



Town Council Meeting

November 24, 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 Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
Mayor Wells led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
Councilor Jon Arnold 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 (zia Zoom) | Councilor David Miles | Mayor Graham Wells

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O'Keefe, Town Manager | Heather Ramos, Town Attorney (via Zoom) | Sean Parks, Town Planner | Michael Giddens, Police Chief | Morgan Cates, Public Services Director | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

Motion made by Councilor Miles to allow Councilor Lannamañ to participate and vote remotely via Zoom; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

None

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Arnold 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.

Diana Ballou, 1005 N. Tangerine Ave. – Town resident, Diana Ballou, expressed disappointment that the Town's Veterans Day program had been canceled due to cold weather, stating that she believed this was an inadequate reason to forgo an opportunity to honor veterans.

Councilor Jon Arnold responded, explaining that the cancellation was based on safety concerns, noting that the Honor Guard only had summer-weight uniforms and would have been exposed to wind-chill temperatures near freezing. He emphasized that the decision was made using sound judgment to prevent potential illness among participants and attendees.

Bill Dixon, 121 E Magnolia Ave. – Town resident, Bill Dixon, raised concerns about longstanding blight and health issues at an abandoned residence located at 118 East Magnolia. He described the property as severely neglected for at least five years, overgrown with dense vegetation, and historically associated with rat infestations and other nuisance conditions. Mr. Dixon stated that code enforcement had previously visited the site but indicated limited ability to compel corrective action. He emphasized that the structure is now fully abandoned, deteriorating, and creating unsafe conditions for the neighborhood.

Council members asked clarifying questions regarding the address and prior complaints. Mayor Pro Tem Everline recalled that Mr. Dixon had raised this issue before. Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, confirmed the address and stated he would follow up with the Code Enforcement Officer to review past actions, current violations, and next steps, including whether property taxes and utilities remain active. Discussion followed regarding enforcement procedures, with Mayor Wells outlining the process for citations, Special Magistrate hearings, daily fines, and potential foreclosure on liens if a property is not homesteaded. The Council noted that there appeared to be inconsistencies regarding the property's homestead status, and further research would be required. Council members reiterated the Town's commitment to preventing blight and agreed that the issue at 118 East Magnolia warrants renewed enforcement attention.

Andi Everline, 1012 N Lakeshore Blvd. – Town resident, Andi Everline, raised two concerns regarding conditions along Lakeshore Blvd. First, she noted that the recently installed sod looks uneven and unkempt, describing it as resembling a pasture rather than the St. Augustine grass previously in place. Councilor Miles acknowledged the issue, observing that bahia sod had been used instead of St. Augustine, and stated that the Public Works Director should review whether the correct material was installed and ensure proper restoration.

Mrs. Everline also reported that multiple streetlights on Lakeshore Boulevard are not functioning, and that one fixture had been removed during recent stormwater work. She stated that the resulting darkness creates unsafe conditions for pedestrians, especially given uneven sidewalks. Councilor Miles explained that Duke Energy can be contacted directly to address outages and determine whether the construction contractor is responsible for repairs. Mayor Wells added that Town staff should coordinate with the contractor through the Public Works Director to confirm the cause and timeline for restoration.

Banks Helfrich 9100 Sams Lake Rd., Clermont, FL – County resident, Banks Helfrich, stated after a short "Farm Tip of the Day," that voting is the most essential right in a representative democracy and urged residents to take part in upcoming elections. He suggested measures that could strengthen voter turnout and concluded by encouraging citizens to take ownership of their government.

Pam Roustio, 25203 Turkey Lake Rd., Howey-in-the-Hills (unincorporated Lake County) – County resident, Pam Roustio, asked for a status update on the proposed restaurant going into the old Howey Market.

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 November 10, 2025, Town Council Meeting.
2. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the October 27, 2025, Town Council Meeting.
3. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the October 13, 2025, Town Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Consent 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 HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

4. Consideration and Approval: **Lake Tech Fire Truck Restoration Agreement**

The Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, presented an agreement with Lake Technical College to advance restoration of the Town’s 1946 Mack fire truck, a long-standing capital project with approximately \$25,000 budgeted including about \$4,700 in prior donations. The proposal would allow Lake Technical College to complete the mechanical and interior work, including essential brake and chassis upgrades, at a discounted labor cost of roughly \$3,500, with parts estimated at \$15,500. The project also requires donating an old Town police Tahoe for components, bringing the Town’s initial cost to about \$19,000 – \$20,000.

Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, outlined the truck’s complicated repair history and reported that remaining bodywork and painting will likely cost an additional \$20,000 – \$30,000 depending on vendor quotes. Mr. Cates emphasized that the project is a “restomod,” not a full restoration, and that further funding requests would follow once mechanical work is completed.

Council discussion centered on the total estimated cost of \$40,000 – \$45,000 and whether this investment is appropriate given the truck’s limited use. Some members stressed the importance of preserving Town history, while Councilor Lannamañ questioned prioritizing this expenditure over other capital needs such as painting the Town’s historic water tower.

Mayor Wells opened this item for Public Comment.

Ann Griffin, 215 E Laurel Ave. – Town resident, Ann Griffin, asked the Council to consider tabling the fire-truck item until longtime volunteer and Town historian, Peggy Clark, could attend a future meeting and provide historical context about prior fundraising. Mrs. Griffin stated that, based on her

conversation with Mrs. Clark, she believed more than \$4,000 had been raised over the years and that additional donations could be generated if the project moved forward. She emphasized the historic significance of the truck and encouraged the Council to give Mrs. Clark an opportunity to share her records and experience before making a final decision.

In response, the Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, clarified the donation history documented in Town records. Mr. O’Keefe explained that approximately \$2,068 had been received in FY 2022, \$2,142 in FY 2021, with no donations recorded in the four years prior, and that an additional \$482 was raised at a prior Founders Day, bringing the total to roughly \$4,693. He noted that these figures had previously been reviewed with both Mrs. Clark and former Town Councilor, Marie Gallelli, who had been championing this cause.

Councilors inquired about other past fundraising events, and the Town Manager confirmed that a \$2,142 contribution recorded in FY 2021 aligned with one such event. He explained that all deposits traceable in the Town’s financial system had been accounted for and carried forward in the project’s balance.

Joshua Husemann, 671 Avila Pl. –Joshua Husemann, spoke both as a Town resident and as Chair of the Parks and Recreation Board. Mr. Husemann stated that restoring the 1946 fire truck solely for parade use would be fiscally irresponsible, noting that the Council recently reduced employee salary increases to limit spending. He questioned the message it would send to allocate at least \$40,000 toward a rarely used vehicle when those funds could instead support staff retention or address active recreational needs. Speaking in his Parks and Recreation capacity, he suggested the money would be better directed toward projects such as the long-overdue basketball court restoration or replacing recently removed playground equipment at Griffin Park. Mr. Husemann urged the Council to reconsider its priorities if it chose to move forward with the fire-truck expenditure.

Bill Dixon, 121 E Magnolia Ave. – Town resident, Bill Dixon, offered brief comments cautioning the Council against pursuing a partial or modified restoration of the fire truck. Drawing on his experience restoring older vehicles, he warned that a “half restoration” or non-authentic rebuild would diminish the truck’s historical value and present the public with an inaccurate representation. He urged the Council to keep this in mind when deciding how to proceed.

Brad Smith, 120 E Holly St. – Town resident, Brad Smith, suggested an alternative approach to the fire-truck restoration. Noting the high cost of repairs and the limited parade use the vehicle would see, he recommended exploring whether a private collector or specialized organization, such as the Florida Antique Bucket Brigade, might be willing to take ownership of the truck, fully restore it, and allow the Town to borrow it for occasional events. He offered this as a potential way to preserve the truck’s history without incurring significant Town expenses.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to table this agenda item to first December Town Council Meeting; seconded by Councilor Miles. This motion failed by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Miles

Nay: Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Mayor Wells

After the failure of Mayor Pro Tem Everline’s motion, Mayor Wells asked if there were any other motions.

Motion made by Councilor Miles approve truck repairs not to exceed the previously budgeted amounts; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. Motion failed by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Miles

Nay: Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Mayor Wells

After the failure of both motions, members concluded that there was not sufficient support to proceed with restoring the fire truck using taxpayer funds at this time. Mayor Wells noted that, while the Council was reluctant to commit Town money to the project, a future proposal involving community fundraising, combined with any funds already budgeted, might receive more favorable consideration. Mayor Pro Tem Everline requested that an agenda item be added to the next meeting to discuss whether residents are willing to raise the necessary funds to complete the restoration. The Mayor confirmed that the prior motion had failed and that any consideration of the existing \$25,000 budget allocation would need to be addressed anew at that future discussion.

5. Consideration and Approval: **Resolution 2025-019 - Final Budget Amendment - FY25**

Mayor Wells read Resolution 2025-019 out loud by title only.

A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA, AUTHORIZING THE FINAL BUDGET AMENDMENT, AMENDING THE GENERAL FUND, POLICE ADVANCED TRAINING FUND, POLICE IMPACT FEE FUND, AND INFRASTRUCTURE FUND, FOR THE BUDGET YEAR 2024/2025.

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, presented the required end-of-year budget amendment, explaining that several funds needed adjustments within 60 days of the fiscal year's close. He noted that the Infrastructure Fund required a \$60,000 appropriation from reserves due to additional costs associated with the North Citrus and Gardenia projects, including land purchases and one change order of roughly \$20,000 related to FDOT permitting delays. Councilor Miles sought clarification to ensure that expenditures did not exceed the contract awarded in September 2024 and confirmed that only the single change order accounted for the variance.

The Town Manager further explained minor adjustments in the Police Impact Fee Fund, primarily related to the purchase of UTV-style vehicles, and other small corrections.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only. Seeing as there were no public comments, Mayor Wells closed Public Comment.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve Resolution 2025-019; 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: **(First Reading) Ordinance 2025-009 - Certified Recovery Residence**

Mayor Wells read Ordinance 2025-009 out loud by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO REASONABLE ACCOMMODATIONS FOR CERTIFIED RECOVERY RESIDENCES; PROVIDING FINDINGS; CREATING SECTION 6.03.00 OF THE LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE; PROVIDING DEFINITIONS; PROVIDING STANDARDS FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF RECOVERY RESIDENCES AND AN APPLICATION PROCEDURE; DECLARING THE SUSPENSION OR FAILURE TO OBTAIN CERTIFICATION A PROPER BASIS FOR REVOCATION OF REASONABLE ACCOMMODATION; DECLARING THAT

RECOVERY RESIDENCES ARE SUBJECT TO THE SAME REGULATIONS AND HAVE THE SAME RIGHTS AS RESIDENTIAL USES; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Town Planner, Sean Parks, presented Ordinance 2025-009, explaining that recent amendments to section 397.487, Florida Statutes, require municipalities to adopt clear procedures and standards for certified recovery residences in order to comply with federal Fair Housing Act protections and reduce legal risk to the Town. Mr. Parks stated that the ordinance would define recovery residences, establish an application and review process, and limit such uses to multi-family zoning districts (HDR-2), subject to a 1,200-foot separation requirement and operation by a state-certified or licensed provider, with larger clusters or reduced separation distances requiring conditional use approval. Mr. Parks noted that, while the Town currently has no HDR districts mapped, adoption is still necessary to maintain compliance should zoning change in the future.

Town Attorney, Heather Ramos, confirmed that this ordinance should be the last of the recent unfunded state-mandated code changes, following fire safety and condominium/cooperative-related updates.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only. Seeing as there were no public comments, Mayor Wells closed Public Comment.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to approve Ordinance 2025-009 move forward to a second reading; 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

7. Consideration and Approval: GFL Contract Amendment

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, presented the proposed amendment to the GFL solid-waste contract, explaining that it reflects the Council’s earlier direction to confirm twice-weekly service, establish charges for bulk pickup, and clarify billing for multiple sets of residential garbage cans. He reported that GFL agreed residents would not be charged to receive extra cans, although the Town would be billed for the monthly collection of each additional set at a slightly discounted rate. Councilor Miles asked about the Town’s standard 10% administrative markup and suggested reviewing whether it should apply uniformly when households have multiple sets. Mayor Pro Tem Everline objected to granting GFL any concession not expressly required by the contract, citing ongoing service issues and questioning why the Town should formalize additional payments when the contractor frequently underperforms. Discussion followed regarding how residents historically requested extra cans, and the Town Manager and Town Attorney clarified that the Town, not residents, is GFL’s customer and that the Town has been paying for multiple sets for several years. Council members also noted the need for clearer billing codes so residents can see when they are being charged for extra cans; staff agreed to implement this.

Mayor Wells opened public Comment for this item only.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Town resident, Andi Everline, stated that, during the prior meeting, the Council had asserted that residents with multiple garbage cans were aware they were being charged double, but she believed that was clearly not the case. She explained that she had personally spoken with a resident who has several cans and was unaware of any additional charges, noting that the bill does not specify “double” or otherwise indicate multiple-can billing. Mr. O’Keefe responded that extra cans were historically provided only when requested through Town Hall, and that residents’ bills would have increased in the following billing cycle. Mrs. Everline reiterated that the lack of clear notation on bills prevents residents from knowing they are being charged more. Council acknowledged

this concern, and Councilor Miles reiterated that the staff have been asked to ensure billing codes are updated so invoices clearly reflect different service levels.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the amendment to the contract (including the table showing the cost of multiple residential carts); 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

8. Finance Supervisor

Mayor Wells briefly explained that an updated finance report was included to provide a clearer picture of year-to-date performance. Because the budget originally showed \$4.25 million in grants that never materialized, distorting both revenues and expenditures, he asked staff to remove those entries so the report would more accurately reflect the Town's actual financial position.

9. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, provided several brief project and scheduling updates. Mr. O'Keefe reported that paving on Citrus Avenue is expected to occur on December 4, and that site preparation for Water Treatment Plant No. 3 and rehabilitation work on the Talichet lift station both began earlier that day. He noted that Town Hall and the Library will be closed on November 27–28 for the Thanksgiving holiday. He also announced that the Lake County Board of County Commissioners will discuss Number Two Road at its regular meeting on Tuesday, December 16, beginning at 10:00 a.m., immediately following the County's State of the County presentation.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

10. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

Mayor Pro Tem Everline reported on a recent public meeting at the County Agricultural Center regarding Number Two Road, noting that many residents along the roadway expressed strong frustration toward the Town and opposed dedicating the segment from Silverwood Lane to SR-19/Palm Avenue to Howey-in-the-Hills. He encouraged anyone with views on the issue to attend and speak at the Lake County Commission workshop scheduled for December 16, where various options, including limiting access at Silverwood Lane, will be discussed.

Mayor Wells added that the County Commission had previously voted down the dedication of Number Two Road to the Town, meaning the developer will now pursue an emergency-only access rather than a full roadway connection. The Town Manager noted that the matter could return to the County if the proposal is modified.

Councilor Miles raised concerns about the long-term financial consequences for the Town if future residents demand intersection improvements after development is built, while Mayor Pro Tem Everline observed that similar roadway limitations exist in other Florida communities. Discussion then shifted to the recent cancellation of the Veterans Day ceremony, with Council members reiterating the cold weather and Honor Guard uniform limitations that led to the decision to cancel the Veterans Day event.

The Mayor Pro Tem also asked about the new curb alignment at Citrus Avenue, questioning whether it reduced maneuvering space. Public Services Director Cates explained that the redesign creates a

straighter intersection to improve sightlines and safety, consistent with other recent Town intersection improvements.

11. Councilor Arnold

Councilor Arnold raised concerns that rising permit activity, particularly from new commercial projects and upcoming residential development, may be creating a processing bottleneck that burdens existing front-office staff and affects customer service. He questioned whether the Town should revisit its earlier decision not to rehire a permit clerk, noting that the Town is currently paying a contracted service approximately \$65 per hour to handle permit-related work that had previously been done in-house at a far lower effective cost. Staff clarified that the funding originally set aside for the Building Services Clerk had been redirected to cover these contract expenses and that permit volumes are increasing, especially for commercial and sign permits. Council members discussed whether the workload justifies a part-time or full-time staff position, weighed the cost efficiency of in-house versus contracted work, and acknowledged that permit revenue is not tied to time spent on each application. The Mayor concluded that the matter should be reviewed further and brought back at a future meeting for additional discussion.

12. Councilor Miles

None

13. Councilor Lannamañ

None

14. Mayor Wells

Mayor Wells wished everyone a Happy Thanksgiving.

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 7:51 p.m. | **Attendees: 33**

ATTEST:

Graham Wells, CMC, Mayor

John Brock, Town Clerk