



HISTORIC TOWN OF EATONVILLE, FLORIDA

REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 2, 2025, at 7:30 PM

Denton Johnson Center 400 Ruffel St, Eatonville, FL 32751

SPECIAL NOTICE: These meeting minutes are presented in an abbreviated format intended as a public record discussion of stated meeting according to the Florida's Government-in-the-Sunshine law. Meetings are opened to the public, noticed within reasonable advance notice, and transcribed into minutes for public record. ***Audio Recording are available through the Town's website on the Council Agenda Page.*

CALL TO ORDER AND VERIFICATION OF QUORUM:

Mayor Gardner called the meeting to order at 7:30 p.m. and a quorum was established by Ms. Bellenger.

PRESENT: (5), Councilwoman Wanda Randolph, Councilman Tarus Mack, Councilman Rodney Daniels, Vice Mayor Theo Washington, Mayor Angie Gardner

STAFF: (7) Demetrius Pressley, **Chief Administrator Officer**, Veronica King, **Town Clerk**, Ryan Knight, **Town Attorney**, Katrina Gibson, **Finance Director**, Chief Stanley Murray, **EPD**, Valerie Mundy, **Public Works**, Marissa Bellenger, **Records Coordinator**

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

Invocation through a moment of silence led by Mayor Gardner followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS** to **APPROVE** the meeting agenda with **AMENDMENTS**; **Moved by** Councilwoman Randolph; **Second by** Councilman Daniels; **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES. Amendment:** Adding Resolution 2025-25 Approving partnership with MASS Mammograms After Sunday Service

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – (4)

Kelvan Franklin (and Darius Washington) – Greetings from the Eatonville Chamber of Commerce who just recently celebrated their anniversary. Franklin encourages residents to attend upcoming Chamber of Commerce meetings and events.

Angela Thomas – Came to council to speak on the old cemetery burial grounds, for the town to give our history away to someone to build a home on–God rest your soul.

Joyce Irby – Made comments on the resignation of Chief Administrative Officer, Mr. Pressley and commented on the construction plans for the old cemetery, inquired about who determines if a home is built, who are the contractors, who is responsible for the money, inquired about money and opportunities for residents to work on projects in the town [developments], would like to see qualified residents participate.

Jeanelle Brunson – Comments on the potential rental ordinance. Mrs. Brunson would like to know what the specific requirements are. According to the ordinance, there are criminal background checks and income checks. What is the reason for them? Mayor Gardner informs Mrs. Brunson that she will have an opportunity to speak on the ordinance in the hearing portion of tonight's meeting. Mrs. Brunson pauses her comments and decides to wait for the public hearing section to continue.

PUBLIC HEARING

Approval of First Reading of Ordinance 2025-3 Rental Homes – (Preamble Read) Mr. Pressley – Just for clarity, there are a few items that are included in the previous ordinance, originally from 2022. The legal team and I have discussed that we should hear from them [legal] first before we proceed forward, and then we can

make a decision on how we would like to move forward. This was presented by Vice Mayor Washington. Vice Mayor Washington – We brought this [ordinance] in 2022, some laws changed in 2023. This is something to look at for changes in this ordinance, the legal team can discuss those changes. Attorney Knight – In 2023, the state did pass a preemption that specifically covers some portions of this 2022, Florida Statue 83.425 specifically says, This section supersedes any local government regulations on matters covered under this part, including, but not limited to, the screening process used by a landlord in approving tenancies; security deposits; rental agreement applications and it goes on, one of the provisions does reference tenant screening. There are subdivisions in here that we need to look through and figure out what exactly is preemptive and what is not, the way this is written [Ordinance 2025-3] it its current form does need to be amended. Vice Mayor Washington – We want to make sure the residents, business owners are approved, need to crack down on some of the rental properties, landlords and renters are not taking care of the properties. Mr. Pressley – The focus for this ordinance was on the ones [properties] not established and left unattended not having any type of prerequisites for renters that have brought blight or slum in the community, not set up to address those that have property management, such as apartments, dwelling units, but rather those [landlords] out of the area not taking care of their properties with renters which impacts our community. Councilman Mack – Would like to table to educate ourselves more and based on the concern of our citizens and others matters taking place. **Public Comments:** Charles Bargineer (Resident) – When addressing homes that are not kept up, the best way for the town to address is through code enforcement, code enforcement should be the first line of defense, code enforcement is currently is not effective. Angela Thomas (Resident) - Comments on concerns that the cost charged to landlords will carry over to the renters. John Lias (Resident) - Code enforcement should handle this matter, if code enforcement is done, this matter will go away; have called, written letters, and sent messages to code enforcement and no one has reached out. Jeanelle Brunson (Resident) - If there is a problem with properties, code enforcement would be the appropriate remedy; do not know why I need to do a criminal background or income check if I do not choose to as a personal business, need to have some established means on how to enforce Ordinance 2025-3, if properties are in disrepair, then code enforcement should be the one to address the issue. Ruthi Critton (Resident) - About the demographics of this community, we know the breakdown between renters versus home ownership, ownership is important to council and to this community, not opposed to this ordinance, blight and slum is important, we are a small community, and we have a pretty big opportunity to set and enforce the standard, appreciate council's due diligence in making sure that things are put in place to use when needed, the conditions of housing in this community is a mounting problem, when there are renters who are not tied nor attached to the community, some things can be overlooked, this council should put something in place, even if we are not micromanaging or harassing renters. John Michael Fernandez (Director of Local Government Affairs Florida Apartment Association) - Happy that the ordinance will be tabled, have concerns with the ordinance pertaining to the preemption discussed by the attorney, spoke to another preemption in Florida Statue 509. Joyce Irby (Resident) - Our location is a target for people who want to buy homes, especially to make a profit, there are a lot of people who have history here and want to buy a home, but they cannot, as someone whose house was built in the sixties, I have a spiritual connection to this community, people passing through [this community] don not care. **Council Comments:** Councilwoman Randolph –This is going to cause a big problem with landlords assessing tenants, already have a crisis concerning an increase in rent, will cause a rise in the cost of housing, tenant water bill are running about \$200 or \$300, rental units are not going to go away, and there are property owners who do not pay their taxes nor their mortgages, LLCs are absorbing units in the homes, our community needs education, a longtime residents lost their house due to taxes for only \$7,000; residents who have worked so hard to leave their properties to their children, the [the children] are creating the housing crisis and putting the homes up for sale, gave opinion that a code enforcement officer will be needed [to be hired]to do this, and will be infringing upon the privacy of private people, it is not [the town's] business whether they [property owner] rents to a criminal, a standard has not been set, this [ordinance] may be good for some communities, but is it good for Eatonville? something that is good; it may be good for some communities, but is it good for Eatonville? There is a lot of rental homes [200 homes stated], have to do code

enforcement, putting an ordinance in place is not going to solve the problem. Councilman Mack – Concerned with overstepping boundaries when requiring criminal background checks, it is their business, it is important that we educate our people, so they do not lose their property, there is more than 200 rental properties in the community and getting worse by the day, need to implement something to prevent people from losing their property, it is heartbreaking to see longtime residents lose their homes due to technicality; code enforcement need help, want to hire another code enforcement officer, it is a lot of work for one person, need to address sooner or later before it gets out of hand; in favor of tabling the ordinance due to the stipulations, against the ordinance. Town Clerk – the legal ad [for ordinances] is not required until the second hearing, no money has been expended. Vice Mayor Washington – We want all properties to be respectful and beautiful, the code has not been enforced, regulation as part of the ordinance will us to address many issues [due to absentee landlords, properties not being taken care of], when the town have to get involved, the town has to get reimbursed [put a lien on the property]. Councilwoman Randolph – When we enforce laws (ordinances) in our town, we have to follow our own laws and ordinances. If we were in Orlando, or the county, and there are properties not in compliance, they give you a deadline and start assessing fines, we have to take control and find a solution. Mayor Gardner – [to Attorney Knight] In other municipalities, do they have code enforcement as well as rental ordinances? Attorney Knight stated that it is typically just code enforcement. Mayor Gardner – Before 2020, there was nothing legally happening with code enforcement (citations were given without any action), documents such as this [ordinance] would help, code enforcement has improved and based on our current situation this ordinance would not be needed as much, there are items in the ordinance that would strengthen code enforcement, updates can be made to code enforcement. Councilman Mack – Code enforcement is an administrative issue, we have been saying that we are going to make changes whether by ordinance or resolution, need to invest in getting another code enforcement officer. Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS to TABLE the First Reading of Ordinance 2025-3 Rental Homes; moved by Councilwoman Randolph; second by Vice Mayor Washington; AYE: ALL; MOTION PASSES.**

APPROVAL CONSENT AGENDA: Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS to APPROVE the Consent Agenda;** approving Town Council Meeting Minutes for August 19, 2025, and Funding for the Lead Service Line Replacement Grant/Loan Agreement; **moved by Councilwoman Randolph; second by Councilman Daniels; AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES.**

COUNCIL DECISIONS:

Approval of Extending the Completion Date of HostDime Requirements – Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS to APPROVE** Extending the Completion Date of HostDime Requirements; **moved by Councilman Daniels, second by Councilwoman Randolph. Discussion/comments:** Mr. Pressley – The item is the same layout as last meeting, had several conversations with the owner and he is on Zoom. There were questions that came up in the last meeting that he wanted to answer, this 3rd amendment brought to the board, is to take effect up to December 31, 2025, he [owner] is aware that he is responsible for the fines that started as of September 1st [based on the 2nd amendment], if Council approve this item [3rd amendment], fines will still be due unless otherwise stated by the Council, fines went up from 250 to 500 in the current amendment. Councilman Mack – It was discussed at the last meeting for the \$200,000 reimbursement to be given back to in good faith (with the extension), request to owner [Manny Vivar] to give the \$200,000 back before moving forward with giving the extension, not willing to give an extension if the \$200,000 is not returned, will continue with fines of \$250 a day until completion of construction, would like to show empathy when people are doing something in our community, but you [Manny Vivar] have not shown up one time during council meetings since January to express that construction is behind, have not been forthcoming. Manny Vivar – Thank you with apology for not being present tonight in person. Addressing you, this is the first time in the entire history of dealing with the town that I have not been present, **(Council members had a difficult time hearing Mr. Vivar, due to the audio capabilities in the Denton Johnson Community Center; Mr. Pressley then called Mr. Vivar from his cellphone which allowed him to speak on speaker for Council)** Mr. Vivar continued with his opening statement. Mr. Vivar – an email was sent in June or July providing a recent update of constraints

faced, the \$200,000 was a reimbursement for infrastructure-related costs, whether the project finished in January or February of this year, or November or October, it would have no implications on the town benefiting from a tax basis perspective, Orange County property taxes are accounted for in the following year of completion of a project and will not hinder the town's inability to collect tax revenue, even with project delays, the town has collected about \$400,000 in taxes, it is up to the town if they want to enforce the \$250 fine, some of the issues are uncontrollable, the CAO has been aware of some of the issues, there were issues with the building code done being enforced by Universal Engineering, there were additional constraints and delays in the construction of the project. Councilman Mack states that the \$200,000 reimbursement was not something that he voted, the town appreciates the business brought to the town over the years, willing to give another extension, but it is more feasible for the \$200,000 to be given back. Councilman Daniels is in favor of giving HostDime an extension without asking for the [\$200,000] reimbursement, in 2015, Town Council unanimously voted on and made commitments to allocate funds for infrastructure, which it has been built, it is critical that we honor our pledge and commit to this project, we should help Manny to get it [building] open to continue the funds necessary to help our town. Mayor Gardner the Town has done nothing wrong in terms of the agreement and is willing to remove the per day fines if the \$200,000 is returned, the reimbursable amount [\$200,000] was based on completion by a certain date, the reimbursement was still given when the completion did not meet that deadline stated in the contract, return the \$200,000, be done with the amendments, complete the building as soon as you can, and every effort will be made to ensure a smooth journey moving forward. Councilman Daniels request for Mr. Pressley to clarify comments made by the Mayor about the conditions of the reimbursement. Mr. Pressley stated that the original layout [agreement] was incentive based. HostDime had to complete the required infrastructure in order to receive a reimbursement in which Mr. Vivar completed with receipts. Councilman Mack asked when construction for HostDime began. Mr. Vivar construction began in 2021. Mr. Pressley clarifies that the original agreement was approved in 2016. Councilwoman Randolph – [To Mr. Vivar] In order to get the certificate of occupancy, what needs to be completed from this point forward? Mr. Vivar – The parking lot will be wrapping up in the next few weeks, remaining site work needs to be completed, the landscaping and inside of the facility needs to be completed, should be done by October. There are miscellaneous inspections that are being scheduled over the next 4 to 6 weeks inside the data center in parallel with inspections on the site work. Councilman Daniels this is not a typical project, it is a Tier IV data center which is rare, the money from this project far exceeds the fines being imposed. Vice Mayor Washington inquired as to whether Mr. Vivar had signed off on the previous agreements [yes], if the signed agreements stated you would be completed by a certain date, I am for allowing HostDime to finish the project, need to pay the fines up until this point. Mr. Pressley – the current fines stay intact until the seal of completion is official, so it will be from July 31st to date of completion. Councilman Mack – [To Mr. Vivar] have already given a lot of leeway—it has been almost five years, and we are trying to get things done. Mr. Pressley recommends the current amendment stay as it is, there can always be a conversation upon completion of what the fined amount would be or if you want to give a discount.. Councilman Mack – I would be willing to do that if he returns the \$200,000. Councilman Daniels inquired as to why council is having this conversation if the previous agreement that mentions the \$200,000 has already been signed and approved. Attorney Knight there is nothing in the agreement regarding the return of the \$200,000 reimbursement since it was approved after it was given. Councilwoman Randolph – not in favor of the return of the \$200,000, I do not want to assess any additional charges, a continuation of the \$250 [per day] fine until completion is fair. (Mayor Gardner **RESCINDS the motion to APPROVE**; Councilwoman Randolph **RESCINDS her move**; Councilman Daniels **RESCINDS his second**) Mayor Gardner proposes putting a motion on the floor to return of the \$200,000 reimbursement with the agreement ending on December 31, 2025, with a one-year extension for completion in December 2026. **(No further action taken on the proposed motion)** Councilman Mack states that what the Mayor is proposing is a fair deal. Mr. Vivar – apologies to Councilman Mack, did not mean to address him personally, proposed if council would extend the date to December 31, 2025, and if not complete it by then, then he will put in writing to return the \$200,000, provided that the fees are waived from now until then, the town is collecting money every single year and is not losing money because of the property

taxes being paid. Mayor Gardner – Manny, trying to walk away from the \$250 daily fine, it was stated in the last meeting that you had tried to get waived. Councilman Mack – [To Mr. Vivar] You are protecting your own interest, and we are protecting the interests of Eatonville. Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS to TABLE the Approval of Extending the Completion Date of HostDime Requirements; moved by Councilman Mack, second by Councilwoman Randolph. AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES.**

Approval of Resolution 2025-20 Transferring Ownership Property Owned by TOE to the CRA-504 Eaton Street – (Preamble read) Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS to APPROVE Resolution 2025-20; moved by Councilwoman Randolph, second by Councilman Mack. Discussion/comments: Councilman Mack** – I had the opportunity to listen to all the citizens tonight and took all of their concerns seriously. I would like to look more into this item and would be in favor of tabling. **(All actions RESCINDED)** to approve Resolution 2025-20; Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS to TABLE Resolution 2025-20; moved by Councilman Mack, second by Councilwoman Randolph. AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES.**

Approval of Resolution 2025-24 – Accepting the Resignation of the Chief Administrative Office– Mayor Gardner requests that this item be tabled because the resignation letter has not been extended, [council] were informed that he would be resigning but no date has been offered, [Council] will get the letter once letter is received, no date has been tendered. (Preamble read) Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS to TABLE Resolution 2025-24; moved by Councilman Mack, second by Vice Mayor Washington. AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES. Discussion/comments:** Mr. Pressley left the room after item #5 and returned for walk-on item #7.

Approval To Purchase Bus and Van for The Town Community Policing And Recreation – Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS to APPROVE the Purchase Bus and Van for The Town Community Policing And Recreation; moved by Vice Mayor Washington, second by Councilman Daniels. AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES.**

(Walk-On) Approval of Resolution 2025-25 Approving partnership with MASS Mammograms After Sunday Service in hosting the 3D Mammography Screening Event in providing community health education and screening to the Town of Eatonville – (Preamble read) Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS to APPROVE Resolution 2025-25; moved by Councilman Mack, second by Councilman Daniels. Discussion/comments: Mayor Gardner** – We have been asked to partner but this event has been out for a while, why would the Town become a partner at the end of the circulation of the event? Councilwoman Randolph – this was brought [to council] back in March, the insurance was provided and could not find a resolution [was an oversight] , asked her [Mrs. King] to put a resolution together. Mayor Gardner – to have this event placed on our social media, there had to have had some interactions, it is a great event. **(Mayor Gardner calls for question) AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES.**

REPORTS:

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER: Demetrius Pressley – The budget meeting is tomorrow (9/3/25) at 5:15pm. Our new representative for District 15 is Lavon Bracy. Also, on September 27th at 6:30pm, is the Onyx Men of Honor and we have a table for the Town of Eatonville. The Orange County mayor will also be in attendance. I will talk a little bit more about code enforcement and the options we have for that during tomorrow's budget meeting. Our swim event received praise, despite the weather, the event was still able to take place. Lastly, thank to you to Chief Murray for keeping us updated on the storm season we are in.

ATTORNEY: Ryan Knight – If you would like more information on the rental ordinance, please reach out. There are also no new lawsuits.

TOWN CLERK: Veronica King – The budget meeting tomorrow will be held at Town Hall. Also, thank you for acknowledging the Clerk's Office and hats off to Marissa, who coordinated our wonderful event for Founders' Day.

MAYOR'S REPORT - Mayor Angie Gardner – Thank you Marissa and Mrs. King–you did a great job training her. In regard to Mr. Pressley's resignation, a date was not set, as soon as the date is set, the Council

will be notified. The important thing for me right now is to make certain that there is no time lost. We will have to advertise for the position, but in the meantime, we need someone to stand in for that position and that person will be Marlin Daniels. If you remember my relationship with Councilman Daniels, it was not pretty and we butted heads, but we did not even know each other. I believe that sometimes there are factors that affect our jobs here and walls go up between us, one of the ways to prevent or mitigate those factors is by tearing down the walls. There is a lot that Marlin Daniels can give to this town. He was raised in the town and knows the town, he knows what goes on behind closed doors, which is important, if we are going to do the job, we need to know what you are up against. I do not want to bring someone in for 6 months and they leave in 2 [months] because of nonsense, this also allows someone from the town to have this position, we have not allowed a local person to learn how to be the Chief Administrative Officer of Eatonville, he will be a great asset. It was not Mr. Pressley's idea, it was mine. When he steps on board for a temporary period, you will be notified, and Mr. Pressley will make certain to train him. Someone needs to continue the legacy that Mr. Pressley has brought.

TOWN COUNCIL REPORT/DISCUSSION ITEMS -

Vice Mayor Theo Washington – I support the decision of hiring Marlin Daniels as interim CAO. Coming into the meeting tonight, I saw 15 signs on a few streets. When we talked about code enforcement, I was like: what are we doing? We must drive this community.

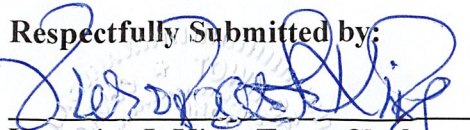
Councilman Tarus Mack – Thank you for everyone for coming out this evening. Condolences to anyone who has suffered a loss within the community, praying for a young man out of Sanford who is a tremendous football player at Florida State University, thoughts are with his family. Congratulations to the Chamber of Commerce for celebrating their 8th anniversary, they are important to this community, and it is our duty to make sure we fulfill their needs. I would also like to congratulate the Clerk's Office. I cannot speak enough on how Mrs. King and Marissa are doing a tremendous job. Mrs. King has been training her, and she is doing a sensational job. Thank you for the professionalism that you bring to the community, that person we depend on, you [Marissa] are being instructed by someone that I have my trust in. Congratulations to Mrs. Bracy for winning her election, a big congratulations to a young man [Marlin Daniels] who was actually one of my opponents in the last election, cannot think of anyone else with more integrity to fulfill the need. In retrospect, to everything that Mr. Pressley has done, it is sad to see him leave because of the scope of work he has done in this community. I really appreciate everything that you have done. We need to consider having a part-time code enforcement officer, it would fill a need in the community.

Councilman Rodney Daniels – I do agree with the sentiments regarding code enforcement. I think I have always been a stickler on outsourcing [Code Enforcement], there is no relationship—you are just following what the code says. I want to give kudos to the previous code enforcement officer. She and I had a conversation one day about my shed because it was not up to code compliance, he said, Councilman if you want to be a leader, you have to lead by example. The next week I went to get it permitted, it goes to show that even though she is my friend, she did not hesitate to tell me when I was wrong. Lastly, “wow” to Mr. Pressley's resignation, and “wow” to Mr. Daniels [Marlin] appointment; thanks to all for coming.

Councilwoman Wanda Randolph – As far as the HostDime situation, it has been an ongoing issue, and I hope that we can come back and finalize this. There is a conduct issue that I had a problem with when addressing the issue about HostDime (at last meeting), a comment was made to me by the Vice Mayor insinuating that Mr. Manny was paying me. I cannot be bought and find the comment to be obnoxious; it insinuates that I am benefiting personally or business wise. It also was discrediting Mr. Manny and his reputation. I am not angry with Vice Mayor Washington, we get along very well, but in this particular case I deserve a public apology. Vice Mayor Washington pulls out a letter he received from the Commission of Ethics.

ADJOURNMENT Mayor Gardner **MOTIONS** for Adjournment of Meeting; **moved** by Vice Mayor Washington; **second** by Councilman Mack; **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES. Meeting Adjourned at 10:01pm.**

Respectfully Submitted by:


Veronica L King, Town Clerk

APPROVED


Angie Gardner, Mayor