



Planning & Zoning Board Meeting

March 27, 2025 at 6:00 PM
Howey-in the-Hills Town Hall
101 N. Palm Ave.,
Howey-in-the-Hills, FL 34737

MINUTES

Board Chair Tina St. Clair called the meeting to Order at 6:00 PM.
Board Chair Tina St. Clair led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

ROLL CALL

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Board Member Joshua Husemann | Board Member Alan Hayes | Board Member Richard Mulvany | Board Member Shawn Johnson (via Zoom) | Vice Chair Frances Wagler | Board Member Paul Johns | Chair Tina St. Clair

STAFF PRESENT:

April Fisher, Town Planner | Sean O'Keefe, Town Manager | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

Motion made by Vice Chair Wagler to allow Shawn Johnson to participate and vote via Zoom; seconded by Board Member Mulvany. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Board Member Husemann, Board Member Hayes, Board Member Mulvany, Vice Chair Wagler, Board Member Johns, Chair St. Clair

Nay: None

CONSENT AGENDA

Routine items are placed on the Consent Agenda to expedite the meeting. If a Planning & Zoning Board Member wishes 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. Consideration and Approval of the February 27, 2025, Planning and Zoning Board Meeting minutes.

Motion made by Board Member Husemann to approve the Consent Agenda; seconded by Board Member Hayes. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Board Member Husemann, Board Member Hayes, Board Member Mulvany, Board Member Johnson, Vice Chair Wagler, Board Member Johns, Chair St. Clair

Nay: None

Board Chair, Tina St. Clair, announced that, due to heavy traffic, the Town Planner, April Fisher, was running late and that the Board would hear New Business Agenda Item #4 (Consideration and Recommendation: **Annual Selection of Board Chair and Vice-Chair**) prior to the Public Hearings.

NEW BUSINESS (*Agenda Item #4 was moved by Board Chair St. Clair to appear before the Public Hearings*)

4. Consideration and Recommendation: **Annual Selection of Board Chair and Vice-Chair**

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, explained that, in accordance with Section 48-3 of the Town code, the Planning and Zoning Board needed to perform the annual selection of its chair and vice chair, a decision that will ultimately be subject to council ratification. Mr. O'Keefe reviewed the responsibilities of these roles and clarified that the term for each position is one year. During this discussion, it was noted that Board Chair St. Clair and Vice Chair Wagler's board appointments would be expiring later in the year, although Board Chair St. Clair had already submitted an application for reappointment.

It was also announced that Board Member, Shawn Johnson's, term is ending, and he would not be seeking reappointment, creating an upcoming vacancy. Board Member Johnson briefly reflected on his time serving the board and was thanked by the chair for his contributions.

Motion made by Board Member Husemann to nominate Tina St. Clair as Chair as Planning and Zoning Board Chair; seconded by Vice Chair Wagler. Motion passed unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Board Member Husemann, Board Member Hayes, Board Member Mulvany, Board Member Johnson, Vice Chair Wagler, Board Member Johns, Chair St. Clair

Nay: None

Motion made by Board Member Hayes to nominate Frances O'Keefe as the Planning and Zoning Board Vice-Chair; seconded by Board Member Mulvany. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Board Member Husemann, Board Member Hayes, Board Member Mulvany, Board Member Johnson, Vice Chair Wagler, Board Member Johns, Chair St. Clair

Nay: None

PUBLIC HEARING

2. Consideration and Recommendation: **1009 N Hamlin Ave Variance Application**

Town Planner, April Fisher, presented two staff-initiated variance requests related to 1009 North Hamlin Avenue (lot one) and the adjacent undeveloped parcel behind it (lot two), both currently under common ownership. The variances were needed to address nonconformities related to minimum lot size and rear yard setbacks as the Town seeks to formalize these parcels as separate, developable lots. This action is connected to the Town's plans for realigning Citrus Avenue, which requires a portion of land from lot two. Because the existing structure on lot one is only 16 feet from the proposed rear lot line—where 30 feet is required—and the overall lot sizes fall slightly short of the 15,000-square-foot minimum, variances were necessary to bring both lots into compliance.

Elizabeth Lynch, one of the property owners, explained that she and her husband were not aware at the time of purchase that the lots were not legally subdivided or fully developable. She thanked staff for guiding them through the process. Town officials clarified that the Town, not the property owners, is technically the applicant, since the right-of-way dedication prompted the need for these variances. The

board discussed the history of the property, confirming that, while the parcels have separate tax ID numbers, they are considered one lot for development purposes under current Town code due to prior joint usage. Town staff explained that a formal lot split application to the Town and then to the county would follow the variance approvals.

Board Chair St. Clair opened Public Comment for this item only.

George Lehning, 1004 N Citrus Ave. – Resident George Lehning stated that he was not opposed to the variance request, especially considering the upcoming realignment of Citrus Avenue. However, he expressed concern about preserving the large, mature oak trees located on the lot, noting that the Town’s regulations prohibit clear-cutting. He reminded the board of the importance of retaining as many trees as possible, emphasizing that a 15,000 square foot lot leaves limited space once a home and drain field are added. Mr. Lehning cautioned that this could result in the loss of significant tree coverage, even if the lot is approved for development.

Board Chair St. Clair closed Public Comment.

Board members then raised detailed questions about the exact location of structures, the size of the variances requested, and the implications for adjacent properties. Town staff reassured them that the proposed configurations would meet all setback requirements for future development on lot two and that no changes to side setbacks on lot one were needed as those conditions pre-existed.

Board Chair St. Clair recused herself from voting due to her past involvement in selling the property.

Motion made by Vice Chair Wagler to recommend approval of the requested variance to allow a lot size less than the required 15,000 square feet in the MDR-1 Zoning District and a variance to allow a rear setback less than the required 30 feet for an existing principal structure in the MDR-1 Zoning District for Parcel #25-20-25-0200-A06-00100, also known as Alternate Key #1329949, as it meets the standards for a variance approval required by LDC Section 4.13.04; seconded by Board Member Husemann. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Board Member Husemann, Board Member Hayes, Board Member Mulvany, Board Member Johnson, Vice Chair Wagler, Board Member Johns

Nay: None

Abstaining: Chair St. Clair

3. Consideration and Recommendation: **Parcel Identified by Alt Key #1256348 Variance Application**

The Planning and Zoning Board held a detailed discussion regarding the variance request for Lot 2, which was triggered by the Town’s need for a right-of-way dedication to support the realignment of Citrus Avenue. Vice-Chair Wagler raised concerns about approving a variance without ensuring the right-of-way dedication would occur, noting that the lot would exceed the 15,000 square foot requirement if the land were not dedicated. Board members clarified that the requested variance only becomes necessary because the Town is acquiring approximately 1,000 square feet of land from the property owners, which would reduce the lot size to just under the threshold.

Town Planner, April Fisher, explained that the variance approval could be conditioned upon the survey that includes the right-of-way dedication, thereby linking the approval to the reduced lot size. Board Member Husemann pointed out that the property owners were cooperating with the Town and providing land that would benefit the broader community, including improving traffic circulation. He and others emphasized that granting the variance was both reasonable and equitable, considering the circumstances.

Further discussion clarified the long-standing development pattern of the parcels and their legal status. Although the property has two tax ID numbers and has been marketed as two lots, it was used as a single parcel by prior owners. The board recognized that the proposed variance would not only allow for future development of Lot 2 but also facilitate the Town's infrastructure project in a straightforward and legally sound manner.

Motion made by Board Member Husemann to recommend approval of the requested variance to allow a lot size less than the required 15,000 square feet in the MDR-1 Zoning District for Parcel #25-20-25-0200-A06-00200, also known as Alternate Key #1256348, as it meets the standards for a variance approval required by LDC Section 4.13.04; seconded by Board Member Johns. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Board Member Husemann, Board Member Hayes, Board Member Mulvany, Board Member Johnson, Vice Chair Wagler, Board Member Johns

Nay: None

Abstaining: Chair St. Clair

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

4. Consideration and Recommendation: **Annual Selection of Board Chair and Vice-Chair**

(Agenda Item #4 was moved by Board Chair St. Clair to appear before the Public Hearings)

5. Consideration and Recommendation: **Lake Hills - Main Blvd. and Mass Grading**

The board considered a proposal for the Lake Hills Planned Unit Development (PUD) involving the construction of the main boulevard and mass grading of the site. Town Planner, April Fisher, explained that her primary review concern was tree preservation, and she confirmed that tree replacement for any removed trees would be addressed during the residential plan review phase. With that assurance, she recommended approval. Town Engineer, Don Griffey, confirmed that engineering concerns had been addressed, and applicants Dean Barberree of Reader Communities and engineer David Stokes provided additional details about the project's scope and phasing.

Mr. Barberree clarified that this step would initiate infrastructure for the development, which would be built out in three phases, with approximately 200 units expected in phase one. Questions from the board focused on tree replacement standards and the inclusion of required features like a SCADA alarm system for the lift station. Town staff confirmed that the Town's current construction standards require such equipment, and any past exceptions were made by previous Town Councils.

The conversation also addressed traffic improvements associated with the project. A roundabout is planned to replace the current traffic signal at the intersection of State Road 19 and County Road 48, adjacent to the Town's existing water plant. That plant will be decommissioned and removed as the new facility is built nearby, freeing up space for the roundabout. The developer will contribute proportionally to the cost of these improvements. Additional questions addressed future signalized access points and road alignment near the proposed Publix development.

Motion made by Board Member Hayes to recommend approval of the proposed Lake Hill main boulevard and mass grading application with the condition that all replacement trees as required by the land development code will be shown and identified as to quantity and location as part of

the separate residential plans permit review; seconded by Board Member Mulvany. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Board Member Husemann, Board Member Hayes, Board Member Mulvany, Board Member Johnson, Vice Chair Wagler, Board Member Johns, Chair St. Clair

Nay: None

6. Consideration and Recommendation: **Ordinance 2025-001 - CIP Amendment**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA AMENDING THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS ELEMENT IN CHAPTER 8 OF THE TOWN'S COMPREHENSIVE PLAN BY UPDATING THE FIVE-YEAR SCHEDULE OF CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS TO INCLUDE ESTIMATED CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS FOR FISCAL YEAR 2024-2025 THROUGH FISCAL YEAR 2029-2030 PURSUANT TO THE REQUIREMENTS OF CHAPTER 163 OF THE FLORIDA STATUTES; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICT, CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

The board reviewed Ordinance 2025-001, which proposed amendments to the Town's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP). Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, explained that the CIP serves two key purposes: first, as a practical planning tool to guide the Town's budgeting process; and second, as documentation to support grant applications and requests for external funding, demonstrating that proposed projects have been considered thoughtfully over time.

The updated plan includes projects across public works, community services, parks and recreation, and transportation, covering the current year and the next five fiscal years. Mr. O'Keefe and other staff noted that many of the projects were carried over from the previous year, reflecting ongoing or multi-year initiatives. The transportation mitigation section includes proposed roundabouts and other traffic improvements developed with input from the Town Engineer.

Board members raised questions about the timing and prioritization of projects, particularly those with community impact such as the Pine Park development and septic-to-sewer conversions. Mr. O'Keefe confirmed that while projects listed for the current fiscal year are budgeted and expected to proceed, longer-term items serve as placeholders subject to available funding and council direction. He and Town Clerk, John Brock, explained that prioritization ultimately lies with the Town Council, though staff provides initial recommendations and cost assessments.

There was also discussion about the funding strategy for Pine Park and efforts to secure grants to advance various infrastructure projects. Concerns about neighborhood-specific issues, such as sewer line capacity in Talichet and property-specific failures, were addressed in the context of broader CIP planning and the role of HOA involvement.

Motion made by Board Member Husemann to recommend ordinance 2025-001 as stated; seconded by Board Member Mulvany. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Board Member Husemann, Board Member Hayes, Board Member Mulvany, Board Member Johnson, Vice Chair Wagler, Board Member Johns, Chair St. Clair

Nay: None

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Any person wishing to address the Planning and Zoning Board 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.

Angel Elvig, 583 Via Bella Ct. - Resident Angel Elvig addressed the board to express concern and seek clarification about the recent bulldozing and tree removal occurring behind her home. She noted that the clearing had dramatically altered the view for many homeowners in Talichet phase 2 section of the development and asked whether the area behind their lots would become a road or green space.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, explained that the activity is related to the Hillside Groves development—a long-planned project dating back to its original approval in 2003. He and Board Member Husemann shared that the current design includes an open space buffer behind the homes on the right side of Talichet Phase 2, as well as additional elements like a lift station and a road further along the development. Some homes will also back up to wetlands or stormwater management areas. Board Member Husemann referred to the most recent site map to describe the layout and committed to confirming buffer distances more precisely. Mr. O’Keefe estimated that the minimum buffer might be 15 feet but offered to review the final site plans for accurate details.

Mrs. Elvig thanked the board for the information and shared that she and her husband had transplanted one of the removed trees to their property to preserve it. Board Chair St. Clair acknowledged the emotional impact of losing established trees and thanked Elvig for her comments.

Kari Hemphill Pomeranke, 594 Via Bella Ct. - Resident Kari Hemphill Pomeranke, who also lives in phase 2 of the Talichet neighborhood, expressed concern about the new road construction occurring behind her home as part of the Hillside Groves development. She explained that, based on the current site plans, the road appears to enter directly from State Road 19, pass behind her property, and make a sharp turn at the rear of her lot. Her primary concern was safety—specifically, the potential risk of vehicles missing the turn and entering her backyard, particularly in the case of impaired driving, which she noted had tragically occurred in the area recently.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, acknowledged that the Town would review the plans in more detail to determine what barriers or buffers—such as swales or berms—are planned for that area. He assured Mrs. Pomeranke that the Town would make those plans available for review. Board Member Husemann added that, based on the layout, her property might be positioned at an angle that reduces the likelihood of a direct impact, though her concerns remain valid.

Mrs. Pomeranke also inquired about potentially installing a taller fence and asked whether the road design would include features like street lighting to make the curve more visible. The board noted that lighting is typically part of subdivision planning, though accidents can still occur.

Finally, Mrs. Pomeranke asked about the status of permit applications she and her husband had submitted. Mr. O’Keefe advised her to follow up with Town Hall directly, and Town Clerk, John Brock, added that staff are available Monday through Thursday, 7 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., to assist with such inquiries.

BOARD COMMENTS

None

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Board Member Husemann to adjourn the meeting; Board Member Mulvany seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

The Meeting adjourned at 7:47 p.m. | **Attendees: 34**

Tina St. Clair, Chairperson

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk