



MINUTES

City Commission Meeting

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

Invocation: Pastor Renee Hill, W.I.N. 1 Ministries

Pledge of Allegiance: Commissioner Emily Lee

Call to Order: 6:03 p.m.

Acknowledge of Quorum and Proper Notice

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

1. Agenda Update

Sasha Garcia, City Attorney, noted that a request was made at the special Commission meeting to remove Resolution Number 25-72 from the agenda. She explained that, according to the Commission Rules of Order Section 10, Presentation of Agenda Items, Revisions, Additions and Deletions, subsection (d), "Any agenda item which has been noticed to the public can only be removed from the agenda with the approval of the City Commission. If the Commission agrees to remove an agenda item, the Presiding Officer shall first give the public an opportunity to speak on the item."

Attorney Garcia polled the Commission regarding whether or not they wanted to remove Resolution 25-72 from consideration. She stated that, if removed, they could allow anyone that wants to speak to come up under Audience to be Heard.

CONSENSUS: It was a consensus of the Commission to remove Resolution 25-72 from consideration.

Attorney Garcia announced that anyone wanting to address the Commission regarding the resolution should come up to speak under Audience to be Heard.

2. Approval of Minutes

July 18, 2025 City Commission Workshop: Downtown Development and the Eustis Community Center Site

September 18, 2025 City Commission Meeting

Commissioner Asbate expressed concern regarding some discrepancies previously mentioned in the July 18, 2025, workshop minutes and noted that they were previously pulled and have not been corrected.

Tom Carrino, City Manager, stated that staff reached out to Daniel DiVenanzo who raised the question about the minutes, and Mr. DiVenanzo never provided to the City Clerk his specific concerns regarding those minutes. Therefore, the Assistant City Manager reviewed the video and the minutes with the City Clerk's office and, what is before the Commission, staff feels is an accurate representation of what happened at that meeting.

Commissioner Asbate responded he is specifically talking about the minutes stating that the City Manager Mr. Carrino would contact Mr. Levey, arrange a meeting and put him in contact

with Mr. Goman. He asserted that direction was not given by the Commission during the workshop. He stated that the video reflects that the consensus was limited to allowing Mr. Goman to move forward with his outreach to the developers while the Commission scheduled a workshop for Dr. Levey for his input. He stated his primary concern is that the minutes should not assign responsibility for actions beyond the Commission's formal direction. He stated that for accuracy and transparency he could not vote to approve that. He added that it is clearly inaccurate.

Mayor Hawkins stated that the minutes are not intended to be verbatim.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft asked if his biggest concern is that he wants them to work independently.

Commissioner Asbate responded that he just wants them to do what they directed them to do. He indicated what Commissioner Lee and he and, possibly Vice Mayor Ashcraft had said which was to get a separate opinion. He stated they worked out the issue, but the minutes reflect differently.

Attorney Garcia stated that the minutes are not intended to be verbatim as long it essentially covers the votes that were made or the direction that was given. She noted that they have video and audio. She indicated that, unless there is an egregious error where there is a complete misrepresentation, then that can be corrected. She stated that there does not seem to be a consensus on that.

Commissioner Asbate stated they seem to be heading toward what they agreed on but the minutes don't reflect that. He indicated he would give a copy of what he read to the clerk to put in the minutes.

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

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

3. Presentations

3.1 Presentation by Debi Weinert on Dolly Parton's Imagination Library

Debi Weinert, Executive Director of Dolly Parton's Imagination Library of Lake County, Florida, provided a brief history of the program which was introduced in 1995 and reviewed the current and historical numbers for the program nationally and locally. She explained how the program works to provide books to enrolled children at no cost to the families and the criteria to qualify. She reviewed the financial breakdown with what is paid for by the Imagination Library and what the local organization pays for. She stated that, based on the 2020 census, Eustis has 1794 children that would be eligible. She indicated that the funds needed would be \$12,564 due to the cost being \$36 per child per year.

The Commission asked what other Lake County cities have provided funding.

Ms. Weinert responded that Tavares provided \$500 over 2 years and Mount Dora gave \$10,000 to fund 300 children. She noted she is asking for more from Tavares for the next year and she had submitted another grant for Mount Dora in August for 311 children which is currently being reviewed. She stated there are other organizations that are doing fund-raising. She noted some of those funds raised may be restricted.

The Commission commented positively about the program with Ms. Weinert noting they will be interviewing young professionals who participated in the program as children.

The Commission asked if there is a way to measure outcomes from the program with Ms. Weinert commenting on testing in schools and comparing scores from the past with those of the children participating in the program now.

The Commission asked about children within the zip code noting that some of the residents may have a Eustis address but reside in unincorporated Lake County.

Mr. Carrino asked if they had separated out the actual City residents from those residing in Lake County with a Eustis zip code and Ms. Weinert acknowledged she did not.

3.2 Update from Mike Goman

Mike Goman, Property Advisors, provided his monthly update to the Commission. He reviewed the process and return rate with a targeted approach which is customized. Mr. Goman noted, at this time, they have had discussions with 22 firms and 5 indicated no interest. He anticipated the firms will grow to 40 or 50. He highlighted comments from firms to include too early in the process, commute time to center of Orlando, seems pioneering in the market, economic market uncertainty, other focus for developers, and opportunity zones pros and cons. He noted capital flows to the strongest markets in the best locations.

The Commission requested a copy of the data to support the process and requested tracking feedback from firms. They asked for clarification regarding the opportunity zones.

Mr. Goman noted that opportunity zones typically indicate disadvantaged communities and implementation issues.

Mr. Carrino noted boundaries in Eustis for opportunity zones with Federal tax benefits and no local benefits.

Mr. Goman state developers are driven by the market and noted feedback about traffic counts.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft commented on that feedback.

Mr. Goman commented that no one has said Eustis is not a market and not a path of progress and cited the process to respond to the objections to tell the story of the opportunity in Eustis. He indicated it would require a 90-day process to survey developers and then present the data to the Commission.

The Commission asked about communications with Mr. Goman responding he has had mostly virtual contact with the goal being to bring developers to Eustis.

RECESS: 7:01 p.m. RECONVENE: 7:06 p.m.

4. Audience to be Heard

Mayor Hawkins opened the floor at 7:06 p.m. for comments on Resolution Number 25-72 which was removed from the agenda. There being no public comment, the hearing was closed at 7:06 p.m.

Gessner Harris thanked Parks and Recreation Director, Sam Brinson, for the Garden Room renovations and programs offered to seniors. She highlighted the programs being provided and also thanked the Commission for their support.

Gary Winheim, Eustis Police Department retiree, spoke about Police Chief Craig Capri, the handling of past complaints, and Chief Capri's behavior. He commented on a meeting he had with the City's HR department and former Police Chief Fred Cobb.

Nichole Jenkins noted her two grandsons who are both autistic. She reviewed various autism statistics and cited related preventable deaths and injuries. She thanked the Eustis Police Department for their efforts on her family's behalf to keep her grandchildren safe. She expressed the need for increased education and requested the Commission's support in furthering her message.

Pam Rivas reported on the Excellence in Entrepreneurship program at the UCF Incubator. She noted that public expressed their appreciation for the programs.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Resolution Number 25-63: Police Vehicle Budget

5.2 Resolution Number 25-76: Acknowledging and Approving Revised Rules of Procedure for the Historic Preservation Board

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

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

6. Ordinances, Public Hearings, & Quasi Judicial Hearings

6.1 Resolution Number 25-72: Guidelines for Commissioner Communications with Developers – Sunshine Law Compliance

Item removed from Agenda under Agenda Update with Public Hearing held during Audience to Be Heard with no comments.

7. Other Business

7.1 Discussion on Buildable City Lots

Mr. Carrino noted that Vice Mayor Ashcraft had asked that the City review its portfolio of available properties to see if any are buildable and could be put to a higher and better use. He commented on the City's previous mow-to-own program and explained the issues with that program. He stated staff has identified three properties that could be developed. He reviewed the statistics of each including one on Gould Street, one at Dawes Street and Getford Court, and one on Pickney Street. He stated that all are located in the CRA district and explained they would have to be advertised in order to be sold.

The Commission discussed their previous discussion and noted their interest in giving preference to first time home buyers with Vice Mayor Ashcraft noting they could require that the property be utilized within a certain timeframe or it reverts to the City.

Mr. Carrino indicated they can be very specific on what they are looking for within the solicitation.

Discussion was held regarding the properties being utilized by a nonprofit organization.

Matt Myrick, Habitat for Humanity, commented on their program and the availability of applicants. He indicated they would be interested in partnering with the City and the possibility of using the high school construction academy.

Attorney Garcia provided suggestions for how restrictions could be placed on the parcels.

It was a consensus of the Commission for staff to bring back the options.

8. Future Agenda Items, Board and Committee Reports, and Comments

8.1 City Commission

Commissioner Lee commented on the awards the City received from America in Bloom. She thanked the Commission for its support and thanked the staff members who also attended - Michelle Saxman, Elis Forman and Brent Matthews. She cited the various activities they participated in and ideas for future projects. She reported on the recent auction for a painting donated by Susie Klingberg.

Commissioner Holland thanked Commissioner Lee and staff for their involvement with America in Bloom and Eustis in Bloom. He reported on legislative activities and committees. He noted he has been appointed to the Federal Strike Commission and will report back to City staff and Commission.

Commissioner Asbate reported on the recent LEAD annual dinner. He cited the number of upcoming business activities and commented on the UCF Incubator. He noted they are offering to have a professional accountant to work with businesses free of charge and cited new businesses coming to the City.

Mayor Hawkins also commented on the LEAD dinner and noted that Eustis was mentioned more than any other City.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft noted that LEAD is interested in conducting a site readiness study for the City's property on 44 at no expense to the City. He asked for a consensus for them to do that.

Al Latimer, Economic Development Director, commented on previous discussions the Commission has had on the use of that property.

Commissioner Asbate explained what a site readiness study would consist of.

Mr. Latimer noted there is an opportunity to market the property through Duke to international and domestic clients throughout the country.

Mr. Carrino confirmed with Vice Mayor Ashcraft that he would have Mr. Latimer work with him on the project with Vice Mayor Ashcraft indicating they should also contact Mason or Mike with LEAD and noted they are excited about the property.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft asked for update on the title search for the Community Center.

Attorney Garcia reported they requested a quote from the surveyor that the City typically uses and the fee can back a little high at \$22,555. She explained the scope of work would include generating a legal description as well. She stated they are looking to get an additional scope or determine if they need to go out for an RFP. She confirmed they had completed the title search and explained what is needed for the survey and legal description.

8.2 City Manager

Mr. Carrino discussed the meeting schedule for December and asked the Commission for direction due to conflicts. It was a consensus to hold one regular Commission meeting on Tuesday, December 9th. He then noted that January 1st is the first Thursday so the organizational meeting is already scheduled for January 8th. He suggested moving the second meeting of January to January 22nd. It was a consensus of the Commission for the January meetings to be January 8th and 22nd.

Mr. Carrino announced he would be introducing the UCF Incubator staff to the County Commission on October 14th in the morning and then attend the FRA meeting after that. He

stated there was a joint meeting between 14 municipalities and the County on September 29th. He indicated that will be happening more often and stated a topic of concern is TDRs or the transfer of development rights. He asked if the Commission would like to schedule a workshop to discuss what those are and how they work. He stated the County may be asking the City to partner with them on a TDR program. He gave a brief explanation of what a TDR is. It was a consensus of the Commission to schedule a workshop.

Mr. Carrino noted that Senate Bill 180 passed by the state. He stated that their legislative delegation asked for feedback to identify issues with the legislation. He explained that Attorney Garcia prepared a letter that staff reviewed and that identified issues which was then sent to the legislative delegation.

Police Chief Craig Capri spoke about the National Night Out to engage the community which will be held Tuesday, October 7th. He commented Coffee With a Cop that was held at the Bay View assisted living facility. He stated the Sheriff's office also participated. He noted that USA Boxing Day in Eustis would be held on November 1st. He explained the background on that program and the participation of an Olympic medalist from Orlando. He thanked the Commission for their support of their outreach activities.

8.3 City Attorney: None

8.4 Mayor

Mayor Hawkins commented on the passing of Aaron Bellair and the loss to the community.

Commissioner Holland announced the memorial service would be held November 1st at LifePointe Church.

9. Adjournment: 7:56 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