



MINUTES

City Commission Meeting

6:00 PM – Thursday, January 02, 2025 – City Hall

INVOCATION: MOMENT OF SILENCE

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: COMMISSIONER WILLIE HAWKINS

CALL TO ORDER: 6:01 P.M.

ACKNOWLEDGE OF QUORUM AND PROPER NOTICE

PRESENT: Commissioner Willie Hawkins, Commissioner Emily Lee, Commissioner George Asbate, Commissioner Gary Ashcraft, Commissioner Michael Holland

1. AGENDA UPDATE

Tom Carrino, City Manager, noted the Approval of Minutes had been moved to after the election of Mayor and Vice Mayor. He also indicated that the final version of the agreement for the US Dept. of Commerce grant was in front of the Commissioners as what was in the agenda packet was not the final version.

Mayor Holland welcomed Senator Keith Truenow, Representative Nan Cobb and County Commissioner Kirby Smith and thanked them for their attendance.

2. OATH OF OFFICE

2.1 Swearing-in of New Commissioners - George Asbate, Willie Hawkins and Emily Lee

Police Chief Craig Capri administered the oath of office to Commissioner Hawkins for Seat #3, Commissioner George Asbate Seat #4 and Commissioner Emily Lee Seat #5.

3. ELECTION OF MAYOR AND VICE MAYOR

3.1 Appointment of City Clerk as Temporary Chairman

Mayor Holland turned the meeting over to Christine Halloran, City Clerk, for the election of Mayor for 2025.

3.2 Election of Mayor

Ms. Halloran reviewed the process to be used for the election of Mayor and Vice Mayor. She opened the floor to nominations for Mayor.

Commissioner Asbate nominated Willie Hawkins for Mayor.

There being no further nominations, Ms. Halloran called for a motion to close the nominations.

Commissioner Ashcraft moved to close the nominations. Commissioner Holland seconded the motion. On a voice vote, the motion to close nominations passed unanimously.

On the nomination for Commissioner Hawkins as Mayor, the motion passed on the following vote:

Voting Yea: Commissioner Asbate, Commissioner Ashcraft, Commissioner Hawkins, Commissioner Holland, Commissioner Lee

3.3 Election of Vice Mayor

Mayor Hawkins commented on the excellent job done by outgoing Mayor Holland. He opened the floor to nominations for Vice Mayor for 2025.

Commissioner Asbate nominated Gary Ashcraft for Vice Mayor.

Commissioner Lee nominated Michael Holland for Vice Mayor.

There being no further nominations forthcoming, Commissioner Holland moved to close the nominations. Commissioner Ashcraft seconded the nomination. On a voice vote, the motion to close the nominations passed unanimously.

On the nomination of Gary Ashcraft as Vice Mayor, the nomination passed on the following vote:

Voting Yea: Commissioner Asbate, Commissioner Ashcraft, Commissioner Hawkins,
Commissioner Holland, Commissioner Lee.

Ms. Halloran called for the Commissioners, Mayor and Vice Mayor to assume their respective seats.

A brief intermission was taken to allow the Commissioners to assume their seats and for additional photos to be taken.

Following the intermission, Commissioner Asbate recognized Commissioners Holland and Lee for their dedication to the community. He thanked his family for their support.

Commissioner Lee expressed appreciation for the opportunity to continue serving the community.

4. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

December 12, 2024 City Commission Meeting

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Commissioner Ashcraft, to approve the Minutes. Motion passed on the following vote:

Voting Yea: Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Asbate, Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Hawkins

5. AUDIENCE TO BE HEARD

Jaclyn Pelchat expressed support for the City stopping the addition of fluoride into the City's water.

Nicole King also expressed opposition to the fluoridation of the City's water.

Gail Isaac-Thomas congratulated the new Commissioners and stated she is looking forward to the City of Eustis working with the new administration.

Representative Nan Cobb introduced her legislative aide Tristan Romundo and district aide Mrs. Lou Wegis. She cited her new office in the Mega Workplace building located at 333 N. Bay Street Rm 204, Eustis, FL. She indicated she would be attending the local and county commission meetings.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

- 6.1 Resolution Number 25-03: Purchase of Security Cameras in excess of \$100,000
- 6.2 Resolution Number 25-04: Parks and Recreation Lightning Detection System for Pool/Ferran Park, Sunset Park, Dog Park and Carver Park
- 6.3 Resolution Number 25-05: Amending the Budget for FY 2024/25 for Economic Development Fund for a Grants Fund for a U.S. Department of Commerce/Economic Development Administration Requirement to Provide Matching Funds for a Targeted Industry Study Grant
- 6.4 Resolution Number 25-06: Amendment in the amount of \$5,831,200 to the FY24/25 Budget for carry-over of FY23/24 unencumbered budgeted funds for various Capital and Consulting Services
- 6.5 Resolution Number 25-07: Approval of a Collective Bargaining Agreement with the Eustis Professional Firefighters Local 4731 International Association of Firefighters Fire Lieutenant Unit

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Commissioner Ashcraft, to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion passed on the following vote:

Voting Yea: Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Asbate, Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Hawkins

7. ORDINANCES, PUBLIC HEARINGS & QUASI-JUDICIAL HEARINGS

7.1 Resolution Number 25-01: Appointing Commissioners to various Boards and Committees

Sasha Garcia, City Attorney, read Resolution Number 25-01 by title: A Resolution by the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Lake County, Florida, to appoint liaisons, directors or members and alternate directors or members to various committees and board of directors to ensure that the City's interests, as expressed through the City Commission, are represented on these various committees and boards.

Following discussion, the Commission agreed to the following appointments: 1) Commissioner Lee as the liaison to the America in Bloom committee with no alternate; 2) Mayor Hawkins to the City Audit Committee; 3) Mayor Hawkins as primary representative and Commissioner Ashcraft as alternate to the Lake Community Action Agency, Inc. Board of Directors; 4) Pam Rivas to the Lake County Arts and Cultural Alliance with Christine Cruz as alternate; 5) Commissioner Hawkins to the Lake County Educational Concurrency Review Committee with Commissioner Ashcraft as alternate; 6) Commissioner Holland as director to the Lake County League of Cities Board of Directors with Commissioner Hawkins as alternate; 7) Commissioner Ashcraft to the Lake-Sumter MPO Governing Board with Commissioner Asbate as alternate; 8) City Manager Tom Carrino, or his designee, to the Lake Eustis Area Chamber of Commerce Board as a non-voting ex-officio member; and 9) Commissioner Ashcraft as City liaison to the Open Door with no alternate.

Attorney Garcia opened the public hearing at 6:39 p.m. There being no public input, the hearing was closed at 6:40 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Commissioner Ashcraft, to approve Resolution Number 25-01 with the agreed upon appointments. Motion passed on the following vote:

Voting Yea: Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Asbate, Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Commissioner Holland, Mayor Hawkins

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Commissioner Asbate asked for a workshop to be scheduled the week of February 10th in a venue open to the public to discuss the downtown redevelopment. He also requested that Commissioners no longer meet individually with developers but only in an open forum. He suggested that the Commission seek a professional consultant or inhouse staff member to guide the Commission through the redevelopment process. He recommended that the individual have experience in the following: 1) land development; 2) economic development of a downtown similar to Eustis; 3) implementation of a master plan; 3) real estate investment strategy; 4) land use knowledge; 5) City land development and planning knowledge; 6) government entitlement assistance; 7) growth management; 8) development approval; and 9) central business district design standards. He commented that he asked staff what one thing they need to do their job better and the response was an active, involved, land use attorney. He recommended the hiring of a land use attorney with such experience.

Commissioner Asbate summarized that he is asking for four things as follows: 1) schedule the workshop in February to allow discussion in an open forum; 2) engage a consultant to help the Commission; 3) individual Commissioners and staff do not have one-on-one meetings with developers once engaged; and 4) engage and use an expert land use attorney.

Mayor Hawkins asked if the annual retreat has been scheduled with Mr. Carrino responding that it has not yet been scheduled.

Vice Mayor Lee commented that the timeframe for the retreat should not be limited but should take as much time as they need.

Commissioner Ashcraft asked how this affects the project with G3C2 with Commissioner Asbate responding that it doesn't necessarily relate to them but to educating and empowering the Commission to help them through the process. He noted that he has spoken with Mike Lane who has experience in this type of process.

Discussion was held regarding whether or not the Commission should hold off on the G3C2 project and the need to have a better idea of what they want before implementing an agreement with any developer.

Discussion was held regarding lack of up-to-date design standards for the downtown and how long it has taken to get the master plan and strategic plan completed with Commissioner Asbate noting that the first recommendation in the strategic plan is to hire a consultant.

Commissioner Lee noted they already have a signed contract with G3C2 for six months. She emphasized the need for the Commission to get focused.

Commissioner Ashcraft stated that a consultant would have an opinion on the downtown development and it will delay the process even further.

Commissioner Holland recommended holding the retreat in order to get all of the Commissioners on the same page. He emphasized that the project needs to be right because they have one shot at it. He agreed with the need for the Commission to talk it through.

Further discussion was held regarding what is the best way for the Commission to move forward and how long it has taken to get to where they are.

Commissioner Asbate questioned whether or not the agreement with G3C2 has been signed with Mr. Carrino indicating he wasn't sure if they had a signed copy back yet. He noted they will be reporting at the January 16th meeting on their progress. He emphasized that they have a good faith obligation to work with G3C2 for the next six months.

Discussion was held regarding scheduling for a retreat with Mr. Carrino commenting on what was initially expected for a retreat. He questioned whether they are discussing two separate retreats - one to discuss upcoming departmental projects and goals and one to discuss the downtown projects.

Following discussion, it was a consensus to hold the retreat on Monday, January 13th at 10:00 a.m. to discuss downtown redevelopment and related issues.

Discussion was held regarding who should be present at the meeting and the need to continue moving forward.

Discussion was then held regarding whether or not the City has an existing land use attorney with Mr. Carrino indicating it sounds as if they want an attorney experienced in negotiating land use or redevelopment agreements. He stated staff would have to research that. He noted an attorney he is aware of that he may be able to have attend that has development/redevelopment experience. He stated the attorney is Mike Goman and confirmed he is experienced in real estate work. He felt that Mr. Goman might be available to assist with discussion on January 13th.

Discussion was held regarding inviting additional attorneys or consultants as well.

Attorney Garcia reminded the Commission that the CRA did approve the contract with G3C2 with the caveat that they come monthly to provide updates on their progress. Under the agreement, the City is restricted from having discussions or negotiations regarding development rights or items similar to that agreement. She recommended that G3C2 be notified about the workshop and asked to attend. She commented on the possibility of the City becoming in breach.

Commissioner Lee expressed concern about bringing in new people that will have different thoughts and stated they need to focus on the commitments already made.

Commissioner Asbate stated his purpose is for the City to build its team and expand its knowledge to work with the developer. He stated what he wants is just an enhancement of what's already been done.

Further discussion was held regarding what the purpose would be in obtaining another consultant and the lack of Commission knowledge in what should be developed downtown. He emphasized his concerns are not about G3C2 and noted that he and Pam Rivas were the ones that brought in G3C2.

It was a consensus of the Commission to begin the workshop at 10:00 a.m. with the meeting to last as long as necessary.

9. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS AND COMMENTS

9.1 City Commission

Commissioner Holland thanked the Commission for allowing him to serve as Mayor and expressed congratulations to Vice Mayor Ashcraft and Mayor Hawkins. He noted he would not be attending the January 16th meeting due to being in Washington DC for the presidential inauguration.

Commissioner Ashcraft expressed concern about the audiovisual problems and the need to get that repaired with Mr. Carrino stating that staff was able to identify the problems; however, the contractor could not get there prior to the meeting.

Mayor Hawkins commented on Commissioner Holland's professionalism in how he ran the Commission meetings and led the City. He stated both Commissioner Holland and Commissioner Lee did a great job as Mayor and Vice Mayor.

9.2 City Manager

Mr. Carrino noted that some of the Commissioners had wanted to tour Reworld. He explained staff is trying to determine the best way to do that due to difficulties in making it a public meeting. He commented on the issue with dead fish in Lake Eustis. He stated they have placed information on the City Facebook page regarding the Florida Fish and Wildlife taking samples and will provide additional information as it becomes available. He announced that he would not be present at the January 16th meeting due to a family commitment but would coordinate with the Assistant City Manager and the City would be well represented.

9.3 City Attorney

Attorney Garcia announced that she was notified by the Grove at Pine Meadows of the withdrawal and dismissal of the release they were seeking based on the Commission's action.

9.4 Mayor

Mayor Hawkins commented on the great discussion held during the meeting and how passionate all of the Commissioners are. He stated his opinion they are on their way to bigger and better things.

10. ADJOURNMENT: 7:27 P.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