



MINUTES

City Commission Workshop: Downtown Merchants

10:30 AM – Monday, July 10, 2023 – City Hall

CALL TO ORDER: 10:30 A.M.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF QUORUM AND PROPER NOTICE

PRESENT: Commissioner Gary Ashcraft, Commissioner Nan Cobb, Commissioner Willie Hawkins, Vice Mayor Emily Lee and Mayor Michael Holland

1. WORKSHOP ITEM WITH DISCUSSION, PUBLIC INPUT AND DIRECTION

Mayor Holland thanked everyone for attending and explained the purpose of the workshop is to hear from the downtown merchants. He further explained that it was being held as a formal Commission meeting due to Sunshine Law requirements. He asked that everyone in the audience introduce themselves and explain what they do for the City or which business they represent.

The following individuals introduced themselves and explained their affiliation: 1) Rick Gierok, Public Works Director; 2) Frank Bartle, Third Generation Estate Jewelers; 3) Jerry Cobb, President of the Eustis Chamber of Commerce and owner of Cobb's Triangle Tractor along with his wife Nan Cobb; 4) Carolyn Maimone, broker associate for Fierce Realty; 5) Calvin Gentry, Downtown Eustis Classic Car Show; 6) Sandy Johnson, Great Pizza Company and officer for Eustis Business Alliance; 7) Christina Patterson, co-owner of Backfin Seafood Restaurant; 8) Brenda Barko, Lollygaggers; 9) Darrell Day, owner of Mystic Ice Cream along with his wife Lisa; 10) Bob O'Day, Humane Society Thrift Store; 11) Al Latimer, Economic Development Director; 12) Christine Guiffre, Events Assistant; 13) Miranda Muir, Events and Tourism Manager; 14) Carl Saenger, Events team member; 15) John Fahning, Captain and Road Patrol Commander with the EPD; 16) Mike Lane, Development Services Director; 17) Cheryl Roberts, Owner/broker with John Roberts Realty and Appraisals; 18) Melina de la Paz, Sol de Mexico Mexican Restaurant; 19) Eric Martin, Code Enforcement Supervisor; 20) Craig Dolan, Parks and Recreation Director; 21) George Asbate, Mega Properties; 22) Ryan Benaglio, Hickory Hill broker associate and representing Pam Rivas, owner of several downtown businesses; 23) Michael Swanson, Fire Chief; 24) Jonathan Sanders, Terri's Eustis Flower Shop and Magnolia Wine Bar; 25) Sean Jenness, Peddler's Wagon; 26) Bill Howe, Human Resources Director; 27) Lloyd Griswold, lifelong resident; 28) Ann Ivey, Library Director; and 29) Eric Blamick, Edward Jones Investments.

Mayor Holland reminded everyone to come to the microphone to speak due to the meeting being recorded.

1.1 Car Show Discussion

Tom Carrino, City Manager, reiterated the use of the microphone and explained it is not for amplification but for recording purposes. He also asked that each person identify themselves when they approach the mic. He then cited some of the agenda items and noted that Calvin Gentry had previously given a presentation to the Commission regarding the monthly car shows. He cited discussion at a budget workshop regarding City expenses pertaining to the car show. He explained that is why the Commission

wanted to hear from the downtown businesses regarding their feelings about the car show and how it affects their business.

Mr. Carrino then stated that there are two specific forms of direct support that the City provides for the car show. The first is payment for the port-a-potties which is estimated at \$5,000 for the next fiscal year and the second is marketing support which is the design and production of posters for the car show which is estimated at \$1,500 for the next year. Therefore, the Commission wanted to hear from the downtown businesses about the car show. He commented on the possibility of having a discussion about organizing the downtown merchants. He noted previous organizations including Eustis Main Street and the Eustis Business Alliance; however, there has not been a coordinated association in recent years.

Mayor Holland opened the floor to public comment and stated the Commission is interested in hearing from the business owners as to whether or not it is beneficial to the businesses. He added they also were wondering if the car show could be moved to the Saturday after First Fridays to reduce the costs.

Sandy Johnson, owner of The Great Pizza Company, commented on the history of her business related to the car show and businesses benefitting from the crowd. She thanked the Eustis Police Department for their efforts at the most recent car show. She noted Eustis Business Alliance (EBA) inactivity in recent years and expressed interest in exploring the future of the Alliance with possible reorganization and membership options. She indicated that they have no additional funds to use towards the car show so they still need the City's assistance.

Christina ?? noted she provides support to the car show along with Sandy Johnson. She expressed interest in staying involved and bringing business to the area. She commented that her business is located further down so they may not be impacted as much. She expressed interest in continuing to support the car show.

Brenda Barko, Lollygaggers, thanked the City Commission for its support of businesses. She indicated they have not been in the area long enough to have an opinion on the car show. She stated she has not noticed a difference on car show nights from other nights.

The Commission asked if the City has any statistics from the Placer software for those days with Mr. Carrino asking Mr. Latimer to retrieve that information.

Darrell O'Day, Mystic Ice Cream, thanked the City Commission. He stated that his patrons double with the car show. He commented on his involvement with the Chamber of Commerce and indicated that a business needs to look at how engaged they each are with an event. He suggested they consider coupling the event with another event such as a high school band concert or other event.

The Commission questioned if there is a difference in the types of businesses and their patron flow.

Calvin Gentry explained their process of registration for the car show. He indicated they direct the car show attendees and registrants to the local vendors. He expressed interest in seeing more businesses stay open during the car show. He noted Backfin as an example of being welcoming to the patrons. He commented on his and Ms. Johnson's efforts to get other businesses to be a sponsor to the show.

The Commission asked about splitting the set-up of the show between the downtown area and the park to expand the show throughout the downtown.

Mr. Gentry expressed support for that while noting the difficulty in getting people across the street. He thanked the Police Department for their assistance with the last show. He commented on how well known the show has become and stated that other car shows are being scheduled around the Eustis show.

The Commission asked about the prizes for the registrants and questioned whether or not there is a registration fee.

Mr. Gentry responded they give away seven \$50 bills at the end of the night. He explained that each registrant is given a door prize ticket when they register. He stated that the show sponsors provide the funding for the prizes noting they currently have sixteen sponsors. He confirmed there is no charge for registration.

Mr. Carrino asked about potentially shifting to a different Saturday such as the Saturday that follows first Friday which would reduce costs.

Mr. Gentry responded that Leesburg holds their car show on the first Saturday, another city holds theirs on the second Saturday, third Saturday is the Villages and the fourth Saturday is Eustis. He expressed concern regarding moving the date due to possible lack of participation. He explained that the participants have certain days they go to certain shows and they don't go anywhere else. He stated they have established the fourth Saturday as the date for their show. He indicated he could make an announcement at the next show and see what the response is.

The Commission asked for a show of hands from any businesses that experience a loss of business during the car show. It was suggested that the car show could be re-oriented to create less congestion for the businesses. It was also suggested that the businesses offer "pop-up" style businesses on the sidewalks during the event.

Mr. Gentry cited various issues including possible damage to grass if the cars are parked elsewhere and with early set-up of cars on the street. He expressed support for the "pop up" businesses on the sidewalks. He explained the difficulty in stopping the participants from arriving early and indicated he would continue to help with any issues.

The Commission questioned how many parking spots are in front of the Chamber of Commerce with Mr. Gierok indicating it is only 25 or 30. The Commission further asked why some businesses are closed and who is most affected by the show.

Melissa Ripple, Paws and Effects, stated she has experienced some loss of business due to the show but noted things have been better. She cited the need for better organization and requested they provide an email list. She expressed support for reorganizing the Eustis Business Alliance. She noted that she is open during the car show; however, she does not receive business from them and loses business as her regular customers make a point not to schedule appointments for those days.

Mr. Carrino noted they did put out some "customer parking only" signs during the last car show. He indicated they were put up early and then taken down after the car show started. He asked if that seemed to help.

Frank Bartle asked about the funding for the car show with Sandy Johnson indicating the funds come from the sponsorships. She stated the car show just pays for itself.

Mr. Bartle commented on his previous work with putting on shows and noted he also promoted car shows and that he never had a car show that didn't charge a parking fee. Every show turned a profit or it was discontinued. He questioned how many members are in the EBA with Ms. Johnson indicating she is the sole current member.

Mr. Bartle noted he previously was part of a downtown business and professional association and it had 70 members. He indicated that the \$600 per year sponsorship fee is a lot. He suggested also bringing in car dealerships and recommended bringing in more corporate sponsorships. He further suggested increasing the cash prizes to make them more appealing. He stated the event has to make money and expressed concern about the City paying for the port-o-lets. He indicated that Mr. Gentry should be compensated for his work on the show. He commented on the possibility of the City taking over the show. He expressed support for the businesses doing more to participate. He noted that he can't stay open late due to security issues.

Mayor Holland thanked everyone for speaking. He cited the need to revitalize the Downtown Business Alliance and for the businesses to work together to make it happen. He commented on the anticipated improvements to the downtown within the next five to six years.

1.2 Events Update

Miranda Muir, Events and Tourism Manager, thanked the City Commission, Event staff, City staff and local businesses for their support of the City's events. She provided an update on the remaining events for the year including the following: Summer Showdown in Ferran Park which will feature the Southern Outlaw Drag Boat races in combination with the End of Summer Back to School Bash, First Fridays, Veterans Day Memorial tribute to those veterans deceased since 9/11 including the Phantom Airborne Brigade parachute drop and parade, Light Up Eustis November 24th, and Snowflakes by the Lake with snow every Friday night through New Year's. She stated Georgefest 2024 will be February 17th through 24th.

1.3 Downtown Street Trees Update

Mr. Carrino provided the tree update. He noted that the canopy lights had been left up year-round at the request of the downtown business owners. He explained that the canopy lights would come down for tree trimming and trunk lights would be updated. He reported the canopy lights will go back up in October/November.

1.4 Waterman Site/Master Plan Update

Mr. Carrino reported that a request for qualifications was issued for the downtown former Waterman site. He stated that a consultant has been hired to prepare a downtown master plan to encompass all of the downtown not just those three blocks. He explained that the public, businesses and other stakeholders will be consulted and noted that the consultant will perform a market study to see what is realistic and what the market will support. He indicated that the plan is to have the first meetings in August with the exact dates to be scheduled. He noted additional meetings will be done one on one. He indicated additional information regarding the meetings will be forthcoming.

Mayor Holland encouraged the business owners and public to be involved with those meetings and commented on the importance of doing the project right.

1.5 UCF Incubator Update

Mr. Carrino stated the City has partnered with Mega Properties, UCF, and Lake County to create a UCF incubator in downtown Eustis. He stated the cost will be approximately \$200,000 per year with Lake County funding \$150,000 and Eustis funding the remainder. He explained that UCF will help with the basics of entrepreneurship and cited how they can help established businesses and attracting new businesses to the area.

Pam Rivas and George Asbate provided an update on the planned September opening.

Mr. Carrino added that the location is the former Lake Mechanical office building.

Ms. Rivas announced that One Million Cups, which is part of the Kaufman Foundation, would meet every Wednesday morning. She explained it is a place for entrepreneurs to present their ideas and get feedback. She indicated it is a nationwide event and would be promoted on the Kaufman Foundation website. She cited various organizations that would also be participating. She then noted some tenants that will also be in the facility including the Small Business Development Center.

Ms. Rivas confirmed there would be no charge for participation in the One Million Cups program. She announced there would be an introduction to the program on July 19th at Foxtail at 9:00 a.m. She noted that this will be the first One Million Cups in Lake County. She added that there is one in Orlando and a second one in Ocala.

1.6 State Road 19 Pedestrian Improvement Project Update

Rick Gierok, Public Works Director, reviewed the history of the project since 2018 and explained it will run from SR 452 to the Eustis Police Department. He explained the project was initiated due to pedestrian safety and cited new pedestrian crossings for Magnolia both on Bay Street and Grove Street. He explained that FDOT has broken the project into three smaller projects with the first being fast tracked as a safety concern. The first step will be the installation of rectangular rapid flashing beacons. He explained how those would work and where they would be located. He stated that should begin in the fall and further explained the project would include resurfacing, changing some curb lines and raising the intersections on Grove at Magnolia and Clifford and on Bay at Clifford, McDonald and Magnolia. He indicated they will also have textured crosswalks, landscaping and different lighting. He commented on some drainage issues that will also be addressed. He indicated the estimated cost is \$6 million and expected to take 18 months. He anticipated actual construction starting in early 2024. He provided a list of some additional details and how it will reduce the speed of traffic. He added that there will be some reduction in parking due to sight distances.

Mr. Carrino stated staff has worked with DOT on the parking issues in order to preserve as many spaces as possible while still protecting the pedestrians.

1.7 Other Business

Mayor Holland thanked everyone for attending and encouraged Ms. Johnson, Al Latimer and others to get together to try and re-organize the Business Alliance. He noted the Sunshine Law and encouraged anyone with questions to contact the Commissioners individually.

2. ADJOURNMENT: 11:44 A.M.

**These minutes reflect the actions taken and portions of the discussion during the meeting. To review the entire discussion concerning any agenda item, go to www.eustis.org and click on the video for the meeting in question. A DVD of the entire meeting or CD of the entire audio recording of the meeting can be obtained from the office of the City Clerk for a fee.*

CHRISTINE HALLORAN
City Clerk

MICHAEL L. HOLLAND
Mayor/Commissioner