



MINUTES

City Commission Workshop

APPROVED 9/18/2025

5:45 PM – Thursday, September 04, 2025 – City Hall

Call to Order: 5:45 p.m.

Acknowledgement of Quorum and Proper Notice

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

1. Workshop Item: Presentation by Dr. Richard Levey

Dr. Richard Levey presented background information on his company, Levey Consulting, and noted that his firm deals with public policy and economic development implementation. He reviewed his public sector experience, education and various projects he has done within Lake County and other areas. He cited his work with other agencies to assist in getting a consensus. He noted he has watched several of their meetings.

The Commission commented on him being a single proprietor with Dr. Levey explaining he does subcontract depending on the engagement. In full disclosure, he noted he did respond to the City's RFP for Economic Development Consultant.

Mayor Hawkins asked Dr. Levey's opinion on whether or not it will be possible to get a consensus with the current Commission.

Dr. Levey responded that anything is possible and that, when you are not on the same page, a consensus can still be possible. He explained his process for listening and identifying those areas where there already may be consensus and then address the differences and identify common ground.

The Commission asked how that is different than the master plan that has already been done with Dr. Levey stating that he does not see a cohesive vision in the City's master plan but instead a lot of pieces and parts. He emphasized that he does not see a collective big idea of what the City is and where it is going. He asked why is Eustis different than the other cities they are competing with for economic activity.

Commissioner Ashcraft stated his thought that the difficulty is the implementation of where we should go after the development of the plan. He cited the need to have an objective, independent look by someone like Dr. Levey. He asked if Dr. Levey would be comfortable doing that.

Dr. Levey stated he has done that, but they already have other people doing pieces of that and he would want to make sure they don't have overlap and duplication. He added that, if there are differences in what everyone thinks the end goal should be and how to get there, it would probably serve them well to get that resolved. He stated they may come up with some enhancements to the plan and develop a more clear and concise vision.

Commissioner Lee stated that the Commissioners need to get their act together as a Commission and until they do that they cannot adjust the master plan. She asked if he sees any hope for them.

Dr. Levey responded that is up to them. If they come to the process with an open mind and are willing to listen to each other, respond, provide input and look for consensus building, anything is possible.

Commissioner Lee commented they need someone to help them get there and help them create that vision. She asked if that is part of what he does.

Dr. Levey responded affirmatively and stated that their strategic plan is more than that as it contains a lot of detail. He stated that after looking at the plan and observing some of their meetings, they could benefit from that and find it helpful.

Commissioner Asbate clarified that Dr. Levey sees need to unify the City Commission and then move on to the next steps.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft stated that to him it is the planning and what should be done when, why and in what order. He commented on the amount of information overload they get.

Dr. Levey stated he could not tell from the master plan the total cost of everything and whether or not Eustis has the financial capacity or the internal capacity within the organization to execute the development. He highlighted the amount of infrastructure that would be the City's portion of development.

Dr. Levey highlighted the usefulness of a facilitator to assist in the process and implementation. He noted in his experience elected officials care a lot and are limited in engaging with each other outside of the public meetings. He explained he presents a composite to try and build a product to move forward which is helpful to both staff and the consultants.

Commissioner Holland expressed concern regarding cost. He noted he has worked with Dr. Levey before and is familiar with his work. He emphasized the need for the Commission to reach agreement.

Mayor Hawkins noted all of the Commissioners are passionate about the downtown and want to make sure to get it right.


Commissioner Lee expressed support for getting a cost from Dr. Levey and moving forward.

Vice Mayor Ashcraft and Commissioner Asbate expressed agreement.

CONSENSUS: It was a consensus of the Commission for staff to work out a scope of services and bring it back with a cost for Commission consideration.

2. Adjournment: 6:05 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