



HISTORIC TOWN OF EATONVILLE, FLORIDA SPECIAL COUNCIL MEETING

MEETING MINUTES

Friday, April 24, 2026, at 6:30 PM

Town Hall – 307 E. Kennedy Blvd.

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 Critton called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. and a quorum was established by Ms. Bellenger.

PRESENT: (5), Councilman Tarus Mack, Councilwoman Wanda Randolph, Councilwoman LaDwyana Jordan, Vice Mayor Angela Thomas, Mayor Ruthi Critton

STAFF: (5) Marlin Daniels, **Chief Administrator Officer;** Marissa Bellenger, **Records Coordinator;** Trinetta Fisher, **Interim Town Attorney;** Greg Jackson (via Zoom), **CRA Attorney;** Lieutenant Lampkin, **EPD**

CITIZEN PARTICIPATION – (4)

Michelle Fort – The agenda tonight is important. Attorney Jackson is a personal injury attorney. Municipal law is a lot. They help a city operate according to the Florida Statutes. The CRA has not been working properly. We need someone with experience and knowledge of land-use and zoning laws. Attorney Jackson is not even qualified to do CRA business. Let Shepard be the interim for 30 days. We do not need to renew Jackson's CRA attorney contract. We are going to hold you [Council] accountable for your decisions. To Councilwoman Randolph, I would not consider running again.

Angela Johnson – Ms. Johnson stated that she is concerned about hiring the TOECRA attorney. She asked that Council provide a list of municipalities who have the same attorney for both town and CRA side. She stated that Attorney Jackson is already working against the Town's interest due to the lawsuit. The attorney for the Town should be aligned with the Town's best interest. She referenced Florida Bar 4-1.7. She also stated that there was a TOECRA meeting on April 17th, but the court ruling from a day prior was not mentioned to the Board. There needs to be clear language in separation of duties if Jackson was the Town and TOECRA attorney. She disagree with hiring him and encouraged the Council to hire an independent counsel. If Jackson were hired, he would need to resign as TOECRA attorney.

Joyce Irby – We do not like the truth and do not care about laws. Blaming Attorney Shepard is not professional. A lawsuit will have to come from the Town about a conflict of interest (with Attorney Jackson). It is about what Anthony Grant wants, not the Town.

Anthony Grant – Mr. Grant addressed comments made by Joyce Irby. He continued by stating it is not a conflict of interest to have the same attorney for the Town and CRA. The Council needs an interim attorney no matter what. Every meeting people come up here and say the same thing. Legal is legal and I could care less about who you choose. To listen to people who do not understand would be irresponsible.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION/DECISIONS:

Legal Counsel for the Town of Eatonville – Mayor Critton began discussion by addressing the amended agenda with an added resolution. She then introduced Attorney Trinetta Fisher, the emergency hire for legal counsel. She stated that a number of things are happening within the Town which requires legal counsel. Tonight, we should consider the litigation of which Attorney Shepard is still the assigned attorney. We should be mindful of the litigation deadline set for next week. We need to establish the direction we would like to go in and

discuss the attorney who should be permanent. Councilman Mack stated that hiring an attorney is up to the Council. Mayor Critton stated that the Council decides who is the permanent attorney and referenced the Town's personnel policy manual. Councilman Mack – I want to make sure we have someone who knows Town business, which is Attorney Jackson. She [Attorney Fisher] is sitting here without the consent of Council. Mayor Critton reiterated that Attorney Fisher is an emergency hire. Councilman Mack responded that he did not see the e-mail about the emergency interim hire. He continued by stating that it is disrespectful to have someone he does not know as the interim attorney. Attorney Shepard was not taking care of the business at hand. Attorney Jackson will be temporary while we find an experienced attorney. Mayor Critton – Does he know the inter-department business of the Town? I spoke with him and he does not know everything. Attorney Fisher addressed Councilman Mack by stating that she does have experience. She asked that he speak with facts and not feelings. Councilman Mack responded that his concern is that she may not know Town business. Mayor Critton – I acknowledge your concerns. I still would like to work together to pick a permanent attorney and we can begin discussion now. Vice Mayor Thomas commented on the mayor's powers and stated that it is in the Town policies. As for Attorney Shepard, he is qualified and the attorney for the FRA (all Community Redevelopment Agencies in the state). Councilwoman Randolph – I have been on the Council for 4 years with 40 years of government experience. She addressed the agenda item to hire Attorney Jackson and stated that the Town charter supersedes everything. Mayor Critton – The charter references hiring a permanent Town attorney. She reiterated her reasoning for the emergency hire. Councilwoman Randolph – How long would the emergency hire last? Mayor Critton referenced the policy and stated that the hire would only be during the period of emergency or 6 months. We do not want this to last 6 months as the Council is ready to move forward. We can decide a permanent attorney tonight. Councilwoman Randolph – I still believe we should follow the charter. I would like to hire an interim so I have time to decide a permanent attorney. Jackson's absence tonight may be an issue since we are voting on him as interim. Mayor Critton agreed. Councilwoman Jordan – Thank you Mayor Critton for exercising your authority for an emergency hire. Thank you, Attorney Fisher. I would like to clear up pending litigation. Would Attorney Fisher be on the case? Mayor Critton – Attorney Shepard is. Do we want to stick with him or replace him? We also need to determine a litigation strategy. To do nothing would be adverse to the Town. Attorney Fisher – I have no problem litigating. The Council asked Attorney Fisher to elaborate on her experience and qualifications. Attorney Fisher stated that she has 21 years of experience and is a FAMU graduate. She has professional experience in land-use, conflicts, personal injury, and wills/probate. She learned of the current lawsuit through Mayor Critton. Mayor Critton explained that Attorney Shepard and Fisher could work together on the lawsuit. Councilman Mack – I do not want Shepard on the case, so we can put Attorney Fisher on it. Marlin Daniels, CAO suggested allowing Attorney Fisher and Shepard to work together and respond to the lawsuit. **Councilwoman Randolph MOTIONS to hire Attorney Fisher for lawsuit instead of Attorney Shepard, while allowing him to transition Fisher. Comments: The Council discussed keeping or removing Attorney Shepard. Councilwoman Randolph RESCINDED her motion due to Attorney Fisher not being familiar with the details of lawsuits. Attorney Jackson joined the meeting by Zoom. Attorney Jackson clarified the case and defended his litigation experience. The Council resumed discussion on the lawsuit and the direction moving forward. Mr. Daniels stated that the Council needed to decide on Shepard's continuation on the lawsuit and their response to the CRA's resolution. Mayor Critton MOTIONS to allow Attorney Shepard and Fisher respond to the lawsuit; moved by Vice Mayor Thomas, second by Councilwoman Jordan. AYE: Mayor Critton, Vice Mayor Thomas, Councilwoman Randolph, Councilwoman Jordan. NAY: Councilman Mack. MOTION PASSES, 4/1.**

Mayor Critton MOTIONS for Attorney Shepard and Fisher to work together to respond to the CRA Resolution; moved by Vice Mayor Thomas, second by Councilwoman Jordan. AYE: Mayor Critton, Vice Mayor Thomas, Councilwoman Randolph, Councilwoman Jordan. NAY: Councilman Mack. MOTION PASSES, 4/1.

Approval of Resolution 2026-28 Hiring Greg Jackson As The Interim General Town Attorney for the Town of Eatonville – Councilwoman Jordan MOTIONS to TABLE until litigation and resolution is resolved:

moved by Vice Mayor Thomas. **MOTION DIES for lack of second.** **Comments:** Councilwoman Randolph noted that there are no changes in the resolution and identified a typo. Councilwoman Jordan stated that the litigation and resolution should be cleared up first. Attorney Jackson stated that the conflict is resolved since Attorney Shepard and Fisher are on the lawsuit. Mayor Critton – There is no need for an interim and this proposed resolution failed three days ago. There is no position to fill due to the emergency hire. We should be looking into a permanent attorney. Councilwoman Jordan suggested that the Council discuss Attorney Jackson as the permanent counsel. Mr. Daniels explained the protocol and processes of hiring a permanent attorney with RFQs and RFPs. Mayor Critton – The Request for Proposals would come to the Council. Mr. Daniels continued explaining the Request for Qualifications process. He suggested that the Council start by coming up with questions for potential candidates to answer. RFQs need to be sent out by May 1st and RFPs need to stay out for a minimum of 30 days.

Mayor Critton MOTIONS to TABLE Resolution 2026-28; moved by Councilwoman Randolph, **second** by Vice Mayor Thomas. **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES.**

REPORTS:

TOWN COUNCIL REPORT/DISCUSSION ITEMS –

Councilman Tarus Mack – Councilman Mack addressed recent actions of the CAO. Mr. Daniels handed out various documents including a doctor’s note and e-mail exchanges with Councilman Mack. Mayor Critton – Your concerns were received and addressed. The documentation of the CAO’s response was just handed out to the Council. (Vice Mayor Thomas exited the meeting due to an emergency) Councilman Mack – I appreciate that. I told Mr. Daniels that I had all the confidence in the world for him until he showed me otherwise. I am going to hold you accountable, just like you are holding me accountable. If you do not like what you see, vote me out. Mr. Daniels – I will hold my comments and make a public comment in an e-mail.

Councilwoman Wanda Randolph – No report.

Councilwoman LaDwyana Jordan – Thank you all for coming out to the meeting tonight. We are going to get it right. Thank you, Attorney Fisher. I appreciate everyone who is up here on the diocese.

Vice Mayor Angela Thomas – No report.


MAYOR’S REPORT - Mayor Ruthi Critton – Vice Mayor Thomas’ family is dealing with something and she did let me know that she had to leave by 8 o’clock. Thank you, Attorney Jackson, for joining us tonight. Thank you, Attorney Fisher, for stepping in at the last minute and accompanying us through this journey. We will work together. I will not step outside my authority. Any decisions that I make, I do with an understanding that I am responsible for those decisions and that they have a direct impact on the community. I will not be irresponsible with my decision making.

ADJOURNMENT Mayor Critton Motions for Adjournment of Meeting; **moved** by Councilman Mack, **second** by Councilwoman Randolph; **AYE: ALL, MOTION PASSES. Meeting Adjourned at 8:27pm.**

HANDOUTS: Section 500 of Town Personnel Policy; Florida Statutes Chapter 164; Marlin Daniels and Councilman Mack E-mail Correspondence

Respectfully Submitted by: Marissa Bellenger

ATTEST



Veronica L King, Town Clerk

APPROVED



Ruthi Critton, Mayor