



Town Council Meeting

November 10, 2025 at 6:00 PM

Howey-in-the-Hills Town Hall

101 N. Palm Ave.,

Howey-in-the-Hills, FL 34737

MINUTES

Mayor Wells called the Town Council Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
Mayor Wells led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
Councilor Reneé Lannamañ delivered an invocation.

ROLL CALL

Acknowledgement of Quorum Present and Proper Notice Given

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Pro Tem Tim Everline | Councilor Jon Arnold | Councilor Reneé Lannamañ | Councilor David Miles | Mayor Graham Wells

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O’Keefe, Town Manager | Heather Ramos, Town Attorney | Michael Giddens, Police Chief | Morgan Cates, Public Services Director | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

None

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the meeting’s agenda; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Mayor Wells

Nay: None

PUBLIC QUESTION & COMMENT

Any person wishing to address the Mayor and Town Council and who is not on the agenda is asked to speak their name and address. Three (3) minutes is allocated per speaker. The general Public Question & Comment period will be limited to a maximum of thirty (30) minutes unless extended by the Presiding Officer.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Town resident, Andi Everline, inquired about a volunteer recruitment effort they had seen publicized on social media, noting they had previously received an email indicating they would be invited to a meeting but had not received any further information. The resident asked whether the

meeting had already occurred. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, responded that the volunteer coordination is handled by Library Director, Amanda Moldan, and stated he would follow up with her to determine the status.

CONSENT AGENDA

Routine items are placed on the Consent Agenda to expedite the meeting. If Town Council/Staff wish to discuss any item, the procedure is as follows: (1) Pull the item(s) from the Consent Agenda; (2) Vote on the remaining item(s); and (3) Discuss each pulled item and vote.

1. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the September 22, 2025, Town Council Meeting.
2. Consideration and Approval: Deaccession of Town Inventory

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Consent Agenda; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Mayor Wells

Nay: None

PUBLIC HEARING

3. Consideration and Approval: **(Second Reading) Ordinance 2025-007 - Noise and Light Control**

Mayor Wells read Ordinance 2025-007 out loud by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY; PROVIDING FINDINGS; ADDING A NEW CHAPTER 119 TO THE CODE OF ORDINANCES REGARDING EXCESSIVE NOISE AND LIGHT; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; PROVIDING FOR ASSESSING SOUND USING A PLAINLY-AUDIBLE STANDARD; DECLARING IT A VIOLATION OF THE ORDINANCE FOR NOISE TO VIOLATE THE PLAINLY-AUDIBLE STANDARD AT THE TIMES OF DAY AND BEYOND THE DISTANCES SET FORTH IN THE ORDINANCE; SETTING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS; PROVIDING EXEMPTIONS AND A PROCESS FOR VARIANCES; PROVIDING STANDARDS FOR LIMITING GLARE AND LIGHT TRESPASS; DECLARING IT A VIOLATION OF THE ORDINANCE TO INSTALL OUTDOOR LIGHT FIXTURES EXCEPT AS PROVIDED IN THE ORDINANCE; PROVIDING EXEMPTIONS AND A PROCESS FOR VARIANCES; SETTING PENALTIES FOR VIOLATIONS; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only. Seeing as there were no public comments, Mayor Wells closed Public Comment and opened Councilor Comment.

Town Council engaged in an extensive discussion regarding the proposed noise and lighting ordinance, beginning with clarification from Councilor Miles that the only change since the draft presented on September 22nd was the addition of a grandfathering clause. Town Attorney, Heather Ramos, confirmed that the new language was intended to exempt certain long-established businesses, including Mission Inn, from the updated regulations. Councilor Miles expressed concern that this exemption undermined the original purpose of the ordinance, would not address the complaints raised by affected residents, and could impose additional enforcement burdens on already overextended Town staff.

Several Council members raised broader concerns about enforceability and unintended consequences. Mayor Pro Tem Everline warned that strict noise thresholds could generate a significant number of complaints, particularly from construction sites, thereby increasing enforcement demands. Councilor Arnold noted that enforcement of the ordinance as drafted would be extremely challenging and suggested it might be premature to adopt such regulations before the Town could better define the issues and ensure workable enforcement mechanisms. Mayor Wells also reiterated his opposition, explaining that several provisions, such as those related to holiday lighting or evening gatherings, were overly restrictive for residents and could produce results the Council did not intend.

Councilor Lannamañ, however, emphasized the importance of proactive planning in light of ongoing and future development. She argued that the Town should establish a foundational noise ordinance rather than waiting to react after problems arise. She also highlighted Mission Inn's recent investment in downward-directed LED lighting and noted that the Town had already spent approximately \$5,000 drafting the ordinance, making it unwise to abandon the effort entirely. While acknowledging the specific concerns about early-morning maintenance at Mission Inn, she maintained that the broader need for a Townwide ordinance remained compelling.

Following further discussion, including Councilor Miles' recommendation that staff negotiate an agreement with Mission Inn to address early-morning noise impacts on nearby residents, the Council considered various procedural options. Ultimately, Councilor Lannamañ moved to continue working on the ordinance and table the item to a date certain. With a second from Councilor Miles, the Council voted to bring the ordinance back for consideration at the January 26, 2026, Town Council Meeting, allowing time for revisions and additional discussions with affected stakeholders.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to table this agenda item to the January 26, 2025 Town Council meeting; seconded by Councilor Miles. Motion failed by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles

Nay: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Arnold, Mayor Wells

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve Ordinance 2025-007 as written; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion failed by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ

Nay: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Arnold, Councilor Miles, Mayor Wells

4. **Consideration and Approval: (Second Reading) Ordinance 2025-008 - Condos and Coop Building Repair and Inspection**

Mayor Wells read Ordinance 2025-008 out loud by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO STRUCTURAL INSPECTIONS AND REPAIRS OF CONDOMINIUMS AND COOPERATIVE BUILDINGS; PROVIDING FINDINGS; CREATING NEW CHAPTER 65 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES; REQUIRING MILESTONE INSPECTIONS OF CONDOMINIUMS AND COOPERATIVE BUILDINGS; REQUIRING INSPECTION REPORTS; SPECIFYING TIMEFRAMES FOR REPAIRS TO BE SCHEDULED AND COMMENCED; REQUIRING THE BUILDING OFFICIAL TO SUBMIT REPAIR AND INSPECTION INFORMATION TO THE DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL REGULATION; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only. Seeing as there were no public comments, Mayor Wells closed Public Comment and opened Councilor Comment.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to approve Ordinance 2025-008; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Mayor Wells

Nay: None

5. Consideration and Approval: **(Second Reading) Ordinance 2025-010 - Fire and Sprinkler Permitting**

Mayor Wells read Ordinance 2025-010 out loud by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO FIRE SAFETY; PROVIDING FINDINGS; CREATING NEW CHAPTER 91 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES; ENACTING A SIMPLIFIED PERMITTING AND INSPECTION PROCESS FOR FIRE ALARM SYSTEM AND FIRE SPRINKLER SYSTEM PROJECTS; REQUIRING CERTAIN DOCUMENT RETENTION BY CONTRACTORS; PROVIDING FOR APPLICATION FEE REFUNDS IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only. Seeing as there were no public comments, Mayor Wells closed Public Comment and opened Councilor Comment.

Town Attorney, Heather Ramos, reported that one revision had been made to the ordinance to address concerns raised by the Town's Building Official. The original draft designated the Building Official as the responsible authority for enforcement, but he advised that he was not the appropriate person to administer the ordinance. To align with statutory language and allow greater flexibility, the ordinance was updated to assign responsibility to the "local enforcement agency," a term that still includes the Building Official but also permits enforcement by other qualified entities.

Mayor Wells asked who would serve in this role if not the Building Official. Mayor Pro Tem Everline suggested Lake County Fire Rescue. Attorney Ramos confirmed that this was the Building Official's recommendation and that the proposed agency fits within the statutory definition. With no further Council comments offered, the Mayor invited a motion on the item.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve Ordinance 2025-010; seconded by Councilor Miles. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Mayor Wells

Nay: None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

6. Consideration and Approval: **GFL Contract**

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, reviewed ongoing concerns regarding the Town’s solid waste franchise agreement with GFL, noting ambiguities in the contract related to twice-weekly trash and once-weekly recycling collection, the \$20 per cubic yard fee for bulk/white goods, and whether additional sets of carts at a residence should incur extra monthly charges. He explained that staff had taken Council’s prior direction to GFL and obtained partial agreement: GFL concurred with the clarifying language for collection frequency and bulk/white goods charges but stated it would not absorb the cost of servicing extra sets of carts without additional monthly compensation. Mr. O’Keefe added that only 11 residences currently have more than one set of carts.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline expressed strong opposition to any additional charges for extra carts, emphasizing that the contract does not expressly authorize them and questioning why the issue had been revisited multiple times. Town Attorney, Heather Ramos, confirmed that her reading of the original contract does not support additional fees for extra residential carts, which is why she had proposed clarifying language in the amendment, but she noted that GFL interprets the contract differently. Town Clerk, John Brock, outlined the existing billing practice, explaining that the Town has, for more than five years, billed residents based on the number of cart sets reported in the utility system and then paid GFL accordingly, resulting in a small net revenue to the Town, totaling less than \$600 annually for the 11 affected customers. Councilor Miles reviewed the commercial rate matrix in the 2022 contract, which provides tiered pricing for one to four carts at commercial locations, and suggested that residential service levels should be treated in a similarly transparent and equitable manner, possibly with a modest discount on second and third carts if Town administrative costs are not materially higher.

Council discussed broader concerns about GFL’s performance, such as hydraulic fluid leaks, missed yard waste, and confusing customer communication, as well as the overall quality of the contract and the limited options available when it was bid, with GFL’s proposal coming in at roughly half the cost of the next lowest bidder. Mr. Brock and Mr. O’Keefe cautioned that bringing service in-house would likely be cost-prohibitive for a Town of this size and that any change in hauler would require a lengthy ramp-up period, during which service disruptions could occur. Town Attorney Ramos advised that the only remaining contract issue requiring Council direction was how to handle residential extra carts. With general consensus, Council directed Mr. O’Keefe and Town Attorney Ramos to prepare an amendment using GFL’s previously submitted residential rate schedule for one, two, and three sets of carts, clarifying that residents will not pay a separate fee to obtain additional carts and that the carts will remain the property of GFL. Council also indicated that any Town markup or discount for additional residential carts will be addressed later through an update to the Town’s schedule of fees, with an eye toward fairness and minimal net financial impact.

Mayor Wells then opened the item for public comment.

Dianna Ballou, 1005 N. Tangerine Ave. – Town resident, Dianna Ballou, asked several clarifying questions regarding charges for additional garbage and recycling carts. She inquired whether residents are aware they are being billed extra for additional sets of carts, how the Town will notify the public of any such charges, and whether the 11 households with extra carts, particularly those who believe they “purchased” them, would be reimbursed if carts themselves are no longer to be charged separately. She also questioned how the Town or GFL could track whether an extra cart was actually set out in a given week if billing is based on an assumed higher level of service.

Mr. O’Keefe explained that, with one recent exception, none of the 11 affected residents had paid out-of-pocket for their extra carts; historically, Town Hall simply requested additional sets from GFL, which then delivered them. He noted that, in the one recent case, GFL had charged the resident for the additional set while the Town and hauler were in a contractual “limbo,” and that this situation would be addressed specifically. Mayor Wells and the Town Attorney stated that the contract language would be clarified so that residents are not charged separately for the carts themselves, avoiding any “double dipping,” and that the monthly service charge would apply regardless of whether the carts are set out

each week, similar to other utility-style billing. In closing, Mayor Wells and Mayor Pro Tem Everline also noted that none of the current Council members were in office, nor was the current Town Attorney involved, when the present GFL contract was originally negotiated and approved.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd – Town resident, Andi Everline, expressed frustration regarding yard waste collection practices. She stated that, when she contacted GFL directly, she was told that yard waste should be collected separately, either during a second pass on Mondays or on Tuesdays. However, she reported that GFL regularly combines yard waste with household garbage during a single pickup, contrary to what she understood to be the established rules when she moved into the community. She said this inconsistency makes it difficult for residents to know when and how yard waste will be collected and noted that the unpredictability contrasts sharply with her experiences living in other states.

Council briefly discussed her comments, with Councilor Miles observing that yard waste disposal primarily affects GFL's own tipping fees rather than the Town's, though he acknowledged the validity of her concerns. Mayor Wells and other Council members explained the broader market shifts affecting recycling and waste handling in recent years, including the decline in demand for recycled materials and post-COVID staffing shortages within the industry. These factors, they noted, have significantly altered collection practices across the region and reduced haulers' ability to operate in the manner residents may have previously experienced elsewhere.

Mrs. Everline reiterated her frustration with the inconsistency of service, and Council thanked her for bringing the issue forward. Mayor Wells confirmed that staff had the direction needed from Council regarding the contract amendment discussions and that the amendment would be brought back at a subsequent Town Council Meeting.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

7. Town Hall

This report was provided in the meeting's packet.

8. Police Department

This report was provided in the meeting's packet.

9. Code Enforcement

This report was provided in the meeting's packet.

10. Lake County Fire Rescue

None

11. Public Services Department

This report was provided in the meeting's packet.

Councilor Miles asked that Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, provide an update on major ongoing capital and infrastructure projects listed in his written report. Mr. Cates outlined the current status of several initiatives, including the Lake County Water Authority stormwater grant project, which is awaiting final as-built drawings; lift station work at Stations 1 and 2, with new wet well pumps installed and minor contract adjustments submitted; continued stormwater and curb installation on North Citrus Avenue, with paving anticipated by month's end, weather permitting; the Talichet lift station

project, pending delivery of panel box components; and Water Treatment Plant No. 3, for which the contractor has signed the agreement and a pre-construction meeting is scheduled, with construction expected to begin within weeks.

Council members commended the Public Services team for the significant progress made on long-running capital improvements. Town Clerk, John Brock, additionally noted the near completion of the Town Hall window replacement project, which required extensive coordination due to aging steel-framed structures and limited vendor availability. Mr. Cates explained that installation of the final window was delayed due to a damaged glass panel but would be completed once the corrected unit arrives.

Further discussion followed concerning financing for Water Treatment Plant No. 3. Councilor Arnold asked whether a funding strategy had been finalized, noting that construction is imminent. The Town Manager stated that the Finance Supervisor would present options at the next Town Council Meeting. Councilor Miles added that the Town has approximately \$5.7 million in eligible grant funding and emphasized the importance of reviewing cash balances and project timing, though he did not view the matter as urgent at this stage. Council members agreed on the need for clarity regarding long-term financing before project expenditures accelerate.

12. Parks & Recreation

This report was provided in the meeting's packet.

13. Library / Community Events

None

14. Town Attorney

None

15. Finance Supervisor

This report was provided in the meeting's packet.

Councilor Miles requested additional discussion of the finance report and noted that he intended to meet with the Finance Director later in the week to review several items in detail. The Town Manager confirmed he would coordinate scheduling so that outstanding questions could be addressed comprehensively.

16. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, provided several operational updates following the departmental reports. He reminded the Council and public that Veterans Day would be observed the following day, Tuesday, November 11th, with Town Hall and the library closed. He also announced that a flag ceremony would take place at 11:00 a.m. at Blevins Patriot Park, led by the Eustis High School ROTC, with Councilor Arnold serving as MC. In addition, he notified the Council of an upcoming county-led public Meeting regarding Number Two Road, scheduled for Wednesday, November 19th at 6:00 p.m. at the Lake County Agricultural Center. He emphasized that the session would function as a listening meeting rather than a joint planning workshop between Town and county officials.

Council members briefly discussed the nature of the meeting, and Mr. O'Keefe noted that County Commissioner Kirby Smith would attend in an official capacity. Mayor Wells and Councilor Miles then addressed broader concerns about Number Two Road and the potential long-term impact of the county's

proposed intersection configurations on future residents of the Hillside Groves and Mission Rise developments. Councilor Miles warned that prohibiting left turns or requiring substantial detours could impose burdens on more than 1,000 planned homes and may trigger later demands for Town-funded roadway modifications that could cost several hundred thousand dollars. Additional concerns were raised about the prospect of restricted access points, including the possibility of county-installed gates, with Council members emphasizing potential emergency-response implications. Councilors stressed that emergency vehicle travel times, cardiac-response windows, and fire suppression needs made any hard closure or severely limited access impractical and unsafe.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

17. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

Mayor Pro Tem Everline raised a constituent concern from residents of the Venezia Townhomes regarding a vehicle that routinely parks too close to an intersection, creating a visibility hazard. He explained that the residents had attempted to seek assistance from both the Howey-in-the-Hills Police Department and their homeowner's association but were unsure which entity had responsibility for addressing the issue.

Chief Giddens responded by clarifying jurisdiction. He noted that the Police Department is aware of the location and has visited the area several times but has not yet observed the offending vehicle present. He explained that, under state law, parking within 15 feet of an intersection is enforceable by law enforcement, as are violations such as blocking or parking across sidewalks. However, any issues falling outside state traffic statutes, such as violations of HOA-specific parking rules, fall under the authority of the homeowners association, not the Police Department. Chief Giddens added that officers, including the nighttime patrol officer, continue monitoring the area in an effort to locate the vehicle while it is improperly parked. Mayor Pro Tem Everline thanked the Chief for the clarification.

18. Councilor Arnold

Councilor Arnold wished the US Marines a happy 250th birthday.

19. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles raised a recurring concern regarding the Town's gas public service tax. He explained that the Town's ordinance levies the tax on both propane and natural gas. While the Town collects franchise fees from the natural gas provider and public service taxes from propane vendors, it appears that the public service tax on natural gas is not being collected or is not reflected anywhere in the Town's financial reports. Councilor Miles emphasized that natural gas pipelines serve portions of the Town and that the absence of this revenue suggests either a billing issue or a failure by the provider to remit required taxes. He reiterated that this potential revenue stream, especially with thousands of new homes planned, warrants immediate attention and better coordination with TECO and future developers to promote natural gas availability in new subdivisions.

Mayor Wells asked whether the natural gas provider was failing to charge the tax or charging it and not remitting it. Councilor Miles stated he has not received a clear answer despite raising the issue multiple times. Mr. O'Keefe responded that the Finance Supervisor is conducting an audit to determine whether the tax has been misallocated or not collected. He added that the Town has consistently invited TECO to participate in development review meetings to encourage natural gas extensions, but the company has shown little initiative. Mayor Pro Tem Everline noted that he had recently spoken with TECO's sales representative and would share that contact information with the Town Manager.

Councilor Miles also observed that both the electric and gas franchise agreements are approaching expiration within the next 18 months. He recommended leveraging renegotiations to pursue

undergrounding of electric lines in the original Town core, similar to requirements imposed on new developments. He stressed that undergrounding improves aesthetics and resiliency and could be an appropriate bargaining point during franchise renewal discussions. Mr. O’Keefe and Councilor Arnold confirmed that this issue has been raised in discussions with Duke Energy representatives, though Duke has signaled concern about the cost. Councilor Arnold added that he had recently spoken with Duke Energy’s vegetation management representative to express ongoing concerns about tree trimming practices and to signal the Town’s desire for more permanent infrastructure solutions.

20. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ reported that a Talichet resident had raised concerns about a large disturbance and what they believed was a delayed police response. She asked the Police Chief to clarify the incident.

Chief Giddens explained that officers arrived within a few minutes and that body-camera footage confirms a timely response. The disturbance involved several juveniles and young adults, conflicting stories, and limited cooperation from those on scene. Minor property damage was documented, but no one was willing to provide names or file a complaint, limiting further action.

Councilor Lannamañ thanked the Chief and noted she raised the matter publicly so residents would know the issue was addressed. She also asked about the status of police body cameras. Chief Giddens stated the equipment is under a three- to five-year contract renewed recently and remains current. He added that the department has responded to two recent TASER-related incidents.

21. Mayor Wells

Mayor Wells had nothing to report.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline asked whether the Town could impose its own local tax once commercial development, such as Publix, arrives, or whether the Town could levy a lodging or bed tax on Mission Inn. Councilor Arnold and Councilor Miles explained that municipalities may only impose taxes expressly authorized by state statute, and hotel bed taxes are authorized solely at the county level. The Town Manager noted that, while new taxes are restricted, the Town may establish certain service-related fees when appropriate. With no further questions, the Mayor called for a motion to adjourn.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Councilor Miles to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Lannamañ seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

The Meeting adjourned at 8:12 p.m. | **Attendees: 27**

Graham Wells, CMC, Mayor

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk