



TOWN OF EATONVILLE

"THE OLDEST BLACK INCORPORATED MUNICIPALITY IN AMERICA"

Message from the Mayor

Dear Residents,

As your mayor, every year I work hard to ensure that my efforts and the efforts of this staff, reflect the needs, values and interests of the citizens and other stakeholders in this Town; to allow for the better opportunity and to secure services that are needed. This year, I am proud to share all the accomplishments made and are yet to come.

In 2022, when I stepped into this role, we were severely short staffed, and employees were wearing many different hats. Today, I am proud to say that we have conquered that hurdle and have filled over 80% of the positions needed to provide the services of a fully functioning municipality. The improvement can be seen in the issuing of permits, response to service calls and concerns, and improved internal and electronic systems.

Town Services for permitting and utilities has improved through the installation of digital software. This software will allow for online tracking capabilities and better follow-up with requests. Although the new meter program began with the prior administration, current staff provided the efficient knowledge and follow-through to ensure the completion of this valuable project. Using technology, better efficiency has been achieved for the residents.

The Town of Eatonville does not exist in a bubble. Many organizations have stepped up to offer their in-kind services such as volunteerism, use of equipment and knowledge, etc. Other Partnerships offer something else that is highly desirable – education. This year, Orange County Public Schools opened the Eatonville Orange Technical College which offers technical courses which will allow graduates to begin work with major corporations in the Central Florida area. Additionally, the Travel and Leisure Corporation has funded a free pre-school for 2- and 3-year-olds. Getting an early start with quality education will increase the chances of educational success in the future. Educational success increases the opportunity for advancement in career placement. Education is power.

Through the work of this administration, the town has come a long way. In 2021/2022 we were elated to find out that the town had secured \$5.9 million to upgrade the drinking water infrastructure. This project is on its way. But the work has continued and further successes this year are in the form of a technological grant for the Denton Johnson Center (\$2.5 million) and a much-needed upgrade to the CRA Building (\$400,000.00). The first payout for the Community Policing Grant has been made and now the design of a new community room in Frances Jerry Park can move forward. This structure will include much needed restrooms as well as additional gathering space for residents.

This budget year, the Capital Improvement projects include the purchase of land as previously announced (\$2 million), and a \$3 million beautification of East Kennedy Boulevard. The list of projects will continue as additional grant notifications are received. This administration is doing the work as promised.



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Municipalities that grow, are the municipalities that plan for that growth. This plan stems from a masterplan that lays the foundation for future zoning and comprehension decisions. As the town grows, the economics of the town will grow. With a strong masterplan and improved infrastructure as well as the other projects listed in the capital improvement plan, and supporting training programs for residents, the town will increase its chances of attracting businesses ready to hire.

There are, however, areas that we are still highly focused on. Those areas include our internal systems. This focus will help us to better service you, the residents, as well as effectively execute the day-to-day operations of our Town. We are evaluating and updating outdated policy and procedural documents and continuing to assess the current flow and management of events and standard operating procedures. This budget year, with the integration of financial data from one system to another, our audit is being submitted much later than desired. Be assured that this problem should not be a hinderance in the future. There is still much work to do, and we are prepared to do that work.

The Town's valuation increased by 22% due to the construction of past housing projects that are now on the tax rolls. This is great news, except that this increase in value has also triggered an increase on safety costs for fire and rescue. This cost will be realized over the next several years so that future revenue increases will help to absorb the new amount. In the meantime, this administration will continue to find ways to work more effectively and attract additional federal and state funding to offset these costs. We will also alert residents of ways they can control their consumption and reduce their monthly costs. Another offset to such increases is with impact fees. This administration has, for the first time in the town's history, instituted impact fees so that the residents are no longer the burden-bearers for new development. Everyone must pay their fair share.

As our Town continues to grow and reach full sustainability, this administration is looking toward the future. A future that involves envisioning what the town can be in the years and decades to come. A future that will include the voice of the residents. By focusing on YOU, we are making this a better place to live, thrive, and allow us to move forward. May we continue to be blessed in this effort.


Dr. Angie Gardner
Mayor, Town of Eatonville