

## 2026 Lake Wales City Commission Candidates

Questions were given to both candidates on February 28, 2026. Both candidates responded no later than March 7, 2026. This document was produced March 7, 2026.

### 1. What would you like citizens to know about you? What is your background? Why are you running for office now in Lake Wales? How will you balance being a commissioner with your family, job, recreation?

#### Eugene Fultz



My name is Eugene Lee Fultz. I was born and raised in Little Rock, Arkansas. I am retired from the United States Veterans Administration as a Utility Systems Engineer. Also, a retired veteran 4 years US Navy, 20 years Army National Guard. My family and I have lived in Florida for approximately 30 years. My wife and I have been Lake Wales residents for 25 years. From 2013 -2022. I served as Mayor of Lake Wales, four consecutive terms. I left office in 2022 to handle family matters in Arkansas. I lost my brother in 2022, my mother in 2024 and my dad in 2025. Now I am ready to serve again. For nine years before being elected Mayor, I taught at Roosevelt Academy. I Pastored a church for seven years and currently serve as the CEO of Greater Grace Outreach Ministries of Florida Inc. Serving over 38,000 hot meals in Lake Wales and Haines City before COVID19. Now we deliver food boxes each month to twenty-five to thirty families in need.

#### Terri Miller



I am a fourth-generation Polk County pioneer and proud Lake Wales native. I care deeply about my hometown and want to help guide its future. My father was a local pharmacist and my mother drove a school bus, and they instilled in me a strong sense of service and community. My late brother Jerry, a community liaison for the local power company and active volunteer, inspired me to always give back. My daughter, Erika, is a military veteran. Before starting my own businesses, I worked 20 years at Florida's Natural Growers, including six as a network security administrator. Today I own Awesome Solutions LLC, where I help families with estate downsizing, offer vintage resale and also provide consulting services in digital marketing and special event management. I have also been deeply involved in community service through Rotary, the chamber of commerce, and youth recreation programs. Like many residents I am concerned about how quickly Lake Wales is growing and whether we have the resources to support that growth. I want to help manage growth responsibly while preserving our small-town charm and quality of life. I also want to bring people together to find solutions and help bridge divisions in our community. With a flexible business schedule and strong family support, I am confident I can balance serving as commissioner with my work, family, and community commitments.

## 2. Why should someone in Lake Wales vote specifically for you (instead of your opponent)?

**Eugene Fultz**



I feel that I am the better candidate because my experience speaks for itself. As Mayor, I served on the Lake Wales Charter School Board of Directors, Lake Wales Economic Development Council, Polk Transportation Planning Organization. (Chair) Polk Regional Water Corporative, (Vice Chair) Polk Transportation Authority, (2 terms) Polk Sheriff Citizens' Advisory Committee, Lake Wales Planning and Development Council, Lake Wales Citizen's Police Advisory Committee, Ridge League of Cities, Florida League Of Cities, Florida League Of Mayors, and Florida Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials. My certifications are as follows; Institute of Local Elected Officials 1,2, and 3, Graduate of Leadership Lake Wales, and Graduate of Leadership Polk.

**Terri Miller**



Voters in Lake Wales should support me because I bring a lifetime of service, deep community roots, and a commitment to bringing people together to solve problems. As a Lake Wales native, I understand the history, values, and challenges of our community. My professional background includes 20 years at Florida's Natural growers and experience running my own consulting and retail businesses. This combination of technical, business, and organizational experience has prepared me to evaluate issues carefully and make thoughtful decisions. I have spent more than two decades volunteering and leading through Rotary and other community organizations. Those experiences have strengthened my ability to listen, build consensus, and connect people who want to make Lake Wales better. Rather than creating division or complaining about problems, I am running to bring people together to find practical solutions. I believe Lake Wales must manage growth carefully so we preserve our small-town charm and quality of life. I also want to help bridge divisions in our community by encouraging listening, cooperation, and respect. My life and work have been centered on service, problem-solving, and helping others. I believe that experience and commitment will allow me to represent the citizens of Lake Wales with integrity, energy, and a genuine love for our community.

### 3. What do you see as the two biggest issues facing the city, and how could you help improve things?

**Eugene Fultz**



I feel that one of the biggest issues for our city is Economic Development. If we are to develop a quality city where we can Live, Work, and Play, we must bring in more businesses and industries that pay a living wage. Working hand and hand with the Lake Wales Chamber of Commerce and the Economic Development Council, we can accomplish much. By building relationships with other cities, counties, our state and yes, even other states we can and will get leads on corporations looking to start-up or relocate. We must be actively involved in locating and acquiring properties that can accommodate such industries.

Another big item that needs to be addressed is the Wales-built Hotel redevelopment. Some seem to think that this will be an albatross around our necks, but I beg to differ. The redevelopment of this hotel will become an economic driver for our downtown retail businesses. Considering the historical value, this could become a big draw for tourists. We must ensure that the right redevelopment company is chosen to bring out the historical nuances through advertising and promotions.

**Terri Miller**



Two of the biggest issues facing Lake Wales are smart growth and infrastructure, along with creating strong economic opportunities for the people who already live here. Growth is coming to our community, and in many areas it is already happening. The real challenge is smart growth, not stopping growth, and making sure it is managed responsibly. That means carefully planning for roads, utilities, drainage, water and public safety as our population increases. Development decisions must also consider how growth affects existing neighborhoods and the overall quality of life in Lake Wales. As a commissioner, I would work to ensure that new development is thoughtful, well-planned, and aligned with the Lake Wales Envisioned plan, which emphasizes walkable, compact neighborhoods, preserving natural areas and preventing suburban sprawl while ensuring new industrial, residential and commercial developments are built with high-quality design standards. Infrastructure must keep pace with growth so that residents are not left dealing with overcrowded roads or strained city services. At the same time, Lake Wales needs strong economic development that benefits the people who already live and work here. We should encourage businesses that create quality jobs and strengthen our local economy. Expanding opportunity helps families thrive and builds a stronger tax base that supports city services. I believe good leadership means listening to residents, asking tough questions, and making decisions that balance progress with preservation. My goal would be to help Lake Wales grow in a way that protects our small-town character while creating opportunity for future generations.

#### 4. How can using Adaptive AI help or hurt people working in Lake Wales and how city business is conducted?

**Eugene Fultz**



Adaptive AI is a great tool, if used properly. We must not allow this great tool to eliminate jobs that are held by our city staff and workers. If we allow this to happen, that will defeat our overall efforts to keep our citizens employed at home where they live and play.

Adaptive AI and AI-powered technologies are being deployed by many municipalities to enhance urban efficiency. Optimize infrastructure and improve citizen services in response to rapid population growth. Key applications include smart traffic management, expedited permitting processes, and predictive maintenance for public infrastructure.

**Terri Miller**



Adaptive AI has the potential to help Lake Wales operate more efficiently and serve residents more effectively. City departments could use AI tools to analyze data, improve planning, and respond more quickly to community needs. For example, AI could help identify infrastructure needs, manage traffic patterns, or improve scheduling for public services. Businesses in Lake Wales like mine already benefit by using AI to improve marketing, customer service, and operational efficiency. AI also helps small businesses compete and grow in a changing economy. At the same time, it is important to recognize that new technologies can also create concerns for workers. Some people worry that increased automation could reduce certain types of jobs or change how work is performed. Because of this, the focus should be on using AI as a tool that supports workers rather than replacing them. Training and education will be important so people can adapt to new technology and develop new skills. Transparency will also be critical when AI is used in government decision-making. Residents should understand how technology is being used and how decisions are made. If used thoughtfully and responsibly, adaptive AI can improve efficiency while still keeping people at the center of city government.

**5. Lake Wales is experiencing actual as well as potential growth and development within the next 5-10 years. There is both positive and negative public support for current and future growth. As an elected official, your oath of office is to “protect, serve, and defend” the Constitution of the United States, the State of Florida, as well as the charters, ordinances and statutes of both Polk County and the City of Lake Wales. In your votes for or against growth and development, will you follow public opinion, or will you abide by the law, statutes, and ordinances that govern growth and development ?**

**Eugene Fultz**



Over the 25 years that I’ve been a resident of Lake Wales; the desires of most citizens have been creating our own unique identity. Ie; national branded restaurants, big box department stores, jobs paying living wages, and new executive housing to attract the best medical and business staff as they consider moving into our city.

Potential growth and development are vital for small cities seeking to grow because they drive economic diversification, job creation, and improve quality of life. Strategic growth prevents population decline and economic stagnation, enhances tax revenues for infrastructure improvements, and builds a sustainable, resilient community, fostering local pride and attracting new residents. Therefore, I will abide by the law, statutes, and ordinances that govern growth and development.

**Terri Miller**



An elected official has a responsibility to do all parts of the job honestly and thoughtfully. A commissioner must listen carefully to the people because residents are the ones who live with the consequences of growth and development decisions. Public input is essential in helping leaders understand the concerns, needs, and priorities of the community. At the same time, commissioners must follow the law, the city charter, and the ordinances that govern development. Those rules exist to ensure fairness, consistency, and transparency in how decisions are made. Ignoring the law would undermine public trust and create uncertainty for residents and businesses alike. My approach would be to carefully listen to public concerns and perspectives before any vote is taken. I would also study each issue thoroughly so I fully understand the legal requirements and long-term impacts. Good leadership means balancing community input with responsible governance. When both are considered together, better and more sustainable decisions can be made. Residents deserve leaders who will listen respectfully while also honoring the rules that guide the city. My goal would always be to vote in a way that is lawful, thoughtful, and consistent with the best interests of Lake Wales.

**6. New development is happening faster than our infrastructure can handle. There are many current homes for sale which are having trouble moving due to availability of new construction. Would you be supportive of a moratorium on new home construction by large development until the used home market has been reduced by 75%? Explain why or why not.**

**Eugene Fultz**



I will not be supportive of a moratorium on new home construction. Suspending new home construction until existing homes are sold is generally considered an inefficient approach to managing housing market demand and limits consumer choice. While a high inventory of unsold, new homes can put downward pressure on the prices of older homes in the same area, building new homes remains a key factor in economic growth, providing needed supply and, often more modern, energy-efficient options.

**Terri Miller**



I understand why some citizens are asking about a moratorium on new home construction. Many people feel that development is moving faster than our infrastructure and housing market can comfortably absorb. Those concerns are real and deserve serious attention from city leaders. Residents want to make sure that roads, utilities, and public services can keep up with growth. At the same time, I would want to carefully examine the legal and economic impacts of a blanket moratorium before even considering that type of policy. A moratorium can have significant consequences for property rights, housing supply, and the local economy. It is important that any action the city takes is legally sound and thoughtfully considered. My focus would be on responsible planning and making sure infrastructure keeps pace with development. The city should carefully evaluate how growth affects traffic, utilities, water supply, and public safety. We should also ensure that new development aligns with the city's long-term plans and community goals. Good planning and strong oversight can help manage growth without creating unintended consequences. My goal would be to make balanced decisions that protect quality of life while ensuring Lake Wales grows in a responsible and sustainable way.

**7. What steps can the City Commission take to work with the Lake Wales Charter Schools, Polk County Schools, and other schools and programs in the area to improve literacy among young people? (Getting grants? Organizing transportation programs?)**

**Eugene Fultz**



Our City Commission has been and can continue to support schools by providing access to affordable facilities, offering capital outlay funding for infrastructure, and facilitating partnerships for shared resources. They can also streamline zoning for new sites, promote colocation in existing buildings, and encourage collaboration through city-wide compacts for enrollment and data sharing. Capital Outlay money is designed for purchasing, constructing, renovating or equipping long-term physical assets (buildings, infrastructure, major equipment). Funding can be financed through state appropriations, bonds, special taxes, or specific voter approved initiatives.

**Terri Miller**



Literacy affects everything that follows in a young person's life. A child who reads well has a stronger chance to succeed in life, pursue opportunities, and contribute positively to the community. While schools carry the primary responsibility for education, the city can play an important supporting role. The City Commission can help strengthen partnerships between schools, libraries, and community organizations that focus on reading and learning. Supporting after-school programs that include tutoring and reading time can make a real difference for many students. The city can also encourage volunteer reading initiatives where adults mentor and read with children. Community programs at local libraries can provide safe and welcoming spaces where young people can develop strong literacy skills. Promoting family engagement in literacy is also important, because reading habits often begin at home. The city can help raise awareness about the importance of reading through community events and public programs. Encouraging collaboration between nonprofits, civic groups, and local businesses can also expand literacy opportunities. When communities invest in their young people, the long-term benefits are significant. When a community works together around education and literacy, everyone benefits.

## 8. What is something positive you appreciate about your opponent?

**Eugene Fultz**



My opponent is a very nice and considerate young lady. We have had opportunities in the past, to speak honestly and openly with one another. She is a respected individual, and I consider her to be a friend.

**Terri Miller**



Anyone who steps forward to run for public office deserves respect. Campaigns require time, effort, and a willingness to be accountable to the public. Not everyone is willing to take on that responsibility, so it says something when a person is willing to step forward for the community. Public service often involves sacrifice, long hours, and listening to many different viewpoints. That commitment to civic participation is something I genuinely appreciate. The other candidate for seat 5 is a minister who works with a nonprofit that helps feed people in the community. Efforts like that show a concern for others and a desire to serve. Even when candidates disagree on issues, the willingness to contribute to the community is important. Elections give citizens the opportunity to hear different ideas and perspectives about the future of their city. Healthy elections encourage thoughtful discussion and greater civic engagement. Respectful campaigns help strengthen trust within the community. In the end, everyone involved should share the same goal of wanting the best for Lake Wales.

## 9. How can citizens get more information about you and your campaign?

**Eugene Fultz**



If citizens would like to get more information about my campaign, please contact me by email ([efultz99@gmail.com](mailto:efultz99@gmail.com)). I will be happy to respond.

**Terri Miller**



I truly appreciate when people take the time to learn more about the issues facing Lake Wales and the people running to serve our community. I believe local government works best when citizens stay informed and engaged. Listening to residents and hearing their concerns is an important part of good leadership. I want people to know that I care deeply about the future of Lake Wales and the quality of life for everyone who lives here. My goal is to help bring people together to find thoughtful solutions to the challenges our city faces. I believe in responsible smart growth, strong community connections, and preserving the character that makes Lake Wales special. Public service should always be rooted in listening, respect, and collaboration. I welcome the opportunity to hear your ideas, concerns, and hopes for our community. Conversations with residents help guide better decisions and stronger leadership. I encourage anyone with questions or thoughts to reach out and connect with me directly. You can call or text me at (863) 513-7779 or send an email to [TerriAwesomeLW@gmail.com](mailto:TerriAwesomeLW@gmail.com) You can also learn more and follow the campaign on my Facebook page, Terri Awesome Miller for Lake Wales.

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