



Town Council Meeting
July 24, 2023 at 6:00 PM
Howey-in the-Hills Town Hall
101 N. Palm Ave.,
Howey-in-the-Hills, FL 34737

MINUTES

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

ROLL CALL

Acknowledgement of Quorum

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councilor Reneé Lannamañ | Councilor David Miles | Councilor George Lehning | Mayor Pro Tem Marie V. Gallelli | Mayor Martha MacFarlane

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O’Keefe, Town Administrator | John Brock, Town Clerk | George Brown, Police Lieutenant | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | Morgan Cates, Public Works Director

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

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

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Councilor Lehning, Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli, Mayor MacFarlane

Nay: 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 July 10, 2023 Town Council Meeting.
2. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the July 13, 2023 Town Council Budget Workshop.

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

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Councilor Lehning, Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli, Mayor MacFarlane

Nay: None

PUBLIC HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

3. Discussion: **Wastewater Update**

Councilor Miles introduced and explained this item. Councilor Miles handed out a Position Paper that that he had written. Councilor Miles explained that the position paper addressed three potential options for delivering wastewater services to present and future residents. Based on the FGUA presentation made at the July 10, 2023 meeting and assuming all 3,789 units requiring service were built, the Town needs 1.21 million gallons a day (mgd) treatment capacity. The current privately owned treatment plant has a capacity of 0.87 mgd. Therefore, additional capacity is required, even if no further developments occur. The three options are:

- 1) The Town build a publicly owned treatment plant using a 13.5-acre tract along number 2 road owned by the Town, after the land donation described below is accepted.
- 2) The Town invest in the privately owned plant to expand it in 435,000-gallon increments. The private owner would own the plant and land, but the Town would own the rights to an amount of capacity in the plant based on the investment amount with the private owner.
- 3) The Town would buy the existing privately owned plant and expand it. Councilor Miles stated this option was not feasible since the private owner had stated the plant was not for sale and use of the Town's eminent domain powers would be prohibitively expensive.

Councilor Miles then asked the Council to decide between options one and two quickly so the Town could obtain the necessary capacity as soon as possible.

Mayor MacFarlane asked if the Town had applied for any wastewater treatment plant grants. Councilor Miles responded that the Town had not yet applied for any wastewater grants. Mayor MacFarlane suggested that Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, should write a Position Paper on the Drake Pointe development drilling their own well and that this Position Paper should be send to the St. Johns River Water Management District. Mr. O'Keefe committed to doing this.

Councilor Miles explained that he had helped negotiate a 5-acre parcel of land with a wetland located on it to be donated to the Town. The owners of this land asked that, within 5 years, a new park be created (which did not have to be on the donated land) and that the Town would invest at least \$50,000 into the creation of this park. This new park would be named after the landowners that were giving the 5-acre parcel of land to the Town.

Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that this land deal would only happen if the Town Council were to vote on and agreed to it.

Councilor Miles suggested that the proposed new park be built on the 5-acre parcel that the Town's retired solid waste landfill resides on.

Councilor Lannamañ referenced a letter that was sent to Town from Scott Line (from the Sewer & Water Investments, LLC – owners of the wastewater plant that the Central Lake CDD utilizes). Mr. Line was upset about the treatment and way people had spoken about him and the Central Lake CDD during the previous Town Council meeting. Councilor Lannamañ asked her fellow Town Councilors and the general public to act and speak more professionally in the Town Council meetings. Councilor Lannamañ also stated she did not want to see any more public attacks from Town Councilors directed towards the Town's mayor.

Councilor Miles asked the Town Council if he and the Town Manager should continue to explore purchasing an area of land that he referred to as the "B" parcel. Mayor MacFarlane suggested that the Town Council schedule a future Town Council Workshop to understand Councilor Miles' wastewater plans. Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli agreed with Mayor MacFarlane.

Councilor Miles stated that he did not want to see the Town sell the 2-acre parcel on Number Two Road to Lake County Fire Department. Councilor Miles suggested that the Town should sell the 2-acre parcel on State Road 19 (currently identified as Pine Park) to the Lake County Fire Department. Councilor Miles suggested that the Town should donate the two acres to the county, rather than selling it. **This was due to 9 out of 10-year period to use the land had elapsed, and if not used for public purposes in the next year, the land would revert to the private developer.**

Councilor Lehning asked Councilor Miles if he could utilize the donated 5-acre parcel of wetlands for the proposed wastewater treatment plant. Councilor Miles stated that the Town Engineer had indicated to him that the Town would be able to utilize the wetland 5-acres for the Town's wastewater purposes.

Mayor MacFarlane asked Councilor Miles what grants he would be applying for to assist with the construction and/or design of the proposed wastewater plant. Councilor Miles stated that he would go after Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) grants **and loans**. Councilor Miles stated that that he believed the Town would need a wastewater plant of at least 900,000 to one million gallon a day capacity.

Mayor MacFarlane called for a recess in the meeting from 6:52 PM to 7:00 PM.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Tim Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd – Mr. Everline spoke about the letter that the Town had received from Scott Line. Mr. Everline reminded the Town Council that, if the Town donated the 2-acre parcel on Ste Road 19, the Town would lose \$100,000 that the Town had already budgeted from the sale of land to the county.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite stated that he believed the Central Lake CDD was worried about the Town competing in wastewater treatment and thinks that the Town should develop its own wastewater treatment plant.

Larry Morris, 800 Citrus Ave – Mr. Morris stated that he was an inspector that had inspected the Central Lake CDD wastewater treatment plant when it was constructed. Mr. Morris stated that the treatment plant was cheaply built and nearing the end of its life. Mr. Morris stated that he believed the Town should be independent of the Central Lake CDD and should own its own treatment plant.

Diane Ballou, 1005 N Tangerine Ave. – Mrs. Ballou had questions about new developments and if they would be utilizing a Town-owned wastewater treatment plant.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N Tangerine Ave. – Mr. Ballou asked if Venezia and Talichet would hook up to a Town-owned wastewater treatment plant.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment.

NEW BUSINESS

4. Consideration and Approval: **Resolution 2023-005 Proposed Maximum Millage Rate**

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, introduced and explained this item. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the proposed maximum millage rate in the Resolution was 7.5 mills and that the first public hearing on budget and millage would occur at 5:05 PM on September 7, 2023.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite asked what the millage rate was for the previous year.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve Resolution 2023-005; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli. Motion passed unanimously by roll-call vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Councilor Lehning, Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli, Mayor MacFarlane

Nay: None

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

5. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, thanked everyone for attending the Town's Water Treatment Plant #3 groundbreaking. Mr. O'Keefe reminded the audience about several upcoming meetings and event dates. Mr. O'Keefe stated that county staff was still researching the viability of purchasing the originally proposed land from the Town for the proposed fire station.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

6. Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli asked about the upkeep of the adopted bump outs. Public Works Director, Moran Cates, stated that he had sent emails to the people that have currently adopted the bump outs asking if they would like to continue taking care of their adopted bump out and that he would continue to reach out to them.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli asked if a Parks and Recreation Board member could come in and speak about their plans for the Fiscal Year 2024 budget. Mr. Cates stated that he could give an update on behalf of the Parks and Recreation Board.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that she had heard in an earlier meeting that the Central Lake CDD may have ERUs available for purchase to allow the Howey Market to hook up. Mr. O'Keefe stated that he would follow up with the Central Lake CDD to see if there were any available ERUs for the Howey Market.

7. Councilor Lehning

Councilor Lehning asked for an update on the comments on the Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code that had been submitted. Councilor Lehning asked when the next Special Magistrate hearing was and if the Town had received any updates from the proposed Cedar Creek development.

8. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles spoke about the proposal to increase the Town's library staffing from one full timer and one part timer to two full time people. Councilor Miles stated that he would like to see the Town's library's hours of operation increasing specifically on the weekend. Councilor Miles stated he would like the Saturday hours of operation for the library to increase to 10 AM to 5 PM.

Councilor Miles stated that he had noticed that the Town was advertising to hire a new Finance Supervisor and wanted to know why. Councilor Miles was concerned that the transition to a new Finance Supervisor would hurt or affect the implementation of the encumbrance accounting module to the Town's accounting software.

Councilor Miles suggested that the Town give a grant to the Venezia and Talichet HOAs for them to purchase park equipment and setup parks within their neighborhoods. Councilor Lannamañ suggested that, due to insurance concerns, those HOAs may not be interested in adding HOA-owned parks.

9. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ thanked the Town Clerk for replacing the old chairs in the Council Chambers and thanked the audience for attending the Town Council Meeting.

10. Mayor MacFarlane

Mayor MacFarlane stated that the Town has been contacted by a resident that is having a terrible time with a noisy neighbor and that the Town should explore creating its own noise ordinance.

Mayor MacFarlane asked who the Town would need to contact about the \$4.25 million dollars of state appropriations money. Mr. O'Keefe stated that he would give a short presentation on that during the next Town Council meeting.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that she was concerned about the Town's small staff and that the top priority for the staff should be getting Water Treatment Plant #3 built.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

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.

Ellen Yarckin, 800 Citrus Ave. – Ms. Yarckin thanked the Town staff and Councilors for their hard work. Ms. Yarckin stated that she thinks the Town should have an official Town plan.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite explained how he thought a noise ordinance would be implemented. Mr. Tuite was concerned about the Town drilling into the Lower Floridan Aquifer.

Banks Helfrich, 9100 Sam's Lake Road, Clermont, FL – Mr. Helfrich spoke about community civility.

Tim Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Mr. Everline doesn't think that a lot of developers are left to hook up to a new wastewater treatment plant and that the current town residents would be bearing most of the cost for a new plant.

Terri Blessing, 24913 Blue Sink Rd., Howey-in-the-Hills (unincorporated Lake County) – Mrs. Blessing thinks the Town and county neighbors need to work diligently together.

Glennys Barber, 307 S Lakeshore Blvd – Ms. Barber was concerned about her road and that there was mud on her road and that her road needed to be fixed. Ms. Barber suggested that the Town reach out to resident Janice McLaine about a loophole to allow the utilization of wetlands land.

Councilor Lannamañ asked resident Larry Morris about the average lifespan of a wastewater plant. Mr. Morris said that it was 25 to 30 years.

Councilor Miles stated that Tim Everline had advanced a question about the Central Lake CDD wastewater treatment plant. Councilor Miles stated that he thought the Town should approach the Central Lake CDD about the cost of refurbishments that would be necessary for their wastewater treatment plant.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that she would like to know what maintenance the Central Lake CDD has performed on its wastewater plant.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m. | **Attendees: 36**

Mayor Martha MacFarlane

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk