



City Hall Council Chambers  
9101 Bonita Beach Road SE  
Bonita Springs, Florida 34135

**City of Bonita Springs  
City Council Special Meeting  
Minutes**

March 4, 2026

*Immediately following the 9:00 a.m. City Council Regular Meeting*

**1. Call to Order** - Mayor Gibson called the special meeting to order at 10:16 a.m.

**2. Roll Call**

*Present: 7 Council Member Bogacz, Deputy Mayor Purdon, Council Member Carr, Mayor Gibson, Council Member Corrie, Council Member Fullick, Council Member Fitzpatrick.*

*Absent: 0*

**3. Public Comment on Agenda Item**

*Deb Orton - Commented on the ongoing advocacy commitments and efforts undertaken by Friends of BERT.*

*Doug Hattaway - Representing Trust for Public Lands, informed Council he is present to answer any questions.*

**4. Council Discussion on the Status of Seminole Gulf Railway Property Acquisition and Direction to Staff**

*City Attorney Derek Rooney opened the discussion with a slide presentation summarizing the key elements of the current purchase agreement between Seminole Gulf Railway and the Trust for Public Land. He stated that the total purchase price is \$60,000,000, with the City of Bonita Springs responsible for the 5.8-mile Bonita Springs segment, totaling \$28,565,723, to be paid to the Trust for Public Land.*

*Mr. Rooney's briefing also outlined the non-negotiable terms of the agreement, the due-diligence timeline, and the following actions he requested Council take at this meeting:*

- 1. Confirm general acceptance of the terms.*
- 2. Confirm inspection conditions: (1) appraisal, (2) environmental review, (3) title, and (4) authorized borrowing. Exceptions waivable by Council.*
- 3. Confirm support for joint due diligence under the existing Memorandum of Agreement.*
- 4. Authorize staff to proceed with a referendum authorizing borrowing for closing and initial construction costs for a term not to exceed 30 years, and authorize staff to work with the City's financial advisor and bond counsel.*

*Mr. Rooney further stated that the proposed referendum would appear on the August 18, 2026 Primary Election ballot. Council will review and approve the referendum language in April, after which the language will be submitted to the Supervisor of Elections (slides on file in the Clerk's office.)*

*Next, Council Members shared their perspectives and raised questions. Discussions included the process for determining fair-value appraisal outcomes - a topic addressed in a memorandum distributed by Council Member Corrie (on file in the Clerk's office). Council Member Corrie emphasized that the City is not purchasing*

land, but rather the infrastructure and title rights. Additional discussion topics included the two-year period allotted for the railroad to complete property clearing and the Project Development and Environment (PD&E) study.

Council also discussed an appropriate not-to-exceed borrowing amount to present to voters. Mr. Rooney opened the discussion with \$35,000,000 as the initial figure for Council discussion. Several Council members expressed interest in a higher amount to ensure sufficient funding for the first phase of construction across a larger portion of the Bonita Springs segment.

Council Member Corrie motioned to approve the staff requests as outlined by the City Attorney, and to authorize staff to proceed with a referendum authorizing borrowing up to \$45,000,000 for closing and initial construction costs, for a term not to exceed 30 years. Council Member Carr seconded. **The motion carried unanimously.**

City Attorney Rooney then informed Council that the Trust for Public Land and Friends of BERT have requested a letter from the City, signed by the Mayor, formally requesting technical assistance. Because both organizations are nonprofits, such a letter would support their outreach efforts for tax-related purposes. Council Member Corrie motioned to approve issuance of the letter and to authorize the Mayor to sign it; Seconded by Council Member Fullick. **The motion carried unanimously.**

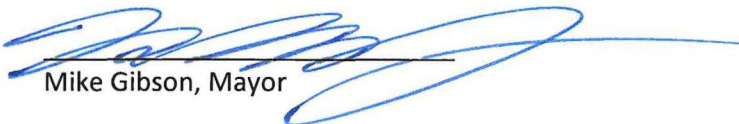
**5. Adjournment** - There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:20 a.m.

PREPARED AND ATTESTED BY

  
Michael J. Sheffield, City Clerk

APPROVED BY CITY COUNCIL

Date: 3/25/26

  
Mike Gibson, Mayor