



Town Council Meeting
February 26, 2024 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 Manager | Tom Harowski, Town Planner (via Zoom) | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | Morgan Cates, Public Works Director | John Brock, Town Clerk

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Miles to remove item #6 (Consideration and Approval: Removal of Board Member Ellen Yarckin from the Planning and Zoning Board) from the meeting’s agenda. There was no second for this motion.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli to approve the meeting’s agenda and to move item #6 (Consideration and Approval: Removal of Board Member Ellen Yarckin from the Planning and Zoning Board) to appear directly after the Consent Agenda; seconded by Councilor Lehning. Motion approved by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: Councilor Miles

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 January 22, 2024 Town Council Meeting.
2. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the January 22, 2024 Town Council Workshop Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Consent Agenda; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

NEW BUSINESS (*Item #6 moved to directly after the Consent Agenda during Agenda Approval*)

6. Consideration and Approval: **Removal of Board Member Ellen Yarckin from the Planning and Zoning Board**

Mayor MacFarlane introduced and explained this agenda item. Mayor MacFarlane stated that this item was added to the meeting's agenda due to several complaints from town residents about the way Ms. Yarckin acted during the previous (2/12/2024) Town Council meeting. Mayor MacFarlane stated that, during the Asma Parcel agenda item, Ms. Yarckin was disruptive, yelling from the back of the Town Council chamber, defaming the Town Planner, getting in the faces of the developers, and calling the developers and the Town Planner "liars". Mayor MacFarlane stated that acting in this manner was in direct violation of the Town's Code of Core Values and Civility. Mayor MacFarlane stated that this type of behavior was not appropriate and did not reflect well on the Town.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that the behavior was inappropriate and out of place. Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli asked Ms. Yarckin to speak and possibly apologize for her behavior during the previous meeting.

Councilor Miles objected vigorously to the practice of certain members of the Council chastising residents of Howey who they (the Councilors) objected to their words or actions. Acknowledging that a resident spoke out of turn, Councilor Miles stated the person had a personal emotional interest in the agenda item, as the property was adjacent to hers. Councilor Miles noted at the previous meeting other Councilors had spoken harshly to and about an employee at Howey Mansion due to the conduct of a guest firing fireworks off on an adjacent property during a wedding at the Mansion. Councilor Miles asked the other Councilors to cease reprimanding residents of the Town at meetings.

Ms. Yarckin apologized for being out of line. Ms. Yarckin stated that she did not believe that the Town's meeting followed Robert's Rules of Order and that she was under a lot of stress in her life. Ms. Yarckin stated that she wants stricter rules in the meetings.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Carol Roque, 505 Mission Ln. – Mrs. Roque stated that she was at the meeting and that Tom Harowski's (the Town Planner) behavior was reprehensible. Mrs. Roque stated that Mr. Harowski intimidated and glared at Ms. Yarckin after she called him a liar and thought that Mr. Harowski should apologize publicly.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite spoke on this issue.

Allan Hayes, 111 Island Dr. – Mr. Hayes stated that he was embarrassed for both Ms. Yarckin and Mr. Harowski.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Mrs. Everline read out loud a letter from Suong Miles in support of Ellen Yarckin.

Frances O’Keefe Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Mrs. Wagler stated that she thought everyone would like to scream out loud at Tom Harowski because he said he could not remember what the exact count of the vote was at the September Planning and Zoning Meeting. Mrs. Wagler also thinks that Mr. Harowski should change the order of items that he writes in his staff report. Mrs. Wagler stated that she wants Mr. Harowski to state what the Planning and Zoning recommendation is at the top of his staff reports.

PUBLIC HEARING

3. Consideration and Approval: (transmittal hearing) **Ordinance 2023-013 - Comprehensive Plan Amendment - Future Land Use Element**

Mayor MacFarlane read Ordinance 2023-013 out loud by title only:

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING; AMENDING THE FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT (FLUE) OF THE TOWN’S ADOPTED COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PURSUANT TO SECTION 163.3184 OF FLORIDA STATUTES; DESCRIBING THE ANALYSIS AND REEVALUATION UNDERTAKEN BY TOWN COUNCIL REGARDING RESIDENTIAL DENSITIES AND LOT SIZES IN POST-2010 RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE TOWN; AMENDING CERTAIN FLUE POLICIES TO MODIFY THE REQUIREMENTS IN THE “VILLAGE TOWN CENTER” AND “MEDIUM DENSITY RESIDENTIAL” LAND-USE DESIGNATIONS REGARDING DWELLING UNITS PER ACRE, LOT SIZES, AND OPEN SPACE; AMENDING OTHER RELATED REQUIREMENTS FOR THE TWO LAND-USE DESIGNATIONS; AMENDING POLICY 1.2.6 OF THE FUTURE LAND USE ELEMENT TO SPECIFY AREAS WHERE THE TOWN MAY ALLOW LOTS SMALLER THAN ONE-FOURTH ACRE (10,890 SQ. FT.); PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor MacFarlane asked the Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, to introduce and explain this item. Mr. Wilkes reviewed many of the recommended changes in the proposed amended Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Wilkes stated that he believed that the Councilors had come to a consensus that they wanted a maximum building height of 35’ (while removing any height reference to stories) and that he would make those changes uniformly throughout the proposed Comprehensive Plan. Mr. Wilkes stated he would also ensure that references to ¼ of an acre requirements would consistently list 10,890 square feet instead of 10,800 square feet.

Mr. Wilkes reviewed recommendations for changing the Village Mixed Use (VMU) requirements for Open Space and Parks and Recreation Areas. The minimum acreage of open space that could count as park space was set to 1/2 acre.

Mr. Wilkes referenced Policy 1.2.6 in which he recommends that this policy only applies to the sale of 10 lots or more. Town Planner, Tom Harowski, suggested that, in Policy 1.2.6, Section (i), rather than referencing the Town Center Commercial District, it should reference the Town Center Overlay District.

Mr. Wilkes explained that the proposed amendments to the Comprehensive Plan do not create any entitlements for landowners; they create restrictions on what future Town Councils can allow.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Frances O’Keefe Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Mrs. Wagler had questions about the maps included in the Comprehensive Plan.

Eric Gunesch, 448 Avila Pl. – Mr. Gunesch had questions about the proposal.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite would like to see the packet and agenda for the Town Council meetings to be sent out at least a week or so before the meetings.

Tim Everline, 1012 N Lakeshore Blvd. – Mr. Everline had questions about Policy 1.1.2.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the transmittal of Ordinance 2023-013 with the amendments that Tom Wilkes provided and change of the word of “Commercial” to “Overlay” on page I-39; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli. Motion approved unanimously by roll-call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

4. Discussion: (second reading) **Ordinance 2024-001 Mission Rise PUD Rezoning**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO LAND USE; REZONING FOUR PARCELS OF LAND LOCATED GENERALLY IN THE SOUTHWEST PART OF THE TOWN AND COMPRISING THE PROPOSED PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT TO BE KNOWN AS “MISSION RISE” ON AN L-SHAPED AGGREGATE OF ABOUT 243.3 ACRES WEST AND SOUTH OF THE DEVELOPMENT KNOWN AS “THE RESERVE AT HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS” (NOW ALSO KNOWN AS “HILLSIDE GROVES”), WITH PART OF THE LANDS BEING SOUTH OF NUMBER TWO ROAD AND EAST OF SILVERWOOD LANE AND OTHER PARTS OF THE LAND BEING WEST OF STATE ROAD 19 AND SOUTH OF REVELS ROAD, THE FOUR PARCELS BEING IDENTIFIED WITH LAKE COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER ALTERNATE KEY NUMBERS 1780616, 1780811, 1030421, AND 3835991; AMENDING THE TOWN’S ZONING MAP TO APPROVE PLANNED-UNIT-DEVELOPMENT (PUD) ZONING FOR THE PARCELS; PROVIDING FINDINGS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL; APPROVING PUD ZONING FOR THE PARCELS, WITH DEVELOPMENT TO BE GOVERNED BY A DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT AND A REVISED CONCEPTUAL LAND USE PLAN AND BY THE TOWN’S LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE AND OTHER TOWN ORDINANCES GOVERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF LAND; REPEALING PRIOR ORDINANCES AND SUPERSEDING CONFLICTING ORDINANCES; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CODIFICATION AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, stated that the applicant for this development had asked for a continuance of this item to the March 11, 2024, Town Council meeting.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only. Seeing no public comment, Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comments.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to continue this item to the March 11, 2024, Town Council meeting; 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

OLD BUSINESS

5. Consideration and Approval: **Hillside Groves Intersection Roundabout Requirement**

Town Engineer, Don Griffey, spoke about the history of the request for a roundabout on SR 19 in front of the proposed Hillside Groves neighborhood. Mr. Griffey stated that, when he had recommended requiring the developer to construct a roundabout at the SR 19 entrance to Hillside Groves, he was operating off of the assumptions that the cost and time commitment would be equal to or less than the intersection that the developer had already gotten approved by the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT). Mr. Griffey explained that he was incorrect on both the cost and the time assumptions and that, due to this, he was recommending the Town allow the developer to construct their original FDOT-approved intersection.

Mr. Griffey stated that, when the commercial component of this development moves forward, it will require a re-evaluation of the intersection and FDOT may require a roundabout at that time.

Councilor Miles asked, when the commercial component for the development does move forward, who would have to pay for the improvements to the intersection. Mr. Griffey stated that any required changes to the intersection that the commercial component triggers, the commercial developer would have to cover the cost at that time.

Ayman As-Saidi with Traffic Mobility Consultants, the traffic engineer for the developer, was allowed to speak. Mr. As-Saidi stated that the traffic study that was completed for this project shows that even when the commercial development component of the project comes in, there will still not be enough traffic to require a roundabout or a signal at the intersection.

Town Planner, Tom Harowski, stated that, when the commercial component of this project moves forward, they will be required to complete a new traffic study.

Councilor Miles stated that he had questions about the trips per day each lot in the development was creating in the traffic study, and he stated that he disagreed with the traffic study.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Tim Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Mr. Everline stated that the Town will need to keep an eye on this and require the future developers to commit to the roundabout earlier in the process.

Eric Gunesch, 448 Avila Pl. – Mr. Gunesch thinks that this development will create a massive amount of traffic on S. Florida Ave.

Frances O’Keefe Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Mrs. Wagler stated that the Police Chief had told the Howey Garden and Civic Club years ago, that there were 8,000 cars a day traveling through the town. Mrs. Wagler wants a roundabout construction at the intersection of Palm Ave and Central Ave.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment for this item.

Councilor Miles made a motion to have the Town Manager negotiate a new traffic fair share agreement with the developer of Hillside Groves to cover future improvements at the proposed intersection. There was no second for this motion.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli to approve the original FDOT-approved intersection at the SR19 intersection to Hillside Groves, while requiring the Town staff to require the future commercial developer to install a roundabout when their portion of the project comes forward; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved by roll-call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: Councilor Miles

NEW BUSINESS

6. Consideration and Approval: **Removal of Board Member Ellen Yarckin from the Planning and Zoning Board**

(THIS ITEM WAS MOVED TO DIRECTLY AFTER THE MEETING'S CONSENT AGENDA)

7. Consideration and Approval: **Sara Maude Mason Boardwalk Revitalization Contract**

Public Works Director, Morgan Cates, reviewed the Request for Proposals (RFP) that had been completed to revitalize the Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve Boardwalk that had been closed since Hurricane Ian. Mr. Cates stated that the Town had received proposals that ranged from \$290,000 to \$1.44 million.

Mr. Cates stated that the staff recommendation was for Dock Pro LLC, who had submitted a bid of \$379,000 (which had included composite decking instead of wood). Mr. Cates stated that the Town currently had only roughly \$300,000 in available Parks Impact Fees.

Councilor Miles stated that, many times when this happens, a purchasing officer will reject all bids and re-bid out the project to try to get better bids. Councilor Miles suggested that the Town might have greater needs than completing this project.

Councilor Miles stated that he thought that the Parks Impact fees would be better spent creating Peak Park.

Councilor Miles made a motion to reject all bids and rebid the project with a smaller scale; Councilor Lehning seconded this motion.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Frances O'Keefe Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Mrs. Wagler wanted any money set aside for Peak Park to be moved to this project and move forward with this project.

Tim Everline, 1012 N Lakeshore Blvd. – Mr. Everline stated that he knew a lot of people that utilized the Sara Maude Mason Nature preserve boardwalk. Mr. Everline said that he thought the Town should rebuild the entire boardwalk and not just part of it.

Eric Gunesch, 448 Avile Pl. – Mr. Gunesch stated that he did not know the boardwalk existed and he wants it reopened.

Joshua Husemann, 671 Avila Pl. – Mr. Husemann recommended that more members of the public attend the Town's Parks and Recreation Board meetings. Mr. Husemann stated that the Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve was the only park that wasn't just for children and thinks that the Town should find a way to redo the entire boardwalk.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment for this item.

Mayor MacFarlane asked about the feasibility of the Town getting a loan to complete the entire project.

Councilor Miles withdrew his original motion.

Councilor Miles stated that he wanted the Town staff to look into borrowing \$225,000, so that the Town could complete the entire boardwalk project.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to have the staff investigate acquiring a loan for \$225,000, with a 5-year term, so that the Town could use future Parks Impact Fees to complete this project now; seconded by Mayor MacFarlane. Motion approved unanimously by roll-call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

8. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, gave an update on the water quality tests that had been completed on the two new wells. The water quality tests that had been completed so far were only preliminary tests. The official samples to be tested will be pulled sometime in March after the test pumping of the well.

Mr. O'Keefe announced that the Town staff had received a grant for \$3.185 million (to be used on wastewater projects) from the Florida Department of Environmental Protection. This will allow the Town to complete a Clean Water Study, and planning, design, and construction for future wastewater projects.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

9. Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that she does not want any more money spent on the proposed Peak Park.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that she believed that the Events Committee needs a new Chair and she did not want that person to be the Town Manager. Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli also stated that she was not in favor of the Town spending any money on a DJ or live music for the Town's Founders Day Event and would rather see the events money spent on restoring the Town's antique firetruck or retired water tower.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that she was not happy with the meeting packets being released on Fridays before meetings and would like to see them released sooner.

10. Councilor Lehning

Councilor Lehning stated that the next Lake-Sumter MPO meeting was to be held on February 28, 2024. Councilor Lehning stated that he would ask about the bypass study request that the Town had submitted.

11. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles stated that the Town Attorney, Town Manager, and himself were having discussions with the Central Lake CDD about procuring additional wastewater capacity for the Town.

Councilor Miles stated that there was nothing adverse in the coring survey that had been completed at Peak Park and thinks the Town should move forward with constructing a park at that location.

Councilor Miles wants to pursue donation of land from Mr. & Mrs. Lynch, who, for the donation of land, would like to have a park like Peak Park named after them.

12. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ discussed the cost to restore/paint the Town's retired water tower and its cost associated with that task. Councilor Lannamañ mentioned that it will cost between \$120,000 and \$150,000 to paint the water tower.

13. Mayor MacFarlane

Mayor MacFarlane asked the Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, if he had approached the juice plant about sponsoring the painting of the water tower. Mr. O'Keefe explained that he had and that they were currently not interested.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that the Town would need to start looking for an SRF loan to complete the construction of the new Water Treatment Plant. Mayor MacFarlane stated that the Town of Mascotte's new water treatment plant had cost them roughly \$7 million to construct.

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.

Frances O'Keefe Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Mrs. Wagler wants the Town to re-letter the town's name on its retired water tower. Mrs. Wagler offered to run a fundraiser for the Town, to support this effort.

Mrs. Wagler stated that she would like the town's staff and elected officials to use less acronyms in their meetings.

Mrs. Wagler stated that she would like to know where the money that was raised to fix the Town's old firetruck was.

Mrs. Wagler thought there were too many chiefs at the Events Committee meetings, and that too much money was being spent on events in the town.

Tim Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Mr. Everline stated that allowing the Hillside Groves developer to construct the original intersection made it too easy on them. Mr. Everline stated that making future commercial developers construct a roundabout may keep commercial from coming into the Town.

Eric Gunesch, 448 Avila Pl. – Mr. Gunesch had questions about public notices that the Town had sent out and wants a public notice section on the Town's website.

James Southall, Public Utilities Supervisor – Mr. Southall said there was an osprey nest on the Town's water tower and that work on the tower could only occur at certain times of the year.

Banks Helfrich, 9100 Sams Lake Rd., Clermont – Mr. Helfrich spoke about the theme of supporting farmers.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 9:41 p.m. | **Attendees: 53**

Mayor Martha MacFarlane

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk

DRAFT