

**AGENDA MINUTES
MEETING
AGENDA
MONDAY, JANUARY 26, 2026 5:00 PM**

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City of Leesburg, Greater Leesburg Community Redevelopment Agency held a regular meeting on Monday, January 26, 2026, at Leesburg City Hall. Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson called the meeting to order at 5:02 p.m. with the following members present:

Commissioner Jimmy Burry
Commissioner Jay Connell (5:24 pm)
Commissioner Samantha Ponder
Commissioner Alan Reisman
Commissioner John Sokol
Chairperson Pro Tem Mike Pederson

Chairperson Allyson Berry was absent. Also present were City Manager (CM) Al Minner, City Clerk (CC) J. Andi Purvis, Deputy City Clerk (DCC) Anna Rottermond, the news media, and others.

INVOCATION

Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson 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. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

A. Regular meeting held September 22, 2025

Commissioner Reisman made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of September 22, 2025, and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission. There were none.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Reisman	Yes
Commissioner Ponder	Yes
Commissioner Sokol	Yes
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Five yeas, no nays, the Commission approved the meeting minutes.

3. GLCRA FACADE, SIGN AND LANDSCAPE GRANTS:

- A. Resolution of the Greater Leesburg Community Redevelopment Agency (GLCRA) of the City of Leesburg, Florida authorizing the Chairperson and Secretary to execute a resolution approving Fiscal Year 2026 Façade, Sign, and Landscape Grant Awards; and providing an effective date. (FSL Grants GLCRA 2026).**

ADOPTED RESOLUTION 66

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

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

Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson requested comments from the Commission and the audience.

Commissioner Sokol asked if they were talking about the total amount of what they were going to approve. **Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson** answered yes. Unless he wanted to single one out. **Commissioner Sokol** said he did want a single out the Great Chicago Fire Brewery. He inquired about it, and they said the reason they chose that was for the landscaping part, because the other two may not have such an impact on the downtown. He understands that the black top may not, but he did bring pictures of the awnings, which were absolutely terrible. The awnings would make a huge impact because they would redo the front one. The bid for the other two was \$1,700. They would come in, clean the awnings, redye them, and change the color back to the original. **Commissioner Burry** questioned the military, fire and police support association because they were looking for a sign, exterior painting and landscaping, but he thought they were closed. **Commissioner Sokol** responded that the warehouse itself did close, so the signage will not be done, but the building and landscaping will still happen because the buildings are still there. **Commissioner Burry** asked if there were plans in place for somebody else to go into that building. **Commissioner Sokol** agreed. **Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson** wanted to confirm that he was the owner of the building. **Commissioner Sokol** answered yes. **Commissioner Burry** wanted to verify that one commissioner would not be voting. **CM Minner** agreed. Commissioner Sokol will not be voting. He will abstain when it comes to voting, and he will file a form with the city clerk. **Commissioner Ponder** said he was talking about the awnings and the shutters, so did he want to change the amount because of that? **Commissioner Sokol** replied yes. He wanted to change the amount. They were given \$500, which was about half of the landscaping, and it looks like they would be awarding about half the amount of the grant. He believed the awnings were about \$1,700. So, if they went with how they had been doing it, it would be great if they could get at least half of that and add it to the \$500. **Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson** stated it looked like the percentages were different, and his was one of the smaller amounts.

Planning and Zoning Director (PZD) Dan Miller said they went through the process and made the recommendations. In Commissioner Sokol's case, fifty percent was the recommendation. **Commissioner Sokol** remarked that the only part that was actually put in there was the landscaping, which was \$1,000. So, according to this resolution, it is \$500. **CM Minner** asked about the total grant request. **Commissioner Sokol** answered it was about \$8,000. **CM Minner** reiterated that it was \$8,000 for landscape and hardscape improvements, \$2,000 for awnings, and there appears to be some blacktops. **Commissioner Sokol** pointed out that they took the blacktop repairs out because that does not qualify. It

was \$2,000 for the awnings to be reconditioned. **CM Minner** wanted to know what the award recommendation was. **Commissioner Sokol** said it was \$500. **CM Minner** wanted to confirm how much he was asking for. **Commissioner Sokol** stated he would like to request an additional \$1,000. **CM Minner** pointed out that he was requesting \$1,500. **PZD Miller** added that they took out what would not qualify and that was how they came up with the 50%. **Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson** thanked him for that clarification because it explains why the percentages were different on a few of them. **CM Minner** wanted to verify if this would qualify his request. **PZD Miller** responded yes. It would be everything but the blacktop. He can receive \$1,500.

Commissioner Reisman made a motion to amend the Great Chicago Fire for an additional \$1,000, and Commissioner Burry seconded the motion.

Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson asked if there were any further comments by the commission and audience. There were none.

The roll call vote on the amendment was:

Commissioner Ponder	Yes
Commissioner Sokol	Abstained
Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Reisman	Yes
Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, one abstain, no nays, the Commission approved the amendment.

Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson stated they now needed to vote on the resolution as amended.

The roll call vote was:

Commissioner Burry	Yes
Commissioner Reisman	Yes
Commissioner Ponder	Yes
Commissioner Sokol	Abstained
Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson	Yes

Four yeas, one abstain, no nays, the Commission adopted the resolution as amended.

4. **DISCUSSION:**

CM Minner started the discussion by saying after the last city commission meeting/CRA meeting, both Commissioner Ponder and Commissioner Sokol asked him to have open discussion about budgetary and direction items for FY 26–27. They would like to begin planning for expenditures in the CRA. However, one of the difficult things with the Downtown CRA is that most of the allocation is prescribed and mandated by the decree, the NAACP versus the City and the hospital decree, which dated back to 1995. That decree is still in effect, and essentially it called for the creation of this CRA and that the CRA has to pay 50% of the incremental revenue to the CDC. That is the first bill this CRA has to pay. In rough numbers, they bring in about \$1 million to the Downtown CRA and half of that \$1 million goes directly to the CDC pursuant to the federal decree. Then \$100,000 of that goes to the debt payment for the Main Street project. He was not sure, but that debt was about to sunset. We had a ten-year note, and he believed it would sunset in 2027 or 2028. At this point, they are left with about \$400,000 each year. For FY 26, they left \$400,000 unallocated, but he believed that really shook out to about \$300,000 for FY 26 coupled with the \$300,000 that this CRA was sitting on. They did not put any money in for FSL grants.

If they read the packet closely, they would have seen that they used an allocation from the reserve account, so they are sitting on about \$600,000, and they used about \$90,000 of that this evening. They are now sitting on about half a mill. The purpose was to leave that cash there for the parking project and remember that the project had not gone out to bid. Now, to digress further, the city commission tonight will be considering a lease/use agreement between the City of Leesburg and LifeStream. So, LifeStream is on the precipice of agreeing to allow us to use their parking lot. Their parking lot is roughly from Sixth Street to Fifth Street, Magnolia, and then it goes about halfway to the trail. LifeStream is on the precipice of allowing the city to use it. We will build the parking lot, we will maintain the parking lot and we will accept liability. This deal will be in place for thirty years. We will have to pay them \$15,000 starting this year prior to April 1st, which is a regeneration of Bikefest. So every year the city will pay LifeStream for the use of the parking lot during Bikefest. We are putting it in writing because we are asking for a larger use. That is important for this CRA to know because, assuming the commission approves it later this evening and LifeStream signs off on it, which we have all indications, this will go out to bid shortly, and then construction should start on the project in April or May, sometime after Bikefest. By the time we meet for the budget year 2026–27, they should know some of the parameters of what is available. What he would recommend to the CRA is that the project would be between the \$2 to \$3 million-dollar range and if we need extra cash, that is where he would go. He could not remember the amount, but he believed it was \$1 million dollars. **Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson** stated it was about \$2.5 million minus the \$250,000 for the design. **CM Minner** continued to say that they have about \$2 million sitting there. If that project starts going over, he would recommend they use that money. If it goes over what we have there, then he would say to borrow the 2027 money, because they would have the time to do that for the cash management. If they need more than half a million dollars, they know there will be more coming in unless the state legislature does anything crazy, but they will talk more about that in June. This fund may be tapped for this fiscal year, which we know it is, and the next fiscal year, which is 2027, because we have to commit to paying the CDC, the debt, and we have prioritized the parking project. At that time, this CRA did not have much money to discuss, and he wanted to put that out there for their discussion, and the big answer about where this parking lot was going, and they would have that answer by June. Hopefully, by June they will know where the state legislature is going with regard to taxes and CRAs. Plus, this project will be out to bid and they will know the project number. Some of the question marks that he threw out will be solidified by summer. He wanted to put that out there.

Commissioner Sokol said they were not necessarily asking for money. They just wanted to talk about some of the things they learned at the CRA Conference. He learned some stuff that he thought would make their position a little bit easier. **Commissioner Ponder** thanked the city for allowing them to go to the conference because they learned a lot, and it was very informational. There were people from all over that had some really innovative things that they were doing with the CRA to help improve their communities. They were not coming to necessarily ask for dollars today, but they wanted to give some of the takeaways they took from that conference that they think could be beneficial for the city, along with some possible ways that they may be able to eliminate slum, blight, and improve the community.

Commissioner Sokol added that they would like to hold quarterly CRA meetings instead of having them whenever there is something to talk about. They would like to have them scheduled so they know when the meetings are. Even if they do not have anything to talk about, they could always cancel it. However, they would like to have the meetings scheduled on a regular basis. They do not like finding out about a meeting four days in advance. Continuing, he said some people do not even know who they are and there is a CRA section on the web page, and they would like to have their names added to that page, so people know they can ask them questions. **Commissioner Ponder** added that they would like to include a way for people to reach out to them for information or if there are things happening in the community, they could easily reach out to them. **Commissioner Sokol** said they talked about having a CRA boundary map on the website because the website is vague when it comes to the CRAs. **Commissioner Ponder**

indicated that the boundary map is there, but it is a little tricky navigating it. **Commissioner Sokol** said that the east side of town is still in the CRA, but it has been overlooked. However, he did not know if there were any projects planned for that area. There are items that they are not touching, so they may want to look at them down the line. **Commissioner Ponder** has observed that a lot of funding is being focused on the downtown, more so than the community areas where people are living. There definitely needs to be some attention placed on the community that surrounds the downtown area. She understands the idea of improving the downtown, and hopefully that bleeds into the community, but as a person who lives in the surrounding community, she is not really seeing that. Such as BikeFest, those activities are not brought down into the community end of the street. There are some businesses down there, but the activities are not being brought down that far. They cannot necessarily talk about funds being mandated to different groups which make improvements, but for the dollars that they are able to do something, they would like to ensure that they are doing it equitably to affect all areas within their reach. **Commissioner Sokol** continued to say that one thing they learned, which he did not know if the city was already doing, but was to break down the project to the smallest denominator and then look at grants that could be used for each section of the project. They should try to layer grants to accomplish projects. He would like to use more grant money than CRA money. That was huge and a lot of different departments were talking about how they layer grants. Another thing that was brought up was Brownfields, and those are huge. He said they would be surprised to see how many CRAs were getting into that, and those are project properties that may be contaminated that we may not know were contaminated. A lot of times we may not want to touch that property, yet there are a lot of state and federal dollars that can come through. They could have private and city partnerships to look at properties where those dollars will cover them. Even if we find out that it is a project we do not want to take to the next level, those dollars are still available. That might be a way to get some private people to look at some properties that are sitting there because nobody wants to touch them. One property that comes to his mind is the corner of 14th Street and Main Street. **Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson** commented that he believed it was clean now. It was being remediated by the state. They removed all the equipment, so that tells him that it was completed. After they complete their work, there is a one-year holding period where they continue to monitor the wells. After that it will get a no further action needed. **Commissioner Sokol** said that could be with any project. It does not matter where it is, it can be addressed because that is money they can use instead of saying this is all the CRA money we have. Maybe they could look at other options: partnering with the CRA money to take the CRA dollars and make them more useful and powerful. That way they could do more things. **Commissioner Ponder** added that they were talking a lot about using the funds that are available to create more funds in the CRA so they could in turn do more in the community. When talking about Cutrale, she was unaware of all the chemicals they used in order to create the product that they were creating. Is that something that could be looked at to draw in the right buyer, or whether they may want to do something different depending on what the community needs in that area. These are spaces that are important for our community to look at and to use grants to incentivize people to come in and develop. **Commissioner Sokol** added that at one time the city had a part-time CRA director.

CM Minner pointed out that he did not want to be Mr. Negativity, and he did not want to squander the positive input, but he has been here for thirteen years, and he has had these discussions ad nauseam. He knows when folks go off to these conferences, they get a bunch of ideas and see how other communities do stuff, and they come back feeling that Leesburg sucks because we are not doing it like West Palm Beach. He wanted to bring some reality to the conversation. There are some things that were mentioned tonight that we can certainly take care of, and they are super easy administrative items. He would have that fixed before the end of the week. There were other things that were extremely difficult. The first thing, but in his opinion, there is no side of Leesburg that has received more investment than the east side of Canal Street. First, the aquatic facility was \$6 million. That was a \$6 million investment in Pine Street. The street was another \$5 million, so that was an \$11 million investment on the east side of Canal Street, on the east side of this district. Some CRA money was used, some DST money was used, and there was a

cumulative pot there that got those two projects done. So, to say that the east side was not getting the city's attention is like taking your fingers across the blackboard. There is always the need to do more and when we say that we need to do more, there is an aura that they have ignored. He just wanted to clarify that the east side of Pine Street had not been ignored. The second thing, grants. We use grants all the time and whenever we can get a grant and put our hands on it, we do it. Other communities like to brag about grants, and we brag about grants. He would say that the city has received over \$1 million dollars in legislative projects over the last couple of years. We are tapping into grants whenever we can. With Brown fields, they are tricky, and they are a fun buzzword to talk about at conferences. The trick with Brownfields is that they need private sector participation. Cutrale specifically came up, and he was not talking badly about Cutrale, but they are a difficult partner. Since Cutrale stopped juicing, there have been a number of companies who have reached out to the headquarters of Cutrale with an interest in purchasing the property, with an interest in redeveloping the property, and Cutrale has not been sensitive to that. Cutrale has done what they need to do to control that site. It has not hit a code enforcement issue as they are managing their site. They are not outgoing in terms of forming partnerships to redevelop that site. Offline, he would say it is inappropriate, because it is a non-factual opinion of his as to why they are not active in that. There have been a number of major corporations and local corporations, including LEAD, and the Cutrale site is at the top of everybody's bulletin board. Whether Cutrale is eligible for brownfield or not, we do not know because we do not know the contamination. They talked about Brownfields and the infamous Exxon corner lot. Again, private sector development, so they can rest assured that when they have talked with developers and private parties, they know the tools in the toolbox and to date on the Brownfield issue, it has not germinated. Brownfields are tricky in that they need that private developer; they need that partnership, and they need that private developer to bring in the dollars to help with the remediation, where they then can get the tax credits. Again, that has not germinated to date, and that is not for lack of effort. **Commissioner Sokol** pointed out that they were not trying to offend anyone. They just wanted to present what they learned. **Commissioner Ponder** thanked the city manager for sharing his experiences. It was very insightful. She wanted to echo something that was said at the conference that it would be beneficial if they had more people from the city attend the conference, because she never heard anything about Leesburg being bad. She did not hear anything of that nature, but they did learn from their peers. There are things that people are doing in other places and even if it was not a perfect fit for us, it is still educating us on things that are out there. It is nice to see what other places are doing because it is beneficial. Every city is different. They cannot copy and paste, but they can definitely learn about different things to help improve the community. Yes, Pine Street is a space and a lot of dollars were invested there; the road, the aquatic center. She did not think anyone said ignore, but it was said that the aura of that type of tone, but she did not hear it in this space. However, what she heard as a resident of that side, she was asking if they could continue to improve that area as well. Not just the business part, but where the homes are. She is over in the East and Main area, so she was not necessarily talking about Pine Street, although she was grateful for the work done there because it is beautiful. **Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson** asked if there were any other comments from the commission. He said that good news is that this CRA is working, and it is working well. The fact is that we can pay half a million to the CDC and have a half million that is being used as it is. Personally, with the parking lot, we are so close to the parking lot and that was a good recommendation by the city manager to hold on to the funds until we get through this parking lot, which has been very important to the downtown for years. He was excited to wrap that up, and after that they could talk about other projects. **Commissioner Ponder** said the last item was really important to confirm that the CRA is following the latest state CRA regulations. That was the first class they attended. It was to just make sure that they kept up, because every year the laws change. She wants to make sure we are matching up with what the laws are. **Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson** assured them that city staff was on top of that. He appreciated their input. **Commissioner Sokol** finalized his comments by saying he knew at one time there was a part-time CRA director, and he knew it would have to come out of CRA funds, but it was just something that many of the communities had. **Chairperson Pro Tem Pederson** said his reaction is that

those communities are larger than Leesburg. **CM Minner** added that we did make Ken Thomas a part-time CRA director. However, we eliminated that position when Ken left. We only kept the housing portion, and we reassigned the CRA items to different departments because, essentially, we did not want to spend the money on staff. Also, we had already identified projects, so we saw the money being spent on goals. The FY 27 budget is coming up and, again, who knows what CRAs will look like after this legislative session. There may be no CRAs come October 1st. At this point, it is not really worth talking about other than the state legislature is peeling back the layers of the onions on CRAs and property taxes this year. Everything may be brand-new come June. Personally, as the city manager, he did not see the need for staff, because in all the CRAs we do have a defined vision. However, when budget time comes, they will be involved in the budget process, so maybe that is something we will look at for FY 27.

5. ROLL CALL:

There were no further commission comments offered.

6. 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 Reisman and a second by Commissioner Burry, the meeting adjourned at 5:32 p.m.