



HISTORIC TOWN OF EATONVILLE, FLORIDA HISTORIC PRESERVATION BOARD MEETING MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, August 14, 2025, at 1:00 PM

Town Hall (Council Chamber) - 307 E Kennedy Blvd. 32751

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 Council Agenda Page.*

CALL TO ORDER: Vice Chair LaDwyana Jordan called the meeting to order at 1:03 p.m.

ROLL CALL: Quorum was established by roll call through Marissa Bellenger.

PRESENT: (4) Vice Chair LaDwyana Jordan, **Board Members:** Jane Turner, Ann Dawkins-Curtis, Laverne Bellamy Williams; **Alternate:** John Beacham (Absent: Chair Rosa Pickett)

STAFF: (5) Brianna Ross, **Planning Coordinator;** Demetrius Pressley, **Chief Administrative Officer;** Marissa Bellenger, **Records Coordinator;** Brittani Gragg; **Executive Assistant to the Mayor;** Veronica King, **Town Clerk**

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: Board member Ann Dawkins-Curtis led the invocation with a moment of silence followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION: None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: (*Board was given an opportunity to review the minutes before voting.*)

Vice Chair Jordan **MOTIONS** to **APPROVE** meeting minutes for May 8, 2025, and June 12, 2025; **moved** by Board Member Beacham; **second** by Board Member Dawkins-Curtis; **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES.**

BOARD DISCUSSIONS/DECISIONS:

Staffing Updates – Chief Administrative Officer Demetrius Pressley introduces the new planning and development coordinator, Ms. Brianna Ross. Mr. Pressley – Her role will support the effort in planning and development, coordination, and she will also be a resource to code enforcement, construction management, economic development, and strategic initiatives supported by the administration. Ms. Ross brings in five years of experience in program coordination, stakeholder engagement, and public service. She holds a master's in applied social science with a focus on African American U.S. history and is a Florida notary public. Mr. Pressley asked Ms. Ross to address the Board. Ms. Ross – I am excited to be able to serve the Town of Eatonville. My family is from Eatonville—the Tompkins. If there are any responsibilities to takeover or look over, I would be happy to discuss them with you. Board member Beacham asks which role Ms. Ross will be taking over. Mr. Pressley answers that the role was previously held by Mr. Cobbin McGee.

Discussion and Updates on the Surveying Grant – Mr. Demetrius Pressley informs the Board that moving forward Ms. Ross will be the representative for administration. Mr. Pressley – One of the things that is going on is the update from the National Trust of Historic Preservation and the African American Culture Heritage Action Fund grant that the town received. As of July 28, 2025, the Mayor and I worked with the National Trust to ensure a clear direction, and to make sure the funds were where they needed to be. We had a \$225,000 grant that was approved and set aside by the Town of Eatonville. \$51,000 went to the Everett Fly Association who

is handling the consulting along with existing preservation ordinances, identifying policy gaps and recommending strategies. In the second phase, \$25,000 went to the Association to Preserve the Eatonville Community and their role was to engage in leading proactive community engagement to complement the work being conducted by Mr. Fly. The third approval of funds set aside was for the Community Planning Collaborative which is pending execution as of now. That was for the community survey for historic resources survey focused on the incorporated areas of the Town of Eatonville. It will conduct research which includes data collection, evaluations and uploads. The community outreach and workshop facilitation will be included in this resource survey for the town. The final report will be uploaded into our Florida master site file and will make it eligible for national, state and local registration designation for historic preservation. So, that is another \$55,000 being set aside from that grant. The remaining portion of those funds have not been allocated as of yet. Ten percent of the remaining funds will support our administrative access and support to the grant. And another portion will assist with our Town Planner consultant, Tara Salmieri. The designated amounts have not been disclosed or agreed upon yet. The last time Ms. Salmieri spoke with you all, we talked about the potential grant, well this is now covered under the National Trust grant we have. The executive timeline for that is August 2025 through July 2026. We are looking at the principal, Mr. Ennis Davis. He will be the representative/contractor working in that area for us for the historic resource survey. Jane Turner asks for documentation on the information Mr. Pressley will be handing out copies. Board member Beacham asks if the survey is complete. Mr. Pressley stated it just started. Beacham continues and asks Mr. Pressley if the board will get a chance to look at the planning. Mr. Pressley confirms. Beacham asks if there will be an opportunity to expand the historical zone. Mr. Pressley – This survey is going to cover existing areas. If there are areas that we are looking to add in, I am sure they will be identified in his report and then we will have to figure out what the next steps are in order to add them into the designation. It will have to be an ordinance to add to that. Any workshops Mr. Davis hosts, we will make sure the Board is aware of them. Board member Beacham asks when the next meeting is. Mr. Pressley states they are waiting for dates and will pass them along once they receive them. Board member Jane Turner requests that information be handed out before, so that members can follow along. Vice Chair Jordan asks who is responsible for allocating grant funds. Mr. Pressley – Originally, they wanted to give the money to the town and wanted us to allocate. It was decided to let them [funders] decide and that is how Everett Fly, P.E.C., and Ennis Davis were selected. Board member Turner states that she does not see the total amount of the grant on the copies Mr. Pressley handed out. Mr. Pressley – The whole grant is a separate document; this was just a copy on the update. Board member Turner requested documentation on the full amount of the grant and where it is coming from. Mr. Pressley stated that he will get with the clerk for a copy. Board member Beacham asks if there are any current construction or demolition plans for historical buildings, and if so, will those plans come before the Historic Preservation Board. Mr. Pressley – The house on Bethune needs to be demolished, but I am not sure if that one is in the historic preservation zone, but I will confirm. The Board should review plans before they come along. Depending on what the code and statutes allow, determines whether it is just information to the Board or requires your approval or disapproval. I will make note of any projects so that you all are aware. Vice Chair Jordan – Is the Spencer house is designated as historical or within the boundary? Mr. Pressley – The house is in the district but is unsure if it has been designated. We have been in communication with the family members of the estate. Before anything were to happen to the house, it would have to come before the Town. John Beacham – Is there an update on Club Eaton? Mr. Pressley – I do not have an answer on the update. Last I heard, the grant was potentially being “no doubt,” because of the differences between the owner and the CRA in regard to how it should be operated. However, we could always pursue something different.

STAFF COMMENTS:

Brittani Gragg (Executive Assistant to the Mayor): Ms. Gragg announced to the Board that Founders’ Day celebrations will be held this weekend, which includes a history walk hosted by the Clerk’s Office. Ms. Gragg – My hope is that you all would be interested in participating, stopping by, and even be willing to talk to visitors. The history walk will be from 5-8pm, Friday and Saturday. Board member Jordan asks for clarification

on what to expect from the history walk. Ms. Gragg directs Chair Jordan's question to Records Coordinator, Marissa Bellenger. Ms. Bellenger – It is going to be a temporary exhibit with over a dozen photos the town staff has collected over the years. We are going to be setting up in the council chambers and putting the frames on the tables. We are also working with the Art and History Museums of Maitland and P.E.C., who have gladly contributed some objects. We are also going to include a discs of oral histories that were filmed twelve years ago. There will be a viewing area set up for that. I am a historian and studied at UCF with Dr. Scot French. So, this idea was really just about what is Eatonville outside of Zora Neale Hurston? I wanted this to be a love letter to the residents. I would really appreciate the support. I do not want to be the expert in this situation, I want to turn the floor to you all, who are the community historians. Board member Beacham asked if they could get the information ahead of time because the sponsors include the Historic Preservation Board. Ms. Gragg stated that she sent the invitation last week to board members. Ms. Gragg clarified – I sent out the invitation as soon as we figured out what our plan was. For me, I really want you all to be part of the history walk itself. My hope was to get you all involved before it was too late, but I needed to get the marketing out. Board member Jane Turner brought up the 130th Founders' Day which included an art display throughout Town Hall. Ms. Gragg – This for me was an idea that I thought would be the beginning of our ability to tell our own story. I would love to have supporting documents, plaques on the wall, so that I can reference these things when visitors come into town hall. To me, this was just the start. Board member Beacham mentioned a stained glass piece from Hungerford that is currently housed at a Maitland museum. Beacham would like to see the artifact returned and displayed in the town. Ms. Gragg – Please do not look at this as not quite hitting the mark. I would love for it to be the start of a conversation. Dawkins-Curtis – I do appreciate the youthful collaboration. I am a daughter of former Hungerford educators, mother and father, and I do have artifacts from that time. So, I do appreciate it because without a vision, people perish. The more collaboration we can have with young people who are interested, it will be beneficial. I appreciate the effort you are putting in and I am here to support you. Board member Turner suggests reaching out to the Heritage Center in Winter Park because they have tons of information on Hungerford. Ms. Gragg agrees and has spoken with Dr. Scot French, who organized the history harvest at the Heritage Center, to do something similar at town hall. Board member Turner asks as the survey goes along, and structures are identified that they could potentially be used as a heritage center. People are hungry for items and looking for something that is here. Ms. Gragg – I do not tell them there is nothing, it is just that the history is your lived life and stored in your houses. Beacham – Outsiders will tell you that they see deserted land because they do not know the stories of the people in this town. We just have to make sure that we do not let anyone tell us that our land is deserted and the town is dying.

BOARD MEMBER COMMENTS:

Vice Chair Jordan: Chair Jordan has a question about an email she received from the State of Florida regarding documents to submit on our financials. Mrs. Veronica King – Every year all elected and appointed officials as well as statutory charter officers, have to fill out the financial disclosure. The information in the email says you have to submit it at a certain time every year. I am not in a position to assist because it is a conflict of interest, but the Office of Ethics has staff that can help. This is the second year that we have had to do it electronically since they do not accept physical forms anymore.

Town Clerk Veronica King announced that an early voting election period is coming up and encouraged members to come out and vote. Election day is September 2, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT Vice Chair Jordan Motions for Adjournment of Meeting; **Moved** by Board Member Dawkins-Curtis; **Second** by Board Member Turner; **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES. Meeting Adjourned at 1:48pm.**

Respectfully Submitted by:

Veronica L King, Interim Town Clerk