



MINUTES

City Commission Meeting

6:00 PM – Thursday, January 08, 2026 – City Hall

Invocation: Deacon Jim Shelley, St. Mary of the Lakes Catholic Church

Pledge of Allegiance: Commissioner George Asbate

Call to Order: 6:02 p.m.

Acknowledge of Quorum and Proper Notice

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

- 1. Agenda Update: None**
- 2. Election of Mayor and Vice Mayor**

2.1 Appointment of City Clerk as Temporary Chairman for Election of Mayor and Vice Mayor

Mayor Hawkins read a prepared statement thanking his family and staff members for their support, and providing an overview of the year's activities and accomplishments.

Mayor Hawkins turned the meeting over to Deputy City Clerk Mary Montez.

2.2 Election of Mayor

Ms. Montez explained the process to be used for the election of Mayor. She then opened the floor to nominations for Mayor.

The following nominations were put forth as follows:

Willie Hawkins was nominated by Willie Hawkins

Emily Lee was nominated by Michael Holland

There being no further nominations forthcoming, Ms. Montez asked for a motion to close the nominations.

Michael Holland moved to close the floor to nominations. Seconded by Emily Lee. Motion passed unanimously.

On a roll call vote, the nomination of Willie Hawkins for Mayor failed on the following vote:

Voting Yea: Willie Hawkins, Emily Lee

Voting Nay: George Asbate, Gary Ashcraft, Michael Holland

On a roll call vote, the nomination of Emily Lee for Mayor passed on the following vote:

Voting Yea: George Asbate, Gary Ashcraft, Michael Holland, Emily Lee

Voting Nay: Willie Hawkins

Mayor Emily Lee thanked the rest of the Commission for their support and cited the need for the Commission to work together as a team for the good of the City.

2.3 Election of Vice Mayor

Mayor Lee opened the floor to nominations for Vice Mayor.

The following nominations were made for Vice Mayor:

Michael Holland was nominated by Willie Hawkins

Gary Ashcraft was nominated by George Asbate

There being no further nominations forthcoming, Mayor Lee asked for a motion to close the nominations.

Willie Hawkins moved to close the nominations. Seconded by Gary Ashcraft.

The motion passed unanimously.

The nomination of Michael Holland for Vice Mayor failed on the following vote:

Voting Yea: Willie Hawkins, Michael Holland

Voting Nay: George Asbate, Gary Ashcraft, Emily Lee

The nomination of Gary Ashcraft for Vice Mayor passed on the following vote:

Voting Yea: George Asbate, Gary Ashcraft, Emily Lee

Noting Nay: Willie Hawkins, Michael Holland

Ms. Montez announced Gary Ashcraft as Vice Mayor.

RECESS: 6:19 p.m. RECONVENE: 6:27 p.m.

3. Approval of Minutes

Minutes of Regular Commission Meeting of November 20, 2025

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

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

4. Presentations

4.1 Presentation of Library Excellence Award

Ann Ivey, Library Director, introduced Faith Dunaway as the recipient of the second annual Library Excellence Award. She commented on everything that she has done for the library and noted that it was her co-workers that nominated her for the award.

5. Audience to be Heard

Gail Isaac Thomas congratulated Mayor Lee and Vice Mayor Ashcraft on their election to those seats. She announced that January 18th would be the "So Funny Sunday" comedy show at the Hideaway Performing Arts Theater.

Darius Kerrison also expressed congratulations. He noted the location for the comedy show would be at the performing arts center in the old Big Lots shopping center.

Harold Kelly addressed the Commission regarding the upcoming MLK Breakfast on January 17th. He commented on the 2025 event and noted the breakfast would be held at the Tavares

Civic Center. He announced that an ecumenical service would be held on January 18th at the Union Congregational Church and on the 19th would be a continental breakfast and the Unity Walk from Palmetto Plaza to Ferran Park.

Daniel DiVenanzo commented on Commissioner Holland's family's involvement in the community for four generations. He addressed the Commission about the need to encourage youth to stay in the community. He thanked the Eustis Police Department for their efforts to work with the homeless community and the reduction in the number of people sleeping behind his building. He commented on all the City has to offer. He announced he would be meeting with Lake County regarding installing a sidewalk on Lakeshore Drive.

6. Consent Agenda

6.1 Resolution Number 26-02: Acceptance of FDOT Grant for Purchase of Speed Radar Trailer

6.2 Resolution Number 26-03: Amending the FY2025/26 adopted Budget for the Governmental Grants Fund (018) to recognize award of FY2025/26 Florida Department of Transportation Grant

6.3 Resolution Number 26-05: Budget Amendment to FY2025/26 for Spring Ridge Repairs for Culvert Failure from October 26, 2025 Flood Event

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

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

7. Ordinances, Public Hearings, & Quasi Judicial Hearings

7.1 Resolution Number 26-01: Appointing Commissioners to Boards and Committees

Sasha Garcia, City Attorney, read Resolution Number 26-01 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 boards of directors to ensure that the City's interests, as expressed through the City Commission, are represented on these various committees and boards.

The Commission discussed who wanted to be appointed to each board or agency with the following appointments agreed upon: America in Bloom - Emily Lee; Audit Committee - Emily Lee; Lake Community Action Agency - Willie Hawkins; Lake County Educational Concurrency Review Committee - Willie Hawkins as appointee and Gary Ashcraft as Alternate; Lake County League of Cities - Michael Holland with Willie Hawkins as Alternate; Lake-Sumter MPO Governing Board - Gary Ashcraft with George Asbate as Alternate; Lake Eustis Area Chamber of Commerce Board as non-voting ex-officio member - Miranda Burrowes; and Open Door liaison - Gary Ashcraft.

Attorney Garcia opened the public hearing at 6:47 p.m. There being no public comment, the hearing was closed at 6:47 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Commissioner Hawkins, to approve Resolution Number 26-01 with the appointments as discussed. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

8. Future Agenda Items and Comments

8.1 City Commission

Commissioner Hawkins congratulated Mayor Lee on her election as Mayor. He asked Chief Capri to discuss the Police Athletic League. He thanked Chief Capri for his efforts in establishing the league.

Chief Capri commented on the program, noted they would be working with the Recreation Department, and indicated there are some private donations they may be receiving. He indicated he would be putting in the bid for the State PAL tournament to be held in November. He commented on a recent event they held at the high school.

Commissioner Holland expressed congratulations to Vice Mayor Ashcraft and Mayor Lee and stated he is looking forward to a new year.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft congratulated Mayor Lee on her election.

Commissioner Asbate commented on the passing of Greg Sizer and another community member. He noted that Mayor Hawkins presented a proclamation to Greg's wife and indicated that Mr. Sizer was one of the founders of One Million Cups. He congratulated the Mayor and Vice Mayor and thanked Commissioner Hawkins for his service as Mayor and to the community.

8.2 City Manager

Mr. Carrino noted that the next meeting would be January 22nd with a workshop with Dr. Levey at 1:30 p.m. on January 29th. He stated staff is doing research on an executive search firm. He indicated they may be able to piggyback off an existing contract. He stated they are currently looking at a specific firm, checking references and looking at their prior contracts. He commented on how the Commission will need to work with the company to develop an appropriate profile. He stated his hope to get the recommendation to the Commissioners the next day. He noted he would not be able to attend the Martin Luther King recognition events.

Commissioner Asbate asked how they would proceed with Mr. Carrino explaining the cost will be below \$100,000 so it could be a staff driven process to do the consultant selection. He explained that they could move forward very quickly using the piggyback process. He stated the company they are looking at currently has a contract for \$31,000 with another municipality for an executive search. He indicated they could be under contract within the next week or two.

Mr. Carrino stated that the company has indicated that it will take a few weeks to put together the marketing materials and then it will take approximately 12 weeks for the rest of the process. He further explained how the process would proceed if they didn't find an appropriate candidate in the first round.

Mayor Lee asked about the piggybacking with Mr. Carrino explaining they would only be piggybacking the contract. All of the marketing materials would be unique to Eustis. They would not be getting someone else's materials just the process and the basic contract.

8.3 City Attorney

Attorney Garcia congratulated the new Mayor and Vice Mayor and commented on looking forward to the new year and working with the Commission.

8.4 Mayor

Mayor Lee reported on the Eustis in Bloom meeting with the Methodist Church. She stated their grassy area will become a park with a fountain as well as a community garden. She commented on how it will beautify the entrance to the City. She announced they are working on a project for Valentine's Day encouraging students to exchange Valentine's cards with local senior citizens. She encouraged the public to provide names of seniors that would appreciate that. She stated she is looking forward to working with everyone. She expressed concern about the negative comments made by a member of the audience following the election of Mayor.

9. Adjournment: 7:04 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

EMILY A. LEE
Mayor/Commissioner