MINUTES
City Commission Meeting

6:00 PM – Thursday, July 16, 2026 – City Hall

Invocation: A Moment of Silence

Pledge of Allegiance: Vice Mayor Gary Ashcraft

Commissioner Hawkins asked to keep the two Hillsborough County deputies in their prayers.

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

Acknowledgement of Quorum and Proper Notice

PRESENT: Commissioner Michael Holland, Vice Mayor Gary Ashcraft, Commissioner Willie L. Hawkins, Mayor Emily A. Lee

ABSENT: Commissioner George Asbate

1. Agenda Update:

Interim City Manager, Rick Gierok, noted no agenda updates.

2. Presentations:

2.1 Presentation of Florida League of Cities – Home Rule Hero Award to Commissioner Michael Holland

Mayor Emily A. Lee presented the Florida League of Cities Home Rule Hero Award to Commissioner Michael Holland.

Commissioner Holland thanked the Commissioners and the City.

2.2 Presentation by Berry, Dunn, McNeil, & Parker, LLC (BerryDunn) on status of new ERP System Process

Finance Director Lori Carr stated that one of her first tasks after joining the City was to evaluate its financial system. On November 20, 2025, she recommended that the City pursue a new solution, and the Commission approved hiring BerryDunn to assist with the evaluation and selection process. Carr introduced BerryDunn representatives Jonathan Grace and Ross DeFalle.

Jonathan Grace, Principal with BerryDunn, stated that he has 14 years of experience with the firm and 12 years of prior public-sector ERP experience.

Ross DeFalle, Senior Consultant and Project Manager, stated that BerryDunn began working with Carr and Kathy Wood in January as the core project team. Fact-finding sessions began March 10, 2026, covering 27 functional areas and departments. Forty-five staff members participated over three days, providing approximately 450 documents and 43 survey responses. Mr. DeFalle stated that the assessment identified duplicate data entry, reliance on Excel and other ancillary tools, and difficulty sharing information across departments. He stated that a modern ERP system could consolidate processes, strengthen controls, and improve reporting. He reviewed the Request for Information (RFI) results, noting that vendor names were withheld to avoid bias, and the RFI included finance functions, utility billing, and code enforcement. He also discussed the division of responsibilities between the

City and the selected vendor and the need for adequate City staffing during implementation. Mr. DeFalle presented four alternatives: maintaining the existing systems; replacing finance, human resources, and utility billing through one RFP; replacing the full system through one RFP; or replacing the full system through multiple RFPs. He recommended combining finance, human resources, and utility billing into one RFP to limit implementation risk and address the primary areas affected by manual processes and legacy system limitations.

Mr. Grace stated that the assessment identified extensive manual data entry, information spread across multiple systems, and time spent locating information, with opportunities to improve grant and project tracking and provide employee, citizen, and self-service portals. He explained that one-time costs include implementation, data conversion, training, and configuration, while subscription costs cover annual system access. Multiple RFPs would require additional City staff time and BerryDunn consulting fees. The project is approximately halfway complete, with functional and technical requirements to be developed with City staff, the RFP targeted for late October or early November, vendor demonstrations to follow, and contract negotiations targeted for January 2027. Mr. Grace stated that the City would be responsible for validating converted data and that required integrations, including RecDesk and utility payment processors, would be included in the RFP. He also confirmed that the RFP would identify retained systems, required interfaces, data-sharing and integration requirements, compatibility requirements, and associated vendor costs.

Commissioner Hawkins asked whether multiple RFPs would increase costs. Mr. Grace stated that they would require additional staff time and consulting fees. Hawkins also asked whether the RFP would identify retained systems; Grace confirmed that it would include retained systems, required interfaces, data-sharing and integration requirements, and associated costs.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft asked about data ownership and system integration. Mr. Grace stated that the City and vendor would share responsibility for data conversion, with the City responsible for validating the converted data. He confirmed that required integrations, including RecDesk and utility payment processors, would be identified in the RFP. Mr. DeFalle added that retained systems and hardware would be identified to ensure vendor compatibility. Vice Mayor Ashcraft noted concerns about repeating the City’s existing compatibility issues with Edmunds.

Commission directed staff and BerryDunn to proceed with developing the functional and technical requirements for an RFP covering finance, human resources, and utility billing. Mr. DeFalle stated that the RFP would identify systems and hardware to be retained, required integrations and interfaces, data-sharing requirements, compatibility requirements, and associated vendor costs.

3. Audience to be Heard

Gail Isaac-Thomas addressed the Commission regarding East Town CRA infrastructure needs and allocations, stating that CRA funds should prioritize improvements in blighted areas.

Catrice Hatcher, Secretary of Guiding Light Community Outreach, announced the “Beyond the Backpack” event providing school supplies, hygiene items, and community resources to children in need and requested a waiver of the Carver Park Community Center rental fee.

Stephanie Smith discussed efforts to bring faith-based community gatherings to Eustis, referencing a recent Ferran Park worship event and proposing future partnerships with the City and local churches.

Eric Schwalbach discussed his youth outreach programs, “Coaches, Convicts, and Cops” and “Coaches and Convicts with Christ,” emphasizing mentorship and structured activities to educate youth about the consequences of violence, drugs, and other harmful choices.

Randy Campbell introduced himself as the incoming principal of Eustis Elementary for the 2026-2027 school year and discussed his background in Lake County schools and plans to work with the school and community.

4. Consent Agenda

4.1 Resolution Number 2026-59: Annexation Agreement and Applicant's Agreement to Provide Water Service Outside the City Limits for a Real Property at 110 Fruitwood Avenue (Alternate Key 3878119)

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft to approve the consent agenda. The motion passed on the following vote.

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

5. Ordinances, Public Hearings, & Quasi-Judicial Hearings

5.1 Resolution Number 2026-60: Proposed millage rate for the Fiscal Year 2026/2027

Taylor Tremel, City Attorney, read Resolution Number 2026-60 by title only, a Resolution by the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Lake County, Florida, providing for a proposed millage rate of 7.3898 mils for the fiscal year 2026-27. Annual budget for the City of Eustis-Lake County and providing for an effective date.

Finance Director Carr explained that the proposed millage rate would be used for TRIM notices and could later be lowered but not increased without additional notice. She reviewed the required deadlines, with the rate due to the Property Appraiser by month-end, first reading on September 10, and final adoption on September 24. Ms. Carr reported approximately $30 million in revenues, $9 million in operating expenses, and $21 million in personnel costs, with $1.258 million in reserves proposed for one-time capital expenditures. She provided updated figures to include a 6.8% increase in property tax revenue, a 47.71% increase in new construction, and lower-than-anticipated insurance costs. Carr noted three new positions, including a Deputy Police Chief and firefighters for Fire Station Number 3, offset by the elimination of three vacant positions. She indicated that the budget also included a 5% cost-of-living adjustment, housing rehabilitation funding, a $30,000 gateway grant allocation, and potential RecDesk and ERP costs. Ms. Carr stated that the proposed millage rate of 7.3898 represents a 3.93% tax increase and approximately $518,000 more revenue than the rollback rate. Commission action was requested to approve submitting the 7.3898 proposed millage rate to the Property Appraiser for the TRIM notices.

City Attorney Tremel opened the public hearing at 6:57 p.m., and with no public comments offered, he closed the public hearing at 6:57 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Commissioner Hawkins to approve Resolution Number 2026-60. The motion passed on the following vote.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft noted if it were not for the upcoming property tax vote and the exceptional work from both Rick Gierok and Miranda Burrowes in preparing the budget it would have been a no vote for him.

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

5.2 First Reading of Ordinance Number 2026-28: Annual Update of the Five-Year Capital Improvements Schedule of the Comprehensive Plan Fiscal Year 2026/2027 - 2030/2031

City Attorney Tremel read Ordinance Number 2026-28 on first reading, an Ordinance of the City Commission of the City of Eustis Lake County, Florida, approving the annual update of the five-year capital improvement schedule of the comprehensive plan under Florida Statute 163.3177, subsections 3B, providing for conflicting ordinances, severability, and an effective date.

Finance Director Carr noted that she did not have a formal presentation as the topic had been covered extensively in prior workshops. She explained that the process was handled differently this year, with more comprehensive involvement across all departments rather than being limited to individual department heads, since all departments now fall under one structure. She noted one change from the originally presented CIP budget with additional funding added for the 21 N. Grove Building, sourced from the impact fee funds for the Emergency Operations Center (EOC).

City Attorney Tremel opened the public hearing at 6:59 p.m., and with no public comments offered, he closed the public hearing at 6:59 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft to approve Ordinance Number 2026-28 on first reading. The motion passed on the following vote.

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

6. Future Agenda Items and Comments

6.1 City Attorney

City Attorney Tremel said that he hoped his prior written updates have been helpful. He informed the Commission that he has formally taken over all current litigation involving the city from prior counsel by filing notices of appearance. He noted that Derek Schroth is listed as co-counsel on those cases and will receive automatic filing updates and participate as needed.

6.2 City Manager

Interim City Manager Gierok reported that the City reduced the General Fund by approximately $2 million during the budget process. He also reported that RFPs for City Attorney services and a revolving line of credit are scheduled to open July 28 and July 23, respectively.

Gierok reported that 75 applications were received for the City Manager position and that virtual Commissioner interviews are scheduled for the following week. He advised Commissioners to contact Karen Crouch, Human Resources Director, if schedule changes are needed to allow sufficient time for the interviews.

Gierok announced the Habitat for Humanity ProBuild kickoff event on July 21st at the Eustis Community Center for a veteran housing project.

Gierok reported that Lake County will install an all-way stop at Lakeshore Avenue and Woodward Avenue, with the City coordinating advance signage, message boards, and Police Department support.

Gierok reported that this year’s July Hometown Celebration drew 17,284 attendees, compared with 6,500 in 2025, and average attendee dwell time increased from 94 to 150 minutes. He credited Economic Development Director, Mike Bishop, with preparing a report tracking attendance, visitor activity, and local economic impact and advised Commissioners to request a copy if needed.

6.3 City Commission

Commissioner Holland reported that on June 27th, he and Librarian Ann Ivey attended the Miss Florida pageant. He shared that Miss Eustis, Baylee Joy Martin, placed in the top 15 in the state, and

Miss Teen Eustis, Sydney Salas, was first runner-up. He was impressed with both young women, and they are great ambassadors for the city. He would like the community to keep the momentum going.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft requested Commission approval to attend a conference in Nashville focused on strengthening Florida and Japan relationships, noting his prior attendance contributed to bringing the Japanese festival to Eustis and that a Japanese company working with Lake Technical College provides local economic benefits.

Interim City Manager Gierok stated that arrangements needed to be made promptly and that funds budgeted for the League of Cities conference could be transferred since Ashcraft would not attend that conference. Commissioner Holland supported the request provided the cost remained within the League of Cities allocation, and the Commission approved the request.

Commissioner Hawkins thanked Interim City Manager Gierok and Deputy City Manager Miranda Burrowes for their work in the front office and their collaboration with staff. He knows the $2 million budget cut was painful and commended the team for their efforts.

6.4 Mayor

Mayor Lee recognized Rick, Miranda, Cheri, Mary, and Marissa for their work on the July 4th event and introduced Justin, a University of Florida student interested in community involvement, encouraging Commissioners to engage with him.

Mayor Lee asked about improvements at Palmetto Plaza. Interim City Manager Gierok stated that a playground, additional parking, and surrounding sidewalks are planned and currently in design, with the work budgeted for the current year and to be completed by City staff; he committed to providing a project timeline by the end of the day.

Commissioner Hawkins, Commissioner Holland and Mayor Lee discussed the condition of a damaged pole and potential beautification improvements at the site.

7. Adjournment: 7:12 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. If available, the video recording may be accessible at https://www.youtube.com/@EustisComRel/streams or an audio recording may be requested from the office of the City Clerk.*

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CHRISTINE HALLORAN City Clerk	EMILY A. LEE Mayor/Commissioner