**AGENDA MINUTES**
**CITY COMMISSION MEETING**
**CITY HALL, 501 W MEADOW STREET**
**MONDAY, MAY 8, 2023 5:00 PM**

## 1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg Commission held a workshop meeting on Monday, May 8, 2023, at Leesburg City Hall. Mayor Burry called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Allyson Berry
Commissioner Jay Connell
Commissioner Mike Pederson
Commissioner Alan Reisman
Mayor Jimmy Burry

Also present were City Manager (CM) Al Minner, City Clerk (CC) J. Andi Purvis, City Attorney (CA) Grant Watson, the news media, and others.

### INVOCATION

Mayor Burry gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE TO THE FLAG OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## 2. PRESENTATION:

### A. Center for the Arts Update

Mayor Burry asked the Center for the Arts board members to provide their presentation.

Amanda McLea, president of the Leesburg Center for the Arts, thanked the commission and staff for their time. They appreciate the city's continued support for the center. She asked the board of director members and the executive director to introduce themselves. **Ken Naigus**, said he was brand new to the board and is from Clermont. **Toni Stokes**, said she has been on the board for three years. **Richard Colvin** said he was the new executive director. **Joshua Floyd**, vice president, said he has been on the board a little over a year. **Dina Simpson**, said she has been a board member since 2019.

Mr. Richard Colvin thanked the commissioners for having them tonight. They are very mindful of the city's support. It is only because of the city's generosity that the building they occupy for the center is able to survive. He came to Leesburg for two reasons. First, he has an affection for the center and he was involved with some of the previous administrations. He has an affection for the art community in

Leesburg. He is determined that culture does matter. He believes art can transform lives and that is true of all art. Their specialty is visual art, but they will collaborate with all different arts and incorporate them into their educational mission and practice. He has been very fortunate as an artist and as a museum professional for over forty years to have a series of mentors. It is his hope to continue here in Leesburg and to give back some small part of what has been given to him.

Ms. McLea wanted to provide an update and share lessons that they learned over the last few months. They have taken steps to ensure that the center is operating with integrity, honesty, and transparency. They intend to move forward with that as their forefront for guidance to achieve success with their mission. One of the first things they did was update their financial policy. They have new procedures in place on spending limits for the executive director that do not require board approval. They have detailed what those purchases could be. It is very detailed in the specifics of the center. Therefore, any desired purchase outside of those parameters would need board approval. The board contracted with an accounting firm, Hammond, English, and Frazer Accounting, a local firm in Leesburg. There is a defined scope of work which includes a detailed process of how that accounting firm must report back with the financials to the board every month. This contract will be reviewed annually and the board will decide if they want to continue. That will be reviewed and they will look at its metrics for success. The entire board will now have access to the financial reports. There will be view-only access to bank accounts and QuickBooks online. They will be able to see all purchases being made moving forward. Their accountant will come and report to the board in person instead of reporting to one person directly. They are currently in search for a new treasurer. They had a treasurer who stepped forward. However, she has become a general board member and her line of work is in Maitland and that prevented her from taking the treasurer role. That will now be overseen by her along with the executive director. As the board chair, she worked very closely with Sasha Velez. She is the senior financial investigator with the Department of Agriculture law enforcement. Ms. Velez reviewed their policies and suggested changes be made. They took those suggestions and incorporated them into their new practice. She gained some knowledge of previous late filings and a history of improper documentation for the center. That was before they started over viewing the role that caused great problems in the past. They have now repaired that relationship. Ms. Velez offered ongoing assistance moving forward. She was happy to report that they are now in good standing with the Department of Agriculture. They will work together with the Department of Agriculture and it is very imperative to their status as a non-profit organization in Florida. Their Sunbiz account is being updated. Danielle Parker, who was the previous president of the board, recently resigned. So, they are in the process of updating all the officers' names so they are listed accurately. With the exception of adding Mr. Colvin, since he is the new executive director. She asked that Joshua Floyd address the changes to their bylaws.

Joshua Floyd, vice president, stated they took a comprehensive look at the bylaws near the end of last year. The bylaws have only been updated once since 1988, the inception of the bylaws. They went line by line through a comprehensive approach and made changes. Two significant changes that are notable would be; the limited power of the executive director, and the spending limits which are reflected in the financial policy. Those two changes were enacted and reflected in the bylaws. There is more control from the board and less control for the executive director. It provides more transparency about what is being conducted by the executive director. Those two changes have made some big improvements to the bylaws. It was a big step forward for them.

Ms. McLea mentioned as they move forward with the financial updates, they will be open financial reporting to both the community and the board. That will be done on a monthly basis. They will also be open to their stakeholders, who they value and that includes the city. Her mission as the president of the board going forward will be to keep the city updated financially and operationally with what is happening at the center. Some know her personally but she has been in Leesburg for over twenty years. She works at

Lake Medical Imaging. That is her career. She wanted to provide an opportunity for Dina Simpson, secretary of the board, to speak about their future because, as a business owner in this community, she has a vested interest along with great vision.

Dina Simpson, secretary of the board, stated there is no doubt that trust has been shaken. They recognize that rebuilding this trust is tremendously important to everyone. They plan to move forward with great integrity, to be reminded constantly of the meaning of integrity, the quality of being honest and having a strong moral uprightness. That is huge because she is right on Main Street every single day with the community and she has owned a business for six years. That is big. As Ms. McLea said they will provide complete open financial reporting to their board and stakeholders. They will continue to strengthen their board with professional development, including succession training. This was very important to her because, as a previous board member, no one ever taught her about being on a board. She was always in fear of taking an actual board position because no one ever taught her how. This is really important to all of them. There will be a succession, so that way, when someone drops off the board it is not anybody and everybody looking to pick up the pieces, that person will be trained in that position. A big thing they will do is choose the hard right instead of taking the easy wrong. That is something they have to do as members of the community. They need to build this community together with the city. They will stay focused on their missions. Their mission statement is to provide art education, awareness and opportunities for artists, creatives and dabblers in the North Lake County area. To enrich and inspire the community with art and culture and be the place for local artists, creatives and dabblers to gather, create and collaborate. They will focus on programming while working within their financial ability. They will stay involved in the community through community events. Support city leaders and their missions while collaborating with others to promote all art, not just visual art. She speaks for all of them when she says they are passionate about their future. She knows they have partnerships that bring enrichment to the City of Leesburg and art does transform lives.

Ms. McLea stated that concluded their presentation.

**3. ARTS BOARD / COMMISSION Q & A**

**Mayor Burry** asked about their partnership with the Department of Agriculture. In the letter he noticed the expiration date being June 9, 2023. That is only a month away. **Ms. McLea** answered there would be when they do their annual review. Every June they are required to renew their license and it was delinquent in October. When it was filed in November, it was filed incorrectly, so they had to make changes and refile it. In June they will need to renew it for the upcoming year. **Mayor Burry** wanted to know if they had already sent the necessary information for the review. **Ms. McLea** responded yes. **Mayor Burry** questioned if they had their EIN, federal tax determination, and if that was all squared away. **Mc. McLea** responded yes. **Mayor Burry** wanted to ensure their Florida tax exemption was current. **Ms. McLea** answered it was current. **Mayor Burry** commented that he heard they were updating their information on Sunbiz. **Ms. McLea** responded that Sunbiz is being updated from what they had last year. It still shows Danielle Parker as the president of the board and she is no longer the one. They also need to add Ken Naigus to Sunbiz. The paperwork has been completed, they are just waiting for it to clear the system. She checked today and it has not been updated yet. They updated that information late last week.

**Mayor Burry** stated he supports the arts, he is for the arts. He was not there to make any decisions or promises. He would need to see the completed investigation report because right now the only thing he has to go off of is the affidavit from the probable cause, which does not look good. He does not want to pass judgment based solely on that, so he would need to see the outcome from the Department of Agriculture. **Ms. McLea** said she spoke with Ms. Velez about that. She asked her to provide that information to both the city and them. That should come from that office soon.

**Commissioner Reisman** inquired if the investigation was completed. **Mayor Burry** replied that he had not seen anything. That was why he asked. **Commissioner Reisman** asked the city manager if he had received any updates. **CM Minner** answered no, he assumed it was completed. However, the Department of Agriculture handed it over to the Sheriffs Office because that was when charges were filed. **Ms. McLea** stated she knew Detective Neiman of the Lake County Sheriff's Office and Mrs. Velez was in contact. He disseminated the case to her and verbally they were fine with what had happened. She asked her to put that in writing to the commission.
**Commissioner Reisman** commented that he hates what happened to the art center because they became a poster child. He sits on another board and they learned a lot from this investigation. They changed a lot on the chamber board and so did the partnership board. They updated a lot of things after learning what happened to the Center for the Arts. If anything, this was a big learning lesson for everyone. With all the procedures and policies and leadership changes, he would be okay with moving forward with the civic funding. With the next civic funding, he will present something about how they handle civic funding in the budget. **Commissioner Pederson** remarked that he is a supporter. He was on the Leesburg Partnership board when the Center for the Arts was created. They voted to give them seed money and that started with Kathy Cook. He is a supporter and he is sorry about what happened. His position is that we do not penalize a 20-plus-year organization over one individual. They have his support moving forward.
**Commissioner Berry** mentioned that she supports this. She wanted to know if they have any other steps in place to share their plans so the commission knows what they are doing going forward. **Ms. McLea** answered it was like stopping the dumpster fire when this happened. They were focused on getting the financials under control. Obviously, the professional development side is very important because they need to train the board to ensure a strong board. They withdrew from several events over the past year due to cost outlays. **Ms. Simpson** mentioned that they have to stay within the budget and that is where they landed. Their desire is to reinvent the Art Festival and bring it back to Leesburg. They felt that was a crucial thing for the community. Over the weekend, on Friday night, they had an art exhibit opening and she had the pleasure of meeting Simone Richardson from Artists with a Purpose. She has huge visions and they have lunch scheduled. They want to collaborate with the arts, Ms. McLea sits on the Rotary Club as well as Sunrise. Dustin Levine also serves on the Rotary Club. He has performing arts at his purview. They want to collaborate with those arts and bring great things to Leesburg. They want to continue their mission and they are thankful for the involvement from city leadership.
**Commissioner Pederson** wanted to know if they were currently operating. He knows they are not doing many events, but are they operating in some capacity? **Ms. McLea** replied yes. She had to give all the glory to Mr. Colvin because he has done a fantastic job with their programming.

Richard Colvin stated the art with youth program has increased dramatically. They have twelve or thirteen participants on a weekly basis. They are continuing with programming for both children and adults, along with exhibitions for the public to view. They are trying to rebuild relationships. He knows Kathy Cook and when he worked in Eustis a few years back she came in and explained how everything goes. He also worked with Amy Painter. His goal is to repair the bridges and get back to a fully functioning organization. They would like to serve the community. **Ms. McLea** remarked that their paid membership is up, so financially they are stabilizing. **Commissioner Pederson** said he was curious about that because he had not seen specific numbers. He wanted to know if they had enough money to operate. Right now, the city plan is to go through the budget and that could take months before any money is sent in their direction. **Commissioner Reisman** pointed out that the commission held out ten thousand dollars from the last civic funding. It was ten or fifteen thousand until the commission decided it was okay to fund it. **Commissioner Pederson** commented that he supports releasing that money now. He clarified that they will go through the budget in July. It would take some time to approve new money, but he supports releasing it. **Ms. McLea** stated they intend to provide a budget to show where the civic funding monies will be spent. They will also report back to the city once that money has been spent. They will have a standard report going forward at whatever level the city requires. **Commissioner Reisman** pointed out that the money held was ten thousand six hundred and seventy dollars. **Commissioner Pederson** added that he had been a personal friend of the prior executive director. He wanted to know if she was involved in any capacity now? **Ms. McLea** replied absolutely not. **Mayor Burry** said to dovetail on Commissioner Pederson's question, we are a big supporter of the Center for the Arts and they were the victim. He wanted to know if their plan was to pursue criminal charges. **Ms. McLea** answered that the Center for the Arts is pursuing charges. **Mayor Burry** wanted to verify that this would not just go away. **Ms. McLea** said no. Her personal opinion on this is that it does not matter what the dollar amount was, even if it was a penny, if it is not yours, it is not yours. That is her take. As long as she is involved, it will be an absolute no. They will push for criminal charges. **Commissioner Pederson** remarked that things happen. He was on a board when something like this happened. It was embarrassing, but they made it right. He has been in their position and it is tough.

Commissioner Reisman made a motion to release the funds to the Center for the Arts and Commissioner Pederson seconded the motion.

Commissioner Reisman questioned if that motion was correct and if they could do that during a workshop meeting or if they needed to wait and do it during the regular meeting. **CM Minner** answered it needed to be done during the commission meeting. **Commissioner Reisman** stated he would bring it up during that meeting. **Ms. McLea** thanked everyone for the time. They encouraged everyone to go check them out. They meet on the third Wednesday of the month. She would be happy to send that information to the city manager so everyone can add it to their calendars. **CM Minner** stated if they want to do it by consent they can because the number is within his spending authorities. **Commissioner Pederson** mentioned even if they poll the commission now, they can walk out of the meeting knowing they will have the money. **Commissioner Reisman** wanted to confirm that under the consent of the commission he can release the FY-23 reallocation that was held. **CM Minner** said yes. **Commissioner Pederson** said he would support that. **CM Minner** remarked that it would not need a second because, if it is the general consensus of the commission that it needs to occur, that amount is under his spending authority, so he can release it. **Mayor Burry** said he would be a no until they see the final report. **CM Minner** pointed out that after reading the tea leaves he would get the money released. **Commissioner Reisman** said he was looking forward to the continued partnership with the Leesburg Center for the Arts.

**4. ADJOURN:**

**PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES NEEDING ASSISTANCE TO PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THESE PROCEEDINGS SHOULD CONTACT THE HUMAN RESOURCES DEPARTMENT, ADA COORDINATOR, AT 728-9740, 48 HOURS IN ADVANCE OF THE MEETING.**

**F.S.S. 286.0105 "If a person decides to appeal any decision made by the Commission with respect to any matter considered at this meeting, they will need a record of the proceedings, and that for such purpose they may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record includes the testimony and evidence upon which the appeal is to be based." The City of Leesburg does not provide this verbatim record.**

The workshop adjourned at 5:23 p.m.