



HISTORIC TOWN OF EATONVILLE, FLORIDA REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, March 17, 2026, at 7:30 PM

Eatonville Boys & Girls Club

400 Ruffel Ste. B, 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 7:35 p.m. and a quorum was established by Mrs. King.

PRESENT: (3), Councilman Tarus Mack, Councilwoman LaDwyana Jordan, Mayor Angie Gardner

STAFF: (7) Marlin Daniels, **Chief Administrator Officer;** Marissa Bellenger, **Records Coordinator;** Cliff Shephard, **Town Attorney;** Valerie Mundy, **Public Works Director;** Tara Salmieri, **Town Planner;** Katrina Gibson, **Finance Director;** Chief Stanley Murray, **EPD**

INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE:

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

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA:

Mayor Gardner MOTIONS to **APPROVE** the meeting agenda; **moved by** Councilman Mack; **second by** Councilwoman Jordan.

PRESENTATIONS AND RECOGNITION

International Women's Month – Special Acknowledgement – Mayor Gardner gave a brief introduction for International Women's Month then handed over the presentation to Mr. Daniels. Mr. Daniels introduced the presentation and the importance of celebrating women's history month. Town Clerk Veronica King took place at the podium and presented certificates of appreciation to former Councilwoman Wanda Randolph, newly elected Mayor Ruthi Critton, Councilwoman Jordan, newly elected Councilwoman Angela Thomas, and lastly, the outgoing Mayor, Dr. Angie Gardner.

Prior to Citizen Participation, the Mayor allowed former Councilwoman Randolph and Councilman Washington to make outgoing remarks. Councilwoman Randolph – First, I really appreciate being in the Town of Eatonville and a resident representing the people. The last four years I have served my community and have been committed to all of the community's asks. I will continue to do the work and be the leader that I have put time and effort into. Thank you and God bless each and every one of you. Councilman Washington – Thank you to the Town of Eatonville for the years of service. I want to congratulate everyone who has won. I would like to thank my supporters and the Council. Keep Eatonville first and uplift Eatonville. It has been a pleasure serving this community. We have to keep Eatonville out of the

negative press. We have to stay strong for Eatonville. Mayor Gardner – In 2022, I walked into the building and money was low, but through the grace of God—the word says, “what shall we say to these things, if God is for us then who is against us.” So many people were for us: Mayor Demings, the City of Orlando, Representative Anna Eskamani, and Congressman Maxwell Frost. I want to thank the staff of this Town. Thank you Attorney Shepard for your consistent and good foundational counsel. I was always able to trust what you told this Council. I want to also thank Tara Salmieri, one of the best planning and zoning consultants I have ever met. Without the citizens of Eatonville giving me this opportunity, we would not be here today. I was not hired to buckle, I was hired to protect the Town and I will continue to do so. I can always say that I made a place better than it was when I first got there. And Ruthi: stay your ground whenever you have to. Pray and get your support system. I just pray when you come to a meeting, be prepared. Thank you so much. As I move on, I move with the same thought in mind: to help this community and those likes ours. To be the voice for the voiceless.

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – (4)

Jeffery Ellis – Mr. Ellis began by thanking Council and staff for the work on his property. He discussed the temporary permit, which was approved for his fence, but the extension of the permit is in threat of being denied because the current codes do not support it.

Joyce Irby – Thank you to the staff, police department, Cliff Shepard, Tara Salmieri, and the geniuses—Mr. Daniels and Mayor Gardner. Ms. Irby spoke on the Mayor’s tough decision to select Theo Washington as Vice Mayor. She also commented on her journey to respecting the Mayor and her decisions. She then gave advice to the Mayor elect, Ruthi Critton. Ms. Irby thanked Councilwoman Randolph for her caring and told Councilmen Washington that the Council is her people. She ended her comments by thanking everyone for being part of the community.

Ryan Novak – I would like to congratulate the incoming candidates. To Council member Washington, thank you for your years of service. To Council member Randolph, thank you for your dedication, commitment and service to this Town. When I first moved in, a member of the community dropped off a welcome basket. Mayor Gardner, thank you for that gift and your service. I believe that you created a foundation that is strong which will allow Eatonville to thrive.

Payton Gardner – Dear mommy, from the moment you took this seat expectations were set upon you. You remained consistent and chose truth when those were silent. You were tested on your leadership and moved forward because someone stays steady—that someone was you. You took responsibility and accountability. She did not bend and held that line when others expected you to turn away. You did not just complete a term; you clarified by holding your seat. Truth never needs to shout. And to the newly appointed Mayor (Critton), we send our blessings and know that you will do a great job.

PUBLIC HEARING:

Approval of **Second Reading** Ordinance 2026-2 Amending the Town’s Land Development Code, which Permits Existing Duplexes And Prohibit New Duplex Construction (**Planning**) – Mayor Gardner opens for public comment. The Mayor closes public comment after no participation. Mrs. King read the Preamble. **Mayor Gardner calls for motion to APPROVE Ordinance 2026-2; moved** by Councilman Mack, **second** by Councilwoman Jordan. **MOTION PASSES, 3/0.**

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA:

Mayor Gardner MOTIONS to APPROVE the Consent Agenda with Amendments; moved by Councilman Mack, **second** by Councilwoman Jordan. **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES. Comments:** Mayor Gardner read the date of the meeting minutes for approval (December 22, 2025; December 30, 2025; January 6, 2026; January 14, 2026; and March 3, 2026). Item #3 (Approval of Resolution 2026-11) was moved to NEW BUSINESS.

INAUGURATION OF MAYOR/OATH OF OFFICE OF ELECTED OFFICIALS:

The Inauguration began with the Oath of Office for Elected Officials. The Clerk called LaDwyana Jordan to the podium who recited the Oath of Office led by LaVonda Wilder. Angela Thomas was then called to the podium and recited the Oath of Office led by Pastor Critton. The final Oath of Office was for the newly elected Mayor, Ruth “Ruthi” Critton, who recited the oath led by her father, Pastor Critton.

After her swearing in, Mayor Critton made a brief speech: Today is a humbling moment for me. Eatonville is not just where I live; it is where my roots live. I am proud to be a fifth-generation resident of this historic Town and even more proud to be raising my children right here in Eatonville. It means I carry the swords, sacrifices, and hopes of those who built this Town. Their legacy reminds me that leadership is not about position. It is about responsibility to the people and the future of our community; the same community that has shaped my life, values, and commitment to service. Standing here tonight, no longest as mayor-elect, but as mayor, I am reminded that the same Eatonville that was built generations ago is still alive in the people of this community today. One where ownership determines independence and incorporation. One where the ability to work allows you to support your family. One where the value of education was held in high esteem. One where the ability to live a well-balanced life contributed to the overall health of this Town. A vision that will carry us forward. I would like to thank the residents and voters—thank you for showing up. I am grateful for the trust you have placed in me, and I am committed to serving the residents of this Town with fairness, transparency, and dedication. Successful administrations are not powered just by ideas, but by people who believe in those ideas enough to stand behind them. Your support helped us share a vision for Eatonville’s future, and I am deeply grateful. Thank you to my campaign team. Each of you gave your time, energy, and your belief and a few dollars to something bigger than one person. The generations before us have built this Town with courage, determination, and a belief in what Eatonville could be. It is now our responsibility to protect that legacy, constructing our community, and prepare this Town for the generations who come after us. My commitment is simple: to lead with integrity, transparency, and respect for the people who call Eatonville home. My door will always be open because I fundamentally believe that leadership requires listening. The future of Eatonville will not be built by one mayor or one council, but by collaboration between all of us. It happens when a community decides to work together. My call to action is simple: stay engaged, attend the meetings, join Boards, speak up, hold us accountable, and show up! Eatonville’s best days are not behind us; they are in front of us and together we will honor our past and build our future.

NEW BUSINESS:

Approval of Resolution 2026-11 Appointment of One (1) Board Member To The Planning and Zoning Board (Clerk Office) – Mayor Critton MOVES to Appoint Tynisha Brooks to the first vacancy on the Planning and Zoning Board; moved by Councilman Mack, **second** by Councilwoman Thomas. **MOTION PASSES.**

Councilman Mack MOTIONS to Appoint Lisa Grant to the second vacancy on the Planning and Zoning Board; moved by Councilman Mack, **second** by Councilwoman Jordan. **MOTION PASSES.**

Mayor Critton MOTIONS to Add Jeffery Pearsall and Trevor Cobb as Alternates to the Planning and Zoning Board; moved by Councilwoman Thomas, **second** by Councilman Mack. **MOTION PASSES.**

Approval of Resolution 2026-12 Appointments of Councilmembers to the Community Redevelopment Agency Following the March 7, 2026, General Election (Clerk Office) – The Clerk read the Preamble. Town Clerk – There are two applications for the CRA. Mayor Critton asked if any Council members would like to table until the next Council meeting. The Council agreed. **Mayor Critton MOTIONS to TABLE** the Approval of Resolution 2026-12; **moved** by Councilman Mack, **second** by Councilwoman Thomas. **MOTION PASSES.**

Approval of Resolution 2026-15 Changing The Signature Requirements For Checks Issued By The Town As A Result Of The March 7, 2026, General Election (Clerk Office) – The Clerk read the Preamble. **Mayor Critton MOTIONS to APPROVE** Resolution 2026-16; **moved** by Councilwoman Thomas, **second** by Councilman Mack. **MOTION PASSES.**

As for the Walk-on item (Appointing individual to the CRA Board), Mayor Critton stated that she did not want to bring it to the floor and would like to wait until the next meeting; with the consensus of the town council. .

REPORTS:

Chief Administrative Officer - Marlin Daniels – Mr. Daniels began by stating that he is working on policies and procedures with staff. He addressed the budget. Mr. Daniels is also working with Public Works on making the Town more aesthetically pleasing. They made some progress and took out the pottery plants. The Town is also in the middle of their audit and will get it back at the end of April. He clarified that they are going into a single audit due to the amount of grants the Town has received. Council members will begin to receive calls from the Executive Assistant. They should each have their Town-owned electronics. If there are any questions, he encourages Council to reach out to his office.

Town Clerk – Veronica King – Congratulations to the new members of Council. Moving forward, the packet will be emailed and provided physically upon request. There is a manual for elected officials included in tonight's packet.

Town Attorney - Cliff Shepard – Attorney Shepard notified Council that the property tax reform did not make it through the Florida legislator. He believes that they will take it up in a special session. He and his staff will keep an eye on developments. Attorney Shepard also thanked the people he had the opportunity to serve with and allowed him to serve: Councilwoman Randolph, Councilman Washington, and former Mayor Gardner.

TOWN COUNCIL REPORT/DISCUSSION ITEMS -

Councilman Tarus Mack – The Councilman began his report by congratulating the newly elected members of the Town Council. He stated that they need to move forward with doing things for the benefit of the Town. He feels good about everything that has taken place, especially about the people who are sitting on Council. He thanked the former Vice Mayor and Councilwoman Randolph. He also thanked the staff. Finally, he asked Attorney Shepard if there were any pending lawsuits against the Town? Attorney Shepard – There has been a claim, but it is not a lawsuit.

Councilwoman LaDwyana Jordan – The Councilwoman started by thanking the Town and its residents for coming out. She stated that the votes to get her elected was an amazing feeling. We are the people of the historic Town of Eatonville. Thank you to Vice Mayor Washington and Councilwoman Randolph. She ended her report by stating that she looked forward to serving the community with all her heart.

Councilwoman Angela Thomas – The Councilwoman began by stating that her resolution is about love. If we love Eatonville as much as we do, we need to turn our words in action. The oath that I took tonight, I swear to do what is best for the Town of Eatonville. Thank you to former Councilman Washington and Councilwoman Randolph. Also, thank you to the staff. She ended her report by requesting that prayer was brought back to the Council meetings.

MAYOR’S REPORT - Mayor Ruthi Critton – Mayor Critton asked Mr. Daniels for suggestions on the appointment of seat #5. Mr. Daniels – We are going to move that to the first Council meeting in April. Attorney Shepard will be available. Town Clerk – The appointment will need to happen 30 days after the resignation, which was on March 16, 2026. Mr. Daniels – If you cannot come to a consensus, there will need to be a special election which will cost \$11,000. Mayor Critton continues her report by speaking on the importance of decision making. She ends by stating that she promises to do her best for Eatonville.

ADJOURNMENT Mayor Critton Motions for Adjournment of Meeting; **moved** by Councilman Mack; **second** by Councilwoman Thomas; **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES. Meeting Adjourned at 8:50pm.**

HANDOUTS: Tourism Master Plan Feasibility Study, HUB Sub-recipient Executive Summary, HUD Compliance Matrix

Respectfully Submitted by: Marissa Bellenger

ATTEST

Signed by:
Veronica King
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Veronica L King, Town Clerk

APPROVED
Signed by:
Ruthi Critton
B7C21BB6095E4AA...
Ruthi Critton, Mayor