

**CITY OF BEVERLY
PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES**

BOARD OR COMMISSION: City of Beverly Economic and Community Development Council
DATE: May 28, 2026
LOCATION: Beverly City Hall, 191 Cabot Street, 3rd Floor, Conference Room A
MEMBERS PRESENT: Darlene Wynne (Ex-Officio), Zach Servideo, Dan Allon, Donna Musumeci, Jason Consalvo, Nathan Seavey, James Muse, Diantha Phothisan (Chair), Christopher Wrenn, Kevin Grant, Thomas Holland, Mayor Cahill
MEMBERS ABSENT: Chris Tatnall, Erin Schaeffer (Ex-Officio), Councilor Crowley, Michael Collins (Ex-Officio)
RECORDER: Kristan Patenaude

1. Call to Order

Schaeffer called the meeting to order at 8:35 a.m. and introductions were made.

Review and Approve Meeting Minutes

a. April 23, 2026

Allon: Motion to approve the April 23, 2026, meeting minutes, as amended. Musumeci seconds. (11-0), the Council was unanimously in favor.

Diantha Phothisan (Chair) entered the meeting at 9:00 a.m.

2. CDBG Update – Darlene Wynne

Wynne explained that the Community Development Manager was hired in February and has been working on getting the pre-grant startup requirements completed, including a full environmental review. This project is a housing rehab program that does not yet have sites defined and so it is difficult to know if they are historic sites. The sites will need to be assessed as to whether they are subject to floodplain, historic, or other regulations. The City had a 30 day notice prior to a request for the funds to be released and this has been signed off on. The City is contracting with its vendor, Habitat for Humanity, with a kickoff meeting yesterday. The funding for the project is supposed to be spent in 18 months. The City was notified that it was awarded the grant on October 22nd but could not say anything about it until mid-December when the State announced it. Work did not truly begin until January. The City can request an extension once a better timeline for the project is known. In the meantime, the City successfully applied for the next round of funding which starts July 1st. Notice of the award will not likely happen until September. The applicant includes new programs such as a small business micro enterprise loan program, housing rehab, and two public social services.

3. Mayor Michael P. Cahill conversation

Mayor Cahill noted that the Council took the first of two necessary votes to raise the trash fee. The Council is raising it to a lower number than what he requested but this will cover a good amount of the trash and recycling costs, though still leaving the City with a balance to cover. Cities and towns all over the region are making significant cuts. Large State aid cuts were made over the two recessions of 2003 and 2008. The State cut over \$7,000,000 in aid to Beverly and the City has never really recovered. State aid used to make up 24% of the City's budget and now makes up about 13% of the budget. This is definitely impacting how the City is able to do its business. The combination of raising property taxes to the max and whatever State aid is sent, is just not enough. One big revenue source is auto taxes, but people continue to buy fewer cars. Another big piece is new growth. Any investment made in properties creates new value, which gets captured during assessments. This is part of the reason that there is interest in spending energy on an Economic Development Action Plan. There is interest in raising new growth to help meet the budgetary needs. There is also interest in the overall wellness of the community. The City is mandated by the State to raise pension investments by approximately 4.5% per year. This year, that is almost \$700,000 more than last year. The City is on target to fully fund its pension system in 2032. At that point, the City will be approximately \$18M per year into its pensions and some of that money will become available for other purposes. There is another large liability of approximately \$300M in post-employment benefits. There are some cost increases every year that are well above 2.5%. The City will be putting in for a 9% premium increase for healthcare, of which the City pays 80% and employees pay 20%.

Mayor Cahill stated that, aside from taking care of the assets, infrastructure, etc., the other big thing that cities do is to deliver services, and this costs money. The City has been trying to put as much as possible into the schools, increasing school spending by \$5.6M two years ago, \$7.6M last year, and \$4.5M this year. Thus, while there was some upheaval over the increased trash fee, and it is impactful to raise a fee by a significant amount in the middle of all the affordability challenges people are facing, he believes this will level out fairly quickly.

Mayor Cahill stated that the City's affordability questions are not going to get easier going into next year because the secondary sewage treatment plant is 30 years old and much of the equipment has reached an end of life cycle. Thus, there is an \$800M capital plan that needs to be carried out for the next 15-20 years. The customers collectively have to pay for all the improvements through water and sewer rate increases. The water treatment district is about two years behind the sewerage district in coming to cities and towns looking for more money. Beverly's average property tax bill is modest in the context of the county. The City's average property tax bill is 14th in the county, meaning that 13 communities have a lower average bill and 21 communities have a higher average bill. The City has worked hard to keep the water and sewer rates from ballooning up, while increasing them to cover needs. The community is doing a good job of keeping the tax burden down.

4. Economic Development Action Plan – Matrix Review and Discussion

90 The group discussed the Economic Development Action Plan and the action matrix. The goal is
91 to create a graphically presented document that easier to read. The group discussed which items
92 could be prioritized for implementation and which ones are most achievable and will make a
93 difference. There was discussion regarding selecting items that are most likely to bring money in
94 faster. There could be a balance between which items cost the least amount of money and will
95 bring any money in. There was a suggestion to create a timeline of items that could be done in
96 30, 60, and 90 days that are also foundational pieces.

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98 There was discussion regarding how the City could partner with other entities or create
99 something similar to a hub in order to approach various items.

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101 **5. Future meeting agenda topics**

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103 As discussed during the meeting.

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105 **6. Other items not known in advance of the posting of this agenda**

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107 None at this time.

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109 **7. Adjourn**

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111 The meeting was adjourned at 10:00am.