



Town Council Meeting

May 22, 2023 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.
Jim Steele, Lake County Poet Laureate, read an untitled poem.

ROLL CALL

Acknowledgement of Quorum

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councilor Reneé Lannamañ | Councilor David Miles | Councilor George Lehning | Mayor Pro Tem Marie V. Gallelli | Mayor Martha MacFarlane

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O'Keefe, Town Administrator | John Brock, Town Clerk | Tom Harowski, Town Planner (Zoom) | George Brown, Police Lieutenant | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney (Zoom)

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

**Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the meeting's agenda; seconded by Councilor Miles.
Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.**

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Councilor Lehning, Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli, Mayor MacFarlane
Nay: None

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 May 8, 2023 Town Council Meeting.

2. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the May 2, 2023 Town Council Workshop Meeting.
3. Consideration and Approval: **Library Services - Amendment to the Agreement**

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Consent Agenda; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

PUBLIC HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

4. Consideration and Approval: **Resolution 2023-003 Adoption of GSA Per Diem**

Mayor MacFarlane opened this item for public comment and, seeing no comment, Mayor MacFarlane closed public comment.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve Resolution 2023-003; Seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by roll-call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

5. Presentation: **Presentation on Town Audit for FY22 (Curtis Binney presenting)**

Curtis Binney, Town Auditor, was unable to attend the meeting due to a family emergency.

Sean O'Keefe, Town Manager said that he would send all the Councilors a copy of the draft Annual Financial Report (AFR) that he had received.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to table until next meeting; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

6. Discussion: **Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code**

Councilor Lehning stated that he is the one that asked for this item to be placed on the agenda with the purpose of setting the framework as to how the Land Development Code and the Comprehensive Plan would be reviewed. Councilor Lehning suggested that the Town Councilors and Planning and Zoning Board Members review those two documents, create their comments on them, and forward their comments to Town Planner, Tom Harowski, who will compile those comments together.

Councilor Lehning suggested, as an example, that developers should not be allowed to clear cut trees on a lot, that they should have to hire a tree surveyor and restrictions should be placed on what trees would be cut down.

The Town Council expressed to the Planning and Zoning Board that the joint Planning and Zoning Board / Town Council Meeting, which was scheduled for June 15th, should be cancelled and rescheduled later when both the Council and Board have had time to review the document and make comments.

Councilor Miles was concerned about Town Planner, Tom Harowski, editing his and other people's words.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that she thought that Mr. Harowski was the appropriate person to send the comments to and that he was the appropriate person to compile them.

It was decided that June 15th was picked as the due date for submitting comments on the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code. These comments would be submitted to the Town Planner, and he would compile them so that, at a future date, the Planning and Zoning Board and Town Council could come together and discuss them.

Councilor Lehning wants a way to know what the residents of the Town think about these items and suggested a survey should be sent out to residents, perhaps in the water bills. Mayor MacFarlane explained that, when this was done in the past, there was not a good return on the surveys. Mayor MacFarlane suggested that maybe the Town should canvass the residents door-to-door.

Councilor Lannamañ stated that what she has been hearing from residents was that they were concerned with lot sizes and what types of homes will be built. Councilor Lannamañ stated that she believed the minimum lot size for the Town should be 75' by 120' lots.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that the primary issue she hears from residents is the property tax rate and how it can be lowered.

Councilor Miles suggested that the Town Manager needs to inform the Planning and Zoning Board that they need to have their comments of the LDC and Comprehensive Plan submitted to the Town Planner on June 15th.

Councilor Miles stated that he was concerned with the size of the lots, but also with the size of the house and the allowed impervious area.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that she would create a form to simplify the submission of comments on the documents. She would then forward this to the Town Clerk, who would then forward it out to the Town Council and Planning and Zoning Board.

Councilor Miles pointed out that there are errors in the Comprehensive Plan. As an example, in Chapter 8 of the Comprehensive Plan, on page 18, it mentions a Wastewater Impact Fee that the Town no longer collects.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite stated that he had reviewed the Comprehensive Plan and that he thought the maps included in the plan were too small. Mr. Tuite thinks that Mr. Harowski doesn't listen to or know what Howey-in-the-Hills residents want. Mr. Tuite does not like the book Strong Towns and does not agree with it. Mr. Tuite thinks the Town wants a minimum lot size of 100' by 120'. Mr. Tuite thinks that the Town should hire a new planning consultant.

Eric Gunesch, 448 Avila Pl. – Mr. Gunesch stated that he had recently moved into the Town from Lake Nona. Mr. Gunesch said that he felt the recent joint Planning and Zoning Board / Town Council Workshop was a fiasco. He said that he believed that the Town would need to expand, needed more commercial development, and would need its own wastewater treatment plant. Mr. Gunesch said that he wanted the Town to preserve the rural feeling of Howey.

Wendy Zermeno, 25896 Bloomfield Ave., Howey-in-the-Hills (unincorporated Lake County) – Mrs. Zermeno thinks that surveying the residents is a good idea.

Frances O'Keefe Wagler, 409 W Central Ave - Mrs. Wagler wanted to know if other people, aside from just Planning and Zoning Board members and Town Councilors, could submit suggestions.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

7. Town Manager

Sean O'Keefe, Town Manager, stated that an update to the Tree Ordinance would be going before Planning and Zoning in June. Mr. O'Keefe reminded everyone that the Memorial Day ceremony would be taking place on May 29th. Mr. O'Keefe also explained that the Cedar Creek developers would be having a Community Meeting at the library to discuss their proposed project on Tuesday June 27th at 6 p.m.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

8. Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli asked again about the Town Audit and Mr. O'Keefe reiterated that he would send out the draft AFR to all the Town Councilors.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli asked about the status of the Citrus Avenue right-of-way (ROW). Mr. O'Keefe explained that the request has been submitted to Lake County for them to give the Town the ROW on Citrus Avenue.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli asked about the proposed changes to the Grid Street requirement in the Comprehensive Plan. Town Clerk, John Brock, explained that the requested amendment to the Comprehensive Plan had been transmitted to DEO and he would check on its status.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that she hoped the next joint Planning and Zoning Board / Town Council meeting would have a greater level of decorum.

9. Councilor Lehning

Councilor Lehning asked about the status of the Dixie Drive project. Mr. O'Keefe status there was not an update on the status and would check with the Public Works Director for an update.

10. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles explained that he had completed two meetings with the Town Manager and Town Attorney about wastewater. Councilor Miles stated that he has come to the conclusion that the Beucher family has legally excluded anyone but the family and their designated representatives from running the Central Lake CDD. Councilor Miles stated that they have asked the Beucher family if they are interested in selling the Central Lake CDD and the Beuchers have said no.

Councilor Miles stated that he has had discussions about locations the Town could purchase land and build its own wastewater treatment plant. Councilor Miles stated that he has asked the Town Manager to speak with the other Town Councilors individually, about specific locations and the cost to purchase the land.

11. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ stated that she was disappointed in the lack of decorum shown during the recent joint Planning and Zoning Board / Town Council workshop. Councilor Lannamañ stated that the Town Council should consider that they are planning the Town not just for the current generation, but for future generations. Councilor Lannamañ wants a safe and sustainable town.

12. Mayor MacFarlane

Mayor MacFarlane stated that she thought the Town should have wastewater, road, and stormwater impact fees.

Mayor MacFarlane suggested that Town Councilors should pay close attention to proposed rezoning of a parcel to commercial that would be going through the Planning and Zoning Board soon.

Mayor MacFarlane asked about the status of Lake County Fire Department purchasing a parcel of land from the Town. Mr. O’Keefe stated that there was no update, but it did not seem like a priority for the county.

Mayor MacFarlane asked if the Lake County School Board purchased a parcel in the Lake Hills development. It was determined that the School Board did purchase the parcel in question.

Mayor MacFarlane asked about if the Town was allowed to make broad changes to the Comprehensive Plan and LDC as has been proposed and that the Town should consult with the Town Attorney.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that the Town Council would need to complete an annual review of the Town Manager and that it should have been completed in April. Mayor MacFarlane stated that she would send out the document to be used when reviewing the Town Manager and that she would find out who the Town Councilors should send the completed document back to.

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.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite stated that he agreed with Councilor Miles that the Central Lake CDD was ridiculous. Mr. Tuite stated he had gone to the Water District website and searched for CUP applications and had seen three pending applications (one from Central Lake CDD, one from the Citrus Plant, and one from the Town).

Banks Helfrich, 9100 Sam’s Lake Rd, Clermont, FL – Mr. Helfrich told a story about brothers.

Eric Gunesch, 448 Avila Pl. – Mr. Gunesch spoke about the Town focusing on future generation and that he would send suggestions to office@howey.org.

Councilor Miles then asked about the 663 Avila Place property (which had previously had sewage backing up problems). Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe stated that Public Works Director and the Building Official would both be reviewing the property.

Councilor Miles wanted the Town Attorney to research if the Town can require the seller to give notice to new potential buyers about the sewage issues the property had undergone. Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney, stated that Florida law would already require the seller to disclose issues with the house.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m. | **Attendees: 31**

Mayor Martha MacFarlane

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk