



# MINUTES

## City Commission Meeting

6:00 PM – Thursday, April 17, 2025 – City Hall

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**Invocation: Moment of Silence**

**Pledge of Allegiance: Commissioner Michael Holland**

**Call to Order: 6:06 p.m.**

**Acknowledge of Quorum and Proper Notice**

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

**1. Agenda Update: NONE**

**2. Approval of Minutes**

April 3, 2025 City Commission Meeting

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

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

**3. Presentations**

3.1 Amazing Race Charity Distribution

Mayor Hawkins complimented A'zhane Faulknor for her work on the Amazing Race for Charity.

A'zhane Faulknor, Events Assistant, addressed the Commission regarding the City's assumption of the Amazing Race for Charity 2025. She announced that a total of \$41,850 was awarded and explained that some of the organizations received more than others due to them taking on additional duties such as multiple challenge stations, water stations and providing extra volunteers. Checks were presented to the following organizations: Companions for Courage \$3,575; ECS for Kids \$3,575; Education Foundation of Lake County \$3,575; Habitat for Humanity of Lake and Sumter County \$5,000; Hand-in-Hand Recovery \$6,000; Humane Society of Lake County \$3,575; Lake Cares Food Pantry \$3,575; LuvExtension \$3,575; Trout Lake Nature Center \$2,000; and Worth It Suicide Outreach and Support \$4,500.

Ms. Faulknor recognized the African American Heritage Celebration Committee, Inc., receiving \$500. She stated they brought energy to the finish line, cheered on the race, handed out drinks and helped volunteers throughout the race. She also recognized Alea Academy, receiving \$2,500, for organizing transportation for the race participants to the starting line.

Ms. Faulknor announced that the 2026 event would be held on Saturday, March 21, 2026 and noted that registration is already open.

### 3.2 FY 2023/2024 Audit Presentation

Lori Carr, Finance Director, introduced Helen Painter and Loren Walker from Purvis Gray to present the FY2023/2024 audit.

Ms. Painter reviewed the City's annual comprehensive financial report and the governance letter. She explained the management team prepares the financial statements and Purvis Gray offers its opinion of those statements. She stated they issued an unmodified (or clean) opinion which indicates that the statements are fairly stated in all material respects. She commented that the budget is the strongest internal control to make sure the City does not overspend. She stated that there are two management letter comments. She stated the outsourced CPA firm for the police pension fund continues to be late. She explained those accounting records are included in the City's annual comprehensive financial report. She also stated there are some issues with reconciliation of the capital asset records. She cited the capital expenditures through the ARPA funds, grant funds and other capital expenditures. She explained they have asked staff to change their procedures to ensure that the capital asset records are reconciled on a more timely basis. She added that something needs to be done with the Building Fund. She explained that state statute governs how much excess revenues over expenditures can be held in the Building Fund. Due to the increase in construction, a decision needs to be made on how to spend that money down. She explained the CRA now has to have a stand alone report. She noted that the CRA has a note due in the new year and it is a balloon payment so they will have to get it refinanced. She concluded that all of the funds did well and had monies left over to go into reserves. She added that the pension funds also did well.

### 3.3 Presentation and Acceptance of the City's Audited Annual Financial Reports for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2024

There being no questions forthcoming from the Commission, Ms. Carr explained that there was no formal action required by the Commission.

## **4. Appointments**

### 4.1 Appointments to the Historic Preservation Board (HPB) – 3 Members and 1 Alternate

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft, to reappoint Dorothy Stevenson to the Historic Preservation Board. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

Motion made by Commissioner Asbate, Seconded by Commissioner Lee, to reappoint Ronald K. Musselman to the Historic Preservation Board. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

Abstaining: Mayor Hawkins

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft, to appoint Shanna Graves to the seat vacated by Dina John. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft, to appoint Derek Stewart to the seat vacated by Robyn Sambor. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

Dorothy Stevenson expressed her pleasure in serving on the Historic Preservation Board and thanked the Commission for the reappointment.

## **5. Audience to be Heard**

Brian Broomfield addressed the Commission regarding the Pledge of Allegiance and meaning of liberty and justice as key principles of our democracy. He expressed opposition to actions taken by the current federal administration.

Kimberly Newcombe commented on issues with the 7-Eleven being built off of Abrams and Orange. She cited construction being done in the early hours and bright lights installed that shine directly into their bedrooms. She explained they have reached out to 7-Eleven and the City and asked for trees to be installed or some cover to protect her property. She indicated they have been trying to sell their home and all of the buyers back out due to the 7-Eleven. She emphasized the lack of response they have had and stated their possible intent to go to court.

Mayor Hawkins responded that the City has been in contact with the developer and they are trying to help. He cited an email he had received and he noted that the City had taken down a tree at the request of the resident and they asked for their fence to be repaired and the City took care of that. He asked the City Manager to address the concerns with Tom Carrino, City Manager, stating he and Miranda Burrowes would prepare a report on what they have been working on with 7-Eleven. He stated that the Building Inspector has contacted the developer regarding no construction prior to 7:00 a.m. and they indicated they would not begin working prior to that.

Troy Newcombe reported that the 4:30 a.m. construction happened just two days prior.

Mr. Carrino stated that the City can't force them to plant additional trees but the City can ask them to increase the trees over what their original plan requires. He indicated that he would send an email summarizing what they have discussed with 7-Eleven.

Darius Kerrison stated the Eustis Hometown Comedy Music Festival last weekend was great with lots of people and thanked City staff, Commissioners and Marissa Cella for their assistance. He also thanked everyone for their attendance.

## **6. Consent Agenda**

6.1 Resolution Number 25-25: Public Records Exemption for Municipal Clerks and Employees who perform municipal elections or code enforcement functions

6.2 Resolution Number 25-28: Authorizing an Expenditure for the Water Department Office Building Generator Replacement through Tradewinds Power Corporation Totaling Expenditures in Excess of \$100,000

6.3 Resolution Number 25-29: Approving an Expenditure in Excess of \$100,000 for the Public Utilities 2025 Reclaimed Water Master Plan Update

6.4 Resolution Number 25-31: Authorizing Award of Bid Number 002-25 to Cacique Utilities for the County Road 44 Force Main Bypass Connection and Approving a Purchase in Excess of \$100,000

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

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

## **7. Ordinances, Public Hearings, & Quasi Judicial Hearings**

### **7.1 Resolution Number 25-32: Amending the City of Eustis 2016 Redevelopment Plan by Adopting the 2025 Downtown Master Plan Final Draft**

Sasha Garcia, City Attorney, read Resolution Number 25-32 by title: A Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Lake County, Florida; amending the City of Eustis 2016 Redevelopment Plan by adopting the 2025 Downtown Master Plan final draft; authorizing implementation of the plan; and providing an effective date.

Mr. Carrino explained Al Latimer, Economic Development Director, was unable to attend the meeting. He cited the Master Plan workshop and explained the resolution would both adopt the Master Plan and incorporate it into the 2016 Redevelopment Plan so the CRA can actively participate in implementation of the plan.

Commissioner Asbate commented favorably on the workshop and asked the Commission to consider further discussion on the Master Plan.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft stated he had a number of people who have contacted him regarding the Master Plan. He cited the number of people offering information from multiple resources and questioned how best to filter the information and make a decision. He noted the need to move forward and have direction. He indicated he had spoken with a number of people since the workshop and stated his opinion they should focus on the hotel first. He expressed concern regarding recent business closures.

Mayor Hawkins stated they need to concentrate on the waterfront and questioned whether or not a hotel would get people downtown.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft commented on the number of people that were in town including the fair, a sailing regatta and the comedy festival and all of those people had nowhere in town to stay.

Commissioner Lee agreed with the need for the hotel. She stated they need to follow the Master Plan and it recommends they start with the hotel. She added they need a hotel with an event facility.

Commissioner Holland emphasized why they need to go ahead and adopt the master plan. They can workshop what to do first after. He cited the legislation being considered by the State Legislature that would affect CRAs.

Mayor Hawkins emphasized the Commission is in the driver's seat and they need to make the decision. He indicated that, if they build the hotel, there needs to be a way to consistently bring people into the downtown.

Further discussion was held regarding adopting the master plan and then holding a workshop later.

Attorney Garcia opened the public hearing at 6:55 p.m.

Daniel DiVenanzo thanked the Commission for continuing to update the master plan. He commented on changes to the City and Lake County in the past ten years. He expressed agreement with adopting the plan and then they can make changes. He cited the impact of the loss of the hospital versus the current vibrancy in the downtown. He noted that hotels often have gift shops and jewelry stores and stated Eustis already has those.

There being no further public comment, the hearing was closed at 6:58 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve Resolution Number 25-32. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

## **7.2 SECOND READING**

### **Ordinance Number 25-01: Amendment to Chapters 102 and 109 of the Land Development Regulations**

Attorney Garcia read Ordinance Number 25-01 by title on second and final reading: An Ordinance of the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Lake County, Florida; amending the City's Land Development Regulations as follows: (1) Amending Section 102-11(b): Community Meeting; (2) Adding sub-sections to Section 109.4-Use Regulations Table to include definitions and requirements for the following uses: "Retail Smoke Shop," "Tattoo Establishment," and "Massage Establishment"; amending Section 109.4 - Use Regulations Table to add as a conditional and/or permitted use the following uses: "Self-Service Storage," "Retail Smoke Shop," "Tattoo Establishment," and "Massage Establishment"; providing for applicable legislative findings; providing for codification, scrivener's error, severability, conflicts, and an effective date.

There being no additional presentation or questions, Attorney Garcia opened the public hearing at 7:00 p.m. There being no public comment, the hearing was closed at 7:00 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft, to adopt Ordinance Number 25-01 on final reading. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

## **7.3 FIRST READING**

### **Explanation of Ordinances 25-03, 25-04 and 25-05 Explanation of Ordinances for Annexation of Parcels with Alternate Keys 1097070 and 1094712**

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

Attorney Garcia read Ordinance Number 25-03 by title on first 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.

Mike Lane, Development Services Director, reviewed Ordinances 25-03, 25-04 and 25-05 pertaining to the annexation, future land use designation and design district designation for the real property located north of CR44 and east of SR 19. He noted the site is across the road from the Trout Lake Nature Center. He stated they are asking for the MCI future land use designation and for the Suburban Corridor design district for 9.5 acres of the site and Suburban Neighborhood for the 40 acres behind it. He explained staff's analysis of the application and confirmed the notices were provided. He explained what is allowed under the current County designation versus what would be allowed under the City's MCI designation.

The Commission asked what constitutes light commercial with Mr. Lane explaining it can be similar to the Cobb Commerce Park such as craft activities not heavy industrial.

Mr. Lane further discussed staff's evaluation of the requested future land use and stated County Road 44 is an urbanizing corridor with commercial and residential activities.

The Commission asked if the County Urban Low category would allow heavy commercial use with Mr. Lane stating he was unsure, but he thought it would allow some commercial.

Mr. Lane stated that utilities are available, and future development would require an analysis to ensure it is out of the flood zone. He indicated the property is low recharge and has a mixture of poorly drained soils. He confirmed that a future developer would be required to provide geotechnical reports. He added there would be two design districts for the site - 9.5 acres in the front designated as Suburban Corridor with the bulk of the property in the rear designated Rural Neighborhood.

The Commission discussed what could happen on the site if the City does not annex the property versus the City being able to control what is placed on the site. Opposition was expressed for the site being developed as an apartment complex.

Attorney Garcia opened the public hearing at 7:08 p.m.

Blake Griswold expressed support for the property being annexed so the City has more control. He opposed it being developed as industrial and support for it remaining rural.

John Thornton estimated that 25 of the acres are considered wetlands. He commented on the number of ponds for water drainage and noted someone did recent dredging. He stated the property already floods when it rains. He expressed concern regarding the property being developed and where the water would go. He stated that he was told that the owner was going to harvest trees or plant grass and harvest that, but nothing has been done. He noted rolls of hay that have been sitting there for some time. He emphasized the issue his neighbors may have with flooding. He further commented on the possibility that the County and St. John's Water Authority may be imposing violations on the site.

Sherry Thornton expressed concern regarding the concrete that was placed there and what goes into the air and water supply when the concrete is ground.

Cindy Newton commented on the amount of trucks going down Estes Road and stated not all the concrete came from Eustis. She stated they don't know what's in the concrete and indicated it is being dumped close to the wetlands and the floodplain. She added that the drainage will end up at the City's waterfront coming from Trout Lake.

There being no further public comment, the hearing was closed at 7:14 p.m.

Commissioner Asbate commented that it is better for the property to be under the City's control. He also noted that the St. John's issues would continue to be addressed. He then cited the possible development of a trail and where it might be placed.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft responded that the railroad is in negotiations with Lake County regarding the trail but possibly a second trail could go through the property.

Attorney Garcia clarified that Commissioner Holland moved to approve the ordinance and Commissioner Asbate seconded so they could continue the discussion.

The Commission discussed the ability to control development of the site if it is annexed, whether the City would have the authority to have the site cleaned up, the impact of what has already been done to the site and whether heavy industrial could be placed on the site.

Mr. Lane responded that it is a mixed-use commercial/industrial district so it is intended to be lighter industrial.

Discussion was held regarding any development having to meet current code and would only need Commission approval if they need waivers.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Commissioner Asbate, to approve Ordinance Number 25-03 on first reading. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

#### **7.4 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**

Attorney Garcia read Ordinance Number 25-04 by title on first reading: An Ordinance of the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Lake County, Florida, amending the City of Eustis Comprehensive Plan pursuant to 163.317 F.S.; changing the future land use designation of approximately 49.5 acres of recently annexed real property at Alternate Key Numbers 1097070 and 1094712, generally located north of County Road 44 and east of State Road 19, from Urban Low in Lake County to Mixed Commercial Industrial in the City of Eustis.

Attorney Garcia opened the public hearing at 7:22 p.m. There being no public comment, the hearing was closed at 7:22 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Vice Mayor Ashcraft, to approve Ordinance Number 25-04 on first reading. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

#### **7.5 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**

Attorney Garcia read Ordinance Number 25-05 by title on first reading: An Ordinance of the City Commission of the City of Eustis, Lake County, Florida; assigning the Rural Neighborhood design district designation to approximately 40 acres of recently annexed real property at Alternate Key Number 1097070 and assigning the Suburban Corridor design district designation to approximately 9.5 acres of recently annexed real property at Alternate Key 1094712, north of County Road 44 and east of State Road 19.

Commissioner Ashcraft confirmed neighborhood doesn't mean homes and Mr. Lane agreed.

Attorney Garcia opened the public hearing at 7:23 p.m. There being no public comment, the hearing was closed at 7:24 p.m.

Motion made by Commissioner Holland, Seconded by Commissioner Lee, to approve Ordinance Number 25-05 on first reading. Motion passed on the following vote:

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

## **8. Future Agenda Items and Comments**

### **8.1 City Commission**

Commissioner Holland expressed appreciation for City staff and all they do. He asked everyone to keep the people at Florida State in their prayers and wished everyone a happy Easter.

Commissioner Lee asked about the Parks and Recreation Master Plan.

Mr. Carrino explained the Commission decided not to fund that about three years previous. He indicated staff is currently working on the Capital Improvement Plan and staff was considering bringing back the Parks and Recreation Master Plan. He stated the plan would help better allocate resources and estimated it would cost approximately \$200,000 for the master plan. He indicated that they are doing a site-specific master plan for Carver Park.

Commissioner Asbate commented on impact fees levied by other area cities and noted Eustis is at lowest end. He expressed support for Eustis increasing its impact fees. He also expressed support for enacting the three to one density versus the five to one.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft noted that was being worked on by Kimley Horn and cited the design standards they were working on.

Mr. Carrino explained that staff had brought to the Commission a SR light district that would have had a three to one density. He stated that the County had opposed that district due to some regulations they felt weren't consistent with some of the areas in Eustis. He indicated that Kimley Horn did state that a three to one district would not be good. They said the key is the lot widths, design guidelines and setbacks that would produce high quality subdivisions.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft asked if the City hadn't previously tried to change the density on certain parcels that were already annexed and the owners objected. Mr. Carrino confirmed that it did occur and resulted in a long drawn-out legal battle.

Attorney Garcia explained that it was a lawsuit under the Burt Harris Act. She emphasized that vested rights must be carefully considered. She said any future annexations could be subject to a new density requirement but properties already in the City would be challenging.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft commented on properties already in the City that will eventually be coming before the Commission for development, and they will have to meet the existing regulations.

Attorney Garcia explained that the City is limited to what they can require for design standards based on Florida law.

Commissioner Asbate asked about scheduling the workshop regarding the master plan and a hotel. He suggested adding an extra hour to upcoming regular meetings.

Attorney Garcia suggested that Mr. Carrino circulate some dates for availability. Discussion was held regarding upcoming dates. Mr. Carrino indicated he would send out another "Doodle" for the end of April, first of May, to get a date.

Commissioner Holland asked to speak at the next Commission meeting to provide a report on issues coming up in the legislature. He reported that the City project funding was partially funded in the House and fully funded in the Senate.

## **8.2 City Manager**

Mr. Carrino noted the May 1st workshop at 4:00 p.m. (on the Sunshine Law, ethics and rules of order) and one on May 15th at 4:00 p.m. to discuss the eastern utilities. He indicated that the Attorney Garcia had sent him a memo regarding a new state requirement for a business impact estimate regarding any City ordinances that have an economic impact on businesses and residents. He explained they are required to do an impact analysis that will be included in the agenda packet, and they will be posted on the City's website for five years. He noted that issue will be discussed at the Friday staff meeting.

Mr. Carrino reported that a lot of cities that allow backyard chickens require the residents to go through specific training. He stated that a number of staff members, including Attorney Garcia, Eric Martin and Commissioner Asbate, went through the two-hour training. He explained they paid the University of Florida Extension Office \$5.00 for the webinar, and he served chicken tenders for lunch. He indicated they would be bringing back a discussion on backyard chickens.

## **8.3 City Attorney**

Attorney Garcia confirmed they would hold the workshop on May 1st and the backyard chickens would be heard on May 15th. She explained that the business impact estimate would only be required for specific types of ordinances.

## **8.4 Mayor**

Mayor Hawkins noted a vigil that was held for four residents that were recently killed in an auto accident. He complimented City staff that attended the vigil and their assistance with event. He commented on how the residents don't know everything the City staff members do. He expressed appreciation for all the City staff does. He announced that Lake Cares would hold the grand opening of their facility on May 5th at 10:00 a.m.

Mayor Hawkins emphasized that adopting the master plan was a good first step but there is still a lot of work to be done.

## **9. Adjournment: 7:44 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](http://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.*

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CHRISTINE HALLORAN  
City Clerk

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WILLIE L. HAWKINS  
Mayor/Commissioner