

RESOLUTION #2026-38

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF EATONVILLE, FLORIDA, FOR CLARITY AFFIRMING THE TOWN'S COMMITMENT TO GOVERNMENT TRANSPARENCY AND EXPRESSING SUPPORT FOR THE LEGAL ACTION TAKEN TO ENFORCE ADHERENCE TO THE FLORIDA SUNSHINE LAW AND PROTECT THE HISTORIC HUNGERFORD PROPERTY, PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT; FOR SEVERABILITY; AND PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the Town of Eatonville is the oldest incorporated Black municipality in the United States, established with a rich legacy of self-determination, culture, and historic landmarks; and serves as a vital cultural symbol of heritage and self-determination; and

WHEREAS, the site of the former historic Robert Hungerford Normal and Industrial School has served as a cornerstone of the Eatonville community with historical and educational significance to its community for generations of Eatonville residents; and

WHEREAS, ensuring government entities—including the School Board of Orange County—adhere to Florida's Sunshine Law (Section 286.011, Florida Statutes) is critical for protecting the public's right to transparent decision-making and public participation in matters concerning the disposal of public land; and

WHEREAS, the Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc. (P.E.C) represented by the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) filed a lawsuit alleges that the Orange County Public School Board over the planned sale of the Hungerford property violated the Florida Sunshine Law (Chapter 286, Florida Statutes) by making decisions regarding the sale of the Hungerford property to Dr. Phillips Charities through closed-door, secret negotiations without contemporaneous and public input of Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law by failing to provide required public notice and open meetings in direct violation of the Florida's Government in the Sunshine Law (Chapter 286, Florida Statutes); must be granted transparency and a meaningful voice in the decision-making process concerning the disposal of town land; and

WHEREAS, the Town Council of the Town of Eatonville finds it necessary to advocate for open government, community self-determination, and the strict enforcement of the state's public meetings and public record laws to have a legal and moral right to contemporaneous access to all phases of decision-making regarding the future of the Hungerford land; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF EATONVILLE, FLORIDA:

Section 1. Legislative Intent and Findings. The foregoing recitals are hereby ratified and confirmed as being true and correct and are made a part hereof.

Section 2. Support for Government Transparency. The Town of Eatonville Town Council hereby expresses its full moral and political support for the lawsuit filed by P.E.C. and the SPLC, supporting the enforcement of the Florida Sunshine Law and calling for transparency regarding the disposal of the Hungerford property and reaffirms its dedication to the principles of open government and condemns any closed-door negotiations that subvert the open meeting requirements of the Florida Sunshine Law regarding the \$14 million sale of the Robert Hungerford property to Dr. Phillips Charities.

Section 3. Endorsement of SPLC Lawsuit. The Town of Eatonville Town Council expresses its public support of the legal action initiated by the Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community, Inc., against the School Board of Orange County, to the extent that the legal action will: 1) invalidate any decisions made in violation of the Florida Sunshine Law; 2) ensure transparency in dealing with public property; 3) promote engagement in good faith for the betterment of public discourse; and 4) ensure the utter respect for the statutory and constitutional rights of the Eatonville community regarding the disposition of the Hungerford property.

Section 4. Demand for Accountability. The Town calls upon the Orange County School Board to ensure full transparency in its future operations and to work collaboratively with the Town of Eatonville regarding the Hungerford property to the extent public input will be paramount; and all governing and regulatory bodies dealing with Eatonville's historic footprint will strictly honor the public process, including community stakeholders, in all phases of deliberation, to protect the educational and historical legacy of the Town of Eatonville.

SECTION 5. CONFLICTS: All Resolution or parts of Resolutions in Conflict with any other Resolutions or any of the provision of this Resolution are hereby Repealed.

SECTION 6. SEVERABILITY: If any section, sentence, clause, or phrase of this resolution is held to be invalid or unconstitutional by a court of competent jurisdiction, the holding shall not affect the validity of the remaining portions of this resolution.

SECTION 7. EFFECTIVE DATE This Resolution shall take effect immediately upon its adoption.

PASSED AND ADOPTED by the Town Council of the Town of Eatonville, Florida, on this 7th day of July 2026.

ATTEST:

RUTHI CRITTON, Mayor

VERONICA KING, Town Clerk