



Town Council Meeting
February 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 (via Zoom) | Councilor Jon Arnold | Councilor Reneé Lannamañ | Mayor Graham Wells

MEMBERS ABSENT:

Councilor David Miles

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O’Keefe, Town Manager | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | April Fisher, Town Planner | Rick Thomas, Police Chief | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

Mayor Wells asked for a motion to allow Mayor Pro Tem Everline to participate and vote remotely via Zoom.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to allow Mayor Pro Tem Everline to participate and vote remotely via Zoom; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote

Voting

Yea: Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Mayor Wells

Nay: None

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

None

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ 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, 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.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N. Tangerine Ave. – Mr. Ballou had questions about the Town Hall’s hours of operation changing to Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Mrs. Gallelli wanted to let all those in attendance know about an ecological expo that would occur on February 22nd in Groveland at Lake David Park. Mrs. Gallelli also had questions about how long the permitting process should take.

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 Jan 27, 2025, Town Council Meeting.
2. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the January 28, 2025, Town Council CIP Workshop.
3. Consider and Approval: **FDEM/FEMA Mitigation Grant Funding Contract (Lift Station #2)**
4. Consideration and Approval: **Resolution 2025-003 - Urging the Florida State Legislature to Provide a Public Records Exemption for Municipal Clerks**

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA URGING THE FLORIDA STATE LEGISLATURE TO ENACT LEGISLATION TO PROVIDE A PUBLIC RECORDS EXEMPTION FOR MUNICIPAL CLERKS AND EMPLOYEES WHO PERFORM MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS WORK OR HAVE ANY PART IN CODE ENFORCEMENT FUNCTIONS OF A CITY AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the items on the Consent Agenda; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Wells suspended the Town Council Meeting and convened the Board of Adjustment to hear the two variances.

5. Consideration and Recommendation: **229 Messina Pl. Variance Application - (Town Council sitting as the Board of Adjustment)**

Town Planner, April Fisher of Parks Consulting Services, provided an overview of the variance request. The applicant sought a variance for a swimming pool, pool deck, and screen enclosure, specifically requesting a three-foot reduction in the required 10-foot setback for the deck and screen enclosure and a one-foot reduction for the pool itself. Mrs. Fisher explained that the variance criteria outlined in the Land Development Code (LDC) (Section 4.13.04) require that all five conditions be met to approve a variance. The application did not demonstrate how it met these criteria, and therefore, Town staff recommended denial of the variance.

Mrs. Fisher also noted that the Planning and Zoning Board had reviewed the application, but due to a tied vote (3-3), no recommendation was made. The final decision rested with the Town Council, acting as the Board of Adjustment.

The applicants, Marcus Flamingo and Veronica Lucien of 229 Messina Place, addressed the Council. Mr. Flamingo clarified that they were requesting a seven-foot setback. He argued that the unique shape of their lot, which narrows in the front and widens at the back, warranted the variance. He also stated that six of their neighbors had signed letters supporting their request. Furthermore, he expressed concerns that other residents had received variances for five-foot setbacks and questioned the consistency of variance approvals.

Ms. Lucien reiterated that other homeowners in their community had been granted variances for similar requests and emphasized their desire for fair and equal treatment.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Ann Griffin, 215 E. Laurel Ave. – Resident Ann Griffin addressed the Council, expressing concerns about the importance of maintaining adherence to established codes and regulations. She emphasized that, if the Town deviated from its regulations too frequently, it would undermine the integrity of the Land Development Code.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Council members discussed the request in detail. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, clarified that the variance request was for a three-foot reduction from the required 10-foot setback, resulting in a seven-foot setback.

Councilor Arnold noted that, when he built his pool two years ago, he adhered to the 10-foot setback requirement, indicating that this standard had been in place for some time. Councilor Lannamañ acknowledged the applicant’s desire to place the pool in a preferred location but pointed out that previous variance approvals may have been based on conditions that met the LDC's hardship requirements, which this application did not. She advised the applicants to work with their pool designer to modify the design to comply with the code.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline emphasized that the role of the Council was to uphold the Town’s regulations and that the Town Planner had determined the application did not meet the necessary criteria.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to deny the requested variance; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline.

Voting

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

Nay: None

Mayor Pro Tem Everline stated that his reason for voting for denial of the variance request was twofold. One is based on the Town Planner's recommendation and secondly, based on the residents’ ability to, as

Councilor Lannamañ has suggested, go back to the pool designer and have the pool redesigned as close to their preferences as possible and fit into the desired area.

6. **Consideration and Recommendation: 204 W. Myrtle St. Variance Application - (Town Council sitting as the Board of Adjustment)**

Town Planner, April Fisher, presented the details of the variance request. The applicant had previously obtained approval and a building permit for the construction of a swimming pool and pool deck, which had since been completed. The variance request pertained solely to the installation of a screen enclosure over the existing pool deck.

Mrs. Fisher explained that the approved pool and deck were located 9.5 feet from the rear property line, which was less than the required 10-foot setback. The applicant was requesting a six-inch variance to allow for the screen enclosure to align with the existing deck. She noted that the applicant was not proposing any expansion beyond the previously approved deck footprint.

Staff had determined that the variance request met the criteria established in the Land Development Code (LDC) Section 4.13.04, particularly in that:

- The variance was the minimum necessary to allow for the installation of a functional screen enclosure.
- The applicant had a reasonable expectation that a screen enclosure could be added to the existing deck, given that the pool and deck had already been approved.
- The variance would be in harmony with the code and not injurious to the surrounding properties.

Mrs. Fisher further clarified that the original approval of the pool and deck had been an administrative error, and staff had since taken corrective measures to ensure similar issues do not recur. The Planning and Zoning Board had reviewed the application and voted unanimously (6-0) in favor of approval.

Mayor Wells confirmed that he had visited the property to assess the situation firsthand. He noted that the lot had an unusual configuration, with frontage on Myrtle Street but a driveway on Florida Avenue. Upon speaking with the homeowner, he was able to observe the placement of the pool and deck.

Mayor Wells reiterated that the permitting error had resulted in the pool being constructed within the setback, but at this stage, relocation was not feasible. He emphasized that the applicant was not seeking to extend the deck, only to install a screen enclosure to ensure safety and usability. The proposed enclosure would maintain an appropriate clearance for walking space and would not create a safety hazard. Given these circumstances, he agreed with the staff's recommendation for approval.

Mayor Wells asked if the applicant or anyone representing the applicant was in attendance to speak for the applicant.

Nicholas Bowers, representing Atlas Pools of Central Florida and the homeowner, confirmed that the Mayor's and Town Planner's descriptions were accurate. Mr. Bowers expressed appreciation for the Council's time and had no further comments.

Richard Vyce, also representing Atlas Pools, noted that he had submitted the variance documentation and was available for any questions.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Resident Marie Gallelli inquired about the necessity of a screen enclosure for pools and whether there was a timeline for installing one after a pool was

constructed. Town Planner Fisher clarified that screen enclosures were not required by law and that pools could be secured by fences or other means. The timing of enclosure installation varied, as it often involved a separate contractor.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Councilor Arnold commented on the minor nature of the variance request. Mayor Pro Tem Everline confirmed that the property had a six-foot yard fence, which met safety requirements. The Council recognized that the situation resulted from an administrative error and that had the correct setback been enforced initially, the pool could have been adjusted accordingly.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ moved to approve the requested six-inch variance for the screen enclosure, as the request met the variance approval standards outlined in LDC Section 4.13.04; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

The variance request for 204 West Myrtle Street was approved. Mayor Wells thanked the applicant's representatives and reiterated the importance of following the established permitting and variance processes to avoid similar issues in the future.

Mayor Wells closed the Board of Adjustment meeting and re-convened the Town Council Meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

7. Consideration and Approval: **Selection of Planning and Zoning Board Member**

Town Manager Sean O'Keefe provided background information on the appointment process. The Planning and Zoning Board consists of seven seats, with one seat having remained vacant for the past three to four months. The board plays a crucial role in land use and development decisions.

Mr. O'Keefe introduced Mr. Paul Johns, Chief Operating Officer of Orlando Health Southlake Hospital, as an applicant for the vacant position. Mr. Johns has experience working with municipal planning and zoning boards through his role in hospital growth governance and the Health Science Academy. While staff does not make recommendations for board appointments, Mr. O'Keefe presented Mr. Johns' qualifications for the Council's consideration.

Mr. Paul Johns introduced himself, stating that he has served as COO of Orlando Health Southlake Hospital for 12 years. During his tenure, he has been involved in multiple large-scale development projects totaling over \$250 million, requiring frequent collaboration with municipal planning and zoning boards. Notably, he was responsible for the Blue Cedar Freestanding ER project. Having lived in Howey-in-the-Hills for eight years, he expressed a desire to take a more active role in the community.

Councilor Everline reviewed Mr. Johns' application and affirmed his qualifications, thanking him for his willingness to serve. Mayor Wells noted that the Planning and Zoning Board is one of the most critical advisory boards, responsible for ensuring projects comply with the Town's Land Development Code rather than making decisions based on personal preference. He reassured Mr. Johns that, despite

the complexity of the role, he would receive guidance from both the board's chair and the Town's planning consultants.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Alan Hayes, 111 Island Dr. - Resident Alan Hayes raised a procedural concern, referencing Chapter 9, Section 9.00.01(B) of the Land Development Code, which states that the Planning and Zoning Board must have the opportunity to review applicants' résumés and make a recommendation before an appointment is made. He inquired whether this was a temporary appointment or a permanent replacement and emphasized the importance of following the Town's rules.

After reviewing the code, Town staff confirmed that Mr. Hayes was correct and that the Planning and Zoning Board should have reviewed Mr. Johns' application before the Council's appointment.

Mr. Hayes also asked whether applications for board positions were public records. Town Clerk, John Brock, explained that all applications are included in the Council meeting packets posted on the Town's website.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

A discussion followed regarding board terms and whether new appointees should complete the remainder of a vacant term or start a new three-year term. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, recommended aligning board appointments with fixed, staggered terms to avoid inconsistencies and potential legal challenges. He suggested that new appointees should complete the remainder of the vacated term rather than starting a new term upon appointment.

Town Planner April Fisher echoed these sentiments, noting that the Planning and Zoning Board should not operate with long-term vacancies, as tied votes can create decision-making challenges.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to appoint Mr. Paul Johns to the Planning and Zoning Board to fill the remainder of Ellen Yarckin's term, with the understanding that upon expiration, he may reapply and be subject to review by the Planning and Zoning Board before Town Council consideration; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ.

Voting

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

Nay: None

8. Consideration and Approval: **Town Donations**

Mayor Graham Wells introduced the agenda item regarding the allocation of the Town's annual donation budget, which is set at \$2,000.

Town Manager Sean O'Keefe provided an overview of past donation practices, noting that, historically, the mayor had directed allocations, with consistent support given to local scouting organizations. Recent donations had been made to the local Troops of St. George, which had taken over community service efforts following the dissolution of the local Boy Scouts of America troop. The Town had also occasionally donated to other organizations, such as the VFW and Lake County Firefighters.

A new request had been received from the Howey Garden and Civic Club, seeking a \$1,000 sponsorship for a full-page advertisement in their 100th-anniversary cookbook. This request was presented for Council's consideration.

Mayor Wells explained that he had attended a Garden and Civic Club meeting where the donation request was introduced. He expressed concern that the Town appeared to have been expected to contribute \$1,000 for a full-page ad, whereas members of the club were offered a full-page for \$150. As a result, he opted to bring the request to the Council for a formal decision.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Carol Roque, 505 Mission Ln. – Resident Carol Roque voiced her objection to Town funds being allocated to the Troops of St. George, citing its exclusionary nature as a Catholic-based organization. She emphasized the importance of ensuring taxpayer funds are not directed toward religious-affiliated groups.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. - Resident Marie Gallelli supported the idea that Town funds should not be used for donations to private organizations. She questioned the value of placing an advertisement in a cookbook and noted that advertising is typically a function of private businesses rather than municipalities.

Gail Boettger (President of the Howey Garden and Civic Club), 11451 Valley View Dr., Howey-in-the-Hills (unincorporated Lake County) - Mrs. Boettger addressed concerns about the cookbook advertisement request. She clarified that she had never personally advocated for a \$1,000 donation and that pricing for the ads had been determined by a committee. While she appreciated any support from the Town, she emphasized that the club's funds were used for charitable contributions.

Martha MacFarlane (Former Mayor), 63 Camino Real – Resident Martha MacFarlane expressed support for a smaller Town-sponsored advertisement in the cookbook, suggesting that it commemorate Howey-in-the-Hills' 100-year anniversary rather than function as a standard advertisement.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Resident Andi Everline stated that she thought it was unethical to donate to an exclusionary group, such as the Troops of St. George.

Pat Miller, (the Garden Club's cookbook project leader) – Resident Pat Miller confirmed that a full-page ad cost \$150, not \$1,000 as previously mentioned. She also expressed her personal opinion that municipal funds should not be used for donations to private organizations.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Council members discussed the appropriateness of Town donations and the need for transparency in allocation decisions. Councilor Arnold acknowledged that supporting local civic organizations was valuable but emphasized that the Town should not be expected to pay a premium for advertisements.

Councilor Lannamañ proposed that the Town place a one-page ad in the cookbook commemorating its centennial at the standard rate of \$150.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve a \$150 expenditure for a one-page advertisement in the Howey Garden and Civic Club's cookbook to commemorate the Town's 100-year anniversary, Seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote

Voting

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

Nay: None

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

9. Town Hall

Report was included in the meeting's packet.

10. Police Department

Report was included in the meeting's packet.

11. Code Enforcement

Report was included in the meeting's packet.

12. Public Services

Report was included in the meeting's packet.

13. Library / Community Events

None

14. Town Attorney

None

15. Finance Supervisor

Report was included in the meeting's packet.

16. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, provided updates on waste collection, upcoming closures, and an event. GFL, the Town's waste collection service, experienced multiple truck breakdowns, causing delays in trash pickup. Residents whose trash was not collected should leave it out, as collection will resume first thing the next morning. Updates have been shared via social media.

Additionally, Town Hall and the Library will be closed on Monday, February 17th, in observance of Presidents' Day.

The grand reopening and rededication of the Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve Boardwalk is scheduled for Friday, March 7th, at noon. The Troops of St. George will be serving lunch at the event.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

17. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

None

18. Councilor Arnold

None

19. Councilor Miles

None

20. Councilor Lannamañ

None

21. Mayor Wells

None

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 8:05 p.m. | **Attendees: 41**

Mayor Wells

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk

DRAFT