



Town Council Meeting
October 14, 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 George Lehning | Mayor Pro Tem Marie V. Gallelli | Mayor Martha MacFarlane

MEMBERS EXCUSED ABSENT:

Councilor David Miles

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O’Keefe, Town Manager | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | Rick Thomas, Police Chief | Morgan Cates, Public Services Director | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the meeting’s agenda, while removing agenda items #1, #2, #3, and #4 from the Consent Agenda; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, 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.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, asked to pull Agenda Item #8 from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

1. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the June 24, 2024 Town Council Meeting. (***ITEM REMOVED FROM MEETING DURING AGENDA APPROVAL***)
2. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the July 08, 2024 Town Council Meeting. (***ITEM REMOVED FROM MEETING DURING AGENDA APPROVAL***)
3. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the July 22, 2024 Town Council Meeting. (***ITEM REMOVED FROM MEETING DURING AGENDA APPROVAL***)
4. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the September 9, 2024 Town Council Meeting. (***ITEM REMOVED FROM MEETING DURING AGENDA APPROVAL***)
5. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the September 23, 2024 Town Council Public Hearing on Final Budget and Millage Rate.
6. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the September 23, 2024 Town Council Meeting.
7. Discussion: **Deaccession of Town Inventory**

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve Consent Agenda Items #5, #6, and #7; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

8. Consideration and Approval: **Number Two Road Right-of-Way Dedication**

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, explained that Hillside Groves Development’s exit onto Number Two Road would require the dedication of some Town-owned land to comply with Lake County requirements. Lake County is requiring that the Hillside Groves exit onto Number Two Road will only be allowed to turn right out of the subdivision and that there be a merging lane after the exit from the subdivision.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment, but seeing no comments, Mayor MacFarlane closed the Public Comment.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve Agenda Item #8 with Town Attorney amendments, contingent on agreement with the amendments by the Town Attorney, Town Engineer, and the Town Manager; seconded by Mayor MacFarlane. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

PUBLIC HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

9. Discussion: **Talichet Lift Station Adoption/Upgrade**

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, explained that Councilor Miles had made numerous requests for the Town staff to research taking over the HOA owned/managed Talichet wastewater lift station. Due to those requests, staff met with the Talichet HOA and the HOA lift station sub-committee to see if the HOA would be interested and to determine the costs associated with the request.

Mayor MacFarlane asked what the costs would be for the Town to take over the Talichet lift station and bring it up to the bare minimum standards for Town-owned lift stations. Morgan Cates, Public Services Director, stated that it would cost approximately \$110,000 to connect the lift station to the Town SCADA system and to bring the lift station up to the basic standards for Town-owned lift stations.

Councilor Lannamañ stated that she was concerned about general Town funds being spent to improve one specific HOA/subdivision.

Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that the Town Council could impose a property assessment on the homes in Talichet to pay for the improvements.

Councilor Lehning wanted to know why the Town had allowed the Talichet developer to install a lift station that was below the standards of Town-owned lift stations. Mayor MacFarlane gave a synopsis of the history of the lift station.

Mayor MacFarlane asked the representatives from the Talichet HOA to come forward, introduce themselves, and speak. Michael Huculak (Talichet HOA President) and Ernie Sharp came forward and introduced themselves as members of the Talichet HOA lift station subcommittee. Mr. Huculak stated that during Hurricane Milton (and the power outage that came after), the Talichet lift station came within 5 feet of overflowing.

Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, stated that, during the power outage that came after the hurricane, the Town Public Services Department had attempted to assist the Talichet HOA. Mr. Cates stated that, during the attempt to assist the HOA, he discovered that the Town's generator could not even plug into the lift station, as the plug on the lift station was not natively compatible with the Town's generator.

Councilor Lehning stated that he would like to see the Town, or the HOA, acquire a compatible plug to allow the Town's generator to connect to the Talichet lift station if there was an emergency in the future.

Mr. O'Keefe asked the Town Council if there was an interest within the Town Council to take over the Talichet lift station and if so, what they would want to do as a funding mechanism to bring the lift station up to the Town's minimum standards.

Councilor Lannamañ stated that she did not believe there was an appetite on the Town Council currently to do this.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Matthew Pedlar, 414 Amola Way – Mr. Pedlar wanted to know how the developer was allowed to do this.

Eric Gunesch, 448 Avila Pl. – Mr. Gunesch stated that he lived next to the lift station, and it was not fair that the Town Council allowed the developer to do this in Talichet, but not in Venezia.

Eric Bright, 590 Via Bella Ct. – Mr. Bright stated that Talichet phase 2 had 20 new homes in it that were going on the Town's tax roll and those funds should be used to update the lift station.

Tim Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Mr. Everline wanted to know why there was no legal recourse to go after the developer for this.

Miguel Martin, 583 Avila Pl. – Mr. Martin stated that he did not think the Town was accepting any accountability for allowing this to happen.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment for this item.

The representatives from the Talichet HOA subcommittee stated that they were looking for an answer to this problem that was palatable for all. The representatives from the Talichet HOA also stated that they had land that they were willing to trade to the Town as part of the lift station transferal.

Mayor MacFarlane states that she would like to see a comprehensive staff report or project plan in the future for this proposed project.

10. Discussion: **Proposed Central Lake CDD Agreement**

Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that he was reviewing a proposed amended agreement with the Central Lake CDD for the Town's wastewater treatment needs. Mr. Wilkes stated that he would be in a better position to discuss the proposed agreement during the 10/28/2024 Town Council meeting.

Mayor MacFarlane suggested that all Town Councilor send copies of their notes on this topic to Mr. Wilkes for incorporation into a proposed agreement.

Councilor Lehning stated that, if an agreement was worked out with the Central Lake CDD, he wanted the Town to have a representative on the Central Lake CDD board. Councilor Lehning stated he could not support an amended agreement with the Central Lake CDD without an independent assessment of the Central Lake CDD's sewer treatment plant.

Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, stated that the Central Lake CDD needed to make sure that they had generators for use during emergencies.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Tim Everline, 1012 N Lakeshore Blvd. – Mr. Everline said that he was concerned that there did not appear to be an expiration date on the proposed agreement.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment for this item.

Councilor Lannamañ stated that she was concerned about the exclusivity that the Central Lake CDD was asking for in the agreement and would like to see a smaller termination timetable than 5 years.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

11. Town Hall

This report was included in the packet for the meeting.

12. Police Department

This report was included in the packet for the meeting.

13. Code Enforcement

This report was included in the packet for the meeting.

14. Public Works

Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, gave an update on one of the two FDEM grant applications that the Town had submitted for the purchase of a Pump/Generator bypass for one of the lift stations in Venezia. Mr. Cates stated that the Town had been awarded one of the two grants and was still waiting on a response for the second grants submission.

Mr. Cates thanked the Public Works staff, Police Department staff, and residents for their work in clearing all roads in the Town within (with the exception of Island Drive) one day after Hurricane Milton.

15. Library

This report was included in the packet for the meeting.

16. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board / Special Events

None

17. Town Attorney

This report was included in the packet for the meeting.

18. Finance Supervisor

This report was included in the packet for the meeting.

19. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, stated the Town surveyor George F Young was still working on the Citrus Ave Re-Platting project and had been delayed due to the past two hurricanes.

Mr. O'Keefe thanked all the Town's staff for all their hard work in dealing with Hurricane Milton. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the Town was utilizing a contract it had with Lake County for storm debris removal and would update the Town with more information when he received it from Lake County.

Mr. O'Keefe reminded the Town Council and public of the Town Council Workshop scheduled for Wednesday, 10/23/2024 at 6PM. The workshop was intended to bring veteran Town Councilors and Town Councilor candidates up to speed on the status of all major development projects within the Town.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

20. Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli asked for a status update on the Town’s antique Fire Truck (which was in need of repair). Morgan Cates, Public Services Director, stated that the truck would be worked on by Lake Tech at their new Institute of Public Safety Extension Campus.

21. Councilor Lehning

Councilor Lehning asked about the specific procedures that would be used in the November 12, 2024, Town Council Meeting for nominating and voting on the Town’s new mayor. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that he would work with the Town Manager to create the procedure that the Town Council would use at that meeting for this purpose, and they would communicate this to the Town Council during the October 28, 2024, Town Council meeting.

22. Councilor Miles

None

23. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ thanked the Town’s Public Works Department and Police Department for their hard work during Hurricane Milton.

24. Mayor MacFarlane

Mayor MacFarlane also thanked the Town’s Public Works Department and Police Department for their hard work during Hurricane Milton. Mayor MacFarlane also thanked the Town staff that worked in the County EOC during the storm.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that she wanted to see a cost/benefit comparison between utilizing the Central Lake CDD and Groveland for wastewater treatment solutions.

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.

Eric Gunesch, 448 Avila Pl. – Mr. Gunesch thanked the outgoing Town Councilors for their hard work over the past few years. Mr. Gunesch thanked the Town Police Department for its hard work during Hurricane Milton.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 7:58 p.m. | **Attendees: 32**

Mayor Martha MacFarlane

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk