



Veronica King <vking@townofeatonville.org>

Resolution 2025-20 - Public Comment - Eatonville Old Cemetery Preservation

Everett Fly <efly@everettfly.com>

Tue, Sep 16, 2025 at 4:28 PM

To: "Veronica Smith <vking@townofeatonville.org>

Ms. Smith:

During the week of August 20-23, 2025 I was in Eatonville gathering information for the "Eatonville Rising Blockbuster 2027 Project." While visiting various sites in the town several residents asked if I was familiar with the "Old Cemetery Site" at the southwest corner of West Street and Eaton Street (504 Eaton Street), and if I would submit my observations for today's Town Council Workshop and Meeting. Since I cannot attend the meeting in person, I am forwarding my observations for the record as follows:

Mayor Gardner and Eatonville Town Council:

During the week of August 20-23, 2025 I was in Eatonville gathering information for the "Eatonville Rising Blockbuster 2027 Project." While visiting various sites in the town several residents asked if I was familiar with the "Old Cemetery Site" at the southwest corner of West Street and Eaton Street (504 Eaton Street). I became familiar with this site when it was described in oral interviews I conducted between 1989 and 1990. The Eatonville residents indicated that transfer of ownership of the site was being considered to allow construction of a new single family residence. They also mentioned that a study had been conducted in 2006 to investigate the existence of the cemetery and any burial artifacts.

I have been able to find a copy of the 2006 geophysical survey online. After reviewing the document, I respectfully offer the following observations for your consideration before taking any action:

1) The State of Florida website contains guidelines regarding cemetery regulations:

<https://dos.fl.gov/historical/archaeology/human-remains/abandoned-cemeteries/what-are-the-applicable-laws-and-regulations/>

1.a) The The Florida state laws prohibit "willfully and knowingly distributing human remains" and

1.b) "disturbing memorials such as fences and tombstones." It should be noted that the presence of even fragments of human remains and burial artifacts could qualify as a "cemetery."

2) The 2006 investigation and report was conducted by a professional geologist. Best practices indicate that cemetery investigation is more appropriately conducted by a professional archaeologist. Geology and archaeology are related, but geological knowledge is not a substitute for professional archaeological expertise and procedure. The 2006 field investigation was not conducted under what would be considered archaeological best practices.

2.a) The maps in the 2006 investigation and report do not indicate that the entire site, all the way to West Street, was investigated in detail. Only five (5) spots were field tested and investigated. As a result, the report cannot be considered as comprehensive, complete or final.

2.b) The 2006 investigation and report relies heavily on ground penetrating radar (GPR) techniques. GPR results should not be the exclusive, or ultimate, tool for verification of funerary and cemetery remains.

2.c) The 2006 investigation and report used hand augers techniques to probe for fragments below ground surface. A typical hand auger is less than eighteen (18) inches in diameter. Professional archaeological field investigation would typically would be expected to cover at least an area of six (6) feet by six (6) feet, distributed across a site.

3) There are living Eatonville resident witnesses who recall seeing grave headstones and a fence around the old cemetery site.

Though the site at 504 Eaton is no longer an active cemetery, it holds an exceptionally significant place in Eatonville's physical cultural landscape history. Discovery of funerary artifacts or fragments of human remains, after the fact, could result in unnecessary public embarrassment and legal entanglements. I urge you to confer with the Florida Division of Historical Resources for guidance, and employ the proper professional expertise and field methods to document and protect what remains of the original cemetery site.

Respectfully,

Everett L. Fly

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Everett L. Fly
Landscape Architect, FASLA

9/30/25, 11:59 AM

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Architect