

A Workshop Meeting of the Apalachicola City Commission was held on June 3, 2025 at 5:00 PM at the Commission Meeting Room located at 74 6th Street, Apalachicola, Florida.

Present: Mayor Brenda Ash, Commissioner Anita Grove, Commissioner Despina George, Commissioner Donna Duncan, Commissioner Adriane Elliott, Interim City Manager Chris Holley, City Planner Bree Robinson, City Attorney Hartman, and City Clerk Sheneidra Cummings

Meeting was called to order by Mayor Ash followed by invocation and pledge of allegiance.

Agenda Adoption

A motion was made by Commissioner Grove, seconded by Commissioner Elliott. Motion carried, 5-0.

Public Comment

Rob Zingarelli commented.
Cutler Edwards commented.
Donna Ingle commented.

Discussion: Downtown Businesses/Events

1) Defining Event Space

Commissioner Elliott, who called for the workshop, explained that the meeting followed a request from the Planning and Zoning Board (P&Z) to develop a definition of event space. She noted that defining event space affects multiple aspects including parking regulations and city-owned facilities used for events, as well as distinctions between public and private events.

Commissioner Elliott expressed confusion about the absence of P&Z representatives or the individuals who had requested the workshop. She outlined key discussion points including how to define event spaces, differentiate between public and private events, address parking mitigation, and determine permitting requirements.

City Planner Bree Robinson clarified that P&Z had initially requested permission to workshop the definition, but the Commission had instructed them not to proceed

independently, indicating the Commission would address it comprehensively. She explained that P&Z was not expected to provide materials for this meeting.

Mayor Ash expressed concern about having a workshop without proper information or direction, which had caused unnecessary alarm in the community.

Commissioner Grove stated that the need for a definition arose because the city lacks a parking requirement for special event spaces in the Land Development Code (LDC). She suggested that defining a special event space would be a necessary first step.

Ms. Robinson explained the complexities of defining event spaces, noting that many businesses in downtown could be classified in multiple ways - as venues, bars, or restaurants that also host weddings. She pointed out that requiring concrete parking spaces for occasional events could be impractical, as event spaces might only be used a few times per year. She mentioned that while the Florida Building Code categorizes event spaces, Florida statutes do not define them, leaving it to local municipalities. She emphasized that adding parking requirements to the definition could significantly impact business owners.

City Attorney Hartman suggested that having a definition would help distinguish actual event spaces from businesses trying to avoid parking requirements by claiming to be event spaces.

Mr. Edwards noted that the original question raised at the P&Z meeting was about the lack of parking requirements for special events generally, whether held in designated event spaces or not. He suggested that creating rules for special event parking would automatically cover event spaces.

2) Public vs. Private Events

Commissioner Elliott raised questions about how to treat public versus private events differently, particularly regarding permitting and parking requirements. She noted that the city does not currently require special event permits for private events like weddings held at bars or restaurants, only for larger public events using public right-of-ways. Discussion ensued about whether the city should apply different standards to public events versus private events held in commercial spaces.

3) Permitting

Commissioner Elliott questioned whether the city should require permits for all weddings in Apalachicola. She noted that currently, special event permits are generally only required for larger events using public right-of-ways, such as the Oyster Cook-off, Third of July celebration, and Butts and Clucks.

City Attorney Dan Hartman suggested the need to clarify permitting requirements based on the definitions developed for event spaces and special events.

4) Central Business District (CBD) Zoning Discussion

Commissioner Elliott mentioned that RVs and boat trailers taking up parking spaces downtown could be addressed through central business district zoning regulations, separate from event space definitions. She suggested prohibiting boats, trailers, and RVs in the central business district to preserve parking for businesses.

The Commission discussed the underutilization of existing parking lots on Commerce Street. Mr. Zingarelli noted these lots are not inviting to walk to, suggesting cleanup and signage improvements could increase usage. The City Planner mentioned that one of the CDBG projects for the riverfront includes sidewalks and lighting that will make the area more walkable, inviting, and safe.

Toward the end of the discussion, Commissioner Elliott and Commissioner Grove agreed to co-lead efforts to develop a definition of event space. The City Planner committed to providing examples from other Florida municipalities to City Attorney Hartman by Thursday. The Commission decided to revisit the topic at the July meeting, five weeks from the workshop date.

Adjournment

Motion to adjourn the workshop was made by Commissioner Elliott, seconded by Commissioner Grove. Motion carried, 5-0.

Meeting adjourned.

Brenda Ash, Mayor

ATTEST:

Sheneidra Cummings, City Clerk