

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg Commission held a regular meeting on Monday, March 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. Habitat for Humanity Lake-Sumter - Woodland Park Update by Danielle Stroud

Veronica Troxell, Programs Director of Habitat for Humanity, said she was there to speak about the Spruce up the Block Party in Woodland Park. She had the honor of working closely with families through the programs they offer for homeownership, home repair and different educational programs. The Spruce Up the Block Program started in April 2018. Their first project was in Mount Dora; however, they quickly spread the program throughout Lake and Sumter County. Basically, through the Adopt a Block Program, they pick a block in a city or an area of the community that has either been forgotten, the residents do not have access to resources, or they do not have the attention they so much deserve from their city. Through this program, families are able to apply to receive home repair and beautification.

Basically, they go in and clean up the exterior of their community by updating multiple homes at the same time in that community. The families who apply have to income-qualify. This program is a bit different because we select the community. It is not based on individual qualifications. They pick a block, community or neighborhood. Just by living in that community, you can participate in the program. Since 2018, they have had fourteen block parties, and they have served over one hundred families. In addition to helping families, they have helped local community centers, churches and other facilities that offer services to the community. They indirectly help families by helping churches and other community partners where citizens gather. They have preserved a lot of homes and community centers. Through this program, they are able to connect with people throughout the community. They found that citizens worry about their needs not being addressed. They have figured out how to talk to them to figure out what their needs are so they can help address them. They bring community partners together to support them while serving the individuals/families in the community. They are able to have successful Spruce Up the Block parties throughout Lake and Sumter County with the help of local vendors. Florida Paints, one of their vendors, donated over four hundred gallons of paint. That paint was donated to their organization so they could help serve these neighborhoods. The more we have donated to projects, the more we can do in that community. The Niagara Bottling Company donated pallets of water and Bin There Dump That donated dumpsters so they could clean up these communities at a more affordable cost. The helping hands that do the work throughout the communities come directly from the community itself. They invite the families in that community to work alongside the volunteers, which creates and helps lift their community spirit. The families help give back to their neighbors. The Leesburg Construction Academy was one of their newer helping hands for this project. There are youth groups from all over Lake and Sumter County that help. These groups go to both Lake and Sumter County Block Partys to work. This program is very interconnected. They are college groups that come and stay with them, and they help directly on these projects. Ohio State, Massachusetts Maritime Academy and the University of Toledo volunteer their time to help on these projects. They also have interns that come and stay with them from France every summer, to help on different projects. This program brings vendors, the community and helping hands together, which is why they have been successful with the different block parties. More specifically, the Woodland Park community is very special. They adopted the entire Woodland Park community for this block party. There were forty-seven homes in total. However, not every family participated because some families rented their homes and some were vacant. They had eighteen families apply for the block party and fifteen homes received updates. They are painting thirteen homes in total, and eleven homes have been completed. They have to wrap this special project up by the end of the school year, because they have been working directly with the Leesburg High School Construction Academy. There are two different groups of students that help. The first is known as the Dream Team, and they help Habitat for Humanity build brand-new homes. The other group of students is known as the CREW. The CREW is the group that has been helping them throughout the school year with this project. It has been fun getting to know these kids. They come out multiple times a week to help. The students worked directly with the Woodland Park families to paint, fix fascia and fix soffits. The students on the CREW worked directly with families, volunteers and vendors. They have had roughly eighty additional volunteers thus far with more scheduled to come out and join them to finish sprucing up Woodland Park. If you have not been through the Woodland Park subdivision lately, it looks very different compared to a few months ago.

Sheila Snow, a Woodland Park homeowner, said the Woodland Park community wanted to extend their thanks and gratitude to Commissioner Berry, the Habitat for Humanity, the High School Construction Academy students and all the volunteers from Lake and Sumter County for all their hard work and time in helping them revitalize the neighborhood.

Cressida Foster of 2106 Woodland Boulevard said their community is also known as Hollywood. She wanted to thank everyone who came out and volunteered. She gave a special shout out to the University of Toledo and the Knights of Columbus because those were very nice groups who helped with no

complaints. The Hollywood community looks like Hollywood. It looks good and everyone should ride through and check it out. She is so proud of her neighborhood now.

Continuing, **Ms. Troxell** said one of her favorite things about the Spruce Up the Block Party is that it gives back to the community and that is why this program was created. It also connects families in the community. Often, communities are told what they need, and they want to change that script because we should be asking them what they need. This was such a great project. She gave a big shout-out and thanked the City of Leesburg for their support along with the Leesburg High School Construction Academy for helping them. She gave a shout-out to Dan McCauley, the Construction Academy Leader for the CREW. He volunteered and worked in Woodland Park every week. He was very instrumental and provided a lot of support. He led volunteers onsite when their staff could not be there. However, this program could not have been done without the support of the City of Leesburg, Leesburg High School, and Mr. McCauley. She showed some before and after renderings of the homes they worked on. Finalizing her comments, she said this program inspires the community to serve themselves. It inspires people to pick up a paintbrush to help themselves and their neighbors. It inspires people to get out and do the things they have been putting off. She extended an invitation to the City Commission to attend the Spruce Up the Block Party in Woodland Park. It is scheduled for March 29th. At 8:00 a.m. they can come out and roll up their sleeves, and do some volunteering. They are putting out mulch and finishing up the landscaping. They consider this putting the final bow on the project. Then, at 11:30 a.m., the party gets started with food, fun and entertainment. They would love for the commission to come out and help celebrate all the hard work.

Commissioner Berry thanked everyone who was involved in this project. She asked that they pass that word on to Danielle. She was so elated to see the interest that was taken in an area where it was much-needed. This was a small project, but it can be taken and continued throughout the City of Leesburg. All we need to do is join hands and make improvements throughout the community. **Ms. Troxell** commented that if you have not been through the area recently, you should go and check it out. They stepped up and got it done. **Mayor Reisman** thanked her for the presentation. She did a wonderful job with it. The presentation was informative and eye-opening. He is looking forward to continuing the relationship.

B. 2026 Commission Seat Redistricting Proposal

CM Minner started by saying, back in January, Mayor Reisman brought up the fact that we needed to look at redistricting the City of Leesburg. A couple of years ago, we redistricted the city. However, we knew this was coming due to The Villages' development. We knew once The Villages grew, they would inundate one commission district or another. Back in 2021, we changed from the old setup. We used to have three commission districts (one, two and three), and two at-large seats. At that time, we switched to five single member districts. However, the biggest growth area was The Villages, and that growth is currently in district two. Back in 2021, when we did the redistricting of districts, there were guidelines we had to follow. The districts had to be as equal as possible as far as the population. It was not based on voter age; it was based on the total population in the district. We have to be as equal as possible with the total population. We should also follow census blocks or significant boundaries, such as roads, streets, rivers and creeks, those types of things. The districts need to be as contiguous and compact as possible. We need to preserve communities of interest while not diluting minority voting strength. We also need to protect incumbent districts. The next city election will be held in November 2026. Mayor Reisman and Commissioner Berry's seats will be up for reelection, while Commissioner Pederson will be termed out. We will have three districts/seats up for election. When redrawing districts, we have to protect incumbent districts and those are districts one and two. Those elected officials have the right to seek reelection in the district that elected them in the first place, and that is a significant issue when redistricting. Nor do we want to draw crazy or bizarre district lines, although we do see that happen from time to time. With the

population in each district, we have to keep it plus or minus three percent. We also want to see the continuation of the majority-minority district. One thing that made the redistricting a little more difficult is that we are doing it in an off year. The data we used is similar to the 2020 data from the Census that came out in 2021. We had to do a couple of other things to weave in new data. The first thing we did was continue to use the same census blocks. The census department has what they call the American Census Survey. Every year, the federal government does their best to update that census information. However, it is not as widely accepted as "the census", which comes out every ten years, but it is seen as a good data source. We also have building permits, so we know where the houses have been or are being constructed since 2021. The biggest deviation is that we use extrapolated data for the population as well as demographically. We use two different numbers, which are acceptable numbers. In areas outside The Villages, that number is 2.3 people per household unit. So, in the areas where we have new housing, we know we have that data. For example, with Eagle Tail and the other new subdivisions that have popped up outside The Villages, we know how many houses have come in from 2021 to today because of building permits and certificates of occupancy. We took that number and multiplied it by 2.3 to get a population number. However, in The Villages we took a different approach. We used the population number of 1.9 per unit, and we got that number from The Villages. Remember, the demographic data they use is a different demographic than a typical community. We know this is an elderly community, which means household numbers are usually lower and The Villages use 1.9 per household. We could not use 2.3 as the unit number for The Villages, because that would overestimate the population, and inversely give The Villages too much population, which in turn would draw too many seats. That is why we used two different numbers. We used extremely sound logic, and this was reviewed by the city attorney. He wanted to acknowledge the GIS department because they did a wonderful job putting all this together. It became extremely cumbersome in terms of trying to carve everything up while keeping all the goals in mind.

Referring to slides, he said he wanted to bypass the first proposed rendering because, as soon as they came up with it, Commissioner Connell contacted him and pointed out a deviation and that deviation was really the best proposal for The Villages and the City of Leesburg. So our population, with the extrapolation methods, puts us at a population of about 32,750. We had to divide that number by five (plus or minus), so we knew we did not want to see a district/seat having less than 6,300 people and no more than 6,700 people. With the districts, we were able to carve out and hit each number pretty much on the button. However, remember these are proposed districts and figures. District one has a population of about 6,528 people. This district is tricky because, historically, since the mid 90s, this has been the minority district. So, to get a majority-minority in that district, we needed two census blocks that are 80% African-American. We had to weave those two census blocks in that district because, otherwise, we would not get a 50% African-American district (the majority-minority district). The difficulty was that these two districts are on opposite sides of town. Those district blocks cover Carver Heights and Pine Street. In order to get a district that is representative of the majority-minority, we had to carve this district out. They looked at what was done before, and the district lines represented an inverse "c" and even though that was not the typical district we wanted to see, it kept within metes and bounds. They went back through and made sure they had Pine Street and Carver Heights together in one district, and they were able to carve that out.

District two has about 6,517 people, but the problem we had there was with growth issues outside The Villages. We are still seeing moderate growth today, being between 3 and 4%. That number is not crazy, but part of The Villages did move into district two. When we drew up that district in 2021, it had about 5,500 people in it, and it now has an additional 3,200 new homes. We took that number and multiplied it by 1.9, which gave us about 6,000 more people. District two is up for re-election in 2026, and it currently has about 12,000 people in it, and it is clearly malapportioned. Again, this was brought to our attention by Mayor Reisman back in January and in order to correct that, we needed to come up with a Villages

district. So, what does a Villages district look like? Our first cut of it took in and created a new district three, which was just The Villages. The second cut of it, after talking with Commissioner Connell, was that we add the undeveloped area of The Villages into that district. That area consists of Secret Promise and the old Renaissance Trails. The Villages purchased that property from us, and it is pretty much everything north of the Turnpike along CR 470. That area of The Villages south of the Turnpike and south of CR 470 will be developed over the next three to seven years. The Villages came in developed and filled in The Villages of West Lake north of CR 470. They have now gone back up and started working in Sumter County. When that development is completed, they will return south of CR 470 to begin development in the Leesburg area before heading back into Sumter County. He believes by the 2030 census, The Villages should have moved back into that area, and we should see that area being developed. However, right now, the grand total change in population shift since talking to Commissioner Connell is forty people. So, that was a good one to shift, and it keeps The Villages in one single district, and that was the goal and intent of the voters when we passed the referendum. The only thing he did not like about the concept was that he did not think of it himself. He should have seen that. With district three, we basically kept that district the same. However, after speaking with Commissioner Connell, it now incorporates the undeveloped portion of The Villages. So, district four now becomes all of South Leesburg, everything that is not The Villages property. So district two now becomes core old Leesburg down to CR 48. It includes everything not in The Villages or owned by The Villages, and everything south of CR 48 is district four. District three then becomes just The Villages. District five had the biggest change as far as geographical numbers because it is now a little bigger. It has almost 6,600 people in it, and incorporates four areas of the community: Sunnyside, Beverly Shore, Palmora Park, and the northern section of Leesburg. We wrapped all that together in district five. These are good sound districts as far as the population. They are good sound districts as far as the communities of interest we encapsulate. When comparing this updated district map to the map from 2021, the districts have now become more compact and contiguous, and they meet all the litmus standards for redistricting.

Tonight, there is no action needed on this item. If they are happy with the proposed districts, the next step would be to put them in ordinance form for adoption. Even though the presentation did not include the proposed ordinance, it is a standard ordinance which goes into effect for the November 2026 election. The newly drawn districts will go into effect for the November 2026 election. Next summer, when people come in to qualify for the election, they will need to have lived in that district for six months, which is the basic criterion. Again, this goes into effect for the election, but it will not take effect until the organizational meeting in January 2027. First, Commissioner Pederson will be termed out, but he currently resides in Palmora Park, which is currently in his district, district four. However, it will be going away because it will be blended into district five. Commissioner Pederson will still be the commissioner for the current district four through the organizational meeting of January 2027. We do not want to get rid of the district that he represents until that timeframe. The same goes for Commissioner Connell. He resides in Arlington Ridge, which is currently district three. However, his district will take on a little less of an area due to the growth in South Leesburg. He still has a few years left in his term and the proposal reassigns Commissioner Connell from his current district three to the new proposed district four, which is extensively his district. The same thing happens with Commissioner Burry. He resides in Sunnyside, but his district is taking on part of Commissioner Pederson's district, the Palmora Park area and North Leesburg. So this will not be reassigned until the organizational meeting in January 2027, and the ordinance sets all this out. He was looking for feedback. If they were happy with it, the staff would move forward with the ordinance at the next meeting. If they want to see more shots of redrawing lines, they could do that too. **Mayor Reisman** asked for feedback from the commission. **Commissioner Pederson** commented the staff did a great job on this. **Commissioner Burry** was fine with it.

C. Employee Service Award Recognitions:

Five Years: Gina Frazier, Accounting; Mary Arneson-Miller, Police; and Jesus Rodriguez Garcia, Facilities

Ten Years: John Scheer, Police

Fifteen Years: Amanda Saunders, Public Works

Twenty-Five Years: James Ricketson, Fire

Thirty Years: Sherri Stafford, Customer Service

Human Resource Director (HRD), Melissa Arriaga and **CM Minner** recognized and presented each employee with their service award. **Mayor Reisman** thanked all the hardworking employees who help make this city run day in and day out.

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!

Vonda and Max Parker Jr., co-founders of Vmax For One Community, Inc., publicly thanked the commissioners for coming out and participating on March 1st for the Boxing Legends Fashion Runway Showcase. Everyone did an amazing job. On behalf of the youth and their parents, they wanted to publicly thank them. They provided each commissioner with a small token to remember the event. They knew Commissioner Connell had a previous obligation, but they provided him with a token also. They wanted to bring in the video, but it was too long to show.

Jen McCurry of Palmora Park said she was a founding member of the Street Dreams Cruising Corporation, which is a local nonprofit organization that facilitates the Main Street Car Show. Their mission with the Leesburg Main Street Car Show has never changed. They are committed to providing a safe and free family event for the entire community while driving foot traffic and potential revenue to downtown Leesburg merchants and their sponsors. In addition, they continue to drive awareness and raise funds for charities throughout the area. They are extremely grateful to their sponsors, who recognize the potential to grow the car show into an event that would benefit all. However, they have to continuously cancel their event at the last minute with little to no notice from the City. Each time they cancel, they are still responsible for the costs associated with that event. Every time they have to cancel, they miss the opportunity to drive foot traffic into the downtown market, and they miss the opportunity to help worthwhile causes in the community. Over the last eighteen months, since separating from the partnership, this event has been canceled at the last minute five times. They almost canceled the event an additional two times, but they were able to scramble and pull it off. One weekend they were able to pull it off because the mayor helped them out. Four other times, the show was canceled because the city forgot to deliver barricades, and for safety reasons, they could not hold the event without barricades. Last month, had it not been for a city employee who ran into Rick and asked about the car show being canceled, they would not have been able to have the event in February either. Last week, on March 5th, they received an email from a cruiser asking about the Arts Festival being scheduled at the same time as the car show. They knew nothing about the Arts Festival; no one from the city had contacted them. They sent an email that evening explaining that March was their largest event of the year and their charity was to help pay for funeral services for an officer who had passed away. They had 147 cars last month, and they saw hour waits at most restaurants to be seated. We packed the downtown, and they expected closer

to 200 cars this month. They spent the next two days having heated discussions, and it appears that there is a phrase in the permit that says "weekly availability is at the sole discretion of the city manager or designee, which translates to we can cancel your event and give it to someone else." She honestly thought that the phrase meant if they wanted a weekly permit it would be up to the city manager. When reviewing the application itself, it only gives directions if the applicant wants to cancel the event. She could not locate anything about the city canceling. The permit they receive once the application is approved does have a clause that says the special event permit may be revoked by the City if the applicant violates any state, county or local regulations. To sum up, after having to cancel 26% of their events over the past eighteen months, they are getting the feeling that they are not wanted. They cannot continue to run an event when they throw money out the window 26% of the time. It does not make sense to do so. **Mayor Reisman** pointed out that her three minutes were up. **CM Minner** advised that he would be in touch with her. This issue was brought to his attention today and some of the data she brought up he was unaware of until that moment. She did send an email, but he did not have a chance to review it today. He would get in touch with the recreation director, because obviously we have some logistical issues and every event is important to the city. It sounds like we have some work that needs to be done to repair relationships and fix the event.

Dr. Erika Jasper, on behalf of the Men of Distinction, thanked the City and the Commissioners for attending the Gala during Black History Month. They all had a great time at the Black Heritage Festival, and they received so much positive feedback. It was just a great and beautiful day for the parade and festival. She thanked them again for joining them at the Gala. They were very appreciative of their participation.

Dr. Geraldo Rodriguez, a city resident of twenty-one years, said he was an avid tennis player. He wanted to bring up the tennis courts since budgets were coming up. He would like to see the tennis courts refurbished or resurfaced. The tennis courts are located at Woodward and Palmetto Street. It has been over five years since any type of resurfacing has been done and the courts are showing wear and tear. These courts are not only used by the Leesburg High School, the public also uses them. They have to wait until the high school is finished before they are able to play. They know the courts are used, but they are a major, major part of the City. They also have lights for at night, which is wonderful. He asked if they could look at the tennis courts during the budgets. He would appreciate their help since these courts are needed. Tennis is a great way to stay healthy.

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.4 - Execute a Construction Services Agreement with GSB Construction & Development, Inc. to build a restroom facility at John L. Johnson Park.

Commissioner Pederson moved to adopt the Consent Agenda except for 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 24, 2025**

B. PURCHASING ITEMS:

- 1. None**

C. RESOLUTIONS:

- 1. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute Public Transportation Grant Agreement 444873-2-94-01, between the City of Leesburg and the State of Florida Department of Transportation for the construction of the Fuel Farm Project at the Leesburg International Airport; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,990

- 2. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, accepting a Utility Easement affecting the property described therein from Lakehouse Leesburg Apartments, LLC, joined by Southstate Bank, N.A.; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,991

- 3. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, accepting a Utility Easement affecting the property described therein from Damar Storage, LLC, joined by Marcin Boeckl; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,992

- 4. Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida, authorizing the Mayor and City Clerk to execute a Construction Services Agreement with GSB Construction & Development, Inc. to build a**

restroom facility at John L. Johnson Park; and providing an effective date.

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,993

Commissioner Berry 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.

Commissioner Pederson mentioned when reviewing the contract for contractual purposes, he could not find the square footage. He thought it should be there, but maybe an exhibit was missing. He was trying to do the math on a per square foot basis. It was a long contract, and he had to read it a couple of times. He was not voting it down, he just wanted to bring it to their attention. **CM Minner** stated the restroom facility will match the other existing restroom located at Ski Beach. It will be a copy of that restroom, and the square footage is eight hundred square feet. It will also match the restroom located in Berry Park. It will be the same restroom and same style. To recap, this was put in the budget back in 2023. We spent just about the same amount. We spent about \$250,000 to build them. The number they provided is almost the same as it was before. Remember this was kicked back because we were trying to go a cheaper route, but that cheaper route ended up costing about twice as much. We were trying to go with a prefab all-concrete model while trying to keep it aesthetically pleasing. When we were busting the budget on that, it was sent back to staff to cheapen up. So we went back and looked at the old construction plans that we got from Jamie Senator, our architect. We paid him about \$2,500 to get the rights to reuse the plan, and we paid Keith Riddle about \$18-\$20,000 to do the site plan work. We then put it out for bid and the construction contract before them was \$244,000, and the budget was \$300,000. All-in we are looking at \$265,000. If they divide that number by eight hundred square feet, that is the number he was looking for. **Commissioner Pederson** thanked him for the explanation. **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.

5. **City Commission approval of the budget calendar for Fiscal Year 2025-26, which includes dates for Commission workshops.**
6. **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 Bar-Key Groves, Inc., regarding natural gas service to the development known as Grace Groves Phase 1; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,994

7. **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, Meritage Homes of Florida, Inc., and the City of Leesburg, Florida, to allow for payment of Lake County School Impact Fees; and providing an effective date. (Manor Oaks)**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,995

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS AND NON-ROUTINE ITEMS:

A. SECOND READING OF ORDINANCES

1. **None**

B. FIRST READING OF ORDINANCES

1. **None**

C. NON-ROUTINE ITEMS

1. **Resolution of the City Commission of the City of Leesburg, Florida appointing members to the Beautification Advisory Committee; and providing an effective date.**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 11,996

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 asked if each applicant would come up to the podium and provide a brief statement as to why they were interested in serving on this board.

Dr. Erika Jasper said she applied to this committee because it was important and Leesburg was her home. She was born and raised here. Plus, she has been active in the community since God knows when. She was active on the CRA board, and she was involved with clean-up projects. This would be another opportunity to take beautification efforts to another level. As we saw earlier, Habitat for Humanity came forth with their beautification project that inspired the community. She would love to see Leesburg

continue to grow with extended tourism. On the residential side, she would like to see our city grow and be recognized as a beautiful city. She would love to be a part of this committee and take it to another level.

Paula Jordan said she applied to this committee because she has lived here for about thirty years. She agreed with all the sentiments that our city is beautiful. We have a lot of green spaces, and we do not want litter around the city. We need to make this city beautiful because it will make for happiness and a feeling of well-being. She facilitates a program through Life Stream where students go out into the parks every Wednesday for approximately two and a half hours to pick up trash. She would like to see that program continued and expanded for students to assist so they can develop an attachment to the city and community they live in. She would like to give more opportunities for vocational experiences, such as planting flowers or painting park benches. She would like to see that program expanded.

D'Manti Nettles said he was the coach at Leesburg High School. He was also a real estate agent in Central Florida. He is and wants to continue being involved in his community. When he came home from college, his goal and vision was to come back and show the younger generation that we could be involved in many organizations and boards. He believes if he can stand and show that he can come home and be a part of the community and organizations, you can help and grow the city that you came from.

Dianne Venetta said she raised two children in the City of Leesburg. They have been here for twenty-five years. She would really like to be a part of this committee because one of her focuses is youth gardening. She works with public schools to do school gardens. She would really like to see some edible plants, flowers and vegetables. As mentioned, she would really like to focus on the youth, educate them and get them involved. If they have a place to go and have people willing to them, that can really change a community.

Brittany Leonard said she and her husband used to remodel homes in North Carolina. She also has a real estate license, so she follows the market. They moved to Leesburg about two and a half years ago and opened a home decor store in Downtown Leesburg. She did not claim to be an expert in any area, but she was willing to help any way she could. She would love to see Leesburg grow because Leesburg has a lot of potential. She would love to be a part of this committee.

Lisa Humphreys said her parents moved to Leesburg in 1969. She has lived in this city her whole life. She loves this town. She would love to do anything that helps preserve Leesburg to make it the best it can be. She would love to be a part of this committee.

Deb Jayne of Bases Loaded said she works with Keep Lake Beautiful. She is on their advisory committee, and she also volunteers for America in Bloom. She has lived in Leesburg for about five years. This will be her forever Earthly home. She loves it here, and she would like to keep it clean.

Mayor Reisman said having seven applicants show up for a new board is pretty impressive. He could only wish to have this kind of response from other boards. We received ten applications and had seven applicants in attendance. He asked if there were any commission recommendations. **Commissioner Burry** nominated Dianne Venetta. **Mayor Reisman** nominated Lisa Humphreys. It is really cool to have fresh blood on these boards. He was impressed with a lot of the applicants. He asked if there were any other recommendations. We have Dianne Venetta and Lisa Humphreys. **Commissioner Pederson** nominated Dr. Erika Jasper. **Commissioner Berry** nominated D'Manti Nettles. **Mayor Reisman** said if there were no other recommendations he would nominate Paula Jordan. Continuing, he said it was brought to his attention that there may be an organizational conflict with one of the nominees. It was a last-minute thing that popped up with D'Manti Nettles because he serves on another board. He was not

sure if that could cause an organizational conflict or if someone could serve on two boards.

Commissioner Berry said he does serve on one board, but that board is completely different and does not relate to this one. **Mayor Reisman** remarked that he would refer this to the city attorney. **CA Watson** pointed out that it depends on the authority of the board. If the board has any decision-making authorities there could be problems. There could be difficulties with avoiding sunshine laws because you have to make sure who you can converse with when you are not at a public meeting. However, the primary legal concern would be if there were decision-making authorities on one of the boards. If someone was on two boards there could be a dual office issue. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to know what the conflict would be for the other board that he sits on. From the audience, **Mr. Nettles** said he serves on the recreation board. **Commissioner Berry** wanted to know what the conflict could be if he served on both the recreation and beautification board. **CA Watson** said as long as neither board has any decision-making authority there would be no issue. He believes the planning and zoning board is the only one that has decision-making authority. So, as far as he was concerned, there would be no conflict of interest.

Commissioner Pederson wanted to make sure they were clear, because D'Manti Nettles also serves on the West Leesburg CDC. **Commissioner Berry** pointed out that the West Leesburg CDC is not a city board. **Mayor Reisman** stated that right now we have Paula Jordan, Dr. Erika Jasper, Dianne Venetta, Lisa Humphreys and D'Manti Nettles. He asked if there were any objections or other recommendations. There were none. He asked for a motion to accept the nominations for the Beautification Advisory Committee.

Commissioner Berry made a motion to accept the nominations and Commissioner Pederson seconded the motion.

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.

2. Susan Street Update - US 27 Entryway - Discussion and Commission Direction

Commissioner Burry introduced the item to be read by title only. CC Purvis read the item by title only.

Mayor Reisman requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

CM Minner said this item was brought to their attention due to a potential major deviation in the concept. We did the Susan Street project in a design-bid-build fashion. We took input, designed the concepts and then put them out for bid. We picked a construction firm, which was approved by a 3-2 vote. That vote approved a \$10.5 million project with Kingdom Construction and those plans were presented a few months back. However, we anticipated and hoped to bring a major entranceway to Susan Street Park off US 27 and, in order to accomplish that, we needed to work with three property owners; the Gateway Plaza, Pat Sales, and Pizza Hut. Long story short, for different reasons, we were only able to get one affirmative response from Pizza Hut, which was negative. They did not want to give us access, so that response alone shut down the possibility of an entrance coming through that area. We had some correspondence with their attorneys, we had over a year's worth of correspondence with the various entities. The last correspondence we received was from the Pizza Hut Corporation through their attorney

in Jacksonville, who said Pizza Hut was not interested due to parking concerns. However, they may be interested if there was remuneration. We asked how much they wanted, and they never responded back. With that, they decided to leave it. We have not pushed the envelope with any other property owner in this joint venture to gain access. We are at the point of pulling the trigger to issue a notice to proceed, so the contractor can start the project. However, he was not comfortable signing off on the notice to proceed because we sold the commission a project that anticipated an entrance coming off US 27, and the discussions we had said if there were issues with the concept, he would come back before the commission. The recreation director will provide the scope of the plans, costs and the options for the commission. We put the recommendation in resolution format, so based on commission input, we would move forward based on the discussion. This is the final discussion about whether to go, not go, or modify the plan for Susan Street.

Recreation Director (RD), Travis Rima, said he did not think they would be back here to discuss this again and the city manager pretty much summed up the entrance. Referring to some slides, he showed the entrance that was previously proposed that would have run between three property owners; Pat Sales, Pizza Hut and Gateway Plaza. He pointed out the red lines because that is where the three properties meet. The plan was to beautify the area, and put some landscaping in that matched the other entrances to the plaza off US 27. The previously approved plan included four full-sized grass rugby fields, one championship turf field and one auxiliary soccer field because we could not fit another rugby-sized field in. The parking lot was to come off US 27 in between these properties, but based on discussions with Pizza Hut and their kings "x", we need to move the entrance or dumb down the project to a \$5 million project. They talked with Halff, the architect and engineer, to see what a \$5 million project would look like. We would have five football/soccer-sized fields and the parking lot would stay in its current location, which would be an all-grass parking lot. The existing restrooms, concession stand and press box would remain the same. We would use the existing PA system on field one, which is located in the southeast corner. We would have Wi-Fi in that field because that is where the press box would be. We would reuse all the current bleachers that are there now, but they would be lighted. In this plan, the lights are the big cost. Lights are very expensive and there are a lot of moving parts, so we cannot just move the current lights. We have to install new lights. The \$5 million option would keep all existing facilities. However, we would have to bulldoze the baseball fields to turn them into football fields. However, the plan being proposed would use the exact original plan; however, the entrance would be moved to come in off William Street. It would be about 500 yards north of the entrance to Pizza Hut, and it would be on the other side of Pat Sales. The entryway would connect William Street to the parking lot. The one major key to this plan is that it would not move anything else in the plan. Everything would stay the same except for the entrance. So, in the future, if surrounding property owners decided to re-engage in discussions about the entrance coming in off US 27, that would still be an option. We would take the current fence out and install a gate for the entrance. That way, if the surrounding property owners decide to allow us to have an entrance off US 27, we could still do that. He believes that once this project is completed, and the surrounding property owners see the positive impacts, they will want to reopen discussions about that entrance. The local manager of Pizza Hut was very positive, but the disconnect was between them and the property owners. So, if those discussions never come along, we will still have the entrance come in off William Street. We will have a great facility that has dual uses for both local youth and sports tourism. If we went with the \$5 million plan, it would turn this into a single-use facility. Yes, it would be great for our youth, but it would not appeal to outside sports tourism. Having five grass fields will not drive people to come in from across the country. One thing he intentionally left off the slides was the marquee sign. The one big difference besides the entrance and the two highlighted areas was that we wanted to have a marquee sign. We just have to figure out how and where we want to put it. With the FDOT property at the US 441/27 interchange, we have to work with them to figure out how and where to put it. They have started discussions with the architectural engineer and construction guys, but we still need to figure out where it will go and what our options are.

Referring to a slide, he showed the budget. He knows we have seen the numbers quite a bit and taking the entrance away we will save about \$300,000. However, that entrance was going to cost more than that, but there are costs for moving utilities to come in off of William Street. Plus, they would have to pave the road coming in. This option would save roughly \$300,000, and it would put the entrance off William Street. The biggest key to remember in this project is that even at \$10.5 million, the city will only fund \$3.5 million. We would only be on the hook for 33% of the entire project. Now, if anyone follows sports tourism, you will know there are multiple facilities being constructed around Central Florida, especially East Central Florida that range from \$30 to \$130 million. Ocoee just approved a billion-dollar facility, so there is a lot of money being put into these facilities. So, with a \$3.5 million investment by the city, we would have an opportunity to bring in sports tourism, and it would be good for our youth. **CM Minner** said, wrapping up, they would answer any questions. However, they are seeking direction from the commission. There are three options. The first option is the current plan. The only difference would be to have the entrance come in off William Street. That plan is estimated at \$10.5 million with the city contributing \$3.5 million. The city's contribution would cover 33% of the total project. The second option reduces the scale of the project. It would change the fields to rectangle fields, but it would not include the rugby fields, the championship field or any bells and whistles. That is the \$5 million option. With that option, we would lose the County TDC funding, and it would not require as much CRA funding. So, the \$5 million project includes \$1.4 million of city funds, which is about 29% of the total project. To summarize, the options are to either not do the project, do the \$5 million version, or do the current plan with the entrance coming in off William Street. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any commission comments.

Commissioner Berry asked if the entrance sign would be on William Street. **CM Minner** answered the sign would be off William Street. However, we did not include signage in the budget. If they remember at \$10.5 million there is still a \$200,000 or \$300,000 contingency embedded in the \$10.8 million contract. That was included, so we would have money to do some type of marquee sign at William Street and US 27, which is by the old Burger King on the north side of Pat Sales. **Commissioner Connell** pointed out that the access coming in off US 27 came up about six to nine months ago. At that point, he cautioned about spending any more money on engineering consultant fees to obtain an access easement before speaking to the property owners. That was voted 4-1, so it has now cost the city \$100,000 to find out that we cannot have access coming in off US 27. This commission continues to put the cart in front of the horse when spending money. There are certain things we should obtain or get a verbal consent on before we spend any money. In less than a month we have spent \$350,000 on stuff that we have canceled. We have wasted \$450,000 over the last several months on projects we are no longer doing. Now, as far as William Street, what is the width of the right-of-way, since we are proposing to put a road through it? **RD Rima** responded it was thirty feet. The architectural engineer has looked into that, and they need twenty-two feet. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know if we could still accommodate stormwater at thirty feet with twenty-two feet of asphalt? **RD Rima** replied that twenty-two feet was the entire road. **CM Minner** pointed out that we would have drainage and a street in that thirty-foot-wide access easement. Actually, it is not an access easement because this property is owned by the city. **Commissioner Connell** said the picture in the slide was a little vague. Would this run in between any homes because the aerial did not show any homes? **CM Minner** remarked that there was one house on the west side. **Commissioner Connell** asked if they were diverting traffic between houses on William Street? **CM Minner** responded with all due respect, that is how it is now. They have to drive through a neighborhood to get to the park. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know what the advantage was of moving the access versus leaving it where it is now. **CM Minner** pointed out that with the shift in fields, in order for us to get larger-rugby-sized fields, which are about 30% bigger than a football field, we needed to use the west side of the property, and we needed to expand it south into the wetlands. Hence, the wetland mitigation. In order to get the configuration of five rugby-sized fields and a soccer field, including the parking lot, we had to

configure the parking lot that way. If they were to use the existing Susan Street access, we would not be able to have the larger fields. We tried to have the entrance to the park come in off US 27. However, since we are not able to have it come in off the highway, and we still want the concept, this has become the easiest and cheapest alternative for connecting to the new parking lot. The entrance would be off William Street instead of Susan Street. The current way to get to Susan Street is to take Griffin to Pamela to William to Susan. Unless you come in off William Street, which the locals only know about. There they could zoom straight across. With this concept, the entry would be off William and you would not have to drive all the way down to Susan Street, and we need that grassy area for stormwater. This would divert the entrance to William Street. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know how long the new proposed strip would be off William Street to get to the parking lot. **CM Minner** responded about one hundred and fifty yards. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know how much it would cost to pave one hundred and fifty yards of asphalt while accommodating stormwater. What are the engineering costs? **RD Rima** explained that they estimated \$75,000 for that entrance, which includes moving and adding utilities along with asphalt. **Commissioner Connell** inquired if we were going to asphalt one hundred and fifty yards? **RD Rima** agreed. It would be at least one hundred and fifty yards. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to confirm that we would asphalt one hundred and fifty yards twenty-two feet wide, accommodate storm water and move utilities at that price. **RD Rima** stated Ian of Kingdom Construction provided these figures. **CM Minner** added the estimate of \$10.5 million with the reduction of \$300,000 did come from the contractor and engineer. These are based on unit prices. They reported that figure to us after we asked how much it would cost to do it this way. That figure came from the contractor. **Commissioner Berry** asked if the William Street entrance was by the old Burger King. Would people have to travel south on US 441 or would they come across to turn in? **Commissioner Burry** said people could go down Griffin to turn on Penn and drive straight into it, or they could turn at Captain D's onto William Street. **Commissioner Berry** stated right now, in order to get to Captain D's you have to go around. If you are traveling north on US 27, you have to take it up to Griffin to get to Penn or Pamela Street. **Commissioner Pederson** said he supported this project at \$4.5 million. Some of his comments would be redundant, but when this went to 7.5 million, he started choking and grumbling a little bit. Then, when it hit \$10.5 million, he voted against it. Now, for him, with the entrance moving, it has now gotten worse. He still stands behind his original comments because he sees this as being a \$5 million project. He could support cutting it back. He could support five or six million dollars for the sake of our youth, and it would improve the park. He would be fine with \$5 million, but why not follow the existing site plan? That way down the road, if we wanted to build the stadium, we could. Yes, we would have to update the site plan, but he wanted to throw that out as an idea. We should follow the site plan versus a whole new site plan. He could not get behind \$10.5 million on a bet for sports tourism. He could support anything half of that for the sake of our youth. **Mayor Reisman** asked for public comments.

Chuck Johnson of 1330 Citizens Boulevard, Suite 404, said this was his hometown. He was there to encourage the commission to make a difficult decision about Susan Street. People will judge this community by the way we take care of our children. Remember, we are not just talking about our kids. We are talking about children twenty to thirty years from now. We have a chance to do something great. Yes, it is a lot of money, but everyone will forget about the price, because our children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren will enjoy this park. He encouraged them to build the project. Please build the \$10 million dollar project. We need to be daring. We need to spend the money because, otherwise, we will find another use to spend that money. It will happen, so spend the money on our youth. We need to spend that money on a place where people will come and visit. We need to make it great. We need to make it great, like Pat Thomas or Sleepy Hollow. Susan Street needs to be great too, and that is done by being brave and insightful leaders. Please spend the \$10 million and follow the project as it was originally designed, because his children and grandchildren thirty years from now will thank the city.

Roger Croft of 1125 Sunshine Avenue said he was the chairperson of the recreation advisory board. They

have to consider three options, and while he respects everyone's comments, he agrees with Chuck Johnson. They need to remember ten, twenty or even thirty years from now, when we look back at this, we are going to think we got it for a bargain. There are reasons why people come here for the Bass Tournaments, and it is not just because we have lakes. We were smart enough to develop the Ski Beach area around the lake. We also have the Pat Thomas Stadium for hosting baseball games. He was sure there was a lot of resistance when they discussed the Pat Thomas Stadium back in the day, but here we are eighty to ninety years later, and we are still enjoying that stadium along with the entire Lake County community. He was recently in Nashville, and he ran into a guy who actually played at the Pat Thomas Stadium. Hearing what he had to say made him feel great. We need to decide whether we want to build it for our children and community or if we want to compete in the realm of sports tourism. Remember, when we started talking about Sleepy Hollow, nobody thought we would be hosting national tournaments during spring break with the "Big 10" schools. Just think about all the collegiate women that have played at our local facility. Nobody thought that was going to happen, and he was there to tell them that it was possible for the Susan Street Complex too. We could attract a lot of tournaments for a fraction of the cost that other communities are spending on the same type of facility. We already have the land. We already have a beautiful complex, we just need to finish it. Yes, there are other Central Florida communities spending ten times this amount on the same type of facility, but now is the right time, and they need to make the right decision.

Mayor Reisman said since he has been on the commission it has not happened. However, over the past thirteen years of attending commission meetings, how many times has the commission dumbled-down a project, because it was too much money? Then, a year or two later, they wished they had spent the money or done the original project. Our kids deserve this and economic development will help us. He wants to see future generations along with his kids and grandchildren play on these fields. He supports this. He hopes that once this is completed the surrounding properties will come around, so we can have the entrance come off US 27. This is critical for Leesburg. It will revitalize the area and our kids and future generations deserve it. **Commissioner Connell** wanted to know if the major difference between the \$5 million and \$10 million concepts was the reduction in the size of the fields from rugby to football/soccer fields. **Commissioner Pederson** pointed out that it also includes the stadium. **CM Minner** said there would be four rugby-sized fields, which are about 30% larger than football fields that are grass. One would be a rugby-sized stadium with artificial turf. It would have bleachers, a press box, lighting, and the parking lot change. It would include restrooms and a concession stand box compared to basically the same facility. So, instead of having rugby-sized fields, it would have soccer and football fields. There would be five regular-sized Bermuda grass football fields with lighting and that is a significant difference. **Commissioner Connell** said he heard about supporting our youth and everything else, which he absolutely agrees with, but the youth in this area play football or soccer. They do not play rugby. So, if we want to support our youth, football and soccer fields are where they will play growing up. He was not sure if it was worth double the price of rugby fields.

Commissioner Burry pointed out that, yes, they were talking about rugby, but they had to throw in lacrosse. Lacrosse is a developing sport in our area, and the high school girls' lacrosse program plays and that should be played on larger-sized fields. Lacrosse fields are bigger than football or soccer fields. Most of our soccer programs are played on football fields, which are not regulation-sized fields to begin with. The reason we are talking about rugby-sized fields is that they are the biggest, and all sports can be played on them, so we would not be limited by what we can do. **Commissioner Pederson** said some speakers touched on ten to thirty years down the road. If we are going to do it, we need to do the big fields. Things do change, and we did not talk about lacrosse twenty to thirty years ago, and now we are. Plus, we do not know what the future holds for rugby. He struggled with the concept during the last vote, but for him, with the road now, it had gotten worse. Maybe that could be fixed over time. He looked at a map and if people come from outside of town, they are not going to be very impressed. They are not

going to be impressed trying to find it. They are going to be frustrated because they are not going to be able to find it. However, he would do the bigger fields. They may have the votes tonight for the full project, but why not follow the site plan and do what we can for \$5 or \$6 million. Then down the road we could look at adding to it. With Sleepy Hollow, we started sports tourism, and it has done very well. We are now spending more money on Sleepy Hollow. We have added fields to accommodate sports tourism. So, he does see the chance to grow Susan Street too. **Commissioner Burry** said we have about \$2.6 million in federal money, we have a million dollars' of County TDC money, because the county believes in this project. We have a legislative grant that our local legislators got us from the state, and it also has CRA money. This provides an incredible opportunity for us to say to our youth, community and businesses that you are worth it. He has been passionate about this, and he believes it was the right time for the City to invest in this. He would vote to approve this. **Commissioner Berry** said this was located in the heart of district one. She was excited about the opportunity, and we had long, detailed discussions about it. This will provide an opportunity for young kids to learn about these sports, and that is a plus. However, she wanted to verify that the nice greenery/fencing was still included, because she did not hear if it was. **CM Minner** concurred that it was included in that price. **Commissioner Berry** said she just wanted to make sure the esthetics remained the same. This project will benefit the community by adding jobs as well as providing an opportunity for our youth to learn different sports. There will be opportunities for scholarships for our high school students. She supports this, but she wanted to make sure we kept the surrounding neighbors protected and the esthetics as previously discussed.

Commissioner Burry made a motion to approve the \$10.5 million dollars, Option Two, that included the entrance coming off William Street and Commissioner Berry seconded the motion.

Commissioner Connell said it was mentioned earlier that the revised paving of one hundred and fifty yards with stormwater is part of the proposal. If that comes back and changes, will it be brought back before the commission? **CM Minner** replied if it was outside his spending authority, yes. His spending authority is \$50,000 or 3% of the project. It may even be 1%. However, if it did go over, it would be brought back to the commission. **DCM Hicks**, from the audience, said he believed it was a little more than that. It was more like 1.5%. **CM Minner** continued to say, basically, it is \$10.534 million plus 1.5%. Once that 1.5% threshold is exceeded, we would have to come back to the commission. **Commissioner Connell** ended by saying he did not see how they would be able to pave this and take care of stormwater for that price. **Mayor Reisman** asked if there were any further comments. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

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

Three yeas, two nays, the Commission approved the motion for Option Two.

7. INFORMATIONAL REPORTS:

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

A. None

8. CITY ATTORNEY ITEMS:

CA Watson had no items to address.

9. CITY MANAGER ITEMS:

CM Minner wanted to apologize ahead of time, but he felt compelled to say something in response to Commissioner Connell's report about how we have spent \$450,000 over the last four months. He wanted to put some perspective on that and provide feedback. However, in August, they could judge his performance and do what they would. This May, he will have been a city manager for thirty years. He has thirty years of experience in this profession, and he has seen a lot of different things occur. More specifically, in Leesburg he has been here a little over eleven years and one of the most exciting things he has seen happen in Leesburg, for lack of better words, is that we have picked a lot of low-lying fruit. We have made a lot of accomplishments. We have done a lot of meat and potato stuff. We have kept electric rates down, we kept water flowing, and we have fixed everything from hurricanes. All of that was low-lying fruit. Now, we also did a couple of big projects; we did the Venetian Center, the teen center, the aquatic facility, and we had a lot of back and forth discussions on all those. However, he would still suggest that those projects were low-lying fruit. On the table lately, we have progressed to projects that he considers high-hanging fruit. As we reach higher to achieve different projects that have longer implications, there will be more tentacles, more problems and more unforeseen issues. We are now seeing that in two big projects.

First, Susan Street. Yes, we did put the cart before the horse a little bit in the parking lot, but for him, the city attorney and the recreation director, none of them thought they would be back here. They were shocked that these three entities did not respond back quicker and if we continued to wait we would just be sitting. Yes, he was disappointed that \$100,000 had gone out the door. However, the stage is set, and we could still gain access in the future through that parking lot if the businesses come to their senses and realize they missed the opportunity to fix a three-way cluster of horrible ingress. The police department and EMS have both responded to that area at least for one significant major event since he has been here. Yes, they had an opportunity to fix it, but this project has multiple tentacles. It is a tough project and it is high-hanging fruit. However, in the long term, this will benefit generations to come.

The other project covers what we are doing downtown. There we heard the same conflicts, discussions and comments about how we are wasting money. We heard it when we were talking about purchasing the Tropic building, and how that was a waste of money. We also talked about investing in parking and getting rid of the old Partnership building. During the discussions, we also heard it was a waste of money. Both projects deal with parking improvements. We are demolishing a facility and moving two organizations into the Tropic building. Then we are moving two city departments to two different facilities. Look, we are getting these projects done, and we are staying within budget parameters.

Now, back to Susan Street, in his thirty years of experience, he has heard ad nauseam about spending other people's money and being creative. With this \$10 million project we are only spending \$3.5 million of our own money. We only have 30% skin in the game. He would challenge any other municipal corporation or any other political subdivision in the state to say that they did a project with only 30% skin in the game. So, yes, he was bragging a little, but we just tackled a humongous project without having that much skin in the game.

At the last meeting, we made that decision based on pending litigation. There was no clear-cut definitive

answer that the state was going to support Senator Truenow's bill and demand that fluoride be taken out of the water. We did that because that was the fiduciary thing to do. At least that was his position and his recommendation. The commission voted to change the course of that project. Also, if anyone follows legislation in Tallahassee, there is legislation sitting at their desks that takes away CRAs. So, effective October 1, 2025, there may not be any more projects. Therefore, if we were not going to do this project and spend that US Hwy 441/27 CRA money, we would have to spend all \$6 million of it somewhere else. If the state legislature supports the bill as written, come October 1st that money could be gone. Yes, we are doing significant projects and yes, they are cumbersome, but that is because they are high-hanging fruit. At the end of the day, our experience and record show that once we get things set, we stay within budget parameters. Yes, we may argue about it until the cows come home, but once things are set, we stay within our target. Tomorrow he will instruct the recreation director to issue a notice to proceed, and he will report back accordingly.

10. ROLL CALL:

Commissioner Pederson had no comment.

Commissioner Berry said the Dining in the Dark event that was put on by New Vision of Independence, was held on March 6th. It was a wonderful experience. New Vision is relocating from the Mount Dora/Eustis area to Leesburg. She highly recommended that the city commission and community support them because they do many wonderful things. With CRAs, the state legislature is looking at doing away with them. It is very important that we all, by tomorrow, March 11th, join in by 4:00 p.m. She wanted to know as a commission what they could do to get their comments in. Should they do it individually? What would have the most effective impact? **CM Minner** said the best thing they could do is have a resolution in opposition to the proposed bill. He could have that on the agenda for the next meeting. They could all vote on it and send it to Tallahassee. **Commissioner Berry** pointed out that they need it by tomorrow, so we need to do something. This is really important because we will all suffer. It will not just be the most poverty areas, it will be felt throughout the whole city. Every CRA will be gone, and we will not be able to do anything. We will then be majorly limited. **CM Minner** stated if they do need a statement for tomorrow, he would look into it. If the commission is of the same opinion, he would draft a letter on behalf of the commission and have the mayor sign it. By motion of heads, the commission was in agreement with him, drafting a letter. He plans to do both. He will get a letter drafted on behalf of the commission and have the mayor sign it. He will also have a resolution ready for the next meeting.

Commissioner Connell had no comment.

Commissioner Burry had no comment this evening.

Mayor Reisman said he attended the Arts Festival over the weekend. He thought it was a good layout, and it was well attended. With upcoming events, he hoped everyone could make it out to the Shamrockin' Festival this weekend. It will be held on March 14th and 15th. The Leesburg Special Events has an event coming up that is one of his favorites; it is called Blooms and Brews. It will be held downtown on March 22nd. He highly recommends going. Another favorite event is the Leesburg Chambers, Spring Fish Fry. It will be held on April 3rd. If you have never been, you should go. As a follow-up, the LHS boys basketball team fell short in the third overtime with a score of 54-47. They fought hard and they made us proud. He knows they appreciated the support the city commission gave them. Last, he knows we do not all see eye to eye on a lot of things, but he likes how we come together. He has learned a lot from all the commissioners. Collectively, we bring a lot of wisdom, and he enjoys working with everyone. We have a great city manager, deputy city manager and staff members and everyone does a great job. He looks forward to working with everyone on future projects. **Commissioner Pederson** wanted to clarify about

the \$350,000 for fluoride, that should not fall on the city manager, that should fall on the commission, and he would fall on that sword. He did not think it was fair for the city manager to take the blame for that. **Mayor Reisman** agreed.

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 Berry, the meeting adjourned at 7:07 p.m.