

**CITY OF EUHARLEE
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES
MAY 19, 2026– 6:00 PM**

Mayor Craig Guyton called the meeting to order with the invocation, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Present were Mayor Craig Guyton; Council Members Tim Abbott, Greg Free, Jayson Frederick; City Manager James Stephens; City Attorney Chris Jackson, Police Chief Jody Matthews, and Parks & Recreation Director Becky Rumsey.

Approval to Amend Agenda

Council Member Greg Free made a motion to amend the agenda to add Item Number 4, replacement of shingles on the Militia Courthouse, for both the work session and council meeting. Council Member Jayson Frederick seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

Announcement

Mayor Guyton announced that the family of Council Member Joseph Turner has requested the public be informed of visitation and memorial service arrangements. Visitation will be held on Sunday, May 31st from 3:00 pm to 5:00 pm at Euharlee Baptist Church, with the memorial service beginning at 5:00 pm. The Council continues to pray for the Turner family.

Public Hearing – 1st Reading of Application for Rezoning RZ-2023.1

City Attorney Chris Jackson provided background on the rezoning application. The rezoning request was previously denied in 2023 and later sent back to Council by Bartow County Superior Court for reconsideration under a set of proposed conditions. Proposed changes include:

- The environmental overlay would stay in place, but open space would be reduced from 40% to 35%.
- A portion of the property would be rezoned from RE-1 to R-1, allowing up to 299 single-family homes.
- The developer would be responsible for restoring any infrastructure affected by utility work.
- The developer to work with adjacent property owners; open space and buffers would be arranged to protect nearby properties, based on the court Exhibit A.
- Adjacent owners could purchase designated open space, which would still remain protected.
- The developer would contribute up to \$1 million toward improvements at Milam Bridge Road and Euharlee Road.

Kirk Felstuhl, Attorney for the applicant who appeared long with the applicant, said the proposal which has been in litigation for over two years with extensive discussion, has been reduced over time and now includes fewer homes, preserved overlay protections, added buffers, and a significant contribution for intersections improvements. Attorney Felstuhl stated the revised plan is a fair compromise intended to resolve the ongoing legal dispute.

Public Comments – Citizens in Opposition

Residents opposed the change for several reasons: concerns about environmental impacts, reduced buffer protections for current homeowners, heavier traffic, school capacity, pressure on local roads, loss of rural character, and possible effects on property values. Several said they could accept larger estate-style lots but not a denser subdivision. Others asked that the 40% overlay remain unchanged when purchased not previously appealed and requested stronger protections such as fencing or undisturbed buffers along neighboring properties.

In response, the applicant argued that the zoning would remain consistent with most surrounding property, that prior efforts to market the land under RE-1 were unsuccessful with spending over one million dollars in infrastructure and they can agree to disagree on the efforts and marketing, and that continued litigation could result in a less favorable outcome for the city, including loss of the overlay and fewer development

conditions. Attorney Jackson also noted that one nearby parcel had since been rezoned to A-1, while the rest remained R-1. Mayor Guyton closed the public hearing for the 1st reading of Application RZ-2023.1.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS

1st Reading of Application for Rezoning RZ-2023.1

City Manager James Stephens presented the first reading of Application RZ-2023.1 pursuant to the conditions read by Attorney Jackson. The second reading and public hearing will occur on June 2nd at 6:00 pm.

Council questions focused on what the remand means, how it differs from returning to court, what obligations the developer would have to adjacent property owners, and what the likely outcomes are under each scenario. Attorney Jackson explained that the remand gives Council the opportunity to consider a negotiated set of six conditions that could resolve the lawsuit while addressing concerns raised during the hearings. If Council approves the rezoning with those conditions, the lawsuit ends and the applicant accepts that result as constitutional zoning. If Council declines, the case returns to Bartow Superior Court, where a judge would decide whether the property is constitutionally zoned. He noted that a judge would not be required to keep the same negotiated conditions, including the specific open space locations, buffer distances, or other details now being discussed.

Council also raised questions about whether the developer had already reached out to neighboring property owners and when that coordination would be required. Attorney Jackson said the remand exhibit already reflects prior input by showing out-parcels and green space buffers between the development and surrounding properties, but he could not confirm the extent of any direct conversations between the developer and neighbors. He explained that Council could ask the applicant directly and clarified that the requirement to work with adjacent property owners is a condition tied to the zoning and final plat process. That means the obligation would apply after approval and could be enforced later, including through withholding final plat approval if the condition is not met.

In the same discussion, council members worked through the practical effect of each option. Attorney Jackson confirmed that some residential development can occur on the property under existing zoning regardless of the vote. Under the remand conditions, the development would be capped at 299 homes, the environmental overlay would remain in place with open space reduced from 40 percent to 35 percent, and the city would receive up to one million dollars for intersection improvements. If the matter returns to court and the city loses, the overlay could be removed, the number of homes could increase significantly, and the city could receive no infrastructure contribution. If the current zoning simply remains in place and the owner builds under it, Attorney Jackson estimated the site could still yield about 195 homes. The overall response to Council's questions was that homes are likely either way, but the remand conditions give the city more control over how the property is developed and what protections or improvements can be required. No action was taken during the work session.

White Sox Organization - Joe Cowan Park – Becky Rumsey

Parks & Recreation Director Becky Rumsey presented a request from the Southeast Sox organization to rent Fields 1 and 3 at Joe Cowan Park for \$30,000 for the 2026-2027 contract year, with an additional \$5,500 in screen replacements. Staff recommended approval, citing Jacob Cagle's baseball and field maintenance experience, the organization's positive prior use of the fields, and assurance that the arrangement would not interfere with tournaments or middle school use. Council Members asked about the fit, the team base, and whether the organization hosts tournaments. Mr. Cagle said most players are from Bartow County and confirmed the organization participates in, but does not host, tournaments. No action was taken during the work session.

Library Funding Discussion – Radha Ashok

Bartow County Library Director Radha Ashok, accompanied by members of the Library Board, presented information regarding the Euharlee Library, and distributed informational folders to Council. Ms. Ashok reaffirmed the Board's commitment to maintaining the Euharlee branch in compliance with state and

federal public-library requirements. She requested the city's continued funding support and asked Council to consider citizen feedback from the recent survey. She reported that city assumption of building maintenance last year enabled the hiring of a part-time staff member and expansion of programming. A pilot program for Saturday operating hours will be held on May 30, June 13, and June 27 from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, and residents were encouraged to participate as usage numbers impact funding.

Ms. Ashok highlighted available services including Tutor.com (free daily from 3:00 pm – 11:00 pm), cultural and park pass programs, electronic magazines, genealogy resources, and low-cost printing. She noted that approximately 1,600 cardholders currently serve a population of 4,284.

She stated that federal and state aid requirements, including Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA) compliance, prevent the library from co-sharing a building with the city. A letter from the State Librarian also outlines why the library cannot utilize an intern. The library plans to pursue marketing grants, expand services, upgrade technology, and refresh furnishings as funding allows. Ms. Ashok concluded by reading patron statements supporting the library and requested that Council maintain funding and keep the library operating in its current form.

The Council held an extended discussion with Library Director Radha Ashok regarding the funding request of \$71,563 (approximately \$88,000 with upkeep). Ms. Ashok asked Council to consider citizen survey feedback and the Library Board's request to maintain the Euharlee Library as it is while the community grows.

Council members expressed appreciation for her engagement but raised concerns about usage data, noting that 2025 figures show most visits are for internet access and programs. Ms. Ashok emphasized that many residents rely on the library for essential services, that visitation is nearly double the city's population, and that program demand will increase with new families.

Council discussed funding models, maintenance responsibilities, and the possibility of an MOU with performance metrics, though the City Manager cautioned against arbitrary standards and Ms. Ashok noted state rules require a full-year funding commitment to retain state aid.

Council members voiced frustration about limited flexibility due to state and federal regulations, while Ms. Ashok reiterated willingness to expand programs, extend hours, partner with parks, and modernize technology. She warned that closing the library would make it nearly impossible for Euharlee to ever regain one. Council members expressed both support for the library and concern about long-term viability, with some suggesting alternative uses of the space or shifting responsibilities, while Ms. Ashok requested one more year to demonstrate measurable improvement.

Replacement of Shingles on Militia Courthouse – James Stephens

City Manager James Stephens reported that Council received a quote from Vintage Roofing to replace the cedar shingles on the Militia Courthouse and adjacent jail building in the amount of \$22,305.60. Public Works Director Todd Roberts sought multiple quotes and received one additional estimate for \$28,000, but it did not include cedar shingles and would not meet the Historic Preservation Committee's Certificate of Appropriateness requirements. Public Works will also replace deteriorated windowsills on the rear of the Militia Courthouse as an immediate maintenance need. Mr. Stephens noted that although the quote is high for a small structure, the cost reflects the use of historically appropriate cedar shingles and must meet preservation standards.

Council Member Greg Free expressed concern about the high-cost relative to the building size.

Council Member Jayson Frederick commented on the city's broader financial pressures, referencing recent expenses for other historic structures, ongoing library funding discussions, and the city's limited general fund balance, along with SPLOST commitments for Osborne Park. No action was taken during the work session. The item was scheduled for consideration during the regular council meeting.

Public Comments

Resident Phoebe Floyd, spoke in support of keeping the library as it currently operates, sharing that it provided essential enrichment during her childhood and remains a barrier-free resource for families living paycheck to paycheck. She emphasized the library’s role in early literacy, equitable access, and community enrichment.

Resident Billy Pruitt raised concerns about the nearby subdivision, stating he and others attempted to purchase lots but were told none were available. He asked about the potential number of homes a judge could allow. Council members explained that losing in court could permit up to 600 homes, while the negotiated proposal limits development to 299 with infrastructure improvements. Discussion covered zoning, school capacity, and risks associated with the judge’s remand order.

Adjournment - With no further discussion the meeting adjourned at 8:12pm.

**CITY OF EUHARLEE
CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
MAY 19, 2026 – 7:00 PM**

Mayor Craig Guyton called the City Council Meeting to order at 8:12 pm.

UNFINISHED AND NEW BUSINESS

Public Comments – Agenda Items Only
No public comments.

Approval of Minutes

Council Member Greg Free motioned to approved minutes for May 5, 2026, as written. Council Member Jayson Frederick seconded the motion. Motion passed unanimously.

White Sox Organization - Joe Cowan Park – Becky Rumsey

Parks & Recreation Director Becky Rumsey presented staff recommendation for the Southeast Sox organization rental of Field 1 and Field 3 for contract year 2026-2027 for \$30,000 for the year and replacement of square screens for fields and indoor batting cages valued at \$5,500. Council Member Jayson Frederick made a motion to accept the rental for one year at \$30,000 with replacement of screens of \$5,500 to the White Sox organization at Joe Cowan Park. Council Member Greg Free seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

Library Funding – Mayor Craig Guyton

Council reviewed the Euharlee library’s request for \$71,563 for FY 2026–2027, with total city cost nearing \$90,000 when maintenance is included. Members expressed support for keeping the library open but raised concerns about low usage, limited programming, and whether the current model is sustainable. Several options were discussed, including full-year funding, six-month funding, shifting maintenance costs, adding program-specific funding, and requiring performance metrics or a termination clause, but no funding motion passed. Library representatives said they are willing to expand programs and services but are constrained by state funding requirements and operational rules. Council Member Greg Free motioned to table until June 2nd meeting. Council Member Jayson Frederick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. Council directed staff to explore a possible memorandum of understanding with measurable expectations.

Public Works Director Appointment – James Stephens

City Manager James Stephens stated that according to the charter, City Council must approve department heads. For position of Public Works Director, he puts forward the name of Marshall Aiken for consideration and approval. Council Member Jayson Frederick made a motion to hire Marshall Aiken as the new Public Works Director. Council Member Greg Free seconded. Motion passed unanimously. Mr. Stephens thanked

Todd Roberts for the work he put in for the city, noting the city looks different and better because of his efforts and he will be greatly missed. Council looks forward to working with Marshall Aiken.

Replacement of Shingles on Militia Courthouse

Mayor Craig Guyton stated Council has a recommendation to replace shingles for \$22,305.60. Council Member Tim Abbott made a motion to table replacing these shingles until such time they can understand more about the building and renovation from the Historical Planning Committee. Council Member Greg Free seconded the motion. Motion passed 3-1.

Announcements

Mayor Guyton announced the Carnival by the Creek on May 30th from 11:00 am to 3:00pm at Osborne Park. Mayor Guyton thanked everyone who came out tonight and thanked Ms. Ashok for all her work.

Adjournment

Council Member Greg Free made a motion to adjourn. Council Member Jayson Frederick seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously. With no further discussion the meeting was adjourned at 8:56 pm.