



Town Council Meeting

April 28, 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 Special 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:

Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | Michael Giddens, Police Department Lieutenant | Public Works Director, Morgan Cates | Victoria Roszkiewicz, Executive Assistant to the Town Manager | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

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, 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.

Erin Fox, 508 N Florida Ave. – Resident Erin Fox expressed concern about a lack of inclusiveness in the Town, sharing that she and her family have often felt unwelcome despite being active in the community. She cited an

incident at a Christmas festival where her daughter and a visiting student were made to feel uncomfortable at the library. Mrs. Fox urged the Town to ensure public spaces and programs are accessible to all, not just specific groups. She also raised frustration with repeated Code Enforcement actions and called for more communication with residents instead of a punitive approach. Mrs. Fox supported both the Town's and the mansion's Founders Day events, emphasizing they shouldn't be seen as competing. She suggested allowing residents to use the Town's electronic board to promote milestones or events and encouraged Council to serve the entire community.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Resident Andi Everline expressed frustration over the ongoing tension between the Town and the historic mansion, calling it a cherished part of the community's history and a valuable economic asset. She noted that the original Founder's Day was held at the mansion and suggested the Town consider calling its event something else, like the Citrus Festival, to avoid conflict. Mrs. Everline urged unity and inclusiveness in the small-town community.

Tom Ballou, 1012 N. Tangerine Ave. - Resident Tom Ballou shared his appreciation for the community in Howey-in-the-Hills, noting he moved there for its small-town feel after living in a larger city. While acknowledging occasional disagreements among residents, he emphasized the overall positive nature of the community. Mr. Ballou expressed frustration that ongoing personal conflict between a brother and sister is negatively affecting the Town, and he urged a resolution so the community can move forward in unity.

Carol Tate, 1003 Hamlin Ave. – Resident Carol Tate echoed earlier comments, stating that Founder's Day should have been a collaborative event between the Town and the mansion. She suggested solutions like using shuttles to connect both locations and provide a shared experience for the community. Tate also agreed with comments about personal conflict affecting the town, urging that it end so the community can focus on its strengths and unity.

Gail Boettger, 11451 Valley View Dr., Howey-in-the-Hills (*unincorporated Lake County*) – County resident Gail Boettger expressed support for previous speakers and shared her concerns about confusion surrounding the multiple events scheduled near Founders Day. She explained that the Garden Club, which has worked hard to organize the May 3rd event and fundraise through cookbook sales, feels overshadowed by the Town's May 10th celebration and the separate mansion event. Mrs. Boettger noted that conflicting signage and advertising have caused public confusion about the event dates, diminishing visibility for the May 3rd gathering. She urged better coordination and communication in the future, emphasizing that the Garden Club supports both the Town and the mansion, and wants to see all parties work together to serve the community.

Kate Roberts, 1104 N Valencia Ave. – Resident Kate Roberts, a newcomer to Howey-in-the-Hills and a first-time vendor at the upcoming mansion-sponsored event, shared her disappointment over the conflict and confusion surrounding event signage. She described her excitement to participate and her desire to support local business and community spirit. Mrs. Roberts expressed concern that signage promoting the mansion's event is being overshadowed by town-sponsored signage, leading to confusion, even among her own family. She urged the Town to allow additional signage for the mansion event, emphasizing that both events celebrate the same history and should reflect a shared community effort.

Cathy Coleman, 1004 Citrus Ave. – Resident Cathy Coleman raised questions about the process for deciding what content appears on the Town's main signs, particularly regarding how organizations like the Garden Club can publicize events. She expressed concern over the confusion and division caused by having two separate Founder's Day dates and asked who made that decision and why. Mrs. Coleman emphasized that, with proper coordination, both events could easily coexist on the same day, with trolleys helping residents enjoy activities at both locations. She also noted efforts to promote unity by cross-posting events on social media and urged the Town to address the unnecessary separation during the 100th anniversary celebration.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline clarified that event planning is currently handled entirely by Town staff, not a formal special events committee, and that Council members have no direct input on event decisions such as signage. He encouraged residents to get involved if a committee is formally established in the future.

Mayor Wells confirmed there is no official committee, only weekly internal staff meetings to plan the May 10th event. He acknowledged the unfortunate division between the Town and mansion events, noting that both have their own planning processes and challenges, particularly that the Town has raised significant sponsorships, while the mansion has secured more vendors. Mayor Wells emphasized the Town has allowed limited signage for the mansion event and removed signs placed on private property at the mansion manager's request. He also pointed out the lack of visible promotion from the mansion in places like the post office and suggested that more proactive marketing would help. He stated there are no plans to rename the Town's Founder's Day event, though such a change could only occur through a Council vote. Finally, he announced that a meeting is already planned between Town staff and mansion representatives to improve coordination for future events.

Carol Tate, 1003 Hamlin Ave. – Resident Carol Tate sought clarification on how residents can get involved in Town event planning. She asked if Amanda Moldan, the Library Director and Community Events Coordinator, holds meetings that citizens can attend. Mayor Wells explained that Amanda organizes staff meetings for Town events like Founder's Day, Christmas, Halloween, and others.

Mrs. Tate also inquired about whether residents could have placed signs promoting the May 3rd mansion event. Mayor Wells deferred the question to staff, and Town Clerk, John Brock, confirmed that temporary event signs are allowed on private property, including residential yards, as long as they are not placed in the public right-of-way. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, added that the recently updated sign ordinance permits signs for community events, provided they are removed shortly after the event concludes.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Resident Andi Everline asked when community members were excluded from the Town's events committee, noting that residents used to be involved. Councilor Miles explained that the events committee had included representatives from the Garden Club, Men's Club, and other citizens until April of the previous year, when his wife, who had served as the Garden Club representative, passed away. Since then, the Town shifted event planning solely to staff, and no formal committee meetings have occurred.

Councilor Miles expressed support for reinstating the events committee, suggesting it include community and nonprofit representatives and be chaired by the Library Director, who currently coordinates Town events. He also proposed a unified promotional message recognizing "Founders Week" and highlighting both the May 3rd and May 10th events on the Town's digital signs as a good faith gesture. Looking ahead, he encouraged a return to joint, same-day events to foster community unity.

Joshua Husemann, 671 Avila Pl. – Resident Joshua Husemann, Chair of the Parks and Recreation Board, clarified that the now-defunct events committee technically falls under Parks and Rec. He noted that, while his board had been approached to take over event duties, they chose only to assist informally, as Town staff had assumed full responsibility. He encouraged residents to attend Parks and Rec meetings, held the second Thursday of each month, as a way to participate and offer input on events.

Councilor Miles recalled that Parks and Recreation Board had previously requested not to manage events, which led to the formation of a separate events committee. He supported reinstating that committee and proposed that the Library Director serve as chair. As a gesture of unity, he also suggested advertising both the May 3rd and May 10th events on the Town's electronic signs under the theme "Howey's Founder's Week."

Councilor Arnold echoed concerns about the disjointed event planning and emphasized the strong association between the Town and the mansion in public perception. He noted confusion from outside groups, including UCF and nearby municipalities, and urged a collaborative approach moving forward. Councilor Arnold recommended volunteers step up for committees and requested that the Town temporarily turn off the electronic sign at SR. 19 and CR. 48 until after May 3rd to avoid deterring attendees due to date confusion.

Mayor Wells acknowledged the suggestions and assured that they would be brought to the Town Manager. He reiterated hope that a post-event meeting between mansion leadership and Town staff would improve collaboration for future events.

Councilors Miles and Lannamañ concluded by supporting the idea of promoting a week-long celebration on both electronic signs to reduce confusion and promote unity, with agreement from other Council members.

Councilor Arnold stated that, in lieu of the comments that the Council had made earlier regarding signage, he wanted to make a motion to amend the Town's electronic sign at the corner of State Road 19 and County Road 48 to include both the May 3rd and May 10th events, identifying them as part of Howey's 100th celebration, May 3rd at the mansion and May 10th at the lakefront.

Motion made by Councilor Arnold to amend the Town's electronic sign at the corner of State Road 19 and County Road 48 to include both the May 3rd and May 10th events, identifying them as part of Howey's 100th celebration, May 3rd at the mansion and May 10th at the lakefront; 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

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.

Councilor Miles stated that he wanted to pull agenda item #3 for discussion. Councilor Miles stated that there was reference to the "City of Groveland" that should be changed to the "Town of Howey-in-the-Hills". Councilor Miles stated that he had discovered two changes minor changes that should be made to minutes in Agenda Item #1 as well. Town Clerk, John Brock, stated that all of Councilor Miles' requested edits had been made and the updated documents had been added to the meeting's packet prior to the start of the meeting. Mayor Wells then asked Councilor Miles if he would be ok for Agenda Item #3 to return to the Consent Agenda and be voted on together with all the other items. Councilor Miles agreed to this.

1. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the April 14, 2025, Town Council Meeting.
2. Consideration and Approval: **Lake County LAB Representatives**
3. Consideration and Approval: **SRO Summer Contract**
4. Consideration and Approval: **Selection of Police Pension Board Member**
5. Consideration and Approval: **Selection of Planning and Zoning Board Member**

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Consent Agenda; 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

Mayor Wells asked Erick Bright (newly appointed Planning and Zoning Board Member) and Madelyn Rodriguez (newly appointed Police Pension Board Member) to come forward and introduce themselves. Both individuals spoke about their background to the Council.

PUBLIC HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

6. Consideration and Approval: **Town Auditor RFP 2025-001**

Mayor Wells suspended the Town Council meeting at 6:59 pm. Mayor Wells convened the Town Auditor Selection Committee at 6:59 pm. Mayor Wells acknowledged that all 5 members of the committee (the Town Council) were present.

Mayor Wells explained the need to initiate the RFP process early to ensure audit costs are properly included in the upcoming budget.

Councilor Miles recommended structuring the contract for the Town Auditor as a three-year term with two optional three-year extensions, rather than annual renewals, to promote continuity and reduce administrative burden. He emphasized the importance of including a termination-for-convenience clause, allowing the Town to exit the contract if necessary. Mayor Wells and Council members agreed with this approach, noting it mirrors past practices and allows pricing stability with future adjustments as the Town grows.

The Council also agreed to advertise the RFP for 30 days and confirmed that the document would be updated to reflect the revised term and conditions.

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

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Town Auditor RFP 2025-001 with the conditions that the RFP be advertised for 30 days, the RFP should advertise that the contract for the Town Auditor would be for three years, with the option for two additional three year extensions, and that the RFP should advertise that the contract for the Town Auditor will include a termination-for-convenience clause; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Mayor Wells then adjourned the Town Auditor Selection Committee and reconvened the Town Council at 7:11 pm. Mayor Wells acknowledge that all five Council members will still in attendance.

7. Consideration and Approval: **RFP/RFQ Cycle for Consultants**

The Town Council considered a proposal to establish a recurring RFP/RFQ cycle for professional consultant services. Councilor Arnold introduced the item, emphasizing the importance of regularly re-

competing contracts to ensure accountability, value, and performance among the Town's consultants. He noted that such a practice is common in both the private sector and federal contracting and can benefit both the Town and incumbent vendors.

Councilor Lannamañ voiced support but noted concerns about replacing long-serving consultants like the Town Attorney due to their institutional knowledge. Town staff clarified that some contracts, such as for the Town Planner, were recently bid and not yet due for renewal, while others, specifically the Town Attorney (last bid in 2009) and Town Engineer (2020)—are due for review.

After public comment and further discussion, Council unanimously approved a motion authorizing the Town Manager to prepare an RFP/RFQ cycle process for all consultants, starting with those currently due. The approved motion was for a comprehensive review cycle rather than limited to specific positions.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the RFP/RFQ Cycle for Consultant while specifically directing the Town Manager to send out RFP/RFQs for the Town Attorney and Town Engineer (since they were due); 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

8. Discussion: Amending the Purchasing Policy

The Town Council held a discussion on proposed amendments to the Town's purchasing policy, with formal adoption scheduled for a Special Town Council Meeting on May 1, 2025. The primary focus was on establishing clear purchasing thresholds and streamlining processes while maintaining appropriate oversight.

Councilor Miles noted that minor grammatical and redundancy edits he had previously suggested were incorporated into the draft. He supported the proposed threshold structure: department directors may authorize purchases up to \$5,000, the Town Manager could approve up to \$50,000, and any purchases above \$50,000 must receive Council approval. He and other councilors emphasized the need for consistency and clarity in thresholds to avoid past confusion.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline questioned the \$50,000 threshold for the Town Manager, raising concerns over past projects where initial Council approvals appeared to be exceeded without clear follow-up. He expressed preference for a lower threshold, such as \$25,000 to \$30,000, to ensure greater accountability. Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, and Town Clerk, John Brock, clarified that purchases remain constrained by the adopted budget, and any spending beyond budgeted amounts must return to Council for approval. They also explained that lowering the threshold would significantly increase staff workload and delay routine purchases.

Councilor Miles and others noted that inflation and modern municipal practices support maintaining the \$50,000 threshold, especially in a growing Town with limited administrative staff. Councilor Arnold stressed the importance of trusting the Town Manager and staff to execute the approved budget efficiently, stating that micromanagement would undermine their ability to operate effectively.

After a lengthy discussion, Mayor Graham Wells conducted a straw poll, and the Council reached consensus to retain the \$50,000 threshold in the revised purchasing policy. The Town Clerk was

directed to prepare a resolution reflecting this consensus for formal consideration at the upcoming Special Town Council Meeting scheduled for May 1, 2025.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

9. Town Manager

Town Clerk / Deputy Town Manager, John Brock, reminded the public of the upcoming centennial events: the mansion's celebration on May 3rd and the Town's official Howey Founder's Day event on May 10th. He noted that the actual date of incorporation for the Town of Howey-in-the-Hills is May 8th, marking its 100th anniversary. He also shared that other municipalities in Lake County, including Montverde, Fruitland Park, and Mascotte, were also celebrating their centennials this year, with Astatula's 100th approaching in 2027.

In the spirit of supporting local business, Mr. Brock highlighted a new food truck offering Italian sandwiches across from Town Hall, operated by a Howey resident. Councilor Arnold and Mayor Pro Tem Everline praised the vendor and emphasized the importance of promoting local businesses. Mayor Wells added that the Howey Market is under contract and expected to reopen in the future as a breakfast diner, further contributing to local economic activity.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

10. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

Mayor Pro Tem Tim Everline reported on the recent Lake-Sumter MPO meeting, where he and Councilor Arnold attended on behalf of Howey-in-the-Hills. He announced that the Town's project had been elevated to number 21 on the MPO's priority list, a significant achievement considering some longstanding projects were removed. The proposed \$250,000 project includes a corridor study addressing safety, capacity, bicycle and pedestrian improvements.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline noted that MPO Executive Director Mike Woods plans to meet with Town officials to further discuss the study. Councilor Arnold added that based on conversations with FDOT and County representatives, the Town could potentially pursue traffic calming measures like roundabouts on State Road 19 and County Road 48, so long as the Town (or developers) fully funds them and obtains FDOT approval.

While Councilor Arnold emphasized the value of proactive planning and funding partnerships with developers, Mayor Pro Tem Everline clarified that SR 19 remains a state road and any improvements, including traffic circles, would still require formal FDOT approval. Mayor Pro Tem Everline noted that FDOT supported a roundabout at the SR 19/CR 48 intersection but not near the Publix area due to concerns over traffic congestion.

Councilor Miles and others discussed the traffic-calming potential of roundabouts, with Councilor Miles advocating for two strategically placed circles to discourage speeding. There was also interest in restriping SR 19 during upcoming resurfacing to improve traffic flow, such as adjusting the width of the driving lanes to allow vehicles to bypass left-turning cars.

In closing, Mayor Pro Tem Everline encouraged future collaboration with FDOT to implement such ideas, and Town staff confirmed that related MPO documents were available for review in the meeting's packet under Mayor Pro Tem Everline's report.

11. Councilor Arnold

None

12. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles informed the Council that he will be absent from the May 12th meeting due to travel. He noted that engineering firm Woodard & Curran had been scheduled to present a progress update on the wastewater study commissioned nearly a year ago but had withdrawn from the agenda without explanation. Councilor Miles also requested that the topic of eminent domain be added as a discussion item for the May 1st meeting.

Additionally, Councilor Miles reported a flooding issue observed during a heavy downpour earlier that evening on State Road 19 near the boat manufacturing facility. He described water as being approximately two feet deep in the southbound lane, causing significant traffic delays and safety concerns. He asked that Town staff notify FDOT of the drainage issue for further investigation.

13. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ raised two inquiries. First, she asked about the status of the Howey Market property, noting that the “For Sale/contract pending” sign had been removed but renovation activities were visible through the windows. Mayor Wells and others confirmed that the property had closed under a pending contract and was expected to reopen as a diner.

Second, Councilor Lannamañ inquired about the status of the property in front of the Howey Mansion, known as the Asma property. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, explained that, although there had been discussions several months ago about potentially subdividing the parcel into two lots, its irregular shape presents challenges. He noted that the owners previously proposed a settlement allowing for two homes on the lot, but the project appears dormant. Some recent activity observed on-site may have involved surveying or platting efforts or could relate to earlier interest from the mansion's owner in acquiring the property, pending financing.

14. Mayor Wells

Mayor Wells thanked the public and Council for their participation and engagement during the meeting. He encouraged residents to promote the Town's Founder's Day event on May 10th, noting it will feature extensive entertainment and over \$30,000 in sponsorships. He also explained the reasoning behind some of the signage decisions and reiterated the need for equitable cost-sharing if future events are jointly planned with the Howey Mansion.

Councilor Lannamañ and Mayor Wells discussed the confusion caused earlier in the year when misinformation suggested the Town was not hosting its own Founder's Day celebration. They expressed concerns about the role of a particular individual affiliated with the mansion in spreading that misinformation and acknowledged a prior meeting with the mansion's owner, Brad Cowherd, who was reportedly unaware of the extent of the issue. Councilors agreed that future coordination must include honest conversations about responsibilities and costs.

Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, addressed an update on the proposed “pigtail” generator connector for the Talichet lift station. He explained that, although the Town was willing make the connection to assist the HOA, no formal request had been received from the HOA, and no action can be taken until the ownership transfer is finalized. Councilor Miles and others agreed on the urgency of resolving the matter before hurricane season.

The Council also discussed the delay in the North Citrus project due to pending plat approval. Councilor Miles suggested allowing separate notary blocks for individual property owners to expedite signatures. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, confirmed that could be done if there's space on the plat.

Resident Joshua Husemann provided an update on behalf of the HOA regarding the Talichet lift station transfer agreement. He stated that the HOA's target is to finalize the agreement by May 7, enabling inclusion on the May 12 Council agenda. He outlined steps being taken to secure the necessary votes through a combination of proxy and petition-style approval.

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 8:17 p.m. | **Attendees: 29**

Graham Wells, CMC, Mayor

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk