



# HISTORIC TOWN OF EATONVILLE, FLORIDA

## COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY

### MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, March 20, 2025, at 6:30 PM

Town Hall (Council Chambers) – 307 E. Kennedy Blvd

**SPECIAL NOTICE:** These meeting minutes are presented in an abbreviated format intended as a public record discussion of stated meeting according to the Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine law. Meetings are opened to the public, noticed within reasonable advance notice, and transcribed into minutes for public record. *\*\*Audio Recording are available through the Town's website on the Board Agenda Page.*

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**CALL TO ORDER** – Chair Gardner called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

**ROLL CALL** – Quorum was established through roll call by Town Clerk.

**PRESENT:** (7) Director Wanda Randolph, Director Tarus Mack, Director Rodney Daniels, Vice Chair Theo Washington, Director Ruthi Critton, Chair Angie Gardner, Director Donovan Williams)

**STAFF:** (5) Michael Johnson, **CRA Executive Director**, Veronica King, **Town Clerk**; Greg Jackson, **Attorney**; Laurie Nossair, **CRA Financial Coordinator**, Lt. Fletcher Boone, **Police**

#### INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chair Gardner led the invocation through a Moment of Silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance

*\*\*Statement was provided by the chair indicating that there is an amended agenda to include documents for a walk on item (Resolution CRA-R- 2025-16), a clear final copy of the bylaws was also provided.*

#### PRESENTATIONS

February 2025 Financial Statement Presentation – Mr. Johnson gave an introduction of the February 2025 financials which accounts for account balances also tracking the expenditures for the month.

**Comments:** CRA tax from the county has not been received (TIFF), anticipating \$132,000; one individual received the PPP grant program for \$4,000, other pending applicants did not submit additional paperwork, payments under the historic grant program were for the architect only; requested for bank balance (Mrs. Nossair looked up the amount as being \$1,797,879.28 as of February 28<sup>th</sup>).

#### CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – (3)

Candace Finley – Inquired about the real plans for purchasing the 140 S. West property, will affect the street lived on, what is being brought is not fitting in size, no community input, no alternative plan beyond the cultural center proposed, there are other community issues that need attention.

Angela Johnson – budget amendment failed at last special meeting, request for attorney to provide legal guidance of when a budget is established by a governmental entity (Town of Eatonville, CRA) and there is insufficient funds on a budget line item and a budget amendment was denied, can an individual spend the money without it being an emergency of spending; sent an email to the Mayor requesting for a written response; expressed concerns about putting a large commercial building in the middle of a residential area without talking to the community and constituents; finance staff should have brought what the current fund balance is, it is a disservice to the residents by voting to approve the purchase of this property without having a clear understanding from the attorney as to whether or not you could spend it if it is not budgeted on a budget line item; in the bylaws, what is wrong with the simple majority? It did not require a supermajority to hire the

executive director, it should not require a supermajority to terminate, it appears that these laws are allowing for unilateral decisions by the Executive Director.

Joyce Irby – Expressed opinion that every decision is designed to say, excuse me, forget the people; the concerns expressed does not matter; the threat is the council's behavior in completely ignoring the will of the people; found out that two of the council members were not consulted on matters concerning the Edgewater High School Alumni Investment Group involvement

## **CONSENT AGENDA**

**Chair Garner motion to APPROVE** the consent agenda approving CRA Board Meeting Minutes for 2-20-2025; 2-26-2025; February 2025 Financial Statement; **moved** by Vice Chair Washington; **second** by Director Mack; **AYE: ALL; MOTION PASSES.**

## **BOARD DISCUSSIONS:**

**Discussion of the CRA Bylaws** – (Director Randolph) someone thought the bylaws needed to be changed; the supermajority (five votes) is not part of the town charter but by a majority vote (four votes); builds up an extra protection for somebody to be saved from termination, if a supermajority is to be used it should be used for everything; 50 articles from the previous bylaws have been reduced to 22 articles, will suffer the consequences should something come up that is not covered in the bylaws, it is a conflict of interest for the executive director to be engaged in creating bylaws when a one portion of the bylaws has to do with the executive director's job, performance, and how he or she responds to the board; the board is held accountable for everything that goes on in the CRA and are to adhere to the bylaws, if not, it will lead to a lot of issues, lawsuits, damages, and loss of status; was supposed to be tabled for a special meeting, for us to go over the bylaws, not for one person to take them upon themselves to change it in their favor. (Critton) request for a method, structure, and decorum to this conversation (Chair recommended going through each section); not in favor of the supermajority, those in favor should be able to explain themselves, (Director Mack) brought the idea of the supermajority because of past conflicts, wanting to put a person in a position to work comfortably without walking on eggshells (Director Daniels) if a person is doing what they are supposed to do when following the CRA plan, there would be no need for a supermajority; do not agree that the Executive Director can make recommendation to ratify and confirm by a majority vote to get rid of legal, if a supermajority is to be used towards an Executive Director it should also apply to legal; the board should be able to call a special meeting; criteria for an advisory board should be a business owner, if not then live in the town for five consecutive years (having homestead), (Director Mack) in favor of the supermajority, but willing to do the majority vote if it is the wishes of the board, the board should make the decision for hiring legal (Director Randolph) inquired about if the board read all of the articles; the disposal of property is not in the bylaws, if not in bylaws what is next (legal- if not in the bylaws, then the Florida Statutes is the default, if not covered in the statute, the board would have to figure it out. (Director Williams) agree to have a special meeting concerning bylaw; if we are going to tell the story, tell the whole story not bits and pieces, the board previously got rid of the current executive director (not because of performance), there were personal things going on. (Chair Gardner) had three directors that were removed, one was removed with cause and Director Johnson was removed without cause but was stated with cause (the resolution was a mess), it caused two people to go under investigation for following the majority vote, a supermajority vote would have avoided that protecting people from needless investigations (nothing was found at fault-a resolution was followed), it protects people who want to come and a job; the Executive Director should run the show, a supermajority for the executive director and a supermajority for the legal would create the same situation in previous years (2018-2019), legal should be protected, the executive director can bring a recommendation but the board will decide by majority vote. (Director Critton) the supermajority strongly undermines the majority, if the personnel is doing the job, there is no need for a supermajority; inquired about the hiring processes now that this position (Executive Director) is a town position, what are the responsibilities, what constitutes cause for termination or why there was no cause, to clear this up may help to determine whether or not a supermajority is necessary, what can the board do to maintain consistency and stability in the processes and procedures, every time an executive director

or an attorney is removed, the community takes a step back, I am for protecting the position, not a person, it seems not to be a policy or procedure matter but a personal matter, what can be out in place to protect the position without necessarily having to change the identity of the democracy, safeguards to ensure that the right thing is done to keep people that are being effective in this agency in place.(Chair Gardner) The supermajority vote would allow for more voices, is a necessity, protect us against ourselves. (Director Randolph) the investigation dealt with an illegal contract, ell the whole story; have not set goals and objectives for the executive director consistent with what the boards would like to see, be proactive, how many CRAs or cities or towns have the supermajority here in Central Florida (legal, do not know of any CRAs that have supermajority, without having done any specific research, why does Eatonville have to be different. (Director Daniels) section five (termination) of the previous executive director's contract on Mr. Johnson states that this agreement may be terminated without cause by the board of directors by majority vote, if terminated without cause full payout of the remaining terms of this agreement shall be made to the employee to include benefits and severance, the agreement reflected the importance of the majority vote. (Mr. Johnson) the executive director asked for some super majority, was presented with three sets of bylaws (when hired in December) by then Chairman Randolph to give a synopsis and put them all together, the bylaws have nothing to do with the Executive Director or the CRA my staff who is governed by the CRA policies and procedures and the town's policies and procedures which includes termination to taking vacation, have to comply with those policies which governs the employee's behavior, the board is expected to follow those policies and procedures in which are adopted, the board is governed under Chapter 163 and has nothing to do with the town's charter, this law says that the board has to adopt bylaws (not the executive directive), all agencies have bylaws, when applying for funding requires the governance document, the bylaws and the organizational chart, it is in the boards hands on how to govern yourselves accordingly as required under chapter 163. (Director Mack) suggest a special meeting to go through the bylaws. (Chair Gardner) the 2023 bylaws are the current bylaws, want to go ahead and schedule a special meeting (set a special workshop for Tuesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 5:30 p.m.).

#### **BOARD DECISIONS:**

**Approval of Resolution CRA-R-2025-04 Approving the CRA Bylaws** – **Chair Garner motion to TABLE** Resolution CRA-R-2024-04 Approving the CRA Bylaws; **moved** by Director Critton; **second** by Director Mack; **AYE: ALL; MOTION PASSES (Item Tabled). Comments:** Tabled item for a special meeting.

**Approval of Resolution CRA-R-2025-16 Authorizing the Purchase of 140 S. West, Eatonville, Florida** (Preamble Read) - **Chair Garner motion to APPROVE** Resolution CRA-R-2025-16 CRA Authorizing the Purchase of 140 S. West, Eatonville, Florida; **moved** by Vice Chair Washington; **second** by Director Mack with question. **Discussions:** Director Mack wants to table item so other board members can get an understanding of this matter (how it would be handled); request an appraisal before moving forward; the proposed cultural center should go to the Denton Johnson Center; suggest getting grant to assist with pushing forward; (Mr. Johnson) can get comparative market analysis done by real estate broker, or hire someone to do a pencil appraisal; to do an appraisal comes with a cost, a cost that exceeds \$7,500 will have to come to the board; (Director Randolph) have to make the money spent is going to benefit the community, the building needs a lot of work and no parking, will have to renovate the property to bring it up to code, have not done enough in Eatonville to help the residents with the CRA money, sidewalks needs to be repaired, pothole in the road needs to be fixed, cars need repair, have issues where money can be spent to improve our neighborhoods; consider getting more funds from the county and CDBG; would like to table; (Mr. Johnson) the board has the authority to change the number on the contract (negotiate); citizen needs are being addresses through the CRA with three grant programs from Orange County, one for major rehabs, one for minor rehabs and code compliance, and a new program addressing hurricane damage, Help CDC along with Build together will be renovating homes (two rounds of 25 homes totaling 50 homes and building a waiting list for the next rounds), the council for aging provides assistance for weatherization, residents can start their processes now, flyers have been distributed for the Saturday event to connect to services; do not have to take CRA dollars to create programs that are already being provided by

service providers in the community, it is not the government's job to fix everyone's problem, when there are agencies providing services, we can let the people know about the resources and services; if the price in the contract is the problem, we will not pay no more than what the property appraises for, there is an appraisal order and a survey order that happens once there is a signed executed contract, the appraisal becomes public records in which others can use. (Director Mack) want to ensure those that was not prepared to make a decision on the information in front of the board by not having the opportunity to speak with the executive director (have a better understanding), (Director Randolph) request to look at the building (executive will set up a date), where will the money come from; need to vote giving the Executive Director approval to negotiate and purchase (the resolution provides for this); what is the plan; (Vice Chair Washington) would love to have the property back (was previously owned by the town), but will have to pay to get it back to the town; (Director Williams) according to the town code the property loses its conforming use becoming residential (not commercial), the appraisal will be done based upon zoning (R2 zoning), (Mr. Johnson) It was the town's property, the transaction of the sale was able to go through, because there were no public documents to protect the town's interest, will follow the will of the board, putting safeguards in place to avoid overpayment, request for the authority to get an appraisal if it exceeds the dollar amount in getting the three bids required to get it done, confirmed with legal the statutory language that the max authorized to spend on the property is 15% above the appraised value, confirmed that the resolution allows the executive director the authority to acquire property based upon the terms and conditions to include moving the earnest money deposit, money will come from the general fund operating funds (anything not restricted or salary). Director Critton) request that there be a budget amendment, according to Florida statute 163.370 talks in detail about the agency powers to acquire property for the purpose of eliminating slum and blight, what happens after the acquisition is just as important, would like to see community engagement and perspective on what should become of the property, concerned about parking and generated traffic in a residential area, expressed concerns about others who do not live in the community buying up property in the town when this is an opportunity for the board to do something amongst ourselves. (Director Williams) this gives the board the first opportunity to purchase, an appraisal now would allow others to see it, the board should do its due diligence by getting under contract and continuing forward with the legal work. **ALL MOTIONS RECIENDED. Chair Garner motion to TABLE Resolution CRA-R-2025-16 CRA Authorizing the Purchase of 140 S. West, Eatonville, Florida; moved by Vice Chair Washington; second by Director Mack; AYE: ALL MOTION PASSES (Item Tabled). Comment:** There is already a letter of intent.

**(ADDED ACTION) Approval for Executive Director to Spent Money for An Appraisal that exceed \$7500**  
- **Chair Garner motion to APPROVE** Approval for Executive Director to Spent Money for An Appraisal for 140 S. West, Eatonville, Florida; **moved** by Director Critton; **second** by Director Mack; **AYE: ALL MOTION PASSES; Comments:** Three quotes must be provided, Director Randolph request for copies of the quotes.

## **BOARD REPORTS:**

**Executive Director (Michael Johnson)** – having a housing resource fair Saturday (March 22) from 10am to 1pm, vendors are prepared, residents can apply for different funding programs, have to get the redevelopment plan updated which is a community process that is going to require two public hearings before it comes to the board, staff is working on recommendations, it will go to the staff, to the community, to the board in your official capacity for approval, to the town council, and then to Orange County, Mr. Pressley will meet with Orange County in advance of the final document making sure their concerns are being addressed in the plan update, hoping to have the process completed to the county by the end of May with an approved in June..

**Attorney (Greg Jackson)** – it is important to have the plan updated by June because on July 1, 2025, or whatever date the CRA is to terminate is going to be determined, to set the date that is either before and not beyond September 30, 2045, the Florida legislature currently has house bill 991, Senate bill 1242 where there are seriously going to sunset; referenced the 2025 Government and the Sunshine Manual as it relates to agendas (page 39) stating that the board can bring walk on motions, it is recommended (best practice) by the Attorney General's office that if it is something of controversy that it is posted on the agenda, but it is not a requirement; the bylaws ratified in July of 2023 by the board has given the executive director the authority to handle the financial operation

of the board, the executive director can use funds as long as there is justification of where those funds will come from and where those funds went per the bylaws of 2023 which the board is currently operating under.

**Director Wanda Randolph** – Requested an update on Club Eaton. (Mr. Johnson) Mr. Smith in Tallahassee has concurred with the executive director that there should have been a structural engineering report done on the building before any money were received, currently waiting on the structural engineering report to if the walls and foundation are structurally sound to build on, building has been in existence since 1942, if the report indicates the wall and foundation are not structurally sound, the money that is allocated will require a new budget taking into account demolition, moving of the foundation, and a rebuild it, which is going to eat up most of the money, will end up will a shell (a nonfunctioning building), state has to determine if the outcome of that property is suitable to waste a million dollars, find a new site to do the same project, or to terminate the grant because the owner has not provided his \$250,000 match, the property owner has inquired about the CRA buying the property, the CRA has the capacity to acquire the property and ensure there is a performing arts and entertainment center which has to go through a letter of intent (LOI) then through the CDBG process of Orange County for acquisition, they will provide 75% and the CRA will have to have the other 25% match, waiting to see what the state decides and positioning ourselves to step in if needed to prevent losing the money.

**Director Tarus Mack** – thanked everyone for being engaged in the CRA business, acknowledged the efforts being done in moving forward getting things done in this community; important that the funds provided from Orange County and from a federal level are spent buying areas that are blighted; acknowledged Mr. Johnson for putting boots on the ground pushing forward, it is a tough job, strongly suggested the supermajority vote but willing to do whatever the board want to do.

**Director Rodney Daniels** – do not think the space is big enough for a multicultural or recreation center, inquired about the Elizabeth Park project proposed back in 2020 (Mr. Johnson) there was a concept to develop the vacant lots into the Elizabeth Park Town Homes, the federal government awarded \$4.1 million for that project (not recommended by the executive director), board has the authority to purchase land and the council can decide how the grant is applied, a recommendation will come from Mr. Pressley and the mayor from the town.

**Vice Chair Theo Washington** – No Report

**Chair Angie Gardner** – the Elizabeth Park proposed project was a way to fix the issue with the town owing the CRA money, in 2022 the ability to get appropriation funds came up, was told to identify a location that is not occupied in which Elizabeth Park was recommended for the appropriations request, if the appropriation funds were received, the location could possibly be moved to consider other options, the pool was done and the location went out of the picture allowing for the \$2 million dollars to be used for other locations; what was heard tonight was misinformation, transparency is talked about but we are not being transparent.

**Director Ruthi Critton** – Inquired about the board being in attendance at the Saturday event (Yes, expect all the leaders of the community to be in attendance), the CRA will have a table and tent, directors can benefit from the resources if they qualify; for those who need a copy of the current recent bylaws, the most recent email with the single document is from July 18, 2024; to legal, can motions from the floor have public participation (Yes, if board chooses); in regards to House Bill 991 and Senate Bill 1242, would like to go to Tallahassee to be heard about getting rid of CRAs, encourage the board to do the same; condolences to the losses in the community.

**Director Donovan Williams** – No Report

**Other Information:** Ms. Ada Sim's funeral is next Saturday (April 12<sup>th</sup>) at the Hope Church in Orlando, Friday, (April 11<sup>th</sup>) for the wake at Mitchell's funeral home, Ms. King will send an email to everyone

**ADJOURNMENT** Chair Angie Gardner Motions for Adjournment of Meeting (**Moved** by Director Mack; **Second** by Director Critton; **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES. Meeting Adjourned at 8:59 P.M.**

**Respectfully Submitted by:**

**APPROVED**

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**Veronica L King, Town Clerk**

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**Angie Gardner, Chair**