



MINUTES

City Commission Workshop

APPROVED 4/6/2023

4:30 PM – Thursday, February 16, 2023 – City Hall

CALL TO ORDER: 4:30 P.M.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF QUORUM AND PROPER NOTICE

PRESENT: Commissioner Willie Hawkins (joined meeting at 4:36 p.m.), Vice Mayor Emily Lee, Commissioner Gary Ashcraft, Commissioner Nan Cobb and Mayor Michael Holland

1. **WORKSHOP ITEM WITH DISCUSSION, PUBLIC INPUT AND DIRECTION: ORGANIZATIONAL GRANTS**

Presentations Order

Amazing Race for Charity

Bay Street Players

LifeStream (Open Door)

United Way of Lake & Sumter

Lake Cares Food Pantry, Inc.

Paws Therapy Dogs, Inc.

Trout Lake Nature Center

Worth It Outreach & Support

Mike Sheppard, Finance Director, introduced the representatives for the various grant applicants.

Robin Richter, Volunteer and Board Member for the Amazing Race for Charity, noted they have donated over \$232,000 to date to local charities.

Bernie Potter, Treasurer for the Board of the Bay Street Players (BSP), commented on the impact the Bay Street Players and the State Theater has had on the downtown. He noted it is in its 49th year and is operating in a 100-year-old theater. He stated that in 2022 they brought 14,000 people into Eustis with over 4,000 of them being new patrons. He added that they run on a very small staff which consists mostly of volunteers. He reported they have \$16,000 per month operating costs whether there is a show running or not. He expressed appreciation for the support they have received from the City.

Marie Alberti addressed the Commission regarding the BSP's Young People's Theatre (YPT). She stated that it is one of the longest running children's theater programs in the country. She stated they have a scholarship program for children who cannot afford the program. She reviewed the various programs for varying ages as well as their summer camps.

Christopher McCullom, owner of Chris's Place, commented on the fundamental value of Bay Street Players. He stated that YPT helps develop kids and promote confidence. He cited a previous program where they used to bring theater to the local schools. He expressed support for their grant application.

Commissioner Hawkins entered the meeting at 4:36 p.m.

Commissioner Ashcraft asked about challenges with the maintenance of the building with Mr. Potter citing issues with the air conditioning and roofing.

Commissioner Hawkins complimented the theater on allowing outside groups to possibly use the theater.

Debbie Flaherty, Program Supervisor for Lifestream's Open Door facility, reviewed the various programs the facility offers for the homeless and cited some of their partnerships. She explained they have case managers on site to assist those with mental health issues. She cited the need for a homeless shelter in Lake County and expressed thanks for the City's support.

Commissioner Cobb asked about how many families are served through Open Door.

Ms. Flaherty responded that they try to help with temporary hotel housing and direct them to the Lake County Housing Authority for assistance.

Commissioner Hawkins asked about help for homeless women with Ms. Flaherty responding that Mid Florida may be helpful for them. She indicated that if there is domestic violence then The Haven may be helpful. She noted that their facility is only open during the day, Monday through Friday.

B.E. Thompson, Lifestream, noted that the police and fire departments have sometimes reached out to him at night for assistance and he has been able to get them into a hotel for the night.

Vice Mayor Lee asked if they are having people from other cities requesting assistance with Ms. Flaherty confirming that and noted there are people coming from other states that may stop for assistance but then move on.

Discussion was held regarding various places the homeless people tend to stay at night and those people that are able to move on to the next level.

Commissioner Hawkins expressed appreciation for Open Door and noted he would like to get additional information from them.

Ms. Flaherty invited the Commission to see the facility and find out what they do. She commented on their needs and those other organizations that provide them support.

Nishika Stafford, United Way of Lake and Sumter County Family Stability Director, addressed the Commission on behalf of the United Way. She introduced Veronica Whetro, Grant Specialist, and Helen Sneed, Interim CEO. She reviewed their various programs aimed at preventing homelessness and provided statistics regarding their assistance to the Eustis community. She commented on the instances that cause families to become homeless. She emphasized the need to continue helping families despite the loss of the Covid related funds. She thanked the Commission for consideration of their application and cited their staff's professional backgrounds.

Commissioner Hawkins asked how much they receive in grants per year with Ms. Whetro responding they probably received just over \$1 million during the last year.

Ms. Stafford confirmed they serve all of Lake and Sumter counties.

Commissioner Hawkins confirmed they also refer clients to Lake Community Action Agency with Ms. Stafford explaining they refer clients to each other.

Mr. Carrino asked for a recess to deal with technical difficulties at 4:57 p.m. The meeting resumed at 4:58 p.m.

Kelsey Gonzalez, Lake Cares Food Pantry, reported they provided 1.2 million pounds of food throughout Lake County in the previous year serving about 3200 households representing 9300 people. She explained they serve 150-200 cars per distribution. She indicated that approximately 60% of the residents from Eustis go to their Mount Dora location. She commented on other organizations they partner with and noted they went to Habitat for Humanity homes to fill their pantries. She thanked the City's Fire Department for their assistance with the third annual food drive.

Mayor Holland announced the City is asking people to bring non-perishable food to all of the Georgefest concerts to be passed on to Lake Cares.

Robin Richter, PAWS therapy dogs, explained their mission is to provide members and their dogs with the opportunities to help others by providing affection, comfort and support to people of all ages. She stated they also provide humane education teaching children and adults animal safety and responsible pet ownership as well as encourage pet adoptions from humane societies or rescue groups. She cited statistics of their group noting they are all volunteer. She reviewed some of their programming and stated their primary program they ask for help with is their Christmas program. She provided an overview of the Christmas program stating the last year they distributed 575 bags. She noted the various locations they visit and stated they do approximately 65 visits per month.

Joanne Rittenhouse reported on various locations they have visited and noted they are going to be going back into the high school. She commented on the benefit to the people in the assisted living facilities.

Eileen Tramontana, Trout Lake Nature Center, explained they are a 230 acre preserve which is primarily a wetlands. She noted that a portion of their land includes a conservation easement with the City of Eustis. She stated they are totally a donation and fee based non-profit. She reviewed the history of the Center and their mission. She indicated they have 2.5 staff members with all of the rest being volunteers. She noted the drop in volunteer hours due to Covid. She indicated they are open to the public six days a week and on Mondays they perform trail maintenance and other maintenance. She cited their statistics regarding attendance including school field trips. She commented on their on-site programs and noted that during the pandemic they brought all of their programs outdoors. She stated that resulted in an increase in their attendance at those programs from 19,000 to 25,000. She provided an overview of a number of their programs that help connect nature with health and promote early nature connections with children. She cited a number of organizations she participates in and a number of upcoming programs. She commented on how they participate in the City's events and how they contribute back to the community.

Ms. Tramontana asked about information she had received regarding a Nature and Conservation Day and asked that they be included with Mr. Carrino directing her to contact the Events and Tourism staff. She noted that part of their application includes some in-kind services they are requesting.

Mr. Carrino noted that the event Worth It is requesting for had already occurred.

Danielle Graham, Executive Director and Founder of Worth It, explained their organization is for suicide outreach and support. She provided copies of a pamphlet with various outreach resources. She provided an overview of suicide statistics. She indicated that in Eustis there is an average of four people each year who takes their own life. She commented on the reasons why people may feel hopeless stating there are always means of trying to prevent suicide. She explained their mission is to compile resources, ask a client what they are looking for and explain the different types of services they may utilize to get help. She provided an overview of their event, Play for a Day, the mental health resource fair. She commented on how other organizations may not know what all resources are available within the community.

Commissioner Hawkins asked how many people in Lake County and Eustis have they counseled.

Ms. Graham indicated she doesn't have a definite number but the last event had approximately 125 people register at the last event. She explained they follow-up with phone calls to see if further support is needed.

Mayor Holland explained that there is a recommended grant awards amount that a committee has put together. He asked if the Commission wants to place that on the next Commission meeting for consideration.

CONSENSUS: It was a consensus of the Commission for staff to place the grant awards on the next regular Commission meeting as recommended by the Committee.

2. ADJOURNMENT: 5:28 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



MICHAEL L. HOLLAND
Mayor/Commissioner