights within the City of Orland and requested that the topic be brought forward for discussion at a future meeting. The speaker also submitted supporting documents to staff for review.

CONSENT CALENDAR

A. Warrant List (Payable Obligations)

- B. Approve City Council Minutes from September 16, 2025
- C. Approve City Council Special Meeting Minutes from September 18, 2025
- D. Receive and File Economic Development Commission Minutes from August 12, 2025
- E. Receive and File Arts Commission Minutes from August 20, 2025
- F. Receive and File Planning Commission Minutes from August 21, 2025
- G. MOU Regarding Use of 700/800 MHz Frequencies
- H. Request for Contract Service with Tyler Technology for Year-End Payroll Processing

ACTION: Councilmember McDermott moved, seconded by Councilmember Smith, to approve the consent calendar as presented. Motion carried by a voice vote 5-0.

ADMINISTRATIVE BUSINESS

Budget Discussion with RGS

City Manager Joe Goodman provided background on the current preliminary budget, which was adopted on June 17, 2025, with a commitment to revisit it by October 2025 to develop long-term strategies for achieving a structurally balanced budget. Mr. Goodman reviewed budget deficits dating back to fiscal year 2022–2023.

He noted that the deficit has grown over the past few years and cannot be resolved immediately. Mr. Goodman recommended that the Council approve the adopted FY 2025–2026 budget while the City conducts a thorough evaluation of all funds. He also reported that staff and RGS continue to identify errors and omissions in the City's financial records related to the transition to the new software system.

Mr. Goodman presented the idea of hiring a part-time employee with accounting expertise to support the transition to Tyler, enhance staff capacity, and assist in identifying the structural changes necessary to achieve a balanced budget. He also shared that he has been working with RGS to prepare a structurally balanced budget outline for FY 2026–2027 that includes all City funds. Reviewing all funds will help the Council more effectively prioritize needs and gain a clearer understanding of the City's overall expenditures.

Unknown speaker suggested that an ordinance be created regarding the budget deficit.

Council discussed the possibility of hiring an additional employee with accounting expertise for a one-year term to assist with financial management. The Council briefly discussed the current budget and the deficits from previous fiscal years.

ACTION: Councilmember McDermott moved, seconded by Vice Mayor Tolle, to Authorize staff to hire a part-time employee with accounting expertise for an initial one-year term, renewable upon successful performance, and proceed with the proposed process and schedule to evaluate the City's fiscal health and develop the structural changes needed to restore the General Fund to a balanced budget. Motion carried by a voice vote, 5-0.

Flag Display on Walker St. and Policy for City Property

City Attorney Scott Drexel addressed a community request to display Mexican flags in existing sidewalk holes along Walker Street during significant Hispanic holidays. Mr. Drexel explained that this issue

involves two parts: first, the need for the City to establish a formal flag display policy, and second, obtaining approval for any displays along Walker Street, which lies within Caltrans' right-of-way.

Mr. Drexel briefly provided background on the topic, stating that the City received a request to display Mexican flags along Walker Street during Cinco de Mayo, Día de los Muertos, and Mexican Independence Day. Mr. Drexel noted that the sidewalk holes in question were drilled approximately 25 years ago with Caltrans' permission and are currently used by the Orland Flag Society to display American flags on national holidays and other occasions. These displays occur without formal City oversight.

Mr. Drexel stated that this request highlights the fact that the City does not currently have a flag policy. He shared that many cities have begun developing such policies following a 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision, which held that cities may control what flags are displayed on City property if the displays are considered government speech. Establishing a policy would formally designate flag displays as City speech rather than a public forum, ensuring clarity and consistency in future requests.

Mayor Romano opened the discussion to the public, stating that the City Council meets to "form a more perfect union" and to allow for justice and tranquility. He noted that everyone has different views and encouraged the community to be respectful of one another's freedom of speech and to be kind to their neighbors.

Vice Mayor Tolle asked whether the banner that crosses SR 32, which is used to promote City events, should also be addressed in the flag policy. City Attorney Drexel agreed, noting that including the banner would clarify what can and cannot be displayed.

Public Comments:

Orland resident Sarah Bosley shared her experience setting up the American flag with her children, who are in the Scouts. She expressed support for the City adopting a flag policy but raised concerns about flying commemorative flags.

County resident Heather Chavez reminded Council that their votes represent the City of Orland and its residents, not personal opinion, and expressed support for allowing the Mexican flag to be flown on City property.

City Attorney Scott Drexel clarified that any adopted policy would not affect the ability to fly the Mexican flag on private property or by private businesses; the policy would apply strictly to City property and rights-of-way.

County resident Dawn Garin expressed support for keeping the flagpoles limited to displaying only the American flag.

Orland resident Michaela Ponce shared information on how other communities display additional flags alongside the American flag and stated her support for allowing the Mexican flag to be displayed along SR32.

County resident Breanne Lowe spoke about Caltrans regulations regarding flags along state highways and expressed support for a flag policy for City-owned property.

County resident Mr. Savage expressed support for allowing the Mexican flag to be flown in recognition of Hispanic heritage.

Prina Vera shared her support for flying the Hispanic flag and spoke about her heritage.

Hilary Crosby expressed support for the City taking proactive steps on flag displays and requested that staff work closely with Caltrans in developing the policy.

County resident Jack Pendergrass shared his perspective as a veteran, supporting individuals' rights to fly any flag on private property but recommending that only the American flag be flown on City property.

County resident Sara King prayed for unity within the community.

An unknown speaker thanked the community for attending and sharing their views and spoke against being defined by a single flag.

Orland resident Janice Noffsinger stated that while the American flag is important, there is nothing wrong with flying other flags on private property.

An unknown speaker referenced America's history as a "melting pot" and expressed support for flying the Mexican flag.

Orland resident George Martinez spoke about freedom and shared that he helped drill the original holes along SR 32, which were intended for the American flag.

Orland resident Mr. Darby expressed opposition to flying only the Mexican flag but supported displaying both the Mexican and American flags together.

Orland resident Ms. Bippus spoke about her family's history and travels, stating she would only fly the American flag. She supported private displays of any flag but emphasized respect for the American flag.

County resident Vernon Montague, a founding member of the Flag Society, shared his belief that the American flag unites the nation and should not share a stage with any other flag. He also noted the importance of reviewing Caltrans regulations for displays along state routes.

County resident Eugene Cleek expressed support for flying only the American flag.

County resident Beth Borkland questioned why flags were displayed after Labor Day; Mayor Romano clarified that the City does not currently oversee the schedule for flag displays.

County resident Joannie Woods expressed appreciation for the community's engagement and support for flying the American flag on City property, while encouraging cultural celebrations through events, banners, or other displays.

Orland resident Sharon Lazorko spoke about community gathering spaces to celebrate cultural heritage and expressed support for limiting flags on City, County, and State properties to the American flag.

County resident Janet Jonte shared her views on the American flag as a symbol and expressed concerns related to deportation.

Orland resident Judy Holzapel expressed support for flying the American flag on public streets.

An unknown speaker shared concerns about community members not feeling valued for their opinions.

County resident Laurel Cleek stated that while she respects all cultures, the American flag should be honored and elevated.

Kelly Day expressed pride in her Mexican heritage and support for flying the Mexican flag.

Orland resident Jaime Davis shared her experience becoming an American citizen, expressing pride in her Mexican roots but support for flying the American flag.

Erin Becerro expressed support for the City creating a formal flag policy.

Orland resident Jaime Lopez expressed concern that the issue of the Mexican flag had divided the community and encouraged kindness and unity.

Orland resident Alex Enriquez shared support for flying the American flag on SR 32 and offered ideas for when flags could be displayed.

Orland resident Jeanette Smith supported flying any flag on private property but limiting City streets to the American flag.

Orland resident Joseph Bauer spoke about heritage and what the American flag represents to him.

County resident Susie Smith questioned why flags were displayed on certain dates. Mayor Romano reiterated that the City does not currently control the flag schedule and stated that the agenda item was included out of respect for those who requested discussion.

County resident Valerie Johnson shared thoughts on community unity and concern about some residents feeling marginalized.

County resident Marissa Hoke stated that the American flag represents everyone and should be the only flag flown on City property.

An unknown speaker expressed support for flying only the American flag.

Orland resident Manuel Quintel, a veteran, spoke about what the American flag means to him and encouraged love and unity within the community.

Orland resident Earl Megginson thanked the Council for facilitating the discussion and allowing public participation.

Orland resident Kyla Supra shared that flying both the Mexican and American flags together could help strengthen community unity.

County resident Dee Dee Jackson spoke about being a minority and expressed concern that expanding the policy could lead to unintended consequences.

An unknown speaker expressed opposition to flying the Mexican flag on City property.

An unknown speaker shared her experience immigrating from Mexico and expressed support for flying only the American flag.

Councilmember Smith stated that the American flag represents all people and thanked the community for sharing their input.

Vice Mayor Tolle shared that he spoke with 30–40 Hispanic and Mexican community members about the issue, all of whom felt that flying another flag along Walker Street would be disrespectful to America. He referenced the City of Manteca's flag policy as a model and expressed support for a neutral flag policy for City-owned property.

Councilmember McDermott shared his experience working with the VFW to raise flags and emphasized unity and respect for differing opinions. He stated his support for freedom of speech and encouraged moving forward with respect and reason.

Mayor Romano thanked the community for their participation and stated his support for directing staff to develop a formal flag policy for City-owned property.

Councilmember Barr thanked the Flag Society for their volunteer service and suggested recognizing Mexican Heritage Month through banners.

City Attorney Drexel noted that selective approval of displays could pose risks and that the first step should be for the City to establish a clear flag policy, followed by coordination with Caltrans regarding Walker Street.

Following discussion, Council directed staff to develop a formal flag policy for City-owned property.

City Manager Verbal Report

City Manager Joe Goodman briefed the Council on various projects around town, highlighting the following updates:

- Reported that the Road M ½ project is nearing completion and provided a brief status update.
- Reported that the DWR project is approximately 70% complete and provided an update on the current phase.

CITY COUNCIL COMMUNICATIONS AND REPORTS

Councilmember Smith:

- Will attend the CGA and GGA Board meetings on October 19.

Councilmember McDermott:

- Had nothing to report.

Councilmember Barr:

- Attended the RTC Regional Transportation Meeting.

Vice Mayor Tolle:

- Attended the RTC Regional Transportation Meeting.

Mayor Romano:

- Had nothing to report.

MEETING ADJOURNED 9:07 PM

Jennifer Schmitke, City Clerk

Mathew Romano, Mayor