

**Minutes of the  
CITY COMMISSION WORKSHOP  
CITY OF EUSTIS, FLORIDA  
February 1, 2007 at 6:00 p.m.**

**THIS WORKSHOP OF THE EUSTIS CITY COMMISSION WAS HELD AT 10 NORTH GROVE SREET, EUSTIS  
WITH MAYOR JAMES T. ROTELLA PRESIDING.**

Mayor Rotella acknowledged that all Commissioners are present and seated.

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

Steve Benetz, Director of Leisure Services/Library  
Fred Cobb, Director of Public Safety/Chief of Police  
Jim Myers, Acting City Manager/ City Clerk

Judy Roberts, Deputy City Clerk  
Mike Sheppard, Acting Finance Director  
Lewis Stone, City Attorney

**Order of Business  
PARENT-ORIENTED GROUPS FUNDING REQUESTS**

**PRESENTATION BY APPLICANTS:**

- **Eustis Jr. Panther Football League**

Mr. Johnnie Saunders, founder of the Eustis Jr. Panther Football League, thanked the Commission for their past support and asked for their continued support.

Dr. Jon Radnothy, 2709 Regal Point Place, Eustis, stated that he has been involved with the League for about eight (8) years. Children involved in the Eustis Jr. Panther Football League are not usually involved in any other programs and live in the poor areas of town. Many former participants have played college football. Basketball has been added in order to help keep the children accountable throughout the year. The League teaches the children social norms, how to respect others, how to make good decisions, etc. Success is not based upon how many championships are won, but what the children will be doing in 20 years. The goal is for them to be successful adults.

Mr. Saunders explained that the age range is 5-15 years of age.

Dr. Radnothy noted that the budget is \$20,000-\$24,000 and that support comes from orthopedic companies and the community. There is a \$50 registration fee. Approximately 50 percent of the children cannot afford to pay the fee and are placed on an "academic scholarship." Children on a scholarship must show their report card in order to keep playing. About 95 percent of the children live in Eustis or attend Eustis schools. They encourage children to be involved in programs in the city where they will attend high school. There were about 50 participants in the cheerleading program.

Mr. Myers stated that a report is required at the end of the year certifying how many participants are Eustis residents. A list of streets located within the City is provided to the applicants to assist in determining residency.

- **Children of Destiny**

Harold Kelly, 2241 Jenna Circle, Eustis, stated that Children of Destiny has been in existence for 12 years. The program was initiated in the Tallahassee area based upon observing children in "the hood." The mission is to work with economically disadvantaged children with primarily one (1) parent at home. A group of volunteers began working with the children through an after-school program. In a two-year period, school attendance improved 80 percent, grades improved by at least one (1) letter grade and discipline improved. Upon relocating in Eustis, he began a similar program at the church he pastors. Progress reports are obtained from the teachers, volunteers visit in the homes to see how the child is progressing and the children are fed at the after school program. Parents are encouraged to allow his group to work with the children four (4) hours a week after school or during Sunday School.

Commissioner Hale questioned if there is a difference between the program offered by the City Recreation Department and Mr. Kelly's program. She suggested that his program could possibly be intermingled with the City Recreation program. She commended Mr. Kelly for helping the children get a "head start."

Commissioner Ales stated that it is a struggle to justify spending money with one (1) particular church to do a program that others are also trying to accomplish. If the two (2) programs worked together, some of the expense could be deferred by not having to use the church facility or pay for food.

Mr. Kelly stated that unless someone visits in the home and talks with the parents, the children will not participate. The children are in Kindergarten - Grade 10. They also offer baseball at Carver Park.

- **Eustis Little League, Inc.**

George Orta, 36300 Foxwood Drive, Eustis, stated that he is President of the Eustis Little League. He handed out additional information regarding repairs and improvements needed at their facilities. Eustis Little League is a non-profit organization that focuses on baseball through Little League International. Their mission is to

implant the ideas of good sportsmanship, honesty, loyalty, courage and respect for authority. Programs are offered to children ages 5-14 years and this year, 15-year olds are being added through a waiver from Little League International in order to keep the Junior League Baseball Division growing. Programs are offered in the spring and fall. He invited the Commissioners to attend Opening Day on March 10, 2007. The League relies entirely upon volunteers. Plans are to continue with improvements that began last year through a grant from the City. The information provided on the application is as accurate as could be determined from the registration forms from 2006. Approximately 590 youth were served last year of which 290 were from Eustis.

Sandra Green, 17530 Willis McCall Road, Umatilla, former City of Eustis Recreation Director, commented that last year, the 9- and 10-year-olds went to the District Championship games. The 10- and 11-year-olds went to the State Championship games and was one (1) of the top eight (8) teams in the State of Florida. The 9- and 10-year-olds girls' softball team went to the State Championship games and was one (1) of the top four (4) teams in the State of Florida.

Mr. Orta commented on the behavior of the 11- and 12-year-olds while competing in the District Championship games. The team progressed to the final game and recovered from a deficit, but lost the game in extra innings. A member from the opposing team noted how the Eustis team demonstrated good sportsmanship and said it spoke of their character and how they had been trained.

- **Eustis Middle School Band Boosters**

Members of the Eustis Middle School (EMS) Band Boosters present were: Jill Wilkins, 216 Temple Circle, Eustis, President;  
Robert Ross, 13710 Sand Bluff Lane, Grand Island; Gerry Ricke, 18725 Bates Avenue, Eustis, Band Director;  
and Jim Byer, sponsor and spokesperson.

Mr. Byer noted that EMS Band is probably one (1) of the most decorated ensembles in the entire area. The Band has received straight superior ratings for their performances since 2004 and has won national awards not only as an ensemble, but as individual performers. There are 147 band students and 26 steel drum players totaling 173 students involved in the music program. An information sheet about The Eustis Middle School Mustang Bands was handed to each Commissioner. On an average, 8-12 students are chosen for the Lake County Honors Band and the All-State Band each year. There is an average of about 30 students who practice after school in preparation for Solo and Ensemble Festivals. Approximately 20 students put in extra time to be a part of the Jazz Ensemble. During the school year, these award winning students average 497 hours per student in extra-curricular practicing and performances and members of Jazz Band I spend another 70 hours outside of normal school hours. The ensemble is very involved in the community. They will be performing at the First United Methodist Church and will be providing music for the Teacher of the Year Banquet. The Band pays for its own transportation when traveling to performances. EMS Band Boosters raise funds to help with expenses.

Commissioner Hale referred to the Parent-Oriented Recreational Funding Application and questioned the number of Eustis resident participants.

Mr. Byer stated that they would be willing to provide the actual number of Eustis residents.

Commissioner Ales explained that part of the criteria is the Commission wanting to understand how many of the children live within the City limits.

Mr. Ricke noted that for several years, the Band has performed a concert in the McClelland Band Shell that includes the Steel Drum Band and the Jazz Ensemble. They participate in the annual Washington's Birthday Festival Parade and have performed at a First Friday Street Fest. They usually perform whenever they are invited.

- **Golden Triangle YMCA Youth Achievers**

Tanya Martin, 1065 Wall Street, Eustis, stated that Youth Achievers and Hispanic Leaders is a pilot program for students at Eustis High School (EHS). It was anticipated there would be between 60 and 70 students participating and there are currently 120 students enrolled. The program is designed to teach character and prepare students for post and secondary education. The children meet twice a week and on Saturdays. The funds being requested will be used for transportation to visit colleges. The plan is to visit colleges in Alabama, North Carolina and South Carolina. Parents attend the Saturday sessions and are taught how to help their children with financial aid applications, how to understand transcripts and are reminded to help their children meet the Grade Point Average (GPA) requirements for college entrance. All enrolled students are Eustis residents and must maintain a 2.5 GPA. Peer tutors are utilized as well as approximately 45 volunteers. The program also works with the Lake-Sumter Upward Bound Program. Based upon the successful program at Eustis Heights Elementary School, Mike Elchenko, Principal of EHS, had asked how the program could benefit high school students. Working with Mr. Elchenko and the Lake County School Board, a program was developed for EHS. The goal is to have a Youth Achievers and Hispanic Leaders program throughout Lake County by 2008. Eustis Middle School (EMS) will have a program next year. The YMCA covers the majority of the budget and fundraisers assist with offsetting the budget. The registration fee is \$35, but the cost to the child is \$15. The YMCA Scholarship Program offsets the registration fee.

- **Lake Basketball Association**

John Rhiem, 32316 CR 437, Sorrento, stated that the Lake Basketball Association fills a need of basketball players up to high school age, that they have added two (2) girls' teams this year, and 30 of the 72 participants are Eustis residents. The teams are competitive traveling teams with academics and discipline being stressed. Tutoring is offered and most of the former Eustis players are playing college basketball. The Lake Basketball Association hosts a local tournament with about 30 teams competing. Proceeds assist in offsetting the budget. Last year teams traveled to Tennessee and Virginia to compete in the Amateur Athletic Union (AAU) Boys Basketball Nationals and three (3) teams competed in the top four (4) in the entire State. The local games are played at EHS and EMS. The length of the program can be 3-5 months with players practicing 2-3 days a week and playing in tournaments 1-2 weekends a month. Some of the tournaments necessitate an overnight stay.

Commissioner Hale stated her appreciation for all that each group does for the children. Grades are improving because the children know that academics are important and that they have to show their report cards.

Mayor Rotella noted that there are many children who are without direction. It is an important part of the community to help support these efforts. The requests will be an agenda item for discussion at tonight's City Commission Meeting at 7:00 p.m.

**ADJOURNMENT:** 6:56 p.m.

  
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Judy Roberts, CMC  
City Clerk

  
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James T. Rotella  
Mayor/Commissioner