



Town Council Meeting

June 23, 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 (Attending Remotely via Zoom) | Councilor Jon Arnold | Councilor Reneé Lannamañ | Councilor David Miles | Mayor Graham Wells

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O'Keefe, Town Manager | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | Rick Thomas, Police Chief | Public Services Director, Morgan Cates | April Fisher, Town Planner (via Zoom) | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to allow Mayor Pro Tem Everline to participate in the meeting and vote remotely via Zoom; 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

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

None

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Councilor Miles stated that he wanted to pull Consent Agenda item #2 (Police Department Utility Vehicle Approval) from Consent Agenda to discuss.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the meeting's agenda; 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

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.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Resident Marie Gallelli requested that the digital sign's slide duration be extended to improve readability for passing drivers. Town Manager Sean O'Keefe noted the current default is five seconds per slide. Councilor David Miles supported the suggestion, stating he also has difficulty reading multiple items and agreed the timing could be adjusted.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Resident Andi Everline expressed disappointment over the conduct at the previous meeting, stating it was embarrassing for those in attendance and noting that while officials apologized to each other, no apology was made to the public.

Mayor Wells responded by apologizing for his role in the incident to both residents present and those watching online.

Tina St. Clair, 135 E. Central Ave. – Resident Tina St. Clair raised concerns about pedestrian safety at the crossing at Central Ave. and SR 19, noting the danger to residents, including children and individuals in wheelchairs. She requested that the Town pursue a flashing-light pedestrian crossing similar to those in other Florida cities and volunteered to help organize community support if needed.

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, stated that Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) is conducting a study that may include improvements through that corridor, with further details provided by staff. Councilor Arnold confirmed the crossing is a high-priority safety project ranked second or third on the list, with hopes to coordinate it with Palm Avenue resurfacing in 2026. Councilor Miles and Mayor Pro Tem Everline added that FDOT is aware of the Town's request but has not committed to the project due to funding constraints. Mayor Pro Tem Everline encouraged residents to submit letters or petitions to FDOT to help elevate the project's priority. Mrs. St. Clair also asked if interim safety measures like painted lines could be considered while awaiting larger improvements.

Banks Helfrich, 9100 Sams Lake Rd., Clermont, FL – County resident Banks Helfrich, identifying himself as "Farmer Banks", began his remarks with a light-hearted "Farm Tip of the Day" about growing watermelons in Florida. He offered three practical tips for improving watermelon quality and reducing pests. He then transitioned to a more serious topic, citing a 2023 Johns Hopkins University study identifying firearms as the leading cause of death for children ages 1 to 17 in the United States. Drawing a historical parallel to Ralph Nader's life-saving advocacy for vehicle safety, Mr. Helfrich urged greater community engagement on gun safety. He noted that the City of Groveland Police Department and local gun shops offer safety courses and emphasized the importance of secure storage practices. Concluding with a call for action, he asked who will step forward as this generation's Ralph Nader to prevent further tragedies. Mayor Graham Wells thanked him for his comments.

Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, reported that the Town's engineered crosswalk improvement plan for the intersection of State Road 19 and West Central Avenue has been selected by FDOT for inclusion in the Target Zero pedestrian safety program. The program, in partnership with Bike Walk Central Florida, includes a 2025 study, at no cost to the Town, that will evaluate driver behavior, pedestrian activity, and enforcement needs. The study results will be shared with Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) to support the Town's request for enhanced safety features, including pedestrian lighting and crosswalks on both sides of the intersection. Mr. Cates and Lieutenant Giddens also attended a regional conference to advocate for the project. While optimistic, Mr. Cates noted the intersection remains hazardous and long-term improvements may require a traffic signal.

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 Consent Agenda item #2 (Police Department Utility Vehicle Approval) from Consent Agenda to discuss.

1. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the June 09, 2025, Town Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Consent Agenda (now only Agenda Item #1); 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

2. Consideration and Approval: **Police Department Utility Vehicle Approval**

Council discussed the proposed purchase of two utility vehicles for the Police Department, focusing on costs, vendor selection, usage, and timing. Police Chief Thomas presented quotes, recommending Love Motorsports in Ocoee as the lowest bidder. Councilor Miles questioned whether the quoted \$16,399 per unit was negotiable and suggested a \$35,000 all-in target. Chief Thomas noted negotiations would need to happen with the dealership's general manager once the Town was ready to commit.

The vehicles would be funded from Police Impact Fees, with over \$250,000 currently available. Council discussed the intended use, primarily for events like Founders Day, Christmas, and emergency response, as well as concerns about warranties, outfitting, and timing of purchase. Mayor Wells suggested delaying the purchase and incorporating it into the FY 2025–26 budget process to allow for broader capital planning and potential cost savings. Councilor Everline voiced his support in waiting to purchase the utility vehicles, as they were not needed until the Christmas Festival.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Tina St. Clair, 135 E Central Ave. - Resident Tina St. Clair inquired whether older vehicles, such as those formerly stationed at the Water Treatment Plant, on Central Ave., could be sold to help offset the cost of new utility vehicles. Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, clarified that those older vehicles had already been removed and sold. Mrs. St. Clair acknowledged the response and expressed support for the Police Department's needs.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Police Department Utility Vehicles purchase; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Voting

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

PUBLIC HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

3. Consideration and Approval: **Selection of Dates for FY25-26 Budget Workshops**

After some deliberation the Town Council decided to hold the first Budget Workshop on July 22, 2025, at 1:00pm and the second Budget Workshop on August 7, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to have the Budget Workshops on July 22, 2025, at 1:00 p.m., and August 7, 2025, at 1:00 p.m.; 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

4. Consideration and Approval: **Hillside Groves Minor Amendment Request**

Town Planner, April Fisher, introduced a request from Meritage Homes to amend the approved Hillside Groves PUD (formerly The Reserve) by reducing the width of townhome lots from 27 feet to 24 feet. Staff and the planning consultant had determined the request constituted a major amendment requiring a full public hearing process; however, the applicant disagreed and sought Council's determination that it could instead be processed as a minor amendment, which would not require re-noticing or a full amendment process.

Applicant representative, Alex Flores, confirmed that, while the unit widths would be reduced, the overall number of townhomes, 153, would remain unchanged. Councilor Miles questioned the use of the additional space, to which the applicant responded it would become landscaped green space. Councilor Miles emphasized that no additional units should be added and raised concerns about reduced setbacks, limited access, and potential street parking issues. He advocated maintaining the originally approved road access layout, noting a previous Council requirement for two access points into the townhouse pod.

Discussion ensued about the feasibility of access onto Number Two Road, which Lake County currently controls but may transfer to the Town within 90 days. The current configuration includes only an emergency access route with a cul-de-sac, which several Councilors found inadequate.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline moved to treat the amendment as major and send it through the full Planning & Zoning and Development Review Committee process, but the motion failed for lack of a second. Councilor Miles then made a motion to treat the change as a minor amendment, with conditions: no increase in the number of units, any space gained from reduced widths to be used as green space, and the road configuration to remain as originally approved. The motion was seconded by Councilor Lannamañ, with following statement "So, David, I like your motion and I want to second it, but the only thing that I would like to have considered is that if the county indeed turns that road over to us, then it can go back to what we originally wanted, which is a second access road." The applicant agreed and clarified that the setback, lot size, and minimum living area standards would remain unchanged.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N. Tangerine Ave. – Resident Tom Ballou expressed concern about treating the lot width reduction as a minor amendment, noting that the developer agreement suggests it requires a major amendment. Citing unresolved issues like access to Number Two Road, he recommended referring the matter to the Planning & Zoning Board for further review before Council made a decision.

Tina St. Clair, 135 E. Central Ave. – Resident Tina St. Clair stated that, based on the staff report and her review, the proposed lot width reduction should be treated as a major amendment. She emphasized the significant percentage change from 27 to 24 feet and supported following the formal review process. Mrs. St. Clair also clarified that costs for public notices are borne by the developer, not the Town, and stressed the importance of relying on the Town Planner's professional recommendation.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Resident Marie Gallelli stated she does not consider the proposed change from 27 to 24 feet a minor amendment and believes it should go back to the Planning & Zoning Board. She noted difficulty reading the highlighted portion of the online materials that defined a minor amendment and emphasized that, since the Town Planner determined it to be a major amendment, that guidance should be followed.

Mayor Wells asked for clarification on the project timeline, confirming that the proposed townhouse changes fall within Phase Two. Applicant Representative, Alex Flores, explained that while home construction in Phase One can proceed, no engineering or infrastructure work for later phases, including Phase Two, can move forward until the amendment is resolved. Councilor Miles confirmed that both townhouse pods are located within Phase Two. Ms. Flores noted that, while the developer agreement doesn't explicitly categorize this change as major or minor, the language allows for Council discretion, which Councilor Miles reiterated had been accounted for in his motion.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to treat the change as a minor amendment, with conditions: no increase in the number of units, any space gained from reduced widths to be used as green space, and the road configuration to remain as originally approved; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion failed by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles

Nay: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Arnold, Mayor Wells

Motion made by Councilor Miles to treat the requested change as a major amendment; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

5. Discussion: **Oak Groves / ISBA Approach**

Town Planner, April Fisher, presented a recommendation regarding the proposed Oaks Grove development, which seeks R4 zoning in unincorporated Lake County (which is within the Town's Interlocal Service Boundary Agreement (ISBA) utility area.) The Applicant, Margaret Brock, stated that the development would comply with Lake County's Land Development Regulations (LDRs), including 25% open space, and clarified that the maximum buildout would likely be around 32–37 homes, not 49 or 64, as speculated, due to site constraints.

Council members expressed concern over potential density, infrastructure compatibility, and the need for water and sewer service, which would likely need to come from the Town. Councilor Miles questioned why the development was proceeding through the County instead of the Town, particularly given the applicant's request for Town utilities. Mrs. Brock responded that she initiated the process with the County over a year ago and was unaware of the ISBA at that time but had reached out to Town staff

prior to formal notice of the rezoning, to discuss getting utilities from the Town. She did not commit to annexation but expressed willingness to meet with the Town to discuss utilities.

Council discussion emphasized limitations in wastewater capacity, Consumptive Use Permit (CUP) constraints on potable water, and the importance of preserving development standards at the Town's gateway.

Councilor Miles made a motion to extend the Town Council meeting to 9:30 p.m. This was done at 8:35 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

William Sullivan, 26336 SR 19, Howey-In-the-Hills (unincorporated Lake County) - County Resident William Sullivan expressed strong opposition to the proposed Oaks Grove development, citing concerns about density, setbacks, and visual impact along State Road 19. He referenced the Lake County Land Development Code, stating that multifamily and townhome units are permitted on the property and noted that a county official confirmed up to 64 units could be built. Mr. Sullivan criticized the inclusion of dry retention areas within the required 25% open space, arguing this overstates the usable green space. He warned that stacked flats could be built along the lakefront, creating high-density development directly at the Town's visual gateway. Drawing from past development experience, he emphasized the potential for such configurations under Florida's condominium laws and urged Council to remain vigilant in protecting the Town's entry corridor.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to follow the staff recommendation and send a formal letter to Lake County requesting a continuance of the rezoning hearing and a joint meeting between the Town, County, and applicant to discuss development compatibility; 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

6. Consideration and Approval: **Oak Groves – Court Reporter Fee Request**

Motion made by Councilor Miles to remove this agenda item from the 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

7. Discussion: **Town Auditor RFP Update**

Mayor Graham Wells introduced the Town Auditor RFP update. Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, reported that only one submission had been received, likely due to the busy audit season, and recommended reissuing the RFP for an additional 30 days to attract more responses. Councilor Miles moved to re-post the RFP for 30 more days, and Councilor Lannamañ seconded. After clarification from the Town Clerk that the original RFP had already closed and must be re-advertised rather than extended, the motion was revised and approved. The Council also agreed to confirm that the sole current applicant, would be considered under the newly re-issued RFP.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to re-issue the Town Auditor RFP for another 30 days in an effort to get additional applicants; 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

8. Consideration and Approval: **Final Plat - Brock Replat of Poco Sierra and Griffin Village**

The Council considered approval of the final plat for the Brock replat of Poco Sierra and Griffin Village. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, noted two conditions: an additional mortgagee block must be added to the plat, and signatures from all six property owners must be obtained before the Town signs. Councilor Miles amended the motion to include these conditions, and Councilor Lannamañ, as the original motion maker, agreed.

In response to a question from Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Mr. O’Keefe and Councilor Miles explained that the replat corrects irregular right-of-way alignments and consolidates parcels, including transferring necessary land to the Town for a properly aligned road. The replat enables the lots to conform to Town code and supports the Town’s road improvement plans.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline also asked whether the Town was incurring costs for idle construction equipment on-site. Mr. O’Keefe and Mr. Wilkes clarified that the construction costs are fixed and the equipment is being staged in preparation for work resuming, with construction expected to restart shortly.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N Tangerine Ave. - Resident Marie Gallelli inquired about the north end of Citrus Avenue as it relates to the replat, expressing concern about the potential for a future road connection or emergency access through to new development. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, clarified that the Town’s project will create an “L”-shaped connection between Citrus and Camellia, stopping at the right-of-way and not extending through the property. He emphasized that any additional road extension beyond that point, whether by Mrs. Brock or the Thompson Grove developer, would not be funded by the Town. Councilor Miles added that, if the remaining 300 feet of roadway in front of the reconfigured lots is to be completed, it would be the responsibility of a developer to construct and fund it.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the replat with two conditions: an additional mortgagee block must be added to the plat, and signatures from all six property owners must be obtained before the Town signs; seconded by Councilor Miles. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

9. Consideration and Approval: **Resolution 2025-010 - Mid-Year FY2025 Budget Amendment**

The Council reviewed Resolution 2025-010, which involved a budget amendment for Fiscal Year 2024–2025. Mayor Wells noted that the resolution’s title and fund references contained inaccuracies: it incorrectly labeled the amendment as "final" and included "sanitation" and "general fund" references that no longer applied. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, explained the amendment included two adjustments: one for reimbursed police vehicle outfitting expenses funded by a state residual grant, and another for water impact fee reimbursements related to well drilling. Councilor Miles questioned whether “state grant public safety” was the correct title for one of the revenue sources. Due to the errors and uncertainty, Councilor Miles moved to table the resolution until the next meeting to allow for corrections.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to table to next meeting; 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

Due to the late hour Mayor Wells asked for a motion to recess for 5 minutes at 8:57 p.m.

Motion made by Councilor Miles for a five-minute recess; 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

The Town Council Meeting reconvened at 9:02 p.m.

10. Consideration and Approval: **Remote Work and Leave Usage**

The Town Council engaged in an extensive discussion regarding Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe’s, planned remote work during an upcoming trip abroad. Councilor Arnold opened by emphasizing the need to avoid disclosing travel dates for security reasons and to focus the conversation on policy and compensation. Councilor Lannamañ clarified her understanding that Mr. O’Keefe would take four to five vacation days for travel, with the intent to work remotely, albeit in a different time zone, during the remainder of the trip using a VPN connection. Mr. O’Keefe confirmed that arrangement had been previously communicated to all council members.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline raised objections, asserting that the Town Manager had not explicitly sought Council approval for remote work and expressing concerns about costs to the Town, the precedent it might set, and Mr. O’Keefe’s accrued vacation practices. Mr. Everline cited the Town Charter’s language about Council oversight and challenged the contractual basis for remote work. The Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, responded that the contract and personnel policies were silent on remote work and did not authorize avoiding leave usage for out-of-town work. However, he acknowledged that it was ultimately a policy decision for the Council. Mr. Wilkes recommended formalizing any approval in the manager’s contract or personnel policies if the Council wished to proceed.

Mr. O’Keefe countered that Town policies implied supervisory discretion for remote work and cited prior instances of staff working remotely. Town Clerk and Deputy Town Manager, John Brock, confirmed that remote work had precedent and cautioned against undervaluing the Town Manager’s contributions, especially during budget season. Mr. Brock emphasized that any remote work should be compensated, while days with no expected work should be treated as vacation.

The discussion shifted to determining how many days Mr. O’Keefe would actively work. He stated his intent to be available for all 17 days, though Council members acknowledged he would likely be required for at least three major meetings and several budget-related tasks. Mayor Wells and Councilor Lannamañ supported allowing remote work on a case-by-case basis without reopening the contract, viewing the situation as a one-time accommodation. Mr. Brock suggested that perhaps the Town Council would trust Mayor Wells to personally supervise and assess Mr. O’Keefe’s remote work activities during the trip and report back to Council.

Ultimately, while Councilors expressed differing views on precedent and policy implications, there was general agreement that Mr. O’Keefe should receive credit for remote work performed, with remaining days designated as vacation.

Councilor Lannamañ made a motion to extend the Town Council meeting by 30 minutes. This was done at 9:32 p.m. The motion was seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Dianna, Ballou, 1005 N Tangerine Ave. - Resident Dianna Ballou initially expressed skepticism but ultimately advocated for a balanced approach regarding the Town Manager's remote work arrangement. She acknowledged that, if Mr. O'Keefe would be attending meetings and performing preparation work while abroad, some compensation was warranted. Drawing from her own experience as a teacher working off the clock, she recognized the evolving nature of remote work expectations. However, she emphasized the importance of careful oversight and accountability, especially given the potential implications for future employment practices in the Town.

A brief discussion followed regarding the financial implications of vacation time and the Town Manager's contractually-allowed vacation cash-out. Mayor Wells floated the idea of suspending the cash-out for the year as a potential compromise but noted it would require further review. Mrs. Ballou concluded by requesting that Council clarify acronyms during future meetings to aid public understanding.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. - Resident Marie Gallelli expressed empathy toward Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe's, planned travel, acknowledging the importance of seizing a rare opportunity to spend meaningful time with family abroad. While recognizing the legitimacy of his commitment to remain available for Council meetings and budget preparation, she questioned whether he could realistically work as extensively as proposed while also making the most of the trip. Drawing from her own international business experience, she encouraged Mr. O'Keefe not to shortchange himself and to consider taking more time as vacation.

Mr. O'Keefe responded by noting his familiarity with the region and emphasized that, while he could theoretically take the entire period as vacation, doing so would place an excessive burden on remaining staff, particularly the Town Clerk, Mr. Brock. He cited recent staffing shortages and the heavy workload during budget season as reasons for maintaining partial work availability. Mrs. Gallelli and other participants also briefly discussed concerns about roaming charges and potential fiscal impacts, though Mr. O'Keefe clarified there would be no direct costs to the Town.

Tina St. Clair, 135 E Central Ave. - Resident Tina St. Clair, drawing on her executive experience in the newspaper industry, offered a firm perspective on the Town Manager's planned remote work during the budget season. She noted that, in her prior roles, vacations were prohibited during critical budget periods and salaried employees were expected to remain responsive without additional compensation. Mrs. St. Clair expressed concern over the appearance of Mr. O'Keefe receiving both paid vacation and compensation for partial workdays, particularly given his contractual ability to cash out unused leave. While acknowledging his contributions and expressing personal regard for him, she argued that most of the trip should be classified as vacation time.

Mrs. St. Clair also pointed to the Town's recent expansion of support staff and asserted that, if Mr. O'Keefe were to be absent during a critical period, the current team should be equipped to handle the workload. She suggested that, if key staff are unable to perform in his absence, the Town should reassess staff roles and capabilities. While leaving the final decision to the Council, she urged them to be cautious in setting precedent and in determining what is fair and responsible to the taxpayers.

Joshua Husemann, 671 Avila Pl. - Resident Joshua Husemann of Avila Place expressed concern over the extended discussion surrounding the Town Manager's proposed remote work and vacation arrangement. He pointed out that, despite the various opinions shared, no one speaking had direct experience serving as a town manager. Mr. Husemann referenced the Town Attorney's earlier remarks

about the longstanding pattern of town managers rarely taking time off, and he questioned why so much time was being spent debating the issue during budget season. He characterized the discussion as an example of micromanagement and suggested that such scrutiny could contribute to staff turnover, a recurring concern at past meetings. Mr. Husemann cautioned that this level of oversight might discourage staff retention and undermine effective governance.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Following extended public and council discussion, Councilor Lannamañ made a motion to allow the Town Manager, Mr. Sean O’Keefe, to work remotely while overseas during the upcoming budget period. Her motion included authorizing the Mayor to monitor the situation to ensure that critical responsibilities were met during Mr. O’Keefe’s absence. Councilor Lannamañ emphasized the need for compromise, stressing that Mr. O’Keefe should not be expected to work without compensation and voicing opposition to micromanagement, advocating instead for trust in staff professionalism.

Town Clerk, John Brock, asked for clarification regarding how the Mayor's oversight would function in practice, specifically, whether it meant the Mayor would determine how many days Mr. O’Keefe would be considered on leave versus working. Councilor Lannamañ clarified that while she was not in favor of micromanagement, the intent was to strike a balance and establish accountability.

Councilor Miles voiced agreement with resident Joshua Husemann's comments and supported trusting Mr. O’Keefe to self-report his time. He emphasized that the Town Manager is the organization’s chief executive and should be treated as such. Councilor Miles rejected the idea of the Mayor acting as a “babysitter,” stating instead that Mr. O’Keefe should log his work and leave time honestly and independently.

After Councilor Miles’ remarks, Councilor Lannamañ amended her motion to allow the Town Manager, Mr. Sean O’Keefe, to work remotely while overseas during the upcoming budget period and trust that he accurately and honestly records his work time.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to allow the Town Manager, Mr. Sean O’Keefe, to work remotely while overseas during the upcoming budget period and trust that he accurately and honestly records his work time; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Mayor Wells

Nay: Mayor Pro Tem Everline

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

11. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe stated that the E. Holly St. project approval agenda item would come before Town Council during the next meeting. Mr. O’Keefe also spoke about the Joint Planning Agreement that Lake County was hosting in Leesburg on June 30, 2025.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

12. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

None

13. Councilor Arnold

None

14. Councilor Miles

None

15. Councilor Lannamañ

None

16. 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 10:06 p.m. | **Attendees: 48**

Graham Wells, CMC, Mayor

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk