AGENDA MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
CITY HALL, 501 W MEADOW STREET
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 10, 2025 5:30 PM

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg Commission held a regular meeting on Monday, February 10, 2025, at Leesburg City Hall. Mayor Reisman called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. with the following members present:

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

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

INVOCATION

Mayor Reisman 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. PROCLAMATIONS:

A. None

3. PRESENTATIONS:

A. HOME Grant/Lake Community Action Agency (LCAA) Presentation

Derrick Blue of Lake Community Action Agency said he was there with the Director of Operations, Tim Bridges. He wanted to provide a ten-minute presentation that covered the Home Grant Program. Starting, he thanked the city commission for seeing that projects and programs like this happen in community redevelopment areas, because there is a dire need for improvement of owner-occupied homes. He gave special thanks to Commissioner Berry for being a champion of this program. He also thanked the city manager for his help and assistance, and he recognized the housing department team for their help in this program.

Referring to slides, he said they focused on twelve homes for the first year. They were homes that needed the most work. The homes had bad roofs, faulty electrical systems, plumbing issues and indoor air quality problems. They performed thorough inspections of the homes. His agency has been doing this type of work for over twenty years. One of their funding sources is the Department of Commerce, and they partner with the Department of Energy to identify health and safety issues. They identify the issues and focus on rectifying them. They also try to make homes more energy efficient, because statistically, most low-income families spend a large portion of their income on utility bills. The last area of focus is cosmetic, because not only do they want homeowners to live well, they want them to look good. He showed a few before and after photos of homes that were completed last year. They took over a thousand pictures, but he only provided a few to demonstrate some of the improvements made. They painted houses that had not been touched in over thirty years. They were able to go in, clean them up and get them painted. It was amazing to see the difference in curb appeal. Some of the neighbors came outside to look at the homes, and some homeowners even helped out, giving them a sense of pride. Even the children came out and helped make some of the improvements. Of the twelve houses shown, they painted the interior and exterior of the homes. They addressed a lot of the kitchens, because they had plumbing and cabinetry issues. Some of the issues have not been addressed since they were installed. When updating, they made good use of the space. They created storage solutions and modernized the cabinetry that was falling apart. Another big area of concern was the bathrooms. Some of the bathrooms had horrible living conditions, and they found mold in the walls. He showed a picture of a bathroom that had been redone and included accessibility improvements. They went in, gutted the bathroom and completely rebuilt it. Some rooms in the houses were really bad. You could tell they had not been touched in quite a while. One homeowner had a breathing problem, and he was sure it was due to mold. They went in and dealt with the mold, leaks and lead in some cases. They created a safe and comfortable space for the residents. They also replaced interior and exterior doors for security reasons. One of the homeowners sent him a ring camera video of someone trying to burglarize the home. They tried to kick in the door to one of the houses. That was why they replaced the doors to add security. They also added security lighting as well as cameras. On some homes, they added fencing to make the area more secure. To make the homes more energy efficient, they added insulation. They added about three solid inches of insulation to make it R40. In some homes, they replaced the old single pane windows with more energy-efficient windows to prevent air from escaping the house. In several houses, they completely remodeled the kitchen because it was falling apart. Some cabinetry just fell apart when they opened it. They saw water leaks and mold inside some of the cabinets. They went in and completely gutted the kitchen. They put in new counter tops, back splashes and cabinetry. They also installed new refrigerators, stoves, and flooring. Several properties had active leaks in the roofs, which caused a lot of mold and moisture to enter the house. They had to pull up the old boards and put in new plywood. Several roofs under this program were replaced. They also replaced the HVAC systems in several homes because they were old and inefficient. They were replaced with sixteen seer units.

One of the best parts about this program is that they require all the contractors to warranty their work for a year, which includes labor. They will come back and do warranty service pro bono. They also included a training/educational piece to show the homeowners how to use the new equipment. They updated some of the landscaping of the older homeowners who were unable to do it themselves. They removed debris and made the landscaping look better. Last year, the City of Leesburg allotted $300,000 for this program to enhance the housing conditions and improve the quality of life for residents within that specific CRA District. They successfully delivered under budget, completing the initiative at $293,618, which averaged about $20,468.17 per home. In the original agreement, the maximum amount was $225,000, so they pride themselves on staying under budget. The entire team did a good job. They worked closely with Commissioner Berry, the Housing Director and her team, along with the city manager and city staff. Their organization invested about $100,000 in materials and labor to leverage the funds. He thought it was noteworthy to mention that they utilize local contractors to do this work. If there are any local contractors interested, they should reach out to them on their website, which is www.lakecaa.org. They accept contractors from all trades, specifically local contractors and handymen. They pair the services based on needs. They also have a system called standardized pricing and that standard pricing has given them flexibility to manage the costs.

In closing, he read a letter from a homeowner, Dorothy Jackson, who resided at 2207 Waitman Avenue. Her husband built their home, and as they were working they found the original permit in the utility room. Ms. Jackson was in her 80s, and she had been in and out of the hospital. However, certain areas of her home were falling apart. Some of the contractors donated materials and their labor, so they could turn that house around. She wrote a letter to them, and he wanted to read it. She wrote, it was with the sincerest gratitude and appreciation to the City of Leesburg and the Lake Community Action Agency for formulating and bringing to fruition the plans and various projects to revamp and restore Lake County and Carver Heights Area of Leesburg. Her husband, Peter Jackson, built their home in 1968, and through this program her house was brought back to life. That was due to the men and women who worked countless hours to get the work completed. Things were done that needed to be completed and upgraded for safety reasons. It took a little longer than she expected, but it was an amazing and exciting journey to see the finished product. She felt the sense of pride that she felt back in 1968. Her family was blessed to have been chosen for this community restoration project. She was thankful and grateful for the dedication and hard work of all agencies, contractors and people involved. Unfortunately, after writing this letter Ms. Jackson passed away, but she was able to sit in her house and enjoy the upgrades because this program truly made a difference to her and the community. **Mayor Reisman** thanked him for the presentation.

4. PUBLIC COMMENTS:

This section is reserved for members of the public to bring up matters of concern or opportunities for praise. Please note that issues raised during this time will not be discussed in detail during the current meeting. They will either be referred to the appropriate staff or scheduled for consideration at a future City Commission Meeting. Each speaker is allocated three minutes to provide their comments. Kindly adhere to this time limit to ensure equal opportunity for all participants and to support the efficient conduct of the meeting. Thank you!

Carolyn VanDyken of 120 Palmora Boulevard thanked the Public Works Director and Al Purvis of the water department for taking the time to speak with her about forever chemicals. The water department does an outstanding job keeping a vital resource clean and available at all times. She learned a lot from her meeting and tour. As far as she was concerned, we have some of the best water in Florida. However, she still had concerns about adding fluoride on top of the fluoride that is already naturally occurring in the water. We have naturally occurring fluoride in the water now and that was overlooked in the previous discussions. After reading the minutes and the discussion with all the people for and against it, she saw residents and non-residents that talked about how they wanted to put fluoride in our water. The bottom line is that the commissioners made a medical decision for the community. They decided to add something that should be prescribed by a doctor to our water and, as a community, they should have had the chance to vote on it. They should have been able to vote whether they wanted fluoride in the water or not. She saw a lot of back and forth about how fluoride keeps cavities away. However, the Leesburg fluoride system has not worked since the year 2000. She moved her family back to Leesburg in 2008 and at that time she had a three-year-old son. He is now nineteen years old and to this date he has never had a cavity. It is funny that his generation is made fun of as being the most hydrated generation, because they carry water bottles everywhere. They have mandated breaks in soccer and any other recreational sports. They constantly take water breaks even when it is fifty degrees outside, which seems ridiculous. They are constantly drinking the city water and to date he has never had a cavity.

5. CONSENT AGENDA:
Routine items are placed on the Consent Agenda to expedite the meeting. If the Commission/Staff wish to discuss any item, the procedure is as follows: (1) pull the item(s) from the Consent Agenda; (2) vote on remaining items with one roll call vote, (3) discuss each pulled item and vote by roll call

Items pulled for discussion:

5.C.1 - Approving a Proportionate Share Mitigation Agreement between the School Board of Lake County, M&C Hunt, LLC., and the City of Leesburg, to allow for payment of Lake County School Impact Fees
5.C.6 - Executing an Inter-Local Agreement related to Bus Stop Shelters between the City of Leesburg and Lake County
5.C.7 - Approving a Downtown Building Redevelopment Grant to Dance Dynamix, LLC, for renovations at 606 West Main Street
5.C.9 - Executing a Post-Closing Occupancy Agreement between the City of Leesburg and Frostinburg, LLC.
5.C.10 - Executing a Commercial Lease Agreement between the City of Leesburg and Leesburg Art Festival, Inc.
5.C.11 - Authorizing the transfer of $840,584 from the General Fund to the Electric Fund for the Itron AMI Agreement

Commissioner Pederson moved to adopt the Consent Agenda except for 5.C1, 5.C.6, 5.C.7, 5.C.9, 5.C.10, and 5.C.11, and Commissioner Berry seconded the motion.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Mayor Reisman	Yes

Five yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the Consent Agenda, as follows:
(Each item has its coordinated resolution number listed below the header)

A. CITY COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES:

1. Regular meeting held January 27, 2025

B. PURCHASING ITEMS:

1. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute Amendment Two to an existing contract with Lakeside Electrical Services, LLC; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,970

2. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute Amendment Three to an existing contract with Electrical Works, LLC; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,971

3. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, authorizing the Mayor and the City Clerk to execute a Mobile Organic Biofilm System Trial Agreement with Nuvoda Innovative Water Solutions, LLC; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,972

C. RESOLUTIONS:

1. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, approving a Proportionate Share Mitigation Agreement entered into by and between the School Board of Lake County, Florida, M & C Hunt LLC, and the City of Leesburg, Florida, to allow for payment of Lake County School Impact Fees; and providing an effective date. (Huntington Oaks)**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,973

Commissioner Pederson introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Pederson made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman said he pulled this item, so the city manager could give a debrief. He believed there had been some misunderstanding about the payment not being made to the school board unless the development actually happens. He did not pull item 5.C.8 even though it was for the same thing. He just wanted some clarification on the miscommunication. **CM Minner** agreed. We do these at the time of inception and then the city collects all the impact fees and pays them to whatever jurisdiction. Typically, it is our impact fees, school board impact fees, and county impact fees, but they are not paid until permits are issued. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any further comments or questions from the commission or audience. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes

Mayor Reisman Yes

Five yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution.

2. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute a Cattle Grazing and Hay Production Lease for the City of Leesburg Closed Landfill; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,974

3. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, relating to the SAHFI, Supplemental Funding for Hurricanes Fiona and Ian, Clean Water State Revolving Fund Loan Program; making findings; authorizing a revised Loan Agreement; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,975

4. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute an Elevated Water Tank Rehabilitation Services Agreement with Five12 Painting & Remodeling, LLC to rehabilitate various elevated water tanks throughout the City; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,976

5. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute a gas service agreement between the City of Leesburg and Pulte Home Company, LLC, regarding natural gas service to the development known as Highland Pines - Phase 1; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,977

6. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute an Inter-Local Agreement related to Bus Stop Shelters between the City of Leesburg, a municipal corporation and Lake County, a political subdivision of the State of Florida; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,978

Commissioner Pederson introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Pederson made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Connell said this item had come up before with moving the bus stop from the college campus. He wanted to know why the city would pay to move a Lake County bus stop off state-owned property to the City of Tavares. We have all these other jurisdictions involved, so why would we pay for this? **CM Minner** explained this issue had come up during the sale of about ten acres of airport property, which was governed by the city commission, and sold to Blurock Development. At that time, College President Bigard took issue with the concept of the city selling that property. In short, once upon a time, that property was school board property. It was donated to the college and then the college donated it to the city at our request. However, that request happened sometime in the late 1980s. We found out about it when we discussed it publicly, and passed a resolution. At that time, we said we would endeavor to make amends. He did some research on the topic, and found nothing that overly stated that the city in fact promised to never develop this property. Essentially, the position of the state college was that back when the college donated the property to the city, we needed it to use it as an airport runway protection area, and we were never to develop it. Now that we were selling it, it got the attention of College President Bigard, and at that time we worked and put together a resolution that said we would endeavor to remedy the situation. However, we did not find documentation that substantiated what President Bigard thought. We found minutes, and the minutes did not elaborate anything specific to the city not developing that property, but the minutes did indicate some sort of disgruntle between the city and the college at that time. That was all the documentation we could gather, and the documentation only showed some sort of disgruntlement. With that, we continued with the sale, and that sale has now closed, and the money is in the bank. There was potentially some sort of remedy that we resolved in good faith to do, but he did not think the commission was bound to vote for it. However, in good faith, they should vote in favor of it. With the concept of moving the bus stop, there would still be a bus stop at Lake Sumter State College because they would only move the transfer station. The bus stop location at the college campus also houses a bus stop for the Lake Express. The college felt the transfer station brought more traffic and concerns to the campus, so they did not want it there. So, the quid pro quo was because the city sold the property, if we moved the transfer station they would not fuss over the sale of the property. So, we endeavored to find a location for the transfer station in Leesburg. We thought the mall would be a good location. However, at the eleventh hour, the mall backed out for various reasons that he did not explore other than it did not work. We then pointed them to some other properties, which were airport property, but they did not like airport property. That airport property was a vacant lot next to the Waffle House and the other property was behind the Cracker Barrel, but the county did not like either area. Ultimately, the county found and proposed a site located in downtown Tavares. The county had a litmus test of things that they felt the transfer station needed. The mall had potential, but at the end of the day, mall management did not want to do it and the county felt that the other city properties did not have potential whereas the site in Tavares does. When he heard that the county wanted to move forward with transferring it to Tavares, he asked, since they were moving it to Tavares, did the city still need to pay for it, and the answer was yes. The reason for that was if the city did not sell the property, they would not need to move the bus stop. The city's net on that sale was about 2.5 million dollars. The sale price was 2.75 million dollars, but there were fees that needed to be paid. He shared that information with the commission previously. However, the cost to relocate the bus stop and to keep peace between the entities is $50,000. That is not the greatest of expenses, but it keeps peace between organizations and that is important. **Commissioner Burry** wanted to confirm that the $50,000 being talked about would have been the cost to relocate the transfer station to the mall or the airport property. **CM Minner** responded yes. The agreement said up to $50,000. **Commissioner Connell** stated there was no agreement in writing from the 80s that said we could not sell that property. **CM Minner** agreed. **Commissioner Connell** continued to say that Lake Sumter College had just come up and said we were not supposed to sell it. Then, if we were going to sell it, they would not complain as long as we moved the transfer station. That does not make any sense, because that is not our transfer station. It is located on state property, it belongs to the county, and it is being moved to Tavares. So, why would we pay for this? Are we going to start making concessions with everyone when we want to sell a piece of property? Where adjacent neighbors say hold on, we do not want you to do that, but if you do, we want you to do this for us? That sets a very bad precedent. If Lake Sumter College does not want it moved to Leesburg property, then Lake Sumter College should pay to move it, or they can work out something with Lake County to move it. He did not know why Leesburg would be responsible for moving this transfer station for $50,000 of taxpayers' money. He understands trying to be a good neighbor, but this is taking it too far. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any other comments from the commission or the public. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	No
Commissioner Burry	No
Mayor Reisman	Yes

Three yeas, two nays, the Commission adopted the resolution.

7. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, approving a Downtown Building Redevelopment Grant to Dance Dynamix, LLC, for renovation at 606 West Main Street; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,979

Commissioner Pederson introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Pederson made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Connell stated there had been numerous discussions, so he did not want to spend a lot of time on it. However, he wanted to bring it up one more time because it was his understanding that this would be the last application for this program. **CM Minner** agreed. **Commissioner Connell** continued to say his concerns in the past have nothing to do with the business that is being proposed, which is Dance Dynamics. His concerns have to deal with the policy because there are no strings attached to the policy other than the matching of funds. They do not have to retain ownership for any length of time. There are no requirements that say they have to open the business after spending $250,000 of city money. They could turn around and sell it at any time because there are no criteria and there is nothing that says they have to employ a certain number of people. He believes the policy needs to be revamped. We need additional guidelines because the policy says if you own or buy a piece of property that happens to be located in a certain area on Main Street you qualify. There is nothing else attached, other than you match what you are applying for. There needs to be more guidelines put into this. However, it has nothing to do with the applicant who has applied for the grant. We cannot continue to give away free money with no guidelines in the policy. **Commissioner Burry** commented that when they were mulling over the concept of revitalization of certain buildings, there were eight buildings identified and this particular building was not one of them. However, when he read through the eligibility requirements, this building did qualify.

He wanted to point that out for the record. Initially, it was not on the list, but it does meet the requirements of the application. It is pretty important to point out that this particular business brings a lot of people to the downtown. **Mayor Reisman** echoed those sentiments. He wanted to know about this new business potentially moving there and, with the existing businesses next door, could they have them install sound proofing for the neighbors? He was sure they would take that into account, but he wanted to bring that up. He asked if there were any further comments by the commission or the public. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	No
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Mayor Reisman	Yes

Four yeas, one nay, the Commission adopted the resolution.

8. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, approving a Proportionate Share Mitigation Agreement entered into by and between the School Board of Lake County, Florida, Pulte Home Company, and the City of Leesburg, Florida, to allow for payment of Lake County School Impact Fees; and providing an effective date. (Windmill Road Subdivision)

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,980

9. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute a Post-Closing Occupancy Agreement between the City of Leesburg and Frostinburg, LLC; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,981

Commissioner Pederson introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Burry made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Berry seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Connell asked if this was the property that we sold not too long ago. **CM Minner** agreed. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know if we knew we would still need it at the time of selling. **CM Minner** replied yes. He would say there was a handshake agreement where they were going to lease it back to us for a couple of dollars per month. However, a couple of months after selling it, he received a call from the developer asking for a payment that represented the taxes and insurance. Worst case scenario, assuming the commission approves this, we are looking at about a year at the location. That cost would be about $4,800. In hindsight, we should have made an option to purchase instead of selling it outright. Now, whether the commission wants to tender this, that is up to them. If they say no to the lease, and they kick us off the property, then we will need to relocate somewhere. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know what was currently being stored on that property. **CM Minner** pointed out that currently that property is an important piece for the gas department. There is a lot of equipment stored there and it is used daily. The equipment stored includes welders, trucks and storage of parts along with other daily materials. They also use that lot for parking. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to confirm that when this was being negotiated there was an understanding that they were going to let us use the property for a dollar a year, and now they have completely backed off from that promise and want us to pay basically $5,000 a year? **CM Minner** responded yes. **Commissioner Connell** stated that was just bad business on their part. He understands that we need that property, but that is just bad because it will not take much to eat into that $50,000. He wanted to keep that piece of property to be used as a parking lot. **Commissioner Berry** said there were so many other moving parts to follow this, and we need to make sure that everything comes together. We need to move ahead to make this work. Granted, hindsight, but we need to do this so we can move forward. **Commissioner Pederson** asked if we were to move forward, could they technically default on the lease? **CA Watson** pointed out that the term was month to month. In terms of a termination period of time, it would not be that long on a month-to-month agreement. **Commissioner Connell** questioned the equipment that is stored there and if it was fenced in? **CM Minner** said yes. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to verify if the equipment needed to be kept in a secured location. **CM Minner** responded yes. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know if they could use the parking lot of the Art Center since it was going to be torn down. **CM Minner** stated the equipment has to be stored securely. If they were to say we have thirty days to get off that property or if this was not approved, we would have thirty days to vacate. It would be a scramble because they use that equipment daily, and it is currently located across the street from the gas department. So, the question did put us in a bind, and he would not disagree with anything that was said, because he thought it was a month to month, no fuss, no muss. However, the rent represents taxes and insurance. That was not contemplated, and if we knew they were going to go down this road we would have brought options. In the long-term, this is the right strategy because we sold the parcel for redevelopment and, ultimately, that will have more value than having the gas department there. However, the short-term is an inconvenience for sure. The dollar amount is not a killer, but it does take away from the value of the property. If it was more than that, he would have bawked at it, and not brought it for their consideration. Honestly, this was one of the things where they had to hold their nose and move forward. Similar to the sign issue that was just dealt with because the gas department needs that facility. If we did not have it we would get by, but it would be difficult. We would have to shift some stuff over to the old steel building that public works uses on Main Street. We could get by, but it would be difficult. He understands making a point, and he understands the value and principles of a business deal, but at the cost and with the disruption of the gas operation service, it is not worth the argument. **Commissioner Connell** asked if the equipment that is currently stored could be moved to where the Center for the Arts is? Could they use that property? **CM Minner** said they could possibly move some of it, and they could use that area for parking. However, the equipment that is stored there needs to be in a secure location. There are welders, copper, and other stuff that the guys deal with that has value, so that needs to be securely stored. **Gas Director (GD), Corey Goepfert** said they do deal with theft issues, because people jump the fence. They lock stuff up the best they can, but people still try to get in. They store their trucks and equipment there. The equipment includes trenchers, backhoes and welders. They also park work vehicles there, so for them to not have that lot across the street would make it difficult to operate on a daily basis. They could get by, but the guys would have to take their trucks home, or they would have to transit employees to their work vehicles every day. It would definitely make it more difficult to run the operation. **CM Minner** pointed out if they were to move the equipment and the valuable stuff to the public works facility and have the employees park in the parking lot by the Art Center, it would take approximately a half hour in the morning and at the end of the day to move everyone around. They would have to run over to Public Works to get their stuff, whereas right now, they just walk across the street. He did not anticipate this coming before them. However, the new owners of the lot threw us a curveball. **Mayor Reisman** questioned the timeline for the gas department moving. **CM Minner** responded it would take about twelve months. Obviously, they are already a year into it, but there are a lot of moving parts that they are trying to accomplish. Once everything is done and completed, we will be happy, but getting there is obviously the hard part. At the end of the month our RFP on architectural services should be before them and they should have an architectural contract in March. We are not designing a Taj Mahal, so by summer the design should be done, and we should have it out for bid. Come fall, we should be building it and, hopefully, come Christmas or the first quarter of 2026, we should see it completed. **Mayor Reisman** said, out of respect for the employees and their time, because they are very busy, that losing an hour every day would mean time and money. Knowing that he would support this. **Commissioner Connell** said he understands what has been said, he just hates rewarding someone that made a bad business deal with us. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any other comments. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Mayor Reisman	Yes

Five yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution.

10. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute a Commercial Lease Agreement between the City of Leesburg and Leesburg Art Festival, Inc.; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,982

Commissioner Pederson introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Burry made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Berry seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Connell said he pulled this item, and it goes back to the same thing with Melon Patch. He does not think it is in the city's best interest to continue entering into twenty-five to fifty-year leases. They are way too long, and we do not know what will happen five or ten years down the road. We may even want the building back. These leases are entirely too long. It is not in the city's best interest to enter into super long-term leases. Nothing against the Center for the Arts because they are great, but the length of the leases are entirely too long. Also, it is basically a free lease, so the city is basically saying they can occupy the building for twenty-five years at no cost. **Commissioner Pederson** agreed. He did not like the twenty-five years when he read it. He was unsure if we agreed to this when the Melon Patch sold their building or if there were any pre-agreements. However, he fully supports them, but he does not like twenty-five years. He would like to see them ten or fifteen years. **CM Minner** stated the lease was set up the same way the existing lease is. The existing lease with the Arts Center was ten years. **Commissioner Berry** pointed out that the Melon Patch lease was longer. **Commissioner Pederson** stated that was because they owned their building before selling it to the school. **CM Minner** indicated that the Melon Patch lease was a fifty-year lease. And, without being sarcastic, the city has a history of doing this with the clubs that are important to the city. The boat club was the first one to come to mind. They have prime property, and that lease was for ninety-nine-years. The Melon Patch was a fifty-year lease, but that was based on them providing $150,000 to the city, which paid and made improvements to the Tropic. With the Arts Center, their lease has typically been shorter. However, they requested a longer lease. He did not want to throw the Center for the Arts under the bus, so he presented it as they requested. With the terms and conditions and the semantical stuff, those were addressed, but the term is up to the commission. He did not want to speak for the Center for the Arts, but if they were to change the term, he did not think they would bawk too much. If the commission wants to make an amendment to modify the term and if that is approved, he could send it back to the Arts Center for their approval. **Commissioner Berry** asked what the need would be for changing the time frame since the Melon Patch would be there longer. It is in the same building, and they also provide art for the community. If we were to shorten it, then what? Do we come back again and do it in increments? **Commissioner Connell** said this has nothing to do with the Melon Patch. However, he had issues with the length of their lease. These are long-term leases, and they are not required to pay anything. That does not seem like good business practice for the city. Somewhere down the road, maybe five years, we may have a different use for the other half of the Tropic. Maybe it is not working out for the Center of the Arts. They may be doing something that we do not agree with, and we will be stuck with them. We need to give ourselves options so we do not lock ourselves in for decades. **Commissioner Pederson** asked if he would be okay with ten years? **Commissioner Connell** answered he would not want to go for more than ten years. **Commissioner Pederson** said he was sure five years would aggravate them, so he could live with ten years. **Mayor Reisman** indicated that he was sure the organization was looking for some security. He wanted to know how many years we have been partnering with them. **CM Minner** said we have been partnering with them forever. **Commissioner Pederson** remarked that we have shown our support. **Commissioner Connell** commented that if they do not like the terms, they can find their own building. **Mayor Reisman** agreed, but they bring value to the community just like the Melon Patch does. We give and spend money on Pat Thomas and other organizations. We spend money on those organizations, and they do not pay anything to use the fields. **Commissioner Connell** pointed out that the city owns Pat Thomas, and we are not leasing it to anybody. The issue he has is with the terms of the lease. **Mayor Reisman** said he understands that, but this organization has done a lot of good for our community. He attends their events, and they draw in a lot of people from the retirement communities which are in his district. They fully support this, and they are excited that the city is investing in the arts. We would be giving the organization longevity in our community. **Commissioner Pederson** said he did not want to send the wrong message, because he has always been a supporter and he was glad to have them as a tenant. He also respected Commissioner Connell's comments about twenty-five years because he regretted his vote for fifty years. However, he remembered the reason was that they put money into it, and they sold their building. If the commission could live with ten years, he was sure the Center for the Arts could live with it. **Mayor Reisman** asked if he would agree to doing ten years with an option. **Commissioner Pederson** indicated that would not really work. **Mayor Reisman** stated both parties would still have to agree to it. **Commissioner Pederson** said that would not bother him, but he thought he meant tentative options. **Mayor Reisman** said it would be similar to the airport leases. **Commissioner Pederson** stated that as long as we have rights he would be fine, but he thought he meant tentative options. If that keeps the process simple down the road for the commission, he would be fine with it. **Commissioner Connell** asked the city attorney how that would work. **CA Watson** said there could be an option, but they would have the right to an option in the absence of a default. If they were not in default of the contract, then we would have the obligation to evaluate that in good faith on whether to decide to extend it or not. Now, does that mean the city would have to accept it? Not necessarily, if they have been operating in good faith under the terms of the lease, and they are in compliance with the terms of the lease, then they can request an option. They would need to look at that in good faith and consider that option. In the absence of a basis to deny, it would be hard to push back on someone that is trying to exercise that contractual right. **Commissioner Pederson** said with the airport leases, is it clearly written that both parties have to agree? **Mayor Reisman** remarked that both parties have to agree. **Commissioner Connell** continued to say if we did not have a legit reason, they could continue. **CA Watson** commented that it all depends on the wording. If they had a contractual provision that says the tenant would have an option to extend the lease for five more years provided they are not in default of the existing lease term. Then, unless they are in default of the existing lease term or if there was a clear reason for saying no, it is hard to say no under those circumstances. It could be worded differently so it could be more flexible and more beneficial for the city. **Commissioner Connell** stated in this case it would be hard for them to be in default because they do not have to do anything. **CM Minner** said for discussion purposes he appreciated the mayor's comment about the airport lease and having an option, but the big tangible difference in this one is that airport leases have an asset. If there was a vacant piece of land and an airport tenant came in to the city requesting a cheap lease, they would have to build the facility. They would put “x” dollars into the hangar, and it would be worth half a million dollars. At the end of that lease, that asset would become the city's. In this case, Commissioner Connell’s point was there is nothing tangible coming back to the city, and while we may want to help this organization, they are not giving anything back financially. So, in that regard, if they want freedom of where the building will go in the future, he suggested making this term certain. Whether that be five, ten, fifteen, twenty or twenty-five years. He would not recommend an option in this case. **CA Watson** agreed. They would still have the ability down the road to pick up talks with the Art Center to negotiate an extension. They would have the freedom to do that, and they would not be contractually bound to do it. **CM Minner** said they should change the term to whatever this body agrees to. He would amend the lease and send it back to the Arts Center to see what they do. **Commissioner Berry** said originally the agreement was to bring the arts together; both Melon Patch and the Center for the Arts. Now, their building is becoming a parking lot, and they were going to have everything under one roof. That is the plan. They agreed for fifty years with the Melon Patch, so why change now in midstream? **Commissioner Connell** stated with no disrespect he voted against that because he has an issue with long-term leases because they are not in the city's best interest. **Commissioner Berry** stated we already have one for Melon Patch for fifty years, and we are talking about the other side of the building. **Commissioner Connell** said we would still have half a building to do something different if we wanted to in five or ten years. It would not be locked for another twenty-five years.

Commissioner Pederson made a motion to amend the lease term to ten years and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman asked if there were any other comments from the commission and the public. There were none.

The roll call vote on the amendment was:

Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	No
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Mayor Reisman	No

Three yeas, two nays, the Commission approved the amendment.

Mayor Reisman stated there was an amendment to the main motion for ten years. He asked if there were any further comments from the commission and the public. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes

Commissioner Burry Yes
Commissioner Pederson Yes
Mayor Reisman Yes

Five yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the amended resolution.

11. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the transfer of $840,584 from the General Fund to the Electric Fund for the Itron AMI agreement; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,983

Commissioner Pederson introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Pederson made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman said he pulled this item, so the city manager could give a debrief. **CM Minner** said back around September or October the city commission ended the agreement with GE. We started with GE almost fifteen years ago when we went to the Smart grid. We updated our metering capabilities and other stuff in the electric department. That agreement was set to expire in 2027/2028. However, we are getting out of the GE contract early. Back around September, the city commission voted to terminate that agreement effective November 2025. We entered into an agreement with Itron to do all the automated metering. That financial movement means significant savings in the long term after the initial year of operations. We entered into a ten-year agreement with Itron, and after year two we should see about one million dollars in savings. The unfortunate part is that we have to cough up about one million dollars to finance the changing of the guards. That covers the software, interaction between GE and Itron, and shifting from one house to another. When we approved the agreement we discussed the payment of $840,000, which was to be spread out over the course of FY 25. That way, it does not all come out of the house at one time. We based it on milestones to be reported, but he could not remember what the milestones were. He was sure the electric and IT departments had not forgotten the milestones. In any case, part of the contemplation about the lease was where we were going to take the $840,584 from. He vaguely said we may want to take it out of the general fund and this resolution would authorize that payment for the GE/Itron switch out to come from the general fund. The basic reason for that is, as we continue to move forward, we are trying to keep electric rates as low as possible. Having said that, we may have to entertain a base rate increase around October. He noted the base rate increase was different from the power cost adjustment, and we will contemplate that during budget time. Secondly, inflation has incredibly hurt the electric department because pretty much everything they touch is expensive. It has almost doubled in cost. For example, transformers used to be $1,500, and they are now $3,000. Wire poles and supply meters have also gone up. Inflation has significantly impacted cash reserves in the electric fund. That is related and attached to our continuation of trying to keep electric rates down. They will get more into that during the budget process. Remember, today's electric rate is less than what it was eleven years ago when he became the city manager. Even with a growing system and inflation, we were able to do that. However, he does question how long we will be able to do that. Lastly, we have made a number of system improvements, and we had to use the cash reserves. With all that being said, the electric department has bounced up and down lately. The last two quarters were about half a million dollars plus or minus where the recommended reserve requirement should be. The reserve is sitting around seven million dollars. He would breathe easier at night if that number was around fourteen or fifteen million dollars. He does not think it needs to go back to twenty million, but at seven million dollars with us bouncing back and forth plus or minus half a million dollars, that reserve does get tight. Another area that will show is with our creditors because they do annual bond checks. They have not downgraded us yet based on our cash reserves. However, when we did debt issues our cash reserves were extremely high, so we were able to get favorable interest rates. He could see the credit rating sliding a little bit. Mind you, it would not be catastrophic for us if our credit rating went down. However, if we needed to borrow money, that would affect the interest rates by a couple of points. He did think we would see a full percentage point, but if our credit rating goes down they could see that go up. Again, that is only if we need money. On the other side of the house, the general fund has been the recipient of millions and millions of dollars from the electric fund. The general fund is sitting on about fifteen million dollars, which is way in excess of our reserve. He believes we have guarded that extremely well, so cutting out $840,584 to go back to the electric fund is a smart financial move. So, this resolution authorizes the transfer of $840,584 from the general fund reserve to the electric fund to pay for the Itron/GE change. **Commissioner Berry** asked what the amount was that he would like to see the reserve to be. **CM Minner** said he would like to see the electric reserves between fourteen and fifteen million dollars. That is about double the reserve, and that is two-fold. It is good for our bond rating and the electric fund would be able to handle catastrophic incidents. If something were to go bump in the night and a major transformer goes out, we would be looking at three to four million dollars. However, storms are a different animal. This year we have not finished adding up the numbers, because we had so many hurricanes. With Milton, we probably spent around two million dollars (out of cash) on restoring the electric system. That is another reason that account dinked down. Right now, everything is on freeze until we receive our FEMA reimbursement from the federal government. He was unsure when that would be, but it was coming. Those are the reasons why he does not like to keep the electric fund at the red line. However, right now, we are keeping it at the red line to keep the rates down and the general fund has the cash. It makes sense and in the long-term, the change over from GE to Itron will be financially good.

Commissioner Pederson said he was fine with this. The city manager touched on rates, so he thought it would be a good time to bring up the newspaper articles that he sent the city manager. The articles from the newspapers show the big boys have been raising their rates due to the storms. He was curious to know where we ranked right now. **CM Minner** said there were a lot of interesting dynamics going on right now. However, right now, if we were to go to the American Public Power Association website and the Florida Municipal Electric Association (FMEA) website, it would show that we are a little over average. Compared to the forty-eight municipal electric utilities and the four IOUs, we are moving towards the back quarter. If they look at the All-Requirements Project, which is a more fair comparison, we are pretty competitive in the electric pool. The reason we are falling behind on average is that there are a number of municipal electric utilities that have contract supply power. Meaning, they buy it on the short term. So, right now, they look good, and their rates are extremely competitive, but the trick with short-term power supply contracts is they get rewarded when there is capacity, but that is going away. When there is no capacity, their rates will really go up. We are where we need to be with the All-Requirements Project. That is where we need to be long-term. It is solid, consistent and predictable, and with our investor-owned utility, we are killing Duke. Our rate is a lot better than theirs, and with FPL we are sneaking up past them. Again, at the Public Service Commission, Duke and FPL have rate tariff increases. They are seeking increases based on storm expenses, hardening of the system and fuel. The short term is that everybody will continue to go up. **Commissioner Pederson** mentioned the reason he brought that up was, in 2022, everybody waved the FPL and Duke rates in front of us, and they were not comparing apples to apples. He knew we were competitive now. **CM Minner** said, as predicted, when they brought those rates up, we said just wait, they are going to go higher, and they did. Now, Duke has gone much higher. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any other comments from the commission or the public. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Mayor Reisman	Yes

Five yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND NON-ROUTINE ITEMS:

A. SECOND READING OF ORDINANCES

1. None

B. FIRST READING OF ORDINANCES

1. An Ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, annexing certain real property consisting of approximately 6.52 +/- acres; and being generally located northwest of County Road 44 and south of Hickory Hollow Road, lying in Section 03, Township 19 South, Range 25 East, Lake County, Florida; providing that said property so annexed shall be liable for its proportionate share of the existing and future indebtedness of said city; providing that such annexed property shall be subject to all laws and ordinances of said city as if all such territory had been a part of the City of Leesburg at the time of passage and approval of said laws and ordinances; providing that such annexed territory shall be placed in City Commission District 5; and providing an effective date. (Wayne Storage ANNX)

CA Watson asked anyone wishing to provide testimony on items 6.B.3 or 6.B.4 to stand and raise their right hand, and he swore them in.

Commissioner Pederson introduced ordinances 6.B.1, 6.B.2, and 6.B.3 to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the ordinances by title only.

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

PZD Miller stated this proposal was for an annexation, small-scale comprehensive plan and rezoning. It is approximately 6.5 acres. It is located west of CR 44, south of Hickory Hollow and north and south of Variety Tree Road. With the small-scale comprehensive plan, they are requesting to take the property from Lake County Rural Transition to City of Leesburg General Commercial and the rezoning would take it from County R-6A and CP, which is Urban Residential Agricultural and Planned Commercial, to City Small Planned Unit Development (SPUD). Under the PUD requirements, the proposal would consist of an indoor self-storage facility with some outdoor storage for boats and RVs. There would be one on-site apartment for management and security. No other uses are permitted within this proposal. They included design and architectural standards, and the proposed facade is shown as Exhibit D. We have dark sky lighting and thirty-five percent of the property is open space. There is a fifteen-foot landscape buffer required around the entirety of the property along with a master landscape plan. The standard use of Bahia or Bermuda is permitted in place of St. Augustine grass. The planned main access points are subject to be reviewed and approved by Lake County. All areas directly adjacent to residential areas are required to have a fence with a minimum of six feet and a maximum of eight feet in height. Finally, there is a phasing or expiration clause for the development needing to move forward within four years through substantial commencement or the property automatically reverts to RE-1 zoning. There are representatives here to speak, and he would be happy to answer any questions.

Danika Oliverio, Project Manager of CHW, 11801 Research Drive, Alachua stated she had a presentation for the Wayne Storage Project. It includes three applications; the annexation, the small-scale comprehensive plan amendment and the small planned unit development (SPUD) rezoning. The intent for this project was to allow for connection to City of Leesburg utilities when they become available. It will provide a non-residential use to support the growth along CR 44, and to provide an access easement and roadway pavement improvements on Variety Tree Road. Referring to a rendering, she showed the location of the site. If they were to go further north on CR 44, they would see to the south Orange Bend and Liberty Preserve, which are under development. Further north on CR 44 there is Brown’s Auto Sales, which is part of the City of Leesburg, Hickory Hollow Estates, United Southern Bank and several RV parks going further north. She showed a rendering of the subject property that included the bank, sports bar and pizzeria, the Cutting Edge Hair Salon and Brown’s Auto Sales. Hickory Hollow Road is to the north and Variety Tree Road bisects the bottom end to the south. Both are private roadways. As part of this project, the strip of Variety Tree Road that crosses this parcel, which is about two hundred and seventy feet long and thirty feet wide, will be paved, and it will provide access for the residents who live to the west on Variety Tree Road. She showed the overall project timeline. They have met with planning staff several times. They turned in their application in October of last year and their planning commission meeting was in December, and they recommended approval. She provided a list of the materials covered in all three applications. We have a topographic and boundary tree survey, legal descriptions, deed, property appraiser tax records and affidavits. They have an environmental natural resource report, future land use mapping, rezoning mapping, land use table and the traffic impact statement. They included water and sewer connection covenant, annexation application forms along with all the justification reports and the conceptual site plan. Digging further into the details of the elements, the water and sewer connection covenant was part of the package. It is a binding agreement that says this property would connect to city water and wastewater when it becomes available. That document was signed and notarized by the owner and the city utilities. They have an environmental natural resources assessment document within the package that contains on-site field surveys and database reviews conducted by qualified ecologists. In that report it was noted that there are no rare or endangered natural plant communities, no hydric soils, the property is entirely upland, there are no listed designated animal species on the site and there is no suitable habitat for some of the species listed, although they have been found within a mile or two of this location, but the report specifically states there are no suitable habitat on this site. There are no bald eagles, wading birds, scrub jays, snail kits or sand skinks. They included a traffic statement, which showed very low traffic volumes associated with this type of project. The PM peak total trip is estimated at fourteen afternoon peak total trips. The central parcel of this property is CP zoning, which allows for retail, restaurants, offices, medical and hotels, which would make four hundred or more PM peak trips. This project would have a very low traffic volume at this location.

Referring to the conceptual site plan, she said starting in the southern area, they would see Variety Tree Road, which is where the thirty-foot wide easement and pavement installation for residential access. It would also provide access to the main office area. She pointed out the main entry to the driveway and the office, which includes five parking spaces. There is one office and a restroom. It would have a gated entry to the storage area. There would be one-story buildings, there is a fifteen-foot-wide perimeter landscape buffer and along the entire western side they would have a six to eight-foot-high fence adjacent to the residential areas. The fence has to be opaque, faux stone, wood or vinyl, which is part of the SPUD requirements. This site meets the thirty-five percent open space requirement. There is one additional access to the north, but that gate will remain closed and only used for security purposes. Again, this is a transitional non-residential, low traffic development. With the SPUD requirements, there will be development standards as mentioned with building setbacks, building height, open space requirements, site access and circulation requirements, architectural standards that include dark sky lighting, which means full cut off, so the light does not spill anywhere outside the site. Facade design requirements for any buildings with public road visibility, signage requirements, screening requirements and open space landscaping and buffer requirements. They have a fifteen-foot-wide perimeter buffer around the entire site and within that perimeter buffer the applicant is required to put two canopy trees for every one hundred linear feet of space and thirty-three feet of shrubs for every one hundred linear feet of space to help buffer the project. The opaque wall or fence of six to eight feet high and there are irrigation, water use requirements, maintenance requirements, storm water and utilities are all packed within this SPUD. **Mayor Reisman** thanked her for her presentation. He asked if there were any commission comments. There were none. He asked if there were any public comments.

Donald Schumacher of 9823 Hickory Hollow Road asked about the annexation? Would they only annex this parcel into the City of Leesburg or are they looking at the whole corridor of CR 44? **Mayor Reisman** said it would only be the subject property. **Mr. Schumacher** thanked him for that clarification.

Linda James of 9705 Hickory Hollow Road said she opposes the destruction, stripping and destroying of all the trees. They will burn them and replace them with concrete. There is too much building going on. She invited and pleaded to consider comprehensive, community-based conservation, keeping in mind that wildlife though they may not live needs spots to land and feed on. As a city, they do not consider anything about the wildlife or nature. There is a lot of development going on in that area, so they should think about habitat protection and conserving land. We need land and space for wildlife. All she sees is the complete stripping of all the trees. They are dredging up the land and replacing it with lawns that are sprayed with pesticides and herbicides, which makes a toxic community. She was sure The Villages gave the city the idea, because they are the model for what the city is now following. They will completely destroy everything for the people that are moving to Florida. She knows there are a lot of people coming in that need housing and different services, but she wanted them to consider reserving land for the wildlife. They need to reconsider cutting down the trees, because they have bluebirds and hawks that nest in the trees. They may not have snail kites or other protected species, but there are other wildlife that live there. Where she lives, she abuts a cattle ranch and there are all kinds of milkweed and the cows do not eat the milkweed. She sees hundreds of monarch butterflies and the farmers are aware of them, so he will not destroy the plants and neither will the cows. There are pieces of land that the wildlife counts on, so please consider not tearing down all the trees and burning them.

Steve Clark of 9844 Hickory Hollow Road said his property would be the most affected by this project. It would be located behind and beside him. He purchased this property two years ago, and across the street he has cows feeding on fourteen acres. This area is currently wooded, so they are talking about changing the entire feel of the area. He was a very experienced licensed realtor, so he understood this would only negatively affect the value of his property. His property will be surrounded by metal buildings as opposed to trees or residential buildings. He heard it mentioned tonight that there would be boats and RV storage. That was not mentioned before now. He was not for boats and RVs leaking oil, nor did he want to look at that every day. If that is going to be allowed, the fence needs to be eight feet. He would also like them to address light and sound pollution because this will be located right next to his property. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any other comments. There were none. He stated these items would lay over.

2. **An Ordinance amending the Future Land Use Map of the Comprehensive Plan of the City of Leesburg, changing the Future Land Use Map Designation of certain property containing 6.52 +/- acres from Lake County Rural Transition to City of Leesburg General Commercial, for a property generally located northwest of County Road 44 and south of Hickory Hollow Road, lying in Section 03, Township 19 South, Range 25 East, Lake County, Florida; and providing an effective date. (Wayne Storage SSCP)**

3. **An Ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, changing the zoning on approximately 6.52 +/- acres from Lake County R-6 (Urban Residential District), A (Agriculture) and CP (Planned Commercial) to City of Leesburg SPUD (Small Planned Unit Development) to allow for a self-storage facility for a property generally located northwest of County Road 44 and south of Hickory Hollow Road, lying in Section 03, Township 19 South, Range 25 East, Lake County, Florida; and providing an effective date. (Wayne Storage PUD)**

4. **An Ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, rezoning approximately 4.87+/- acres from SPUD (Small Planned Unit Development) to SPUD (Small Planned Unit Development) for a property generally located west of Lee Street, north of Herndon Street, East of Perkins Street, and south of West Line Street, as legally described in Section 26, Township 19 South, Range 24 East, Lake County, Florida; and providing an effective date. (Lee School 2025 SPUD)**

Commissioner Pederson introduced the ordinance to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the ordinance by title only.

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

PZD Miller stated the request was to rezone the old Lee School property from SPUD to SPUD with revised conditions. The property consists of just under five acres. It is generally located north of Herndon Street, south of West Line Street, east of Perkins and west of Lee Street. The request is for the future development of a one hundred-and two-unit, multifamily apartment complex. Some background on this project: the Lee School was abandoned in the early 2000s and no developers were interested in this property. There were some tire kickers, but no one serious. This property sat vacant for many, many years. In 2015, the property was sold by the school board to an Orlando investor. In 2016, it was rezoned under Ordinance 16-01, that allowed for assisted living, independent living, memory care or medical offices, and things of that nature. With that zoning, they were to keep both buildings. However, we had no serious developers come forward. In 2018, the property was sold to another investor and in 2021, another investor rezoned the property under Ordinance 21-19, which allowed for forty-nine town homes and fourteen apartments. Again, no developers came forward willing to develop that property. In 2024, the historic preservation board voted to allow the buildings to be demolished. They were demolished last year. Those buildings sat unused from the early 2000s through 2024, when they were torn down. Now, today, in 2025, the request is for an apartment complex. If they recall, at the January 27th city commission meeting, staff presented a proposal for the expansion of the downtown mixed-use future land use district. It would utilize the current downtown mixed-use district and expand it to about one hundred and twenty or one hundred and thirty acres. It expanded the district north to the old railroad right-of-way, which is the Leesburg/Wildwood trail. Then east past Pine Street and portions of Rambo Street toward the hospital, but not including the hospital. It then went south to Dixie Avenue and back west, which included the old Lee School site. The purpose of that change was to expand investment opportunities for areas in and adjacent to the downtown. They are anticipating that this will be the first project of what they hope to be several more over time. It will increase investment levels in the core downtown. However, remember these things take years, and if we start now, we will be successful. Under the PUD requirements, this would be a one hundred and two multifamily unit apartment complex. The applicant has asked for four floors, but the planning commission recommended that it be brought down to three floors. He noted that the old Lee School had two floors, but because there was a basement and very high ceilings, those structures were three floors. There are no other uses permitted in this proposal. There is a fifty-foot setback from the road and the unit sizes vary. The plan showed one and two-bedroom apartments, and he did not believe there would be any three-bedroom apartments. The parking will be designed per city code requirements. There are architectural standards required, and the facades are shown in the exhibits, which were reviewed and approved by the historic preservation board. It includes dark sky lighting, thirty-five percent open space and a twenty-five-foot buffer along the entirety of the property boundaries and green space. There is a fence required, which could be wrought iron with brick and stone columns. The standards include no St. Augustine grass and there will be two main access points; one on Lee Street and one on Herndon Street. The signage would be a decorative entry feature, no more than five feet tall. There will be at least ten thousand square feet of recreational area that could include a swimming pool, playground, or a fenced area for a small dog park and a gazebo. There are requirements in the PUD for monumentation, which memorializes the Lee School. Examples of that were included in the exhibits. Finally, the standard four-year phasing clause was included. This was the first reading and the applicant was present to answer any questions.

Commissioner Pederson said he liked this project. He appreciated the developer's patience because we put them through a lot. He was the one that asked for better parking last time. He even said he would be willing to go to four stories if that was what it took to get parking. However, he was fine with this development. He was thrilled about having this number of units within walking distance of the downtown. **Commissioner Burry** asked why the planning commission wanted three stories instead of four. **PZD Miller** answered they compared the size to the old Lee School. The old Lee School was functionally two stories. They had to walk up a flight of stairs to get to the first floor, each floor had high ceilings, and there was a basement. It functioned as a two-story building, but the height of the building was equivalent to three floors. The planning commission wanted it to be similar in height to the old Lee School. Efforts were made by the applicant, but it reduced the open space. He could not remember the exact numbers or percentages, but it did reduce the open space when they brought it down to three stories. That is a question that the city commission needs to make a decision on. **Commissioner Pederson** inquired if he knew how tall the former buildings were? **PZD Miller** answered no. He wanted to note that someone called him earlier and said they thought there was a typo on the height. He needs to go back and look at that. However, the applicant has requested four stories and the planning commission would like to see it reduced to three stories. **Mayor Reisman** echoed Commissioner Pederson's comments. This has been a long road and a long journey for everyone. We are excited to see this project come into fruition. He was excited to see foot traffic in the downtown. People will utilize the walking trails and sidewalks to get to the downtown. **PZD Miller** mentioned that Beacon College was very interested in this project. He did not know the latest negotiations, but they were interested in using as many of the units as possible. A lot of the Beacon College kids do not drive, and this would be within walking distance. This is within walking distance of Beacon College. They could walk down the trail or go down Meadow Street. Beacon College is very interested in pursuing this project. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any other commission comments. There were none. He asked for public comments.

John O'Kelly of 611 Lake Shore Drive said the Lee School project has been ongoing for well over five to six years. He was not opposed to the development, but he felt a four-story apartment building would be overwhelming for the single-family, one-story homes on the perimeter of that block. Many of them are historic old houses. The old Lee School buildings were in fact three-stories in height, because they had to walk up about ten steps to get to the first floor. For consideration, he would like the commission to consider reducing it to three stories. He did not know if that would create a problem with density or green space by having a larger footprint, but if there was a way to work that footprint and get the one hundred units, it would be good for the surrounding homes. The buildings would be placed on the north side of the property, so those folks would be looking up at a sixty-foot concrete wall. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there was any further public comment. There were none. He stated this item would lay over.

C. NON-ROUTINE ITEMS

1. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, adopting the street name for the Veterans Road Infrastructure Project at the Leesburg International Airport; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,984

Commissioner Pederson introduced the resolution to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the resolution by title only.

Commissioner Pederson made a motion to adopt the resolution and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

CM Minner explained the commission needed to vote on a name for the new road. The code reads that the city manager names roads, but he wanted to bring this one to the commission. It was for the Veterans Road Project. The airport is endeavoring to put a cul-de-sac and develop the northeast corner of the airport near the fire department. Basically, at this stage, we need a name. There were a couple of suggestions, but they need to fill in the blank, so they can move this project to the DRC. **Commissioner Pederson** said when he read the packet he thought the airport advisory board should be the ones to make the decision. However, he then saw that they deferred it to us. He also saw a comment that referenced calling it a court. He saw about twelve different street names, but only four or five of them had court listed as a suffix. **CM Minner** clarified that it was a county code. There was nothing in our code that says it had to be a court, it could be a cul-de-sac. He did not believe it had to be tied to court. **Mayor Reisman** informed the commission that he had two recommendations. The first was "Soule Court" in honor of Jodi Soule, who recently passed away from cancer. She was very instrumental and a longtime airport tenant. She was involved with the Experimental Aircraft Association, and she would help the young kids get into flying. The second recommendation was "HG Morris Court" in honor of Gary Morris. He was instrumental with getting the US Customs and the air traffic control tower. **Commissioner Pederson** said he was fine with either one. **Commissioner Berry** concurred.

Commissioner Burry made a motion to name the road "Soule Court" and Commissioner Pederson seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman asked if there were any other comments from the commission or the public. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Berry	Yes
Commissioner Connell	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Pederson	Yes
Mayor Reisman	Yes

Five yeas, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution.

7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS:
The following reports are provided to the Commission in accordance with the Charter/Ordinances. No action required.

A. Financial Reports for October - November 2024

Commissioner Berry requested that they move the money from the West Leesburg CRA of $120,000 to the CRA Reserve fund for future use. **CM Minner** stated that was in their budget packets, it is a quarterly report that is called rollovers. The project that Commissioner Berry is referring to was the Boys and Girls Club rollover of $120,000. Instead of having the lease with the Boys and Girls Club, she would like the money returned to the reserve account. **Mayor Reisman** asked about the police department and the security fee listed for March 16, 2025. He thought that was amended to where the police department was requesting to be paid up front. **CM Minner** wanted to confirm that he was referring to the police department and security. **Mayor Reisman** answered yes. They are working with the police department for security on March 16, 2025. He thought that was adjusted so they had to pay in advance. **CM Minner** wanted to know who they were. **Mayor Reisman** pointed out that the report said Carissa Mosley, and she was working with the police department for security at an event. He thought that was adjusted, so they had to pay in advance. **CM Minner** said he thought that was a forward payment, but he would double-check. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any other questions or comments. **Commissioner Pederson** wanted to verify they were moving the money to the CRA reserve fund from the Boys and Girls Club. **CM Minner** agreed. Instead of going to the Boys and Girls Club, the recommendation was to put it back in reserve.

8. CITY ATTORNEY ITEMS:

CA Watson had no items to address.

9. CITY MANAGER ITEMS:

CM Minner had no items to comment on.

10. ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Pederson had no comment tonight.

Commissioner Berry thanked the Lake Community Action Agency for their presentation. She thanked the commission for pushing those agreements and allowing for the home improvement grant program.

She saw all the pictures, and the few provided did not do it justice. She walked through the homes and saw how much work was done. She wanted to thank everyone for a job well done. She would write it up and send it to the Lake Community Action Agency and, hopefully, this will move the project into phase two. Hopefully, more people will come forward and join in.

Commissioner Connell had no comment.

Commissioner Burry had nothing to comment on.

Mayor Reisman thanked Tracy Dean, the airport manager, for helping to put on a wonderful event this past weekend. There were thousands of people who came out. He is looking forward to doing it again. Upcoming events, we have the Bass Fishing Tournaments over the next couple of weekends. The Lone Oak Cemetery is hosting a Special Moonlight Tour on February 13th. We have Discover Leesburg on February 14th. The Leesburg Chamber of Commerce, Taste of the Lake will be held on February 21st, and in the downtown we have the Blues-BQ on February 22nd. He looks forward to seeing everyone out at the events.

11. 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.

With a motion by Commissioner Pederson and a second by Commissioner Burry, the meeting adjourned at 7:17 pm.