Town of Orange Park
Environmental Quality Board Meeting
Thursday, November 12, 2026
3:00 PM
Agenda

1. Call to Order / Verification of Quorum

2. Approval of the Minutes
   a. Approval of the EQB Minutes for the October 8, 2026 Regular Meeting

3. Chair Comments

4. New Business
   a. Update and Discussion on the Town's Tree Planting Activities

5. Old Business

6. Audience Comments

7. Board Member Comments

8. Information
   a. The next regular meeting of the Environmental Quality Board is scheduled for Thursday, December 10, 2026 at 3:00 P.M.

9. Adjournment

Town of Orange Park
Environmental Quality Board
Thursday, October 8, 2026
3:00 P.M.
Minutes DRAFT

The Town of Orange Park Environmental Quality Board meeting was called to order in the Town Council Chambers on Thursday, October 8, 2026 at 3:00 p.m. by Ms. Debra Waters, Chairwoman of the Environmental Quality Board.. The following Board members were present: Ms. Diane Cook and Ms. Mae Barker. Mr. John Jordan and Mr. Tim Kirby were absent. Others present were Economic and Community Development Director Stephen Smith and Planning and Permit Coordinator Maddie White.

CHAIR COMMENTS

Ms. Waters encouraged Board members to direct their comments to the entire Board rather than to individual members so everyone could participate in the discussions and feel included in the decision-making process.

APPROVAL OF THE EQB MINUTES FOR THE JULY 9, 2026 REGULAR MEETING

Ms. Barker moved to approve the minutes and Ms. Cook seconded, which passed 3-0.

APPLICATION FOR A SIGN VARIANCE (SV-1-2026) FOR 1123 KINGSLEY AVENUE

Mr. Smith presented the application for a sign variance at 1123 Kingsley Avenue, which requested three variances for a freestanding sign: a reduction in the required front setback from 10 feet to 7 feet, an increase in sign area from 32 square feet to 40 square feet, and an increase in sign height from 8 feet to 9.5 feet. The property contains two office buildings constructed around 1960 and is located within the Kingsley Avenue Character Overlay. The existing sign was identified by Code Compliance as nonconforming following the relocation of the law firm to the property. Mr. Smith explained that the sign became nonconforming when the Town's current Land Development Regulations took effect in October 2016, changing the required setback from 5 feet to 10 feet. The existing site conditions include an older chain-link fence and vegetation along the eastern property boundary. Moving the sign back an additional three feet could affect its visibility. Staff therefore recommended approving the requested 7-foot setback. However, staff did not find that the lot's size, shape, or topography justified increasing the sign area. Staff also noted that the requested 9.5-foot height would conflict with the Kingsley Avenue Character Overlay, which requires freestanding signs to be monument-style and no more than 8 feet tall.

During the discussion, Ms. Waters asked why the overlay requirements had not previously been brought to the Board's attention. Mr. Smith clarified that the overlay was adopted as part of the 2016 revision of the Land Development Regulations and is located within the zoning code rather than the sign regulations. He also explained that the applicant's relocation to the property triggered the need to address the existing nonconforming sign.

The Board discussed the proposed monument-style design, which would be more consistent with the Town's preferred sign appearance. However, Ms. Barker expressed concern that approving a larger and taller sign could establish a precedent for other businesses seeking similar variances.

Mr. Smith emphasized that each application must be evaluated individually against the applicable variance criteria. Board members also noted that the existing sign appeared sufficiently visible from Kingsley Avenue and that maintaining the current location would avoid potentially significant costs associated with relocating the sign.

Stacey Morris, who identified herself as Mr. Luke's assistant, addressed the Board on behalf of the applicant. She explained that Mr. Luke's primary concern was retaining the sign's existing location because moving it to the required 10-foot setback could allow a neighboring spiritual advisor's sign to obstruct its visibility. She confirmed that the applicant was agreeable to the staff recommendation. Board members also discussed the possibility of improving visibility by cleaning the nearby fence and vegetation. Concerns were raised about increasing the sign's height along a busy roadway used by motorists, bicyclists, and pedestrians.

Ms. Cook moved to approve per staff recommendation to allow the sign to remain at a 7-foot setback, maintain the maximum sign area at 32 square feet, and maintain the maximum height at 8 feet. Ms. Barker seconded, which passed 3-0.

OLD BUSINESS

There was no old business at this time for the board to discuss.

AUDIENCE COMMENTS

There were no audience comments at this time.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Cook stated in the July 9 minutes, Ms. Barker requested an update regarding previously discussed concerns about trees dying near the intersection of Doctors Lake and Kingsley Avenue. Mr. Smith stated that the Town had not yet received a response from Public Works and that staff would follow up to obtain information, either before the next meeting or by email.

Ms. Barker requested that the matter be placed on the next meeting's agenda and asked that the Public Works Director, Kyle Croce, attend to provide an update. The Board discussed the importance of monitoring the condition of recently planted trees and ensuring that Town funds allocated for tree planting are being used effectively. Members also expressed interest in receiving information about the number of trees planted during the previous six months and their condition.

Ms. Barker suggested sending an email reminder approximately two weeks before each meeting, asking members to submit proposed agenda items and confirm their attendance. The member explained that an advanced reminder would help ensure important topics are included on the agenda. Mr. Smith explained that the Board generally meets on the second Thursday of each month and that agenda packets are typically distributed approximately one week before the meeting. Staff also noted that attendance is followed up on in advance to help ensure a quorum. Board members were encouraged to notify staff if they expected to be absent and to submit agenda requests at least

two weeks before a meeting when possible, particularly when a topic requires staff preparation or additional information. The Board acknowledged the suggestion and discussed the value of establishing a consistent reminder process while recognizing staff's existing workload and the need for sufficient time to prepare agenda materials.

Board members continued discussing the Town's tree-planting efforts, including the types of trees selected, planting locations, maintenance requirements, and long-term survival. One member expressed interest in exploring whether the Town could plant fruit- or nut-bearing trees in appropriate public areas to provide an additional community benefit. Ms. Barker referenced seeing fruit trees in another community and suggested that similar opportunities could be considered locally, provided the trees were planted in suitable locations and fallen fruit could be managed. The Board discussed the Town's tree mitigation fund, which receives funds associated with certain tree-related requirements. Mr. Smith indicated that the fund had a limited balance and, to his knowledge, had not yet been used. Members also discussed Public Works' annual allocation for purchasing and planting trees and expressed interest in learning more about the Town's tree budget, purchasing practices, and the selection of appropriate species.

Board members shared observations about trees that have performed well under local conditions and emphasized the importance of considering drainage, watering needs, weather, wildlife, and the surrounding environment when selecting trees. The Board expressed interest in having the Public Works Director attend a future meeting to discuss these topics and answer questions about the Town's tree-planting program.

Ms. Waters raised concerns about the loss of vegetation and trees in the wetlands and tributary area behind Bradley Park. The member described previously observing an airboat spraying vegetation in the area and reported that spraying had also affected grass along their property. The member expressed concern that the loss of aquatic vegetation could be affecting local wildlife, including manatees, and noted that trees along the shoreline and within the surrounding area appeared to be falling. Other members discussed their observations of changes in vegetation and manatee activity in Doctors Lake. The Board considered whether the work might involve the treatment of invasive vegetation and discussed the need to identify which agency was responsible. Mr. Smith indicated that the Town does not conduct spraying from the lake. The St. Johns River Water Management District and the local riverkeeper organization were suggested as potential resources for further information. The discussion highlighted the Board's interest in understanding what activities are occurring in the area, why vegetation is being removed or treated, and whether those activities could be affecting the local ecosystem.

INFORMATION

The next regular meeting of the Environmental Quality Board is scheduled for Thursday, November 12, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

ADJOURNMENT

Ms. Waters adjourned the meeting at 3:40 p.m.