



Town Council Meeting

March 24, 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 | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | April Fisher, Town Planner | Rick Thomas, Police Chief | Public Utilities Supervisor, James Southall (via Zoom) | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mayor Wells wished Councilor Lannamañ a happy birthday.

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the meeting's agenda; seconded by Councilor Miles.

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.

None

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 March 10, 2025, Town Council Meeting.

Mayor Wells announced that the Town Clerk had made a second version of the minutes, fixing two errors that Mayor Wells had discovered in the minutes.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Consent Agenda with the version 2 of the March 10, 2025, Town Council Minutes; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Consideration and Approval: (Second Reading) - **Ordinance 2024-012 - Watermark Rezoning**

Mayor Wells read Ordinance 2024-012 out loud by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY IN THE HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO LAND USE; PROVIDING FINDINGS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL; AMENDING ORDINANCE 2022-16 AND THE TOWN'S OFFICIAL ZONING MAP TO INCLUDE WITHIN THE PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) KNOWN AS WATERMARK PUD CERTAIN ADDITIONAL LANDS LOCATED TO THE SOUTH OF THE WATERMARK PUD, AS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED IN ATTACHMENT A TO THIS ORDINANCE; PROVIDING THAT THE CONDITIONS, REQUIREMENTS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER TERMS IN ORDINANCE 2022-16 GOVERN THE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADDITIONAL LANDS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, CODIFICATION, RATIFICATION, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Town Planner, April Fisher, explained that the amendment includes the addition of 65 residential units and the incorporation of additional land into the PUD. She noted that the updated proposal reflects revisions requested by the Council during the previous meeting. The applicant provided a revised concept plan showing how the units would be distributed throughout the development.

Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that, in addition to the motion to approve Ordinance 2024-012, the Town Council should discretely approve the Amended and Restated Watermark PUD Development Agreement in their motion for this agenda item. Also, Mr. Wilkes recommended moving Agenda Item #6 (Consideration and Approval: **Watermark PUD Utility Agreement**) to be heard directly after this agenda item.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to move Agenda Item #6 (Consideration and Approval: Watermark PUD Utility Agreement) to directly follow Agenda Item #2 (Consideration and Approval: (Second Reading) - Ordinance 2024-012 - Watermark Rezoning); seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

Applicant representative, Carolyn Haslam, addressed the council and confirmed minor changes had been made to the development agreement in response to Council feedback. The changes to the concept plan did not affect the number of units but adjusted their distribution.

Councilor Miles directed several specific questions to the applicant regarding changes previously requested by the Council. He first asked whether the version of the developer's agreement included in the meeting packet reflected all the revisions proposed during the first reading. Applicant representative Carolyn Haslam confirmed that it did.

Councilor Miles then inquired about the lighting interval, specifically whether it had been updated from 300 feet to the requested 250 feet. Haslam initially responded that the change had not been made due to the lighting being designed by Duke Energy, over which the developer had limited control. However, she and the applicant, Craig Harris, agreed to amend the document to reflect the 250-foot spacing as requested.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline followed up with a question about the inclusion of root barriers, which had also been discussed at the prior meeting. Mr. Harris responded that the root barrier requirement was addressed in the Town's landscaping code, and the applicant would defer to that standard. Ms. Haslam further confirmed that they were committed to following the Town's Land Development Code on such matters. Councilor Miles accepted this explanation but emphasized for the record that the applicant had agreed to comply with the root barrier requirements.

Councilor Miles then asked whether the applicant had finalized an agreement with the Central Lake Community Development District (CDD) for the 290 Equivalent Residential Units (ERUs) of wastewater capacity. Ms. Haslam clarified that they had submitted a draft agreement to the CDD but had not yet received comments. She indicated that they hoped to finalize it within the next two weeks, ideally during the current week.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only. Seeing no response, Mayor Wells closed Public Comment.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve Ordinance 2024-012 and the Amended and Restated Watermark PUD Development Agreement with the changes to the lighting that the applicant had agreed to during the meeting; 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

6. Consideration and Approval: **Watermark PUD Utility Agreement**

(This Agenda was moved to appear directly after Agenda Item #2 in the meeting)

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, explained that the agreement addresses all necessary provisions for water, wastewater, and irrigation services, in compliance with requirements from the St. Johns River Water Management District. Mr. O'Keefe noted that the agreement was up to date and included newer CDD-related requirements.

Councilor Miles sought confirmation that the development's lift station would meet all Town code requirements, including SCADA equipment. Applicant Craig Harris confirmed that all requirements, including SCADA, would be met. The Town Manager also clarified that a past development had been granted a deliberate exception from code compliance, but that would not apply in this case.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only. Seeing no response, Mayor Wells closed Public Comment.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the Watermark PUD Utility Agreement; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

3. Consideration and Approval: (Second Reading) **Ordinance 2025-002 - Logos and Letterhead**

Mayor Wells read Ordinance 2025-002 out loud by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO THE TOWN SEAL, LOGO, AND OTHER SYMBOLS; AMENDING SECTION 31-1 OF CHAPTER 31 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, ENTITLED “TOWN SEAL, LOGO, AND LETTERHEAD”; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL TOWN LOGO AND OFFICIAL LETTERHEAD, AND DESIGNATING A CENTENNIAL LOGO; AUTHORIZING USE OF THE TOWN SEAL, LOGO, CENTENNIAL LOGO, AND LETTERHEAD; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor Wells introduced the item, and Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, explained that the new standard logo retains the basic design of the previous one but features enhanced color contrast and a shinier appearance. Mr. O’Keefe also noted that a special centennial version, which includes a banner marking the Town’s 100-year anniversary, will be used on temporary items throughout the centennial year.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Alan Hayes, 111 Island Dr. – Resident, Alan Hayes, asked whether the centennial logo was a permanent change. Mr. O’Keefe clarified that the new “shiny” logo without the banner will become the official Town logo moving forward, while the centennial version with the banner will be used only on non-permanent items such as letterhead, stickers, and event materials. Mr. Hayes also inquired about the extent of implementation, questioning whether every sign in Town would be replaced and what the cost would be. Mr. O’Keefe responded that there would not be a full-scale replacement of existing signage or materials; instead, the new logo will be adopted gradually as items are naturally replaced. Mr. O’Keefe emphasized that this approach avoids incurring a large, one-time expense. When Mr. Hayes asked if there was a specific budget for the update, Mr. O’Keefe confirmed that logo updates would fall within the already budgeted annual operations and maintenance costs, and that letterhead is printed digitally as needed, so there would be no additional expense.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve Ordinance 2025-002; seconded by Councilor Arnold. 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

4. Consideration and Approval: **Town Auditor Selection Committee**

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, informed the Council that the Town is required under Florida Statute 218.391 to establish an auditor selection committee, as the current auditor is retiring following the completion of the prior fiscal year's audit. The committee must consist of at least three members, must include at least one Town Council member, and must exclude staff as voting members. Mr. O’Keefe suggested that, rather than form a new *ad hoc* group, the Council could designate an existing board, which would streamline the process. The committee’s duties would include approving the Request for Proposal (RFP) criteria in one meeting and reviewing the submissions and selecting an auditor in a second.

Councilor Miles proposed that the entire Town Council serve as the selection committee, fulfilling the statutory requirements and leveraging their collective experience. He also recommended that the new auditor be engaged for a five-year term, with the option for a five-year renewal, suggesting the RFP include pricing guidelines such as CPI-based increases and renewal subject to acceptable negotiations. The Town Manager and Town Attorney confirmed that nothing in the statute precluded the full Council from serving as the committee.

Other Council members supported the idea, emphasizing the Council’s expertise in municipal finance.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Kenny Green, 1101 Hamlin Ave. - Resident, Kenny Green, voiced a concern that anyone with check-signing authority should not serve on the selection committee, to maintain a clear separation between financial oversight and expenditure authorization.

Mayor Wells clarified that council members do not have signatory authority.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Discussion also touched on whether a three- or five-year term would be more appropriate, with some noting the benefits of flexibility in the event of dissatisfaction with an auditor’s performance. It was noted that the selection process is based on qualifications rather than lowest price, allowing for professional judgment in choosing the best fit.

Ultimately, Councilor Miles made a motion for the full Town Council to comprise the audit committee, with the Mayor serving as chair.

Motion made by Councilor Miles for the full Town Council to comprise the Audit Selection Committee, with the Mayor serving as chair; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

NEW BUSINESS

5. Consideration and Approval: **Schedule the Town Manager Performance Evaluation Review Date**

The Council discussed scheduling the Town Manager's performance evaluation and a workshop for strategic planning. Council members agreed that the strategic planning needed to be completed before the budgeting process in June. Mayor Wells emphasized the importance of public understanding regarding the budget process and mentioned that the strategic plan document, once finalized, would be made available on the Town website. Originally, the Town Council stated that they would hold a

workshop on Monday, April 1 at 1:00 p.m. to complete the Town Manager’s review and to discuss strategic planning.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Alan Hayes, 111 Island Dr. – Resident, Alan Hayes, raised a concern about scheduling the Town Manager’s evaluation during daytime hours, arguing that residents should be able to attend.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

After reviewing multiple scheduling conflicts and resident concerns about accessibility, the Council ultimately agreed to hold the Town Manager’s evaluation as a workshop on Thursday, April 3 at 4:30 p.m. It was noted that this time would allow sufficient opportunity for Council discussion before conflicting with a previously scheduled Library Board meeting. The Council also decided that the strategic planning session, which would be held as a Special Meeting, would be held separately on Monday, April 1 at 1:00 p.m.

Town Councilors committed to submitting their review comments to the Town Clerk by Monday, March 31 at noon, following receipt of the Town Manager’s self-evaluation on Tuesday, March 25.

6. Consideration and Approval: **Watermark PUD Utility Agreement**

(This Agenda was moved to appear directly after Agenda Item #2 in the meeting)

7. Consideration and Approval: **Resolution 2025-006 - Safety Resolution**

Mayor Wells read Resolution 2025-006 out loud by title only.

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, COUNTY OF LAKE, STATE OF FLORIDA, AFFIRMING TO THE LAKE-SUMTER METROPOLITAN PLANNING ORGANIZATION AND THE LAKE COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS THE TOWN’S TRANSPORTATION PRIORITIES FOR INCLUSION IN THE MPO’S 2025 LIST OF PRIORITY PROJECTS AND AFFIRMING THE PRIORITIES THAT QUALIFY FOR THE CENTRAL FLORIDA MPO ALLIANCE’S REGIONAL LIST OF PRIORITY PROJECTS.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, explained that the resolution was modeled after a similar one from the City of Groveland, developed with input from Public Services Director and the Town Engineer, and intended to raise the priority of key local projects such as the intersection at State Road 19 and Central Avenue. Councilor Miles suggested including identifying details like making sure that Central Avenue was referred to as its county name, Number Two Road, to help strengthen the proposal.

A lengthy and, at times, contentious discussion followed, primarily regarding concerns raised by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. He expressed frustration over not being consulted on the resolution despite being the Town’s primary appointed MPO representative. Mayor Pro Tem Everline pointed out that the 2025 MPO priorities had already been finalized in June 2024, and the deadline for 2026 submissions had passed on March 14, making the current effort untimely. Mayor Pro Tem Everline emphasized the importance of including MPO representatives in any transportation-related initiatives and voiced disappointment over a lack of transparency in the resolution’s development.

Council members debated whether the resolution had been discussed adequately in prior meetings, with Councilor Miles expressing the need to push forward despite delays. Councilor Miles stressed that the Town must actively advocate for improvements, particularly to address safety and traffic issues on SR 19. Councilor Lannamañ sought clarification on the resolution’s origin and supported ensuring future collaboration with the Town’s MPO representatives.

Councilor Arnold (the alternate MPO representative), who had initially helped obtain the City of Groveland’s template and communicate with MPO representatives, suggested focusing the resolution solely on the SR 19 and Central Avenue crosswalk for expediency. Councilor Arnold cautioned against including broader items that might jeopardize the resolution’s success and proposed splitting the document. Council ultimately agreed that Councilors Everline and Arnold would revise the resolution into a more targeted and representative draft to be reviewed and approved at a special meeting scheduled for April 1.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to continue this item to the April 1, 2025, Town Council Special Meeting; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Mayor Wells
Nay: None

After the vote, it was discovered that Public Comment had been accidentally skipped. Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Kenny Green, 1101 Hamlin Ave. – Resident, Kenny Green, offered historical context on the Town’s limited influence in MPO decisions and encouraged more consistent reporting from appointed representatives at Council meetings. He also supported pursuing more achievable safety measures, like crosswalk signals, rather than full traffic lights.

Councilor Miles noted the importance of getting projects into the five-year MPO plan to eventually secure funding, even if they start with a low priority. The conversation closed with consensus that MPO-related matters should always involve the Town’s representatives and that transportation items should be regularly reported and tracked to improve transparency and advocacy.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

8. Finance Supervisor

Finance Supervisor's report was included in the meeting's packet.

9. Town Manager

During his report, Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, announced the birth of Public Services Director, Morgan Cates’ granddaughter, Noelle Elizabeth Drew, born March 22 in Orlando, and noted that Mr. Cates would be out for a time. He stated that the wastewater rate increase, in accordance with the Central Lake CDD agreement, was implemented in the latest billing cycle for the service period of February 15 to March 15, resulting in a \$4.01 increase for residents receiving wastewater service. Staff expects to be able to schedule Woodard & Curran to present during either the second April meeting or the first May meeting, though Councilor Miles will be absent for the latter.

Mr. O’Keefe also reported progress on the Citrus Avenue project, stating that the Town received permission to clear trees at the site of the future intersection and has received nine of the eleven required quit claim deeds. He announced upcoming events, including the Easter Egg Dash on April 19 at 10 a.m. in Central Park and Founders Day on May 10 from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Griffin Park.

Lastly, Mr. O’Keefe discussed correspondence from the Executive Office of the Governor and the DOGE Department, along with a draft response included in the meeting packet. He explained that, while the current requests are routine and the Town was in full compliance, there may be increased

administrative requirements ahead as the State seeks to implement more federal-style compliance measures. Councilor Miles added that the information requested was a duplicate of what is already required in the annual financial report, a long-standing requirement dating back to at least 1989. Mr. O'Keefe concluded that, while the current request was not burdensome, additional future requests are likely.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

10. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

None

11. Councilor Arnold

None

12. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles raised three issues. First, he inquired about the water line replacement project currently underway on Mission Lane from Lakeshore Drive into the cul-de-sac. Councilor Miles asked for the cost of the project and the reason for the work, noting that only a few houses and empty lots are served by that line. Public Utilities Supervisor, James Southall, responded, explaining that the existing two-and-a-quarter inch PVC line was brittle and had experienced multiple breaks, prompting its replacement with a more durable two-inch poly line. Mr. Southall noted the project is relatively minor in scope and cost and that, while there are no fire hydrants on that segment, one is located at the intersection and meets distance requirements. The goal is to eventually loop the line, though for now a blow-off will be installed due to property constraints. Hydrant testing and painting are scheduled for the following week.

Second, Councilor Miles asked for an update on the timeline for tree removal and site preparation on North Citrus. Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, responded that the work would begin once Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, returned from family leave and coordinated with the tree service, likely within the week.

Lastly, Councilor Miles requested a status update on the installation of backup pumps at the two Venezia lift stations. Councilor Miles reminded the Council that the Town had secured grant funding covering a significant portion of the cost and emphasized the importance of completing the work before hurricane season. Mr. O'Keefe did not have an immediate timeline but agreed to follow up with Mr. Cates and report back.

13. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ expressed her gratitude to Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, and the Public Works Department for installing new street and stop signs in Venezia, noting their improved visibility and appearance. Councilor Lannamañ repeated her appreciation. Additionally, Councilor Lannamañ briefly mentioned concerns about the mess left behind from recent Venezia Townhomes construction, including debris on the streets and a port-a-potty placed in the center median.

14. Mayor Wells

Mayor Wells provided an update on the upcoming Centennial Founder's Day event scheduled for May 10, 2025. He reported strong progress in both vendor participation and sponsor engagement. Approximately 20 companies and organizations have been contacted for sponsorship, and two recent email outreach efforts have already resulted in \$5,000 in pledged support. This funding will allow for increased advertising of the event compared to previous years. The Mayor noted that further details

regarding promotion will be brought to the Council at a later meeting. Overall, he expressed confidence in how the event's organization is progressing.

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 7:51 p.m. | **Attendees: 34**

Graham Wells, CMC, Mayor

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk

DRAFT