



MINUTES

City Commission Meeting

6:00 PM – Thursday, May 01, 2025 – City Hall

Invocation: Pastor Dann Ragan, LifePointe 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. Approval of Minutes

April 5, 2025 City Commission Workshop: Master Plan and Trout Lake Nature Center

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

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

3. Presentations

3.1 Recognition of Miss Eustis Winners 2025

Miranda Muir, Events and Communication Director, thanked the Chamber of Commerce and noted they had taken over the Junior program for 2025. She added that the City's program feeds into the Miss Florida and Miss America programs. She commented on the educational scholarships awarded through the program. She introduced the following pageant winners: Kensley Watson - Tiny Miss Eustis; Violet Doerfler - Little Miss Eustis (absent); Riley Ward - Junior Miss Eustis (absent); Reagan Ward - Teen Miss Eustis; Lauren Guiffre - Miss Eustis; and Jada Carter - Miss Georgefest who will move on to the Miss Florida pageant.

3.2 Proclamation for Building Safety Month

Mayor Hawkins presented a proclamation for Building Safety Month to Robert Harper, Eustis Building Official; Philip Rapalje, Deputy Building Official; and Laurie Huebsch, Administrative Supervisor.

Commissioner Asbate commented on the collaboration between various City departments and other municipalities. He cited the City of Mount Dora's Building Official John Abner for his assistance with mentoring members of the Eustis Building Department.

3.3 Presentation from Danielle Stroud on the Habitat for Humanity Preservation and Repair Program

Danielle Stroud, Chief Executive Officer for Habitat for Humanity, addressed the Commission regarding the Habitat for Humanity Preservation and Repair Program. She provided an

overview of the Habitat vision and purpose, statistics regarding the number of homes completed during the current fiscal year and other programs they offer. She then reported on their Preservation and Repair Program which was begun in 2015. She reviewed the guidelines and requirements for the program and explained that the guidelines and criteria may be adjusted depending on a funding partner. She explained they focus on health, safety and accessibility. She commented on how the program helps build trust within a community and other benefits to the program. She provided examples of various homes they have helped renovate in other communities and cited the success of their programs in Mount Dora and Leesburg.

The Commission asked if they could leverage state funds with Ms. Stroud responding they do when the funding is available.

The Commission asked about the average cost per home with Ms. Stroud responding that the average is usually \$15 to \$20,000. The Commission asked if they ever have to turn down a house with Ms. Stroud responding that if they can't substantially renovate a house enough to give it a lifespan for another generation or to be safe for that individual, then they probably won't invest in it. She added they will look at other options for the individual.

The Commission asked how long a project usually takes with Ms. Stroud stating that the average is three months but that it does vary drastically. The Commission asked if the homeowners have to participate with Ms. Stroud responding affirmatively. If they are physically capable, they are asked to participate. She stated the "sweat equity" is based on how long Habitat would be working on the home.

Further discussion was held regarding some of their projects with Commissioner Ashcraft stating he had asked Habitat to provide the presentation. He noted the City has CRA funds that are not currently being utilized in the housing rehab program with Mayor Hawkins indicating those funds are being utilized. He stated that he could see the Habitat program being utilized in other parts of Eustis.

The Commission expressed appreciation for Habitat's education program with Mayor Hawkins adding that Lake Community Action Agency (LCAA) also educates the homeowners regarding maintenance of their homes.

Discussion was held regarding establishing a program for outside the CRA and how the City funding is utilized by LCAA.

The Commission asked about how the Habitat program differs from the LCAA program with Ms. Stroud stating LCAA's programs focus primarily on weatherization. She indicated the monies they receive are about an analysis of the energy savings at the end of the project.

Ms. Stroud encouraged the City to choose to make a defined plan for how they want to invest in housing within the community whether it is using CRA funds or not. She complimented the City on their decision to invest in the community.

Commissioner Ashcraft commented he would like to see all of the housing rehab funds used each year and marketed to the residents that really need it.

Mayor Hawkins commented that LCAA is able to leverage the funds the City provides so they are able to get more done with those funds. He added that the Habitat program averages \$20,000 per house so the City is able to get twice as many homes rehabbed with LCAA than they could with Habitat.

Ms. Stroud clarified that all of their other partners provide a 50% match, so they are matching dollar for dollar. She stated that their administration fees average ten to fourteen percent and they have also done a flat rate. She indicated they do not charge unless they begin work on a project. Nothing is charged upfront.

Commissioner Asbate asked if the City could provide some of their vacant lots for Habitat to build on with Mayor Hawkins explaining those were part of the former Mow-to-Own program and that still needs to be addressed.

Discussion was held regarding Commissioners not going out and looking at the homes being rehabbed through the City's joint program with LCAA.

Mr. Carrino explained the Commission's creation of the fund in the CRA, beginning with \$250,000. That funding was rolled over due to not being fully used. The current fiscal year was the first time the City put in additional funding, approximately \$40,000, and it has now been spent down so that they have sufficient funds for approximately one more project. He noted that the beginning of the program was during Covid. He indicated that the funds have basically been expended unless the Commission provides additional funding. It was suggested that LCAA provide an update on the program to the Commission.

Commissioner Holland stated that if they want to expend CRA monies, they need to do that prior to October due to changes in legislation.

3.4 Presentation by G3C2

Austin Gunther, representing G3C2, addressed the Commission regarding the former Waterman site redevelopment project. He expressed their desire to be a reliable community partner that has read through the master plan, has listened to their comments, worked with City staff and developed a concept they feel comfortable with them negotiating with staff to bring back an agreement. He reviewed their proposal for the various blocks as follows: 1) Block One (closest to the lake): Civic Center/Reception Hall with approximately 500 seats and 16,000 SF, 6,000 SF restaurant - two stories with a rooftop area; 2) Block Two (down Magnolia Street): 30 to 40 luxury brownstone duplex style homes and a large public park and green space; and 3) Block Three: 505 car precast parking deck, 50 luxury apartments, 12,000 SF retail and 12,000 SF office space. He provided an overview of the concept plan. He explained the various phases beginning with Buildings 1 and 2 and provided cost estimates and a timeline for each. He provided photos and renderings of the proposed uses. He provided financial information regarding cost and potential income and estimated timeline for each block. He stated the plan calls for them to own the parking garage and community center and lease them to the City but that can be done otherwise. Mr. Gunther reviewed the next steps including negotiation of development agreement, due diligence, design, permitting and commencement.

Mayor Hawkins asked if they would be available if they hold a workshop on May 6th or 8th with Mr. Gunther responding he would be available and possibly his father. He wasn't sure about Derek Wallace.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft asked if they would be willing to do a specific block at a certain time with Mr. Gunther responding they would be. He stated they believe that Block 3 with the mixed-use and garage is very important. He indicated that it would support the existing development and the redevelopment.

The Commission commented on their interest in beginning with the hotel block first with Mr. Gunther expressing concern about how that block would take up all of the existing parking. It was noted that the master plan recommends beginning with the hotel.

Discussion was held regarding when to hold a follow-up workshop and to review the concept plan and bring back their questions and comments.

CONSENSUS: It was a consensus to hold the workshop at 5:30 p.m. on Tuesday, May 6th.

4. Audience to be Heard

Christine Cruz expressed concern regarding traffic accidents and safety issues with the street parking on Lemon Avenue (from Center to Exeter) directly behind Eustis Elementary School. She asked the City to conduct a traffic study.

Robert LaValle asked about Duke Energy and the electric poles. Mr. Carrino indicated he would connect him with Duke Energy.

Daniel DiVenanzo commented on the hotel concept from G3C2. He stated that the developer for the hotel would dictate the parking, space needed, and food vendor priorities. He noted the Master Plan focuses on the hotel as the start of the project in order to create a vitality and destination for Eustis.

David Luke, owner of Crazy Gator, commented on the need to focus on the lakefront for development. He noted that everything in Tavares is fronting on the lakefront and emphasized how well they are doing.

Jim Budzynski, owner of Tip Tops in Eustis, commented on development of a bike path as an economic driver. He stated he did not want Eustis to be left out of the planning process for the bike path.

Marie Aliberti, Lake Eustis Area Chamber of Commerce, announced the upcoming National Small Business Week and emphasized the need to recognize the City's small downtown businesses. She noted the Chamber of Commerce has been in existence since the 1920s and encouraged attendance at the upcoming Chamber Breakfast on May 7, 2025.

Kevin Jenness, owner of Peddler's Wagon, expressed support for a bike path in Eustis. He stated that any parking should be public and accessible for visitors and expressed concern that they are underestimating the amount of parking necessary for the downtown plan. He recommended they work on parking before constructing the hotel and cited the issues it would create for the existing businesses if parking isn't undertaken first.

George Warren, Bay and Lake Pharmacy, stated his desire for Bay Pharmacy to be included in plans for the downtown. He noted that he has 52 employees and cited the number of prescriptions processed at the site. He emphasized they don't like being left out of the plan. He commented on his purchase of the former bank site at Grove and Magnolia.

John Kelty, Cozy Corner Treasures, discussed downtown parking issues during business hours and asked for an ordinance to assist with opening up parking for customers and events to bring people downtown. He expressed support for a parking garage and noted businesses that have already closed from the Marketplace. He recommended that business owners and employees should park elsewhere. He commented on the last event and lack of marketing. He stated he felt that inter-City communication is lacking. He cited the need to attract more people to the downtown area.

Greg Gudges, Elite Baggers, thanked the City and staff for the bike rally the previous Saturday. He expressed support for holding another, multi-day, event in Eustis.

Craig Capri, Police Chief, commented on the successful Bike Event over the weekend at the same time as the Car Show. He cited the need for more events downtown to support the businesses. He indicated there were no complaints or traffic issues during the event.

Mayor Hawkins stated it was a great first-time event for the Elite Baggers Bike Rally. He highlighted the City is always trying to bring great events and look to the community for new ideas.

Commissioner Lee noted some businesses closed the day of the Bike Rally event and stated she would like to see more businesses open for events.

5. Consent Agenda

5.1 Resolution Number 25-08: Approving the Coolidge Street Stormwater and Roadway Engineering Services Change Order in Excess of \$100,000

5.2 Resolution Number 25-30: Agreement between the City of Eustis and the Lake County School Board for School Resource Officer (SRO) for 2025-2026

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, 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, Mayor Hawkins

6. Ordinances, Public Hearings, & Quasi Judicial Hearings

6.1 Explanation of Ordinances 25-03, 25-04 and 25-05 Explanation of Ordinances pertaining to Annexation of Parcels with Alternate Keys 1097070 and 1094712

SECOND READING

Ordinance Number 25-03: Voluntary Annexation of Parcels with Alternate Keys 1097070 and 1094712

Attorney Garcia read Ordinance Number 25-03 by title on second and final reading: An Ordinance of the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Florida, voluntarily annexing approximately 49.5 acres of real property at Alternate Key Numbers 1097070 and 1094712, generally located north of County Road 44 and east of State Road 19.

Attorney Garcia asked if there were any questions from the Commission.

Mayor Hawkins expressed concern with the concrete placed on the site and cited possible health concerns caused by the crushing of the concrete. He noted he looked up if there were any health issues associated with the crushing of concrete. He further cited concerns regarding stormwater running into Lake Eustis from the site.

Attorney Garcia opened the public hearing at 7:34 p.m. There being no public comment, the hearing was closed at 7:34 p.m.

Logan Wilson responded to the concrete concerns and stated it is not part of the long-term plans. He indicated that the concrete will ultimately go away. He stated, ideally, he would crush it and haul it away in that format. The Commission questioned why the concrete was not taken to the owner's landfill and crushed there with Mr. Wilson explaining that he only recently purchased the landfill and it was not part of the plan when they started the application process.

The Commission discussed options for the concrete removal and noted, if this property was not within the City, then the County may allow it, and the City would not have control over the property. It was noted that the City also crushes concrete and their current site is near the

subject location. Mr. Carrino explained the reason it was relocated had more to do with the noise. He stated the City does not do it continuously. They would collect it and then every two years crush it.

The Commission asked about the long-term plan for the property with Mr. Wilson responding that the plan is for outside storage. He noted that the concrete material is from the City's relocated material. He indicated it was just a handy location. He agreed that the concrete is atrocious.

The Commission expressed concern whether the property could continue to be used for the concrete crushing if it is annexed. They questioned what the current zoning is in Lake County with staff indicating it is R6 and, while that is not allowed in R6 zoning, the County is overlooking it.

Discussion was held regarding the amount of density allowed in the County under R6 zoning versus the possibility of them building six or seven units per acre.

Mike Lane, Development Services Director, commented on permitted uses. He explained that any development within the City must go before the DRC for approval. Any future development on the site would require DRC approval. He indicated they can't do anything about the existing aggregate but, if the property owner agrees to stop at this point, then staff could discuss buffering, construction hours, and how the business can be a good neighbor. He commented on what's allowed under MCI which is mixed commercial industrial. He stated it is a gray area between light industrial versus heavy industrial. He indicated a smaller quantity of concrete crushing would probably be allowed under MCI.

The Commission discussed whether or not the property owner needed or got a permit for placing the concrete on the site and trucking in the concrete at night.

Jerry Cobb commented on the issue of the concrete. He stated his understanding that they do not intend to bring in anymore. He recommended allowing them to finish it and get rid of it. He then commented on how in the past the City treated human waste adjoining his property.

Mr. Carrino referred to the Table of Uses and indicated it does not specify concrete crushing as either permissible or non-permissible. He cited those items that are listed as not allowed.

Discussion was held regarding whether concrete crushing would be light or heavy industrial and the possible health issues.

Attorney Garcia asked how urgent is the application with Mr. Wilson indicating it is not urgent, they just wanted to start the process. She suggested the Commission add concrete crushing to the Table of Uses as a restricted use.

Discussion was held regarding tabling the annexation and amending the Table of Uses.

Mr. Wilson noted they rent the crushing equipment so they should be done by the time it comes back.

Mr. Lane recommended that they table to a date certain with Attorney Garcia recommending they just re-advertise when it's ready to come back.

Further discussion was held regarding how long to table the ordinances with Attorney Garcia stating they can just table and then re-advertise them once the Table of Uses has been amended.

Motion made by Vice Mayor Ashcraft, Seconded by Commissioner Asbate, to table Ordinance Number 25-03. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

Attorney Garcia explained the other ordinances would not be heard due to the tabling of Ordinance 25-03.

6.2 SECOND READING

Ordinance Number 25-04: Changing the Future Land Use Designation of Recently Annexed Real Property for Parcels with Alternate Keys 1097070 and 1094712

This ordinance was not heard due to the tabling of Ordinance Number 25-03.

6.3 SECOND READING

Ordinance Number 25-05: Assigning the Rural Neighborhood Design District Designation to Recently Annexed Real Property for Parcels with Alternate Keys 1097070 and 1094712

This ordinance was not heard due to the tabling of Ordinance Number 25-03.

7. Future Agenda Items and Comments

7.1 City Commission

Commissioner Lee announced that Eustis in Bloom is sponsoring a photography contest featuring the butterflies that have been installed through the City. She commented on the G3C2 presentation and stated she would have liked to have a copy prior to the presentation. She asked that the Commission be given such information prior to the meeting. She also asked that Gerry Gunther be part of the presentations before the Commission.

Commissioner Holland had no comments.

Commissioner Asbate also commented on the lateness of the G3C2 proposal. He noted it is dated April 15th and asked why the Commission just got it. He expressed concern regarding the need for the Commission to go over the rest of the Master Plan. He commented on the importance of trail development being in the plan and asked for Mike Stevens to present an update on the bike trail development. He then expressed interest in adopting an ordinance to limit parking for a period of time in order to keep the parking areas open for customers.

Discussion was held regarding where residents should park and restricting the parking on Magnolia, Eustis and MacDonald. Commissioner Asbate suggested restricting parking to two or three hours at a time. He stated he was impressed with the pageant winners and expressed support for the City working with the Chamber of Commerce on those events.

Commissioner Lee stated that there used to be a Downtown Merchants Association and suggested the downtown merchants need to work together to address the parking and other issues.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft noted he distributed information regarding how important the hotel and hospital were to the downtown. He stated he would like to see more tables in Ferran Park. He announced that the Eustis High School girls' softball team is playing in the district championship. He added that Eustis is having its first Cinco De Mayo festival at the sports complex at 2001 S. Bay Street and thanked Chief Capri for his assistance. He then showed pictures for a boat concert series to encourage people to come by boat.

Mayor Hawkins suggested that each Commissioner select a genre or a band to develop a concert series for the park. He announced the score of the girls' softball game with Eustis

winning 1 to 2 at that time. He then commented on the retirement of two long-time City employees - Arlene Applegate and Christine Grinstead. He thanked them for their service to the City.

Mayor Hawkins then commented on the Bike Rally and thanked Chief Capri for his work on the event. He congratulated Chief Swanson and Deputy Chief Kelleher on the City's recent ISO rating.

7.2 City Manager

Mr. Carrino announced he is working with the Hoffers on the proposal given to the Commissioners to determine the viability of the project. He stated he sent out the Doodle poll regarding the dates for the workshops. He noted they agreed to meet on Tuesday, May 6th at 5:30 p.m. with G3C2. He asked if they want to also meet on Thursday, May 8th to continue their review of the Master Plan.

Following discussion, it was agreed to also meet on May 8th at 5:30 p.m. regarding the Master Plan.

7.3 City Attorney: None

7.4 Mayor

Commissioner Asbate asked how large a facility is needed to be able to have a certain number of seats. He indicated that Chief Swanson had worked up a report on that and it would be distributed to the rest of the Commissioners.

Mayor Hawkins thanked Mr. Carrino and Deputy City Manager Miranda Burrowes for all of their work.

8. Adjournment: 8:17 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