MINUTES
City Commission Meeting

6:00 PM – Thursday, June 18, 2026 – City Hall

Invocation: Mayor Emily A. Lee

Pledge of Allegiance: Commissioner Michael Holland

Call to Order: 6:00 p.m.

Acknowledgement of Quorum and Proper Notice

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

1. Agenda Update:

Interim City Manager, Rick Gierok, noted there were no updates to the agenda.

2. Approval of Minutes:

2.1 Approval of Minutes for May 21, 2026, City Commission Meeting

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

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

3. Appointments:

3.1 Reappointment to Code Enforcement Board - Member

Interim City Manager Gierok stated that Alan Paczkowski's term expires on July 2, 2026, and he has requested reappointment for a new term to expire on July 2, 2029. There were no other applications received.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Commissioner Hawkins to approve the reappointment of Alan P. Paczkowski for a term to expire on July 2, 2029. The motion passed on the following vote.

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

4. Audience to be Heard:

Daniel DiVenanzo, a local business owner, commented on poor maintenance of landscaped areas at city entrances and noted concerns from other merchants.

Devon Turner, a Lake County resident, spoke about First Amendment rights and the scope of free speech protections at public meetings.

Gary Winheim, unincorporated Lake County resident, commented on the Eustis Police Department Chaplain program that is publicly funded.

Carey Schreier, not a city resident, stated concerns about the police investigation into her son's death.

Eric Schreier, not a city resident, commented on the police investigation into his son's death.

Stephanie Winheim, unincorporated Lake County resident, commented on the Chief of Police and Eustis Police Department's handling of the Jordan Ellis case.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Resolution Number 2026-52: Lake County Local Mitigation and Resilience Strategy Plan (LMS) Adoption

5.2 Resolution Number 2026-54: Budget Amendment in the amount of $200,000 to the Adopted 2025/2026 Budget for the Building Fund

5.3 Resolution Number 2026-55: Approval of a Guaranteed Maximum Price (GMP) of $1,582,155 for construction management services for Phase 1 renovation of the Construction Services Complex located at 21 N Grove Street

5.4 Resolution Number 2026-56: Parks and Recreation Renaming of Sunset Island Park to Timothy Totten Park at Sunset Island

Motion made by Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Seconded by Commissioner Holland to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. The motion passed on the following vote.

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

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

6.1 Resolution Number 2026-57: City of Eustis/UCFRF Business Incubator Partnership Agreement Renewal

City Attorney Tremel introduced Resolution Number 2026-57, a Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Lake County, Florida; approving a second funding agreement between the City of Eustis and the University of Central Florida (UCF) to partner in the operation of a business incubator in the city, authorizing the city manager to execute the agreement, providing for severability, providing for conflicts and providing for an effective date.

Economic Development Director Al Latimer presented a resolution for continued funding of the UCF Eustis Incubator through a second three-year agreement. The proposed annual funding includes $127,500 from Lake County, $42,500 from the City, and $30,000 from UCF, maintaining the prior $200,000 annual funding level.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft stated the incubator is producing meaningful results by supporting businesses at various stages and creating local economic opportunities.

Commissioner Hawkins requested an update from the incubator on its community impact.

Brian Bedrick, Site Manager, explained that the incubator supports entrepreneurs through mentoring, education, and business development programs. He reported that incubator clients generated more than $950,000 in first-quarter revenue and noted expanded partnerships with regional and statewide economic organizations to attract and grow businesses.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft asked about financial oversight, and Bedrick confirmed that accounting and review processes include City, County, and financial staff.

Commissioner Holland described the incubator as a valuable investment for the City and praised its affiliation with UCF.

Commissioner Hawkins asked about program performance over the three-year period. Bedrick stated the program is progressing as expected, with businesses entering, scaling, and demonstrating positive results.

Commissioner Asbate stated the program has exceeded expectations, highlighting its economic impact, mentorship efforts, and success stories. He suggested downtown redevelopment could help retain growing businesses locally.

Mayor Lee asked whether incubator graduates return to mentor others. Commissioner Asbate noted that many participants remain engaged, strengthening the program's mentorship culture, and expressed confidence in the incubator's continued success.City Attorney Tremel opened public hearing at 6:36 p.m. There being no public comment, he closed the public hearing at 6:36 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft to approve Resolution Number 2026-57. The motion passed on the following vote.

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

6.2 Resolution Number 2026-58: Our El Maries Pizzeria & Sub Shoppe Commercial Lease Renewal

City Attorney Tremel introduced Resolution Number 2026-58, a Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Florida; authorizing the City Manager to execute a commercial lease agreement with EL Marie Pizzeria and Sub Shop, LLC., a Florida limited liability company for city-owned property at 200 North Bay Street.

Economic Development Director Latimer presented a three-year renewal of the lease for the city-owned building, extending the agreement through 2029 at the current rent of $1,500 per month. He noted that the tenant previously invested approximately $40,000 in improvements that enhanced the city's property. The lease retains the existing security deposit and includes a 120-day termination clause, allowing the City to end the agreement if needed for future redevelopment.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft clarified that the tenant made improvements to the building. Economic Development Director Latimer agreed.

Mayor Lee questioned the long-term implications of the lease given the city’s redevelopment plans, and whether the city would be able to reclaim the property if needed before the end of the proposed three-year term. Economic Development Director Latimer confirmed that the lease includes a termination clause requiring approximately 120 days’ notice, which preserves flexibility for the city.

Commissioner Asbate supported the three-year lease renewal, stating it aligned with the City's redevelopment timeline and would keep the property occupied while maintaining an active downtown business. He noted the restaurant's positive contribution to the downtown area, acknowledged the tenant's $40,000 investment in improving the property, and stated that the current rent was reasonable given the property's limitations and future redevelopment plans.

Commissioner Hawkins asked about typical square footage commercial rental rates in the area and whether the $1,500 monthly rent aligned with those standards.

Economic Development Director Latimer responded that commercial rental rates vary widely depending on location, condition, and use, and suggested that more detailed input could be provided by those more directly familiar with local commercial leasing conditions.

Commissioner Asbate supported maintaining the current lease terms, noting that keeping the restaurant operational supports downtown activity and recognizing the tenant's prior investment in the property as part of the lease's overall value.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft supported the lease renewal, noting the tenant has responsibly maintained and improved the property and that maintaining a stable downtown business is important.

Commissioner Holland supported the renewal, stating that retaining an established restaurant benefits the downtown area and that the proposed lease terms were reasonable given future redevelopment plans.

Mayor Lee supported the lease but emphasized the importance of retaining the City's flexibility to regain possession of the property if needed for redevelopment.

Commissioner Asbate said he hoped the business would remain in Eustis long-term but did not support requiring the tenant to relocate within the city after the lease expires.

City Attorney Tremel opened the public hearing at 6:45 p.m.

Mark Rhoden, representing El Marie, requested approval of the lease renewal, stating the restaurant plans to continue operating, employs approximately ten people, and appreciates the City's continued support.

There being no further public comment, City Attorney Tremel closed the public hearing at 6:46 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft to approve Resolution Number 2026-58. The motion passed on the following vote.

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

7. Other Business

7.1 Discussion of Meeting Minutes

Interim City Manager Gierok presented four options for City Commission meeting minutes under the City Commission Rules of Order. He noted that minutes must include meeting details, attendance, matters discussed or decided, and votes, but verbatim transcripts are only required if directed by the Commission. The options included action minutes, which provide a brief record of motions, votes, and actions; brief summary minutes (staff recommendation), which add key discussion points, speaker identification, staff direction, and public comments; detailed summary minutes, which provide more comprehensive discussion summaries but require additional time and may increase potential disputes; and transcript-style minutes, which provide the most complete record but require significant resources. Gierok noted the City's current practice is transcript-style minutes.

City Clerk Halloran noted that current minutes average 11–15 pages and require significant staff time in addition to the workload from more than 100 public records requests monthly.

Commissioner Asbate asked about technology solutions.

City Clerk Halloran stated that AI and transcription tools have been evaluated but still require staff review due to limitations with speaker identification and accuracy and noted professional transcription services could cost approximately $22,000–$35,000 annually.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft suggested a hybrid approach, with detailed minutes for certain agenda items and reliance on recordings when appropriate. Halloran noted that audio recordings, livestream backups, agenda packets, and timestamped videos are retained.

Mayor Lee supported a hybrid approach reducing unnecessary detail, such as public comments, while maintaining detailed records of City business, decisions, and Commissioner discussions.

Commissioner Hawkins supported a more efficient format and expressed concern about staff time preparing verbatim minutes when recordings are available for review.

Commissioner Asbate supported continued research into technology options before changing the current process and emphasized the importance of accurate records with Commission direction, ordinances, or resolutions.

Commissioner Holland supported a hybrid format with additional detail for significant matters such as ordinances, public hearings, and quasi-judicial items and noted AI is not yet reliable enough to prepare official minutes.

City Attorney Tremel advised that meetings are not required to be canceled if recordings are unavailable and noted formal transcripts may be provided when required for legal matters.

City Clerk Halloran agreed to prepare sample hybrid-format minutes for Commission review at the July 16 meeting and explore options to improve timestamped access to recordings.

8. Future Agenda Items and Comments

8.1 City Attorney

City Attorney Tremel stated that he contacted the Spring Ridge Association’s attorney and scheduled a meeting for the following week to review comments and discuss the agreement.

City Attorney Tremel provided an update on the revised MMTC ordinance, noting the draft was prepared based on Commission direction and provided to staff. He requested additional Commission review on two areas requiring direction and noted the attorney transition contributed to delays.

8.2 City Manager

Interim City Manager Gierok reminded Commissioners of the Florida League of Cities conference on August 13–15 and requested attendance confirmations. He thanked staff, particularly Miranda Burrowes, for their work on the budget process.

Gierok provided an update on the City Manager search, noting 53 applications had been received. He requested Commissioners confirm participation on the selection committee and explained the process would include candidate review, interviews, and final selection by the Commission. Commissioner Asbate and Mayor Lee confirmed their willingness to participate and emphasized the importance of full Commission involvement.

Gierok presented a draft RFP for the City Attorney position and requested Commission feedback within the week. He noted the RFP would be finalized based on comments before proceeding with the selection process.

8.3 City Commission

Commissioner Holland announced the Hometown Celebration on July 3rd and recognized Cheri Moan and her team for their preparation. He also noted Miss Eustis Bailey Martin and Eustis Miss Teen Sydney Salis will compete in the Miss Florida Pageant. Cheri Moan stated arrangements were in place and she would follow up with the pageant director as needed.

Commissioner Asbate requested an August agenda item to discuss an ordinance addressing underground placement of transmission and power lines in future developments. City Attorney Tremel stated he would review applicable regulations and the Winter Garden ordinance to determine options. Commissioner Asbate recommended using existing ordinances as a reference.

Commissioner Hawkins requested review of potential e-bike regulations, including helmet requirements and age restrictions. Commissioner Asbate suggested reviewing Orange County's policy, and Vice Mayor Ashcraft recommended monitoring Tallahassee's efforts. Mayor Lee expressed concerns regarding e-bike use on sidewalks and pedestrian safety. Commissioner Hawkins requested the item be reviewed and brought back to the Commission.

Commissioner Asbate recognized City employees honored at the employee appreciation event and commended their dedication and commitment to the organization. Commissioner Hawkins agreed and noted the event helps employees feel valued and recognized.

Commissioner Hawkins also commended the Police Chief and officers for their response to recent shootings and emphasized the importance of community involvement in addressing local challenges.

8.4 Mayor

Mayor Lee thanked staff for their work on the budget process and recognized positive feedback on city beautification efforts. She also thanked Daniel DiVenanzo for organizing a downtown merchants meeting to support business coordination.

9. Adjournment: 7:41 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.*

CHRISTINE HALLORAN City Clerk	EMILY A. LEE Mayor/Commissioner