



**CITY OF CLERMONT
COMMUNITY REDEVELOPMENT AGENCY (CRA)
2:30 PM, Tuesday, June 23, 2026
685 W. Montrose Street**

CALL TO ORDER

NEW BUSINESS

Meeting Minutes from April 28, 2026

Main Street Update

ADJOURN

PUBLIC NOTICE

Meeting agendas are available on the city website and are posted within the first floor of City Hall.

Should any person desire to appeal any decision of the City Council with respect to any matter to be considered at this meeting, that person shall ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made including all testimony and evidence upon which any appeal may be based (F.S. 286.0105).

In accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), if any person with a disability defined by the ADA needs special accommodation to participate in this proceeding, then not later than two business days prior to the proceeding he/she should contact Clermont, City Clerk's Office, 352-241-7331.

Please be advised that if you intend to show any document, picture, video or items to the Council or Board in support or opposition to any item on the agenda; a copy of the document, picture, video or item must be provided to the City Clerk for the City's records.

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CALL TO ORDER

The Community Redevelopment Agency met on Tuesday, April 28, 2026, in the Clermont City Council Chambers. Chair Murry called the meeting to order at 2:18 pm with the following Board Members present: Board Members Schuett, Crawford, Strange, Bain, Myers and Petersen.

Other City officials present were Deputy City Manager Matthys, City Attorney Waugh and Deputy City Clerk Wisniewski.

AGENDA ITEMS

Item No. 1 – Meeting Minutes from January 13, 2026

Board Member Petersen motioned to approve meeting minutes: Seconded by Board Member Myers. The motion passed 6-0 with all members present voicing aye.

Board Member Crawford joined virtually.

Item No. 2 – Downtown Presentation

Natalie Kahler, Executive Director of Clermont Main Street, presented an overview of the organization’s purpose, structure, and current initiatives. She explained that Clermont Main Street is part of a national nonprofit network focused on revitalizing historic downtowns through economic redevelopment, historic preservation, education, and placemaking, and noted the local program was reestablished in 2022. Ms. Kahler clarified that while the organization hosts events, its primary role is not event planning but supporting a thriving downtown through community-driven strategies. She emphasized a collaborative, bottom-up approach in which public input shapes annual work plans developed through committees focused on design, promotion, organization, and economic vitality.

Ms. Kahler highlighted ongoing community engagement efforts, including public meetings, business surveys, and outreach tools used to evaluate the impact of initiatives on local businesses. She discussed several established and newer events that help draw visitors downtown, while noting adjustments are made when data shows certain sectors, such as restaurants, are not benefiting equally. She also outlined new initiatives such as a business spotlight video series and an upcoming film-focused project that leverages Clermont’s history as a filming location to promote tourism and local businesses. Lastly, she provided an update on grant funding, noting that while two grants have been approved, uncertainty remains due to delays in the state budget and future grant cycles.

Chair Murry opened public comment. There were no comments. Chair Murry closed public comments.

Chair Murry announced that before moving on to the next item, the Historical Society had requested to provide a brief update on activities in the Historic Village and invited them to present.

Dieter Grube, Treasurer of the Clermont Historical Society, provided a brief update on activities at the Historic Village, highlighting several recent accomplishments. He reported that volunteers completed a long-term project to identify and organize a large collection of historic photographs, many with assistance from longtime residents, and noted plans to eventually digitize the collection.

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He also shared that the World War II exhibit in the Quonset hut has been fully revamped, including preservation of original materials, expanded photo displays, and improved labeling for all items. Mr. Grube noted strong visitor numbers, with a majority coming from outside the area, and emphasized ongoing challenges with limited volunteers and declining donations. He added that the village is highly regarded among regional historical organizations and encouraged greater community support and awareness of the resource.

Discussion ensued on the need to better promote both the historic downtown and historical village, particularly by engaging the community and homeschool groups. Discussion highlighted potential grant opportunities through Lake County tourism, though uncertainty remains about funding parameters and grant-writing capacity. Mr. Grube noted ongoing challenges with limited staffing and difficulty securing long-term volunteers, despite efforts with schools and community groups. Board Members also discussed the importance of increasing awareness through social media and digitizing historical materials, while recognizing the village's valuable and often underappreciated artifacts.

Item No. 3 – Main Street Phase 2 Proposal

Patrick Bianchi, President of Clermont Main Street, presented a conceptual vision for a Clermont Botanical Garden at Center Lake, building on prior downtown design efforts. The project would transform the lake's edge and surrounding green spine along 8th Street into a multi-layered, native landscape featuring water-filtering aquatic plants, pollinator habitats, shrubs, and long-lasting tree canopy, along with an ADA-accessible trail.

He emphasized four key benefits: improved water quality, environmental restoration through native habitats, increased economic activity by attracting visitors to downtown, and long-term fiscal advantages through grants and reduced maintenance costs. The project is intended as a community-driven, grant-funded initiative, with strong educational and tourism potential. Main Street is seeking initial feedback and a letter of support to strengthen future grant applications and move the vision forward in collaboration with local organizations.

Chair Murry opened public comment.

Rosie Mulholland, 12th Street – expressed strong support for the botanical garden concept, noting that local Florida Native Plant Society chapters and the Florida Wildflower Foundation could provide volunteer support and potential grant funding for the project.

Chair Murry asked for virtual comments.

Ana Sinclair, 575 W. Minneola Avenue – she is the Vice President of the Passion Flower Chapter of the Florida Native Plant Society and voiced strong support for the project, offering volunteer and partnership assistance and recommending collaboration with groups like the Florida Wildflower Foundation and International Dark-Sky Association for grants and environmentally sensitive lighting design.

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Board Member Crawford expressed support for the proposal and recommended involving the Clermont Garden Club as a key stakeholder due to their proximity to the lake and expertise, while clarifying that responsibility for the project should not be handed over to any single group.

Chair Murry closed public comment.

Board Members expressed strong overall support for the proposed botanical garden project, praising its vision and potential as a destination and placemaking asset. Discussion highlighted opportunities for education, including partnerships with schools, homeschool groups, and potential integration with water quality and conservation initiatives previously envisioned at Victory Point. Board Members also discussed coordinating with existing programs through collaboration with community groups and organizations. Emphasis was placed on broad community involvement, including local clubs and stakeholders, as well as forming committees to guide design and implementation.

Mr. Bianchi noted that, pending a letter of support, the next steps would include pursuing grant funding, refining design details, and developing cost estimates, with a follow-up presentation to outline a more concrete plan.

Board Member Bain motioned to issue a letter of support: Seconded by Board Member Myers

Chair Murry expressed support but raised concerns about maintaining lake visibility, fishing access, and accommodating existing features like the holiday light display. Mr. Bianchi responded that design details, including plant spacing and a potential fishing pier, would address these issues, with further refinement to come in future plans.

Chair Murry opened public comments.

Jenny May, 4062 Graystone Drive - voiced support for the project and suggested added features such as seating, public art, and a mural to enhance the space.

Chair Murry closed public comments.

City Attorney Waugh explained that the project is supported by the CRA's redevelopment plan, specifically citing provisions that call for enhancing the State Road 50 and Center Lake entryway to create a sense of arrival with features such as signage, streetscaping, and improved water elements.

The motion passed 7-0 with all members present voicing aye.

Board Member Schuett requested a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) workshop to update the strategic vision and redevelopment plan with clear facilitation, while Chair Murry expressed interest in also discussing a potential CRA boundary expansion; the board agreed to move forward with scheduling, directing the City Manager Van Wagner to coordinate availability and target a May workshop date.

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ADJOURN: With no further comments, this meeting adjourned at 3:16 pm.

APPROVED:

Tim Murry, Chair

ATTEST:

Tracy Ackroyd Howe, MMC
City Clerk