



MINUTES

City Commission Meeting

6:00 PM – Thursday, May 15, 2025 – City Hall

**Invocation: Rev. Theodore Andrews, Associate Pastor
Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church**

**Pledge of Allegiance: Aubree Bostwick and Alayna Bostwick
Seminole Springs Elementary School Students**

Mayor Hawkins presented Certificates of Appreciation to Aubree Bostwick and her sister Alayna Bostwick from Seminole Springs Elementary School. Alayna led Pledge of Allegiance.

Call to Order: 6:03 p.m.

Acknowledge of Quorum and Proper Notice

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

1. Agenda Update: None

2. Approval of Minutes

April 17, 2025 City Commission Meeting

May 1, 2025 City Commission Workshop: Sunshine Laws

May 1, 2025 City Commission Meeting

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

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

3. Presentations

3.1 Proclamation for Reverend Hawkins

Mayor Hawkins presented to Reverend William Hawkins a proclamation recognizing his 47 years of service to the Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church. Reverend Hawkins thanked the Mayor, Commissioners, City of Eustis and the Gethsemane Missionary Baptist Church for the honor.

3.2 Eustis High School Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA)

Aran Cross, EHS FBLA Outgoing President, thanked the Commission for their support of the FBLA.

Kelli Ung, Outgoing Secretary for the EHS FBLA, also thanked the City for its support.

Sonya White, EHS FBLA Advisor, presented the Gold Star Partner Award to Mayor Hawkins and the City Commission. She announced that Aran Cross and Kelli Ung are seniors and would be graduating the following Friday. She introduced their other officers: Michael Whitfield, Annabelle Shook and Savannah Shook.

3.3 Economic Development Week (May 11 - May 14, 2025)

Commissioner Holland read a proclamation recognizing Economic Development Week, May 11 - May 14, 2025. The proclamation was presented to the City of Eustis Economic Development Team including Al Latimer, Economic Development Director; Miranda Burrowes, Assistant City Manager; Mike Lane, Development Services Director; and Chamber of Commerce representatives Marie Alberti, Pam Rivas and Brian Bedrick, Site manager for the UCF Business Incubator for Lake County.

3.4 Eustis/Lake County University of Central Florida Incubator

Mayor Hawkins recognized National Police Week which honors police officers who have died in the line of duty.

Brian Bedrick, Site Manager for the UCF Business Incubator for Lake County, presented an overview of the program and highlighted new businesses and services. He cited their outreach efforts to let people know about the program and clarify all the programs and educational activities provided by the incubator, including how UCF fits into the collaboration. He commented on their upcoming activities.

Tom Carrino, City Manager, introduced Pam Rivas, COO of Mega Workplace, Chairperson with the Lake Eustis Chamber of Commerce and Board member with Lake 100 and LEAD.

Ms. Rivas thanked the City and staff for their support. She commented on the importance of economic development and provided an overview of Mega Workplace as a support ecosystem and how they assist the local businesses. She also cited their work with the local schools.

Marie Alberti, Executive Director of the Lake Eustis Area Chamber of Commerce, reported on the Chamber's mission for 2025 and reviewed their plans for the current year. She stated their membership has increased since 2023 from 229 to 322 with 11 new members in January. She commented on the attendance at their monthly breakfast meetings. She indicated they are working on a new website for the Chamber and a survey they are asking people to complete. She cited a number of upcoming events including the Business Expo in June and Home & Garden Expo in September. She commented on the Chamber's work with the high school FBLA organization. She thanked the Commission for their support.

4. Appointments

4.1 Appointments to the Code Enforcement Board (CEB) – Four Members and Two Alternates

Mr. Carrino apologized to the Commission, Code Enforcement Board and applicants due to the amount of time it has taken to bring forward the appointments and re-appointments. He cited staff's work on the process and the need to speed up the process. He thanked all of the current board members and the applicants for their service and their willingness to serve.

1. Member, currently seated, Ryan Benaglio, term expiration 5/31/2024 – seeking reappointment. Term: 5/31/2024 to 5/31/2027

Commissioner Holland moved, Seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the reappointment of Ryan Benaglio for a term to expire 5/31/2027. Motion passed on the following vote:

Aye: Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Commissioner Holland, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Asbate, Mayor Hawkins

2. Member, Karen Sarteles, term expiration 10/31/2024 – seeking reappointment. Term: 10/31/2024 to 10/31/2027

Commissioner Holland moved, Seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the reappointment of Karen Sarteles for a term to expire 10/31/2027. Motion passed on the following vote:

Aye: Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Commissioner Holland, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Asbate, Mayor Hawkins

3. Member, Bradley P. Shelley, term expiration 3/31/2025 – seeking reappointment. Term: 3/31/2025 to 3/31/2028

Commissioner Holland moved, Seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve the reappointment of Bradley Shelley for a term to expire 3/31/2028. Motion passed on the following vote:

Aye: Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Commissioner Holland, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Asbate, Mayor Hawkins

4. Member, Vacancy due to end of term of George Asbate. Term: 1/1/2025 to 1/1/2028.

Mayor Hawkins announced that the applicants for the vacancy are Nicie Allen Parks, Patricia Jensen, and Christine Cruz.

Commissioner Lee nominated Nicie Allen Parks, Commissioner Holland seconded.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft asked if a second nomination could be made with Mr. Carrino stating that, according to the Commission Rules of Order, they need to vote on the motion that's on the floor since it was seconded.

Motion passed on the following vote:

Aye: Commissioner Holland, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Asbate, Mayor Hawkins

Nay: Vice Mayor Ashcraft

5. Alternate, Vacancy due to resignation of Carol S. Kirst on 5/19/2024. Appointment to fill a vacancy for a term to expire 8/4/2025.

Mr. Carrino explained that the first alternate position does expire August 4, 2025. Based on the new tracking and advertising system, this position needs to be appointed but staff will begin almost immediately start the process to get the position again filled in August.

Mayor Hawkins announced there are two applicants for the appointment: Patricia Jensen and Christine Cruz.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft nominated Christine Cruz, Seconded by Commissioner Asbate. Motion passed on the following vote:

Aye: Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Commissioner Holland, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Asbate, Mayor Hawkins

6. Alternate, Vacancy due to resignation of William J. Gay in September 2023. Appointment to fill a vacancy for term to expire 11/3/2025.

Commissioner Holland nominated Patricia Jensen, Vice Mayor Ashcraft seconded. Motion passed on the following vote:

Aye: Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Commissioner Holland, Commissioner Lee, Commissioner Asbate, Mayor Hawkins

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Resolution Number 25-33: Police Department Transfer of Forfeiture Funds for donations to youth sports programs and a smartboard

5.2 Resolution Number 25-35: Approving an Expenditure in Excess of \$100,000 for Controllers and Telemetry Communication Systems Upgrades

5.3 Resolution Number 25-36: Eustis Police Department PBA Memorandum of Agreement Article 18 – Extra Duty

5.4 Resolution Number 25-38: Emergency Management Plan Update 2025

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

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

6. Audience to be Heard

Cindy Newton thanked the Commission for postponing the annexation across from Trout Lake Nature Center. She confirmed that there is an existing code enforcement case on the property with Lake County due to development without an order.

7. Ordinances, Public Hearings, & Quasi Judicial Hearings

7.1 Resolution Number 25-24: Authorizing the recording of liens on delinquent utility accounts

Sasha Garcia, City Attorney, announced Resolution Number 25-24: A Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Lake County, Florida; approving the recording of water, wastewater, stormwater, irrigation, reclaimed water and/or residential garbage services liens; repealing all resolutions or parts of resolutions in conflict herewith; and providing for an effective date.

Lori Carr, Finance Director, cited the previous discussion with the Commission regarding re-implementing the lien process for utility liens on properties where the owner is delinquent on their utility bill. She cited the attachment in the packet with the list of delinquent accounts and explained there was one exception with Nichole Jenkins, Water Customer Service Supervisor, stating they are removing the request for Account 20088-1 as it has been paid.

Attorney Garcia opened the public hearing at 7:01 p.m. There being no public comment, the hearing was closed at 7:01 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft, to approve Resolution Number 25-24. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

8. Other Business

8.1 Discussion of Backyard Chickens

Attorney Garcia provided an overview of the components of a possible ordinance concerning backyard chickens and explained that staff had attended training presented by the University of Florida Chicken University. She noted the chickens would only be allowed for personal

consumption and cited specific prohibited actions and possible restrictions. She commented on restrictions against the hatching of eggs and the prohibition of roosters. She indicated that chickens would only be allowed on residential single-family properties, and lots would have to be fenced in. She stated that any HOA/deed restrictions would override the City's regulations. She emphasized the applicant would bear the responsibility of checking with their HOA or property covenants prior to applying for a permit.

Attorney Garcia reviewed the sample regulations as follows: 1) Only hens, no roosters permitted; 2) Maximum generally between 4 to 6 chickens; 3) Possible minimum requirement (e.g. Winter Garden requires a minimum of three); and 4) Excluding other poultry or fowl such as ducks, geese, turkeys, pigeons, etc. She then reviewed the possible permit requirements as an accessory use including the following: 1) Limit the number of permits issued; 2) Accessory use permit charges to range between \$25 - \$75 and a conditional use permit would not be required; 3) Permits would not be transferable but could be surrendered; 4) Possible requirement for annual renewals which could include a yearly inspection; 5) Tenants must obtain consent from the property owner via affidavit or application joinder; and 6) Only one permit per person per lot would be allowed.

Attorney Garcia reviewed possible additional requirements as follows: 1) Application must be notarized to confirm the applicant understands compliance with the ordinance and provides consent for City personnel right-of-entry upon the subject property for inspection and/or investigation of code enforcement complaints; agrees to penalties for non-compliance and holds the City harmless from matters relating to the permit; 2) Applicant must provide a blueprint drawing of the backyard showing the coop location and size, materials for the coop and number of chickens; 3) Requires inspection of the coop before or after set-up and 4) Possible requirement of no open code violations for permit consideration.

Attorney Garcia then reviewed the recommended run dimensions, placement, and design of the coops. She provided information about the University of Florida Extension Office (UF/IFAS) Training Program. She explained they are offered online and in-person with fees ranging from \$5 to \$15. She noted that some municipalities have partnered with UF/IFAS to create customized courses providing a certificate of completion in the applicant's name which must be provided to the City at time of application.

Attorney Garcia explained some other considerations regarding cats or dogs who injure or kill a chicken, disposal of deceased chickens, corrective actions that may be required, communicating with neighbors and obtaining chickens within a certain timeframe from the permit being granted. She cited certain nuisance concerns and penalties for non-compliance, including code enforcement liens (placed on violator and property owner), fines, revocation of permit and injunctive relief. She noted that most municipalities do not allow roaming and require supervision if they are outside the coop. She reviewed the possible penalties for non-compliance and indicated permits may be revoked due to non-compliance. She cited possible maximums as follows: 1) Less than an acre - up to five; and 2) Anything over an acre - up to ten.

Commissioner Asbate concurred and indicated they discussed requirements for different size lots. He stated the subject came up due to requests from residents. He indicated that every municipality in Lake County and Orange County and in other counties has a backyard chicken program. He noted he contacted Mount Dora and Winter Garden and, to date, they have had zero complaints. He emphasized that Eustis is an agricultural city and Lake County is agricultural. He noted that downtown New York in Manhattan has a backyard chicken program. He commented on the expense of the City's current process. He stated that the program would have a low impact on staff and is educational.

Mayor Hawkins expressed concern with chickens roaming as they do in Miami.

Mr. Carrino explained the City's current process with chickens considered an accessory conditional use which costs \$800. He explained the reason for the fee due to advertising requirements and staff time. He suggested calling it something else so the fee could be reduced. He indicated the Commission would also have to decide if they want to make decisions on a case-by-case basis.

Attorney Garcia explained the program would be enacted by ordinance which would list all of the requirements, indicate the cost of the permit, put the public on notice through the ordinance process and would be issued through Development Services. She indicated that any complaints would be handled through Code Enforcement.

Discussion was held regarding the proposed program with the following issues highlighted: 1) Problems with the chicken owners; 2) Issues with mosquitoes, coop ventilation issues, odors and effects on people with allergies, presence of parasites; 3) Possibility of free ranging chickens eating toxic plants; 4) Effect of other animals such as dogs and cats; 5) Impact on staff; 6) Effect of chickens on the City's efforts to build the downtown; and 7) Number of permits to be allowed.

Attorney Garcia commented that some of the programs started as test programs. She indicated the trial period is usually two years. She cautioned that participants would have to be aware that, if the program gets shut down, then applicants would be responsible for removing the coops and rehoming the chickens. She further commented on the setbacks required by other communities and required locations for coops. She noted that someone with a smaller backyard may not be able to participate.

Mr. Carrino asked if, other than the cost prohibitive nature of the conditional use permit fee, is there a reason the current program does not work. He expressed concern regarding over-regulating.

Further discussion was held regarding a test program with an acknowledgement that there are already unpermitted chickens within the City.

Discussion was held regarding the \$800 fee with Mr. Carrino explaining that conditional use permits are issued for a number of reasons and for those the \$800 fee is appropriate due to advertising costs and staff time. Discussion was held regarding other cities' fees.

The Commission asked if the chicken permit process would be part of the new software program they are rolling out with Mike Lane, Development Services Director, explaining that has not been discussed with GovWell but could be added.

Commissioner Ashcraft thanked Development Services for implementation of the new online permitting program.

Discussion was held regarding the fee range with Attorney Garcia responding that the fees ranged from \$25 to \$75. She explained how a conditional use permit is typically used. She stated that the chicken permits should be tied to a person, not the property.

Discussion was held regarding opening up a test program, the number of permits to allow for a test program, fees, number of chickens to allow, impact on staff and the effect on downtown.

CONSENSUS: It was a consensus of the Commission to have staff draft an ordinance for consideration for a test program for two years with a maximum of 15 permits and three chickens.

Commissioner Holland left the meeting at 7:48 p.m. Prior to leaving he expressed good luck to the Lady Panthers softball team and congratulations to the graduating seniors.

8.2 Sister Cities Discussion

Mr. Carrino noted that former Interim Commissioner Christine Cruz presented information in November about a potential relationship with Japan. He indicated that information was provided to the Commission in their packet.

Commissioner Lee suggested the City could partner with Japan without incurring the costs associated with Sister Cities.

Commissioner Ashcraft explained the suggestion began in discussions with the owners of the Japanese cultural center located outside of Eustis and they have asked if Eustis would consider doing a Sister Cities program with a city in Japan. He expressed support for creating a program and stated his opinion that the costs wouldn't be that great.

Commissioner Lee expressed support for partnering with the cultural center without doing the Sister Cities program. She expressed concern regarding the cost and staff time.

Commissioner Asbate agreed it would be educational and worth exploring.

Mayor Hawkins expressed support for discussing with another city already involved in Sister Cities and learning more about what would be required.

Mr. Carrino noted that the library has already established a relationship and is sponsoring classes. He stated the City could certainly do cultural exchange and work with them and at the same time explore the formal Sister Cities program.

Commissioner Ashcraft stated that having the formal relationship would give the program more weight with the Japanese businesses that might be interested in coming to Eustis with economic development and jobs.

Further discussion was held regarding the benefit of the Sister Cities program and how it might help the City with Mr. Carrino stating that staff would conduct more research on the program.

9. Future Agenda Items and Comments

9.1 City Commission

Commissioner Lee asked about the grant writer position with Mr. Carrino explaining that they are working on re-organization and moving the position to another department.

Commissioner Asbate commented on a tour he took of Lake Tech and stated it may be the strongest economic development tool that is underutilized. He commented on the proposed Trident boat deal with the City of Eustis and encouraged the City to move forward with the agreement. He noted they are holding a boat for the City and stated they need to proceed. He commented on a new dock they had installed and expressed concern there are other municipalities reaching out to them. He added that the proposed seaplane project should work together with that.

Mr. Carrino explained staff had met with Ryan Benaglio and stated that the seaplane proposal slowed up the boat project. He stated they need to clarify what each project needs in the way of infrastructure. He stated that staff will have to bring back to the Commission some different options for design and purchasing. He estimated the probable cost for a design-build for both boat and seaplane infrastructure of \$1 million to \$1.2 million. He explained that the square footage is bigger than what was originally anticipated and prices have gone up per square

foot. He explained there were discrepancies between what experts were saying they needed versus the boat operator's estimate.

Commissioner Lee asked if the City would get anything back from either operation with Mr. Carrino explaining that it would depend on whether or not they enter into franchise agreements with either operator. He indicated that the City would be responsible for the infrastructure since it's the City's infrastructure. He noted that one of the operators mentioned they would probably need a storage area and a kiosk and that would probably be at his cost not the City. He stated those are the types of details they would have to work through. He added that the master plan does mention activating the waterfront and this would do that. He stated they have to come to terms with the cost to do that.

Commissioner Asbate mentioned that Pam Rivas and the Chamber of Commerce discussed the Chamber providing office space for Ryan and Fred to manage their operations which would help them get up and running. Commissioner Asbate asked about City quotes with Mr. Carrino stating they only have a cost estimate from an engineer for the price per square foot. Now they have to have it engineered and designed before they can get it bid out.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft asked about cameras for the park with Mr. Carrino reporting that cameras have been installed in the Police Department, they are in process at Ferran Park and have completed Carver Park. He commented on the possibility of holding a shade meeting to discuss security.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft thanked Mike Lane for the implementation of the online permitting program. He commented on the high school girls' softball team game. He indicated there was also a free comedy show ongoing at the theater. He noted that high school graduation would be in two weeks. He announced that Thunderstorm, who performed at Georgefest, is in the finals on American Idol. He thanked the Events team for their efforts to provide quality entertainment for the City's events. He asked everyone to remember the purpose of Memorial Day and honor those who gave their all.

9.2 City Manager

Mr. Carrino announced the Legislature did pass elimination of fluoride in City water. He stated the City will be compliant with state law no later than the deadline on July 1st. If they run out of fluoride before then, they would stop putting it in the water at that time. He commented on the new Building Department software and noted they have already transitioned to the new software in the Fire Department, and it is working well for them. They are working to get the word out to the contractors, home builders association and the public. He explained they are working to improve customer service externally as well as the internal process. He noted they would schedule a shade meeting to discuss security. He announced that he would be taking time off at the end of the next week and Miranda Burrowes would be in charge.

9.3 City Attorney: None

9.4 Mayor

Mayor Hawkins commented on the City's Spirit Awards luncheon and thanked all of the employees that attended. He complimented Human Resources for their work on the event. He highlighted the upcoming high school graduation.

10. Adjournment: 8:11 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

WILLIE L. HAWKINS
Mayor/Commissioner