

**AGENDA MINUTES
CITY COMMISSION MEETING
CITY HALL, 501 W MEADOW STREET
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2025 5:30 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg Commission held a regular meeting on Monday, February 24, 2025, at Leesburg City Hall. Mayor Reisman called the meeting to order at 5:32 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

The invocation and pledge of allegiance were held at the Greater Leesburg Community Redevelopment Agency Meeting just prior to this meeting.

Mayor Reisman informed the public that items 6A1, 6A2, and 6A3 (Cronin-Dewey Robbins) had been withdrawn by the applicant. These items will not be heard tonight. **CM Minner** pointed out these items were formally withdrawn by the applicant, and there is record of that in his office. The case ends here and any future modification requests for this parcel would have to start from the beginning. They would have to formulate an application, and have it reviewed by the planning commission before coming back to the city commission. If someone was to seek annexation or rezoning, they would have to start from scratch. At this point, this item is officially dead.

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

2. PROCLAMATIONS:

A. Leesburg High School Girls Weightlifting Team State Championship

Mayor Reisman read a proclamation extending heartfelt congratulations to the 2024-25 Leesburg High School "Lady Lifters" Girls Wrestling Team. He urged all citizens to applaud their exemplary sportsmanship and achievements, thanking them for being positive role models for the youth of our City and wishing them continued success in the upcoming years. Go Jackets!

3. PRESENTATIONS:

A. Retirement Awards:

Tino Anthony, IT Director
James Williams, Finance Director

CM Minner presented retirement awards to Tino Anthony, IT Director, and James Williams, Finance Director. They are two long-term employees retiring at the end of the month on February 28th. Tino Anthony was one of the first department heads he appointed. He has twenty years of dedicated service to the City of Leesburg, and the last ten or eleven years he has served as IT Director. He announced that Mike Andrews, Network Manager, will become the new IT Director effective March 1, 2025. James Williams has actually served the city longer because, back in the day, when we did not have an appointed City Clerk, he served as the City Clerk and Finance Director. He then left Leesburg and went to work for Mount Dora. However, twelve years later he got smart and came back. When he first started, Bill Spinelli was the Finance Director and when Mr. Spinelli left to chase his career, he hired Jim back as the Finance Director. He announced that Paul Austin, Customer Service Manager, will replace Jim Williams effective March 1, 2025. There are a couple of changes coming and great things ahead. He thanked both of them for their years of dedicated service. **Mayor Reisman** congratulated them both on their retirement and thanked them for their years of service to the city.

B. Habitat for Humanity Lake-Sumter - Woodland Park Update by Danielle Stroud

This presentation was not heard at this meeting.

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!

Amanda McLea, Chairperson of the Center for the Arts, thanked the commission and city staff for their consistent support. They have not had a great road over the last few years, but they are well on track. Again, she wanted to thank them for their support and to invite them to attend the Art Festival, which will be held March 8th and March 9th in downtown Leesburg. They have a great event planned that includes live performances. Both local and regional artists will be coming and there will be activities for all ages. She hoped to see everyone downtown.

Sanna Henderson said she was there to represent the Leesburg Heritage Society and museum. As a commission, they have done wonderful things throughout Leesburg and, under the current city manager, we now have a new swimming complex and Venetian Center. The list goes on and on. However, she now wanted them to think about Leesburg's history. We do have a Heritage Society here in Leesburg, and they have been here a long time. The Heritage Society has grown throughout the years, and it is important to preserve our history and to have a nice building to store it all in. When that building was first built, it was the Leesburg Woman's Club. It was also used by Lassiter Ware Insurance before it became a city

building. However, that building has been in the city for a long time, and it needs a lot of work. She got involved because she noticed the building needed work. She called the city manager and said the city needed to spend some money on the museum, our history and our heritage. He listened and advised her to come before the commission to make a presentation.

Jim Miller of the Heritage Society handed out some plans that their contractor put together. The contractor did the scope of work, and some preliminary plans. At some point, he would like to do a full presentation for the commission.

Daniel DiVenanzo of 1310 Crestview Drive, Mount Dora, said he was the general contractor, and he received his training at the University of Wisconsin. He has resided in Florida since 1987. He redeveloped a number of buildings in the Lake County area. He did most of the redevelopment for Beacon College. He has done work in downtown Mount Dora. He has done about thirty-five buildings in Eustis. He built four buildings in Umatilla along with their city hall building. The building is five thousand square feet, mission style. The structure is known as the Leesburg Heritage Museum. He inspected the structure, and it was very well and solidly built. In order to utilize it to its best use, it actually needs an elevator. He has done seven elevators in Lake County, which includes one right here in Leesburg. With the building on the south side, it is adjacent to a parking lot. They are proposing to build a one-thousand-square-foot building, and they are anticipating a two-story addition adjacent to allow for a main entry off the parking lot as well as an elevator and a second staircase as a secondary means of egress. There would be restrooms on the first and second floors. They would be ADA-compliant. On the second floor there will be a kitchen/break room. It would not include a stove or hood. If they were to do the renovations, the building would be about six thousand square feet. The budget is for a complete rehabilitation of the exterior, building with the addition and installing the elevator. They would replace all the glass doors, stucco the exterior and restore the original facade on Sixth Street to its original design. This includes renovating the entire interior of the building, which includes a new plumbing system, new electrical system, new HVAC systems, installation package and windows. This budget is close, but, of course, he was not necessarily the contractor. All he was doing was preparing the commission for a meeting. If they decided to move forward, he would guide them through the development process. Then, of course, it would go out for bid. He noted that he had only lost one bid in thirty years for construction and that was the city hall of Umatilla. However, when the contractor fell through, they hired him to finish the job. This would be a fabulous structure. They would end up soup to nuts with a new building for less than two hundred dollars per square foot. The numbers might be tightened up once they have the documents. He also has an architect named David Jazz with Jazz and Associates out of Mount Dora. He is an excellent restoration architect. Of course, they may have to go out for bid. The packet he provided showed sample elevations. There was a sketch of the elevation because they are proposing to make the elevation where the new entry matches the other entry. The windows were there, and then they built a drive-thru window, but that will be torn down.

Frank Stander said he was part of the fifth generation Leesburg family of Evander Lee and Leesburg was named after him. He would be his second great, great uncle. He had a sister who was his great, great-grandmother. He asked the city commissioners what happened in Leesburg sixty-eight years ago this week? We celebrated Leesburg Centennial. It was a week-long celebration celebrating the history of Leesburg. That is why they need this museum refurbished. He then asked what happened on March 3, 1845? Florida became the 27th state in the United States of America. That is why we need history. We have history at the Leesburg Heritage Museum, and we want to pass it on to future generations. Yes, it is a lot of money, but it is for the City of Leesburg, so it would be money well spent.

Roland Nunez of 1928 CR 25A said he was a proud Leesburg resident. He was there on behalf of the Hispanics of Lake County Association. They are a countywide nonprofit that improves community

engagement through workforce development, humanitarian outreach and multicultural awareness. Over the last three years, they have provided opportunities for engagement through everything from breakfasts, festivals, fairs and a survey that resulted in a sixty-eight-page community report. That report provided demographics of the community within Lake County. He was there to invite the commission to their quarterly breakfast. They rotate cities, but, of course, as a Leesburg resident, he was excited to have it come to Leesburg. They are hosting their first Leesburg breakfast at the Leesburg Resource Center on March 4, 2025, at 8:00 am. The breakfasts are themed on different areas that are important to the community and the theme of this breakfast is entrepreneurship and small business development. Local small business owners will have an opportunity to talk about their journeys and experiences to provide inspiration to others. They will also have the Lake County Small Business Development Center for those who are interested in their own entrepreneurship ventures. He asked for their support by promoting this opportunity and, if they were available, he would like them to attend as well as they wanted to be able to show the Leesburg residents support who might want to join. It is a great opportunity, and they can find more information on their website, www.holca.net. He thanked them for their continued support, which included the Hispanic Heritage Month Proclamation back in September.

Damon Nedos of 1081 Bradford Ridge said he was the coach at Leesburg High School for the boys and girls basketball teams. He thanked the mayor and commissioners for coming out and supporting them at their regional game. The girls finished and lost in the regional finals, but the boys made it to the state tournament, which will be held March 5th at 3 p.m at the Lakeland Center. They would love for everyone to come out and support them.

Theresa Conner of 910 Georgia Avenue said she was a commissioner for the Carver Heights Montclair Area CRA. She thanked the mayor and the public works department for helping to clean up the community this past Saturday. They had a great time. They picked up about six tons of trash. They are planning another big cleanup event to get more people involved. She did have a presentation, but she did not get it in on time for it to be checked, so she would email so they could view it.

Alice Hoffman of the Plantations said she was there back in December when they were discussing fluoridation of the water and voted. She did not know what had happened between then and now, but she commended the city on bringing this back up. She is a health coach/health advocate, and she wanted to urge them to resist putting fluoride in the water in Leesburg. Studies have shown it to be a neurotoxin. It is toxic to our health, especially children. It shows it can lower IQ levels, and it can cause many other health implications. In fact, if you look at the back of the package for the fluoride that would be put in the water, there is a skull and crossbones on it. Clearly, that is not something we should put in the water or into our bodies. It is not healthy, and she was glad to see them considering suspending the plans to fluoridate the water.

Nicole King of Sorrento thanked the commission for bringing the fluoride topic back up. She hoped that they could have a better solution to potentially remove it and keep it out of the water. Our most vulnerable communities depend on this conversation, and she knows that there were some comments made by the city manager a few weeks ago, and it went on public record that there were some concerns that people were bringing these to you guys needlessly and that, regardless of the concerns of fluoride, it was being seen as a conspiracy theory even tying it in at the time that this was occurring during the time that Robert Kennedy Jr., was potentially going to be appointed. She could not in good faith believe that anyone would want to think that it was a conspiracy theory to want to have informed consent protected. She was a registered nurse in this community, and she takes that very seriously. This is a fundamental right for all human beings in the community of Leesburg that in 2006, the National Research Council deemed fluoride a neurotoxin, but it was a federal court ruling last year that just confirmed this based on evidence that was presented to them during that time. Fluoride is considered a medical intervention that is

prescribed by a physician. Unregulated amounts of fluoride can cause fluorosis, and toxicokinetics evidence has shown that fluoride can pass through the brain during invitro analysis. It is really disappointing that, despite all the overwhelming evidence based on literature and federal and state guidance, that fluoride has the potential to harm. They should make the decision to remove the unreasonable risk to pregnant women and children by removing fluoride from the water. She was there respectfully, and she wanted to stress the importance of this. Instead of airing on the side of caution months ago, she could only assume that there was pressure by some of the local dentists and others that were deciding factors that pushed medicating Leesburg communities with fluoride and why this decision continued. If fluoride was such an important need, there could have been business decisions made to take that \$600,000 and use it to find ways to make fluoride products more available to those who want them. We keep showing up because these decisions continue to be made despite federal and state guidance coming back and saying that it was a health hazard to continue leaving fluoride in the public water systems. Respectfully, this committee's job is to ensure that the community has access to safe drinking water. It is not their decision as a panel to take away that right of informed consent. Once again, please decide to do the right thing and shut down any efforts to move forward with adding fluoride to Leesburg's drinking water.

Karen Motley of 2445 Fairwinds Drive, Tavares, said she was a registered nurse in the area. She knows the FDA has deemed fluoride as a drug because it is a treatment. Being a nurse, we come in contact with medications that are pulled off the market because they have found problems with the medications. Fluoride can cause problems for the community and for those that take it. With fluoride, we have new research studies coming available. We do have a federal ruling from September 2024 that says the amounts of fluoride that is put in the water can cause neurotoxic and IQ problems, and the more water you drink, your body may not be able to excrete it all out. So, over years and years of consuming fluoride it will accumulate in your body. She is an older individual, but she hoped that they would consider not moving forward with the fluoride in the water. With the vaccine, they were given the ability to opt out with a medical or religious exemption if they chose not to take it, but with this particular drug they did not have the capability to opt out unless they put a water filtration system on the house. She asked that they consider not moving forward with it.

Carolyn VanDyken of 120 Palmora Boulevard said she was back to talk about Fluoride. Respectfully, there are opinions on both sides, and she was not a scientist or a doctor, so she was not there to go on about fluoride, but ultimately, it boils down to freedom and the freedom to choose what goes into our bodies. While the intentions of the program might have been the best of intentions, it is ultimately up to the citizens on what we consume. She asked the commission to side on the side of freedom and allow the citizens the choice of whether they want to consume fluoride naturally or from toothpaste.

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.A.1 - City Commission Regular Meeting Minutes of February 10, 2025.

5.C.4 - Execute a Renewal Lease Agreement with the West Leesburg Community Development Corporation (WLCDC) for office space at the Leesburg Resource Center

Commissioner Pederson moved to adopt the Consent Agenda except for 5.A.1 and 5.C.4, and Commissioner Burry 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 February 10, 2025

Mayor Reisman said in the meeting minutes under Non-Routine Items, the naming of "Soule Court" at the Leesburg Airport should read "experimental aircraft association" and not "environmental assessment". He asked for that change to be made.

B. PURCHASING ITEMS:

- 1. Purchase request for vehicle equipment for the City of Leesburg Police Department in the amount of \$89,441.25 from Global Public Safety, a Single Source vendor. This equipment is for eight (8) new replacement Police Department vehicles.**

C. RESOLUTIONS:

- 1. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, amending the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget for the General, Stormwater, Greater Leesburg CRA, Carver Heights CRA, Highway 441/27 CRA, Capital Projects, Electric, Gas, Water, Wastewater, Solid Waste, Airport, Discretionary Sales Tax, Police Forfeiture and Fleet Services Funds for the carryovers from fiscal year 2023-24; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,985

- 2. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, amending the Fiscal Year 2024-25 Budget for the General, Capital Projects, Electric, Gas, Wastewater, Discretionary Sales Tax and Fleet Services Funds for the First Quarter; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,986

3. **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 City Homes, Leesburg LLC, regarding natural gas service to the development known as Silver Lake Estates-Phase 2; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,987

4. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute a Renewal Lease Agreement with the West Leesburg Community Development Corporation (WLCDC) for office space at the Leesburg Resource Center; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,988

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 Berry asked what the reason was for doing three-year leases because this organization had been established there for nineteen years. Why are we renewing them every three years? Is it due to organizational structure or what? **CM Minner** said he did not have a good answer, but that is how it has been done in the past. In the past, we have done three-year leases, but they could change that.

Commissioner Berry inquired if they could modify the lease to ten years? **CM Minner** responded that if the commission decided upon ten years, they could do that because city staff does not have preference on leases. We have partnered with them for some time, but it is the pleasure of the commission.

Commissioner Berry wanted to know if any commissioner would object to extending the term of the lease. **Commissioner Connell** stated he does not think the city should do long-term leases.

Commissioner Berry asked if ten years was too long. **Commissioner Connell** replied yes, and said three years is more than sufficient. Ten years would be an extremely long lease. **Commissioner Berry** mentioned that the West Leesburg CDC is housed at the Resource Center, so to keep doing three-year leases is questionable. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know if it was a big deal for them to come back and ask for an extension to the lease. **Commissioner Berry** thought it was unnecessary. It is hard for them to do longevity planning when they have to come back every three years to extend the lease. As the commissioner of that district, it is hard to say if they will be in this building or not and that was why she wanted to bring it up and ask. **Commissioner Connell** said he understands, but he has concerns with the city entering into long-term leases. Three-to-five-years is the longest the city should ever go on a lease. **Mayor Reisman** said he would support a ten-year lease. **Commissioner Pederson** said the building was constructed for them, and we customized it for them. He fully supports everything they are doing, but he was not crazy about a ten-year lease. We are not pulling the rug out from under the organization, but originally the basis for three years was due to certain requirements. He might be able to do five years, but he could not support ten years. **Commissioner Berry** said she was thinking about

stability, and she would like to move forward even though she does not have the votes.

Commissioner Berry made a motion that the West Leesburg CDC lease at the Resource Center be extended to a ten-year term instead of a three-year term.

Mayor Reisman asked for a second to the motion. There was no second, so the motion failed. We are back to the original motion of three years. He asked if there was any further discussion. There was none. He asked for public comments.

Fred Griffin Jr., President of West Leesburg CDC, said he was glad Commissioner Berry brought this up, because when he sat down with the board they questioned him about the short-term lease since the Resource Center was built around the West Leesburg CDC to help the community. He was curious about why it was three years and when he asked the city manager he said he did not know why. He knows Commissioner Connell was not a big fan of ten-year leases, but looking at the landscape of other organizations, they have twenty and forty-year leases. This building was built for them, and it is very difficult to operate and plan for the future when they have short-term leases. This building was built for this purpose, and they do not plan to move anywhere else. He is in the office every day, so he sees the operations. They have movement, but they would like to see more movement.

Mayor Reisman asked if there were any other comments. 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.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND NON-ROUTINE ITEMS:

A. SECOND READING OF ORDINANCES

- 1. An Ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, annexing certain real property consisting of approximately 9.94 +/- acres; and being generally located north of Dewey Robbins Road, east of U.S. Highway 27, lying in Section 31, Township 20 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 3; and providing an effective date. (Cronin-Dewey Robbins ANNX)**

WITHDRAWN ORDINANCE 25-06

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 9.94 +/- acres from Lake County Rural to City of Leesburg Low Density Residential, for a property generally located north of Dewey Robbins Road, east of U.S. Highway 27, lying in Section 31, Township 20 South, Range 25 East, Lake County, Florida; and providing an effective date. (Cronin-Dewey Robbins SSCP)**

WITHDRAWN ORDINANCE 25-07

3. **An Ordinance of the City of Leesburg, Florida, changing the zoning on approximately 9.94 +/- acres from Lake County A (Agriculture) to City of Leesburg SPUD (Small Planned Unit Development) to allow for 48 townhomes and 15,000 square feet of commercial for a property generally located north of Dewey Robbins Road, east of U.S. Highway 27, lying in Section 31, Township 20 South, Range 25 East, Lake County, Florida; and providing an effective date. (Cronin-Dewey Robbins SPUD)**

WITHDRAWN ORDINANCE 25-08

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)**

ADOPTED ORDINANCE 25-09

CA Watson asked anyone wishing to provide testimony on the Lee School 2025 SPUD case to stand and raise their right hand. He swore them in.

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

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

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

PZD Miller said the request was to rezone the old Lee School property. It is approximately five acres located north of Herndon Street, south of West Line Street, east of Perkins Street and west of Lee Street. The request is for a future development of a one-hundred and two-unit multifamily apartment complex.

The school abandoned this property in the early 2000s and since then no developers have come forward. They have only seen tire kickers. In 2015, the property was sold by the school board to an investor. In 2016, that investor under Ordinance 16-01 rezoned the property to allow for assisted living, independent living, memory care and medical offices. However, no developers were interested in the property. In 2018, the property was sold to another investor. Then in 2021, that investor under Ordinance 21-19 rezoned the property to allow for forty-nine town homes and fourteen apartment units. However, again, no developers were found to be interested in the property. In 2024, the Historic Preservation Board voted to allow the buildings to be demolished. So, essentially, nothing has happened over the last twenty years on that property. The applicant had worked with the city commission and the planning commission, but there was no way to save the buildings. They could not be used for positive economic use. The current request is for an apartment complex and, under the PUD requirements for this proposal, it is a one-hundred and two multifamily-unit complex. There would be four floors as seen in the attachments. The Planning Commission voted and asked for three floors in their motion. No other uses are permitted in the proposal. There is a fifty-foot setback from the roads, the unit sizes vary, and there would be one and two-bedroom apartments only. The parking will be per City of Leesburg code requirements. There are design and architectural standards shown in the exhibits, which include dark sky lighting and thirty-five percent open space. There is a twenty-five-foot buffer going around the entirety of the property and green space. A fence is required, which will be wrought iron, brick or stone columns. Bahia or Bermuda grass is to be used, there will be no St. Augustine grass since it uses a lot of water. There will be access points on Lee Street and Herndon Street. The signage will be decorative with entry features of concrete brick or stucco with a maximum height of five feet. There is a recreational requirement of ten thousand square feet to be devoted to a separate recreation area, which could be a swimming pool, playground, dog park, etc. There is a requirement in the PUD for monumentation memorializing the Lee School and examples of that were shown in the exhibits. They have the standard phasing clause which reverts this property to RE-1, which is one acre per unit if substantial commencement does not occur within forty-eight months. Michael Rankin of the Land Planning Group is here to represent the case and answer any questions.

Commissioner Burry indicated that there was some verbiage about the revised conditions. Has anything changed with regard to the original proposal? **PZD Miller** answered yes. The proposed PUD that allows forty-nine units is the revision. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any questions for the applicant by the commission. **Commissioner Connell** said the proposal is for four stories, but four stories are too high for this area. He agrees with the planning commission. He does not want them to go more than three stories. Four stories in the middle of this neighborhood is way too high. **Commissioner Pederson** stated he went to Ocala and drove the project they did there. He saw numerous four-story buildings and that was the solution. We put this developer through a lot, and in the debates he said if they could get the parking satisfactory he would support four floors. He was excited about this project, and he appreciated the developer's patience. This is big for the downtown, and it is good for our city. **Commissioner Connell** pointed out that they could still do three stories and get the same number of units. However, they would eat up a little of the open green space. Four stories are way too high for this area and the surrounding neighborhood. Doing three stories does not change the number of units; it only changes the amount of open green space because they would have to make the footprint of the building bigger. **Commissioner Burry** said at the last meeting there was discussion about the elevations because the old Lee School was built up and the first and second floors were taller than a normal floor. What is the height difference between the four floors and the old Lee School? **PZD Miller** explained that the Lee School was deceptive. It was a two-story building, but it functioned as a three-floor building because it had a basement. If you remember, you had to walk up eight or ten steps to get to the first floor and the ceiling height was much higher than a normal building. Visually, the Lee School building was a three-story building even though it functioned as two stories. The net result is that we will see one additional story versus two additional stories. **Commissioner Pederson** wished we had known the height of that building since he asked that question at the last meeting. From a perception standpoint, the old Lee School looked

to be over three floors and that was where he was going with that comment. **PZD Miller** commented that when looking at the standard floors of an office building, the old Lee School would have been three floors. However, the buildings had higher ceilings and an elevated first floor. **Commissioner Pederson** said the net difference could be six or eight feet. **Commissioner Burry** pointed out that more people are coming in saying they do not want more urban sprawl. It is an ideal location to have units close to our downtown. With four stories we are going up instead of sprawling out, and that is a good idea.

Commissioner Connell said he was not opposed to the development of the property. He was opposed to the overall height of the building. It would be a four-story building, so plus or minus it would be at least forty-feet-high. At ten feet per floor, we are looking at forty feet, which is too high for the area. They can still get the same number of units with three floors. **Mayor Reisman** pointed out that he would rather see more green space than height. **Commissioner Connell** said there was a city park just down the street. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any other comments. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

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

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

B. FIRST READING OF ORDINANCES

1. None

C. NON-ROUTINE ITEMS

1. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida suspending the Fluoride Injection system to the water distribution system; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,989

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 Berry seconded the motion.

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

CM Minner said we have talked about this ad nauseam. He did not know about controversies or conspiracy theories, but he would not back off from his commentary and there were political and financial factors for bringing this back to the commission, which also changed his mind about fluoridating the water. First was SB 700 by Senator Truenow. He introduced a bill in this year's legislative session that requires no additives other than disinfecting additives be added to the drinking

water. Obviously, that bill has a long way to go, so he reached out to our lobbyist, Ryan Matthews, and almost everyone who follows the legislation believes this bill has a better-than-average chance of passing in its form. Also, at the federal level, with the appointment of Robert Kennedy, Jr. to the health and human services, there will definitely be some different concepts about how we move forward with public health. As a matter of timing, there are no official state or federal directives to change public water drinking formulas. However, with our luck, by the time we get the project finished, there will be. Administratively, he stopped the project last week to save as much as we could. He updated the commission via email on Friday. He provided the update which included a presentation from the director of public works. It showed that we would save about \$225,000 out of the \$600,000 project. We also have \$100,000 of equipment that we believe can be used in different fashions. With that, he recommended terminating the project. **Commissioner Pederson** stated this has been a controversial subject. He flipped his vote on it, and that was the only time he had done that in six years. He did not regret his vote supporting it a year ago, but with the changes in the political landscape, he could not support moving forward. He would vote to terminate it. **Commissioner Berry** added that she originally agreed and voted for fluoride. It was originally presented to help children and fight cavities, so she voted for it. She focused on her district and the kids that did not have dental plans. We used to have fluoride in the water years ago. It was very helpful and no one had any problems. However, based on the information presented and with the votes that would be coming, she agreed that they were being forced by the political arena that fluoride was not good. She thanked Commissioner Connell for bringing it up in December because he brought it to light. However, at that time, she was still for it because nothing had been proven or stated. But, now she has had a change of heart. **Commissioner Pederson** stated he did not want to base his comments on the political landscape nor did he want to debate science and different studies. He was referring to the changes in Tallahassee and DC. **Commissioner Berry** commented that she was referencing that too. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any other commission comments. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

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

Four yeas, one nay, 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 - December 2024

Mayor Reisman said in the report he noticed we had three individuals working with the police department. He assumed it was for security due to alcohol being served at the events. He was not sure why they were still seeing that, because that policy had changed. Also, in the report it showed one person working with the electric department, and he assumed that was for apprentice reimbursement. However, that total has not changed in over a year, so apparently, they are not working with the electric department. That person owes the city \$2,500. He wanted to know if there were any legal actions we could take. Could we go after the people that owe the city money? **CA Watson** said they could take legal action and go after the people who owe the city money. He would be happy to review and evaluate the records. He

would talk to the city manager about how to move forward. However, every situation is unique. He would be happy to review them because they may have to take legal action to get them resolved. **Mayor Reisman** added that some of them go way back. So, apparently they have not been working with the city. He also thought the commission voted to change the policy for police/security at alcohol-related events where they had to pay in advance. So, why are we still seeing it? **CM Minner** stated it was an accumulative report, but he would get a better answer. **Mayor Reisman** wanted to know why they were choosing which events would have police present. **CM Minner** responded that it was chosen for us. We have a policy that is based on the number of people and if alcohol is served. Remember this is an accumulative list, and the code requires that we have police protection or police force if there is alcohol served and if there is a certain number of people. **Police Chief (PC), Joseph Iozzi**, said he could not specifically recall the number of people, but alcohol events do require an officer to be present. There is a different detail rate for alcohol versus standard detail. **Mayor Reisman** said there were two events over the weekend that had no officers. Those events were sponsored by the city, or we were a sponsor of those events. He wanted to know why we did not have officers at those events, since we require people or outside entities to have officers when they serve alcohol. **Recreation Director (RD), Travis Rima**, stated there is a special event policy and a Venetian Center policy, and anything at the Venetian Center, according to the policy, requires them to have an officer. When it comes to special events, it is written in the code, and it says it is at the police department's discretion. The special events code is in chapter twenty-six. With the Venetian Center, that was a directive from the commission. **Mayor Reisman** said there was an event at the Venetian Center on Friday night that had no officers. He was not sure why they were approving applications when they did not have an officer. **CM Minner** asked if he was referring to the Taste of Lake event. **Mayor Reisman** agreed and said there have been other events he attended where no officers were there. If we are going to pick and choose, it needs to be all or none. **CM Minner** stated they would have an officer at the chamber event. **Commissioner Pederson** said he would like to give the police department discretion based on the group and what the event is. **Mayor Reisman** said if he rented the facility and served alcohol, he would have an officer, and he would have to pay them. So, if an officer is required per the Venetian Center policy, why are we picking and choosing? He was not saying we should have charged them because it was a city-sponsored event. He was just saying that we should have had an officer at those events.

Commissioner Berry wanted to know what other event was there that did not have an officer there other than the Taste of Lake event. **Mayor Reisman** replied these are city-sponsored events. **Commissioner Berry** thought they had to have a police officer. **Commissioner Pederson** inquired if the issue was, if it were a city-sponsored event, we should have police there. **Mayor Reisman** answered yes. Every other organization is required, so he was not sure why we were sponsoring these events. **Commissioner Pederson** stated he attended that event and did not even think that would be an issue. This is a non-issue for him. He was not worried about it. **Mayor Reisman** stated if we are not going to enforce it for everyone, we need to change our policy. **Commissioner Pederson** did not agree. We had some trouble there for a while, but this was a city event and if the city event went bad, we would not do it again. **Mayor Reisman** said he respects the comments. **Commissioner Pederson** mentioned that tonight we have overly complicated three different subjects. One was for a sign, and now we are talking about events at the Venetian Center. There was an incident a year or so ago where there was some trouble in the parking lot and that was a large party. In fact, all four venues were full that night, so it was a bit chaotic. **Mayor Reisman** said he had nothing against the organizations. He believes if alcohol is being served they should have an officer there, especially since it was a city-sponsored event. **Commissioner Berry** asked when the Venetian Center is being rented it does not require an officer, and that it is up to the police department to decide if they are needed and alcohol has to be a part of it? So, what if there was no alcohol? **Mayor Reisman** remarked that if there is no alcohol, no officer is required. If there is alcohol, then an officer is required. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to know about the other city buildings that are rented. Are officers there? **Mayor Reisman** did not believe alcohol was allowed to be served there. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to know if an officer would be required regardless of whether

alcohol was being served. So, is alcohol the determining factor for police presence? **Mayor Reisman** agreed. **Deputy City Manager (DCM), Robert Hicks**, said that was a trigger that set out whether they were going to have a police officer there. Also, when the Venetian Center came together, we put together the best policy we could to fit all the nuances that were occurring. They then started leaning towards whether it was an outside event that was not sponsored by the city because of liability reasons. If it is sponsored by the city, we are covered there, especially if it has alcohol, and you are selling tickets to the public or charging them to come in for a donation for a cup of alcohol, because the state uses that as whether they need a liquor license. That is where that started, and then the nuance came in about what if it was a ticketed charity event put on by the chamber. However, they will do a review of that to get best practices and see what other cities are doing, but it is a nightmare to come up with an exact policy that says this is what we are going to do. **Commissioner Berry** inquired about safety concerns for people walking to and from their cars. They could get robbed, someone could be lurking near a car or break into a car. Why does it have to pertain to alcohol? If you rent a building, you should have a police officer for security since we already have maintenance staff there for locking and closing the building. That should be a standard. We should offer that when someone rents city property. **DCM Hicks** responded that two things came into play in that. We have restaurants and bars all around the city that have parking lots where they do not have anyone there, but we have quite a few events with limited staff. On the police department side, having somebody fill that every time for a two-to-four-hour detail can become problematic. There are issues to look at there, but they will work with the police chief and the recreation director. They will look at other cities. However, the Venetian Center has been a very successful venue and as it grows they will look into that. **Commissioner Pederson** stated so far he was only aware of one event that got a little out of hand, and that led to the change in policy. Other than that, he was not aware of any other incidents. **DCM Hicks** replied there have been some events that got a little spicy. **CM Minner** pointed out that those events were not city events. **Commissioner Pederson** stated that was the difference. **CM Minner** stated they work at the commission's direction. This has been a policy that we have had since the Venetian Center was built. It was a Chamber/City event for Taste of Lake, and we did not require police protection there. If the commission wants police protection at any event that has alcohol, they will do that. However, it will take a motion of the commission to direct that, and an informal motion is fine. Again, there is a significant delineation between a city-sponsored event and a private event that uses public facilities. That would become a liability issue. Frankly, the clientele that participates in the event may need more policing than others. However, if we want one standard for everyone to follow, he understands that. At the end of the day, that does increase our costs and, if that is the commission's desire, they will see to it in the future. **Commissioner Berry** questioned if we ever had security or a police officer, someone who actually works for the city as a security person? **CM Minner** replied that a city-sponsored event outside Bikefest is an event that has a couple of hundred people and, typically, we have not had to have police coverage there. **Commissioner Berry** said she was referring to all city-owned facilities. It could be the Resource Center, Venetian Center or Teen Center. **CM Minner** answered if there was alcohol, yes. However, if it was a city event held at any facility, we would not require a police officer to be there, excluding Bikefest. **Commissioner Berry** asked if they could circle back to discuss this, because she attended the chamber event and even though she did not feel threatened, she had to walk behind the baseball fields to get to her car. She had someone else walking with her. However, for safety reasons, if something were to happen, even though she does not want anything to happen, she does not want to wait until something happens to react. She wants to be proactive. It is not safe all the time, not just with alcohol and non-alcohol. It is people in general. She does not think we should take chances. She knows at the Resource Center in the back of the parking lot it is very dark. When they have meetings, people have to walk around, so people usually walk in groups when leaving, and she experienced that as well. She had no problems on Friday, but she did have to walk behind to the baseball field, and she had someone to walk with her. **Mayor Reisman** stated he was fine with staff bringing something in the future, because this is something we should discuss. **Commissioner Pederson** clarified that he was okay with the current policy, and he would like to give the police

department more discretion. Any group can hire police for an event. He does not like all the mandating and the policy has worked fine. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to know if that fee would be paid when they sign the rental agreement and would it state that they are asking for police. **Commissioner Pederson** pointed out that is what started the whole conversation, because he thought the applicant was required to prepay. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any other comments. There were none.

8. CITY ATTORNEY ITEMS:

CA Watson had no items to address.

9. CITY MANAGER ITEMS:

CM Minner had no items to address.

10. ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Connell had no additional comments.

Commissioner Burry commented that in light of the vote tonight on fluoride, he wanted everyone to consider and think about how our city's right to choose what we want to do was being eroded by Tallahassee. We had talked about this in the past on different subjects, but he wanted everyone to think long and hard about what was going on.

Commissioner Pederson had no further comment.

Commissioner Berry wanted to inform every one of the events coming up. The Men of Distinction are having their Black Tie Gala on February 28th at 7:00 p.m. On Saturday, March 1st, there will be a parade, and the commission will be participating in that as a group. After the parade, they are kicking off the Black Heritage Festival on Pine Street. At the Venetian Center at 7:00 p.m. they will be modeling for the V-Max Production. After that, there is a boxing party, and that is open to the public. It runs from 8:00 p.m. to midnight. She believed that was being presented by the recreation department.

Mayor Reisman reminded everyone about the Leesburg Arts Festival downtown. Also, County Commissioner Sabatini reached out to him about the Leesburg High School boys' basketball team because they are going to the state championships. He asked if the city would be willing to put up some money to help the team with lodging and food. The County would match those funds. He reached out to the school to see about the costs, and they said it would be a little over five thousand dollars, which includes the Airbnb, transportation and food. He asked the city commission if they were willing to help cover those costs. **Commissioner Pederson** wanted to know the amount. **Mayor Reisman** said it would be up to twenty-five hundred and the county would match. **Commissioner Pederson** stated it was really a school board expense, but he would support it. He was excited to see them make the trip to Lakeland. **Mayor Reisman** asked if this item needed a motion and vote. **CM Minner** mentioned that the county would match this request. He believed the City of Eustis was also involved, but the concept was that if everyone kicked in, the county would match equally up to \$2,500. **Mayor Reisman** asked if the commission was okay with that. In a show of nods, the commission agreed to fund up to twenty-five hundred dollars. **Commissioner Burry** added they have done this in the past. **Commissioner Pederson** agreed. We supported the Leesburg High School Band when they went to New York for the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade.

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 6:43 p.m.