



Town Council Meeting

March 10, 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 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:

Sean O’Keefe, Town Manager | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | Morgan Cates, Public Services Director | Rick Thomas, Police Chief | Oscar Ojeda, Finance Supervisor | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

Mayor Wells introduced Lisa Busto, with Parks Consulting Services.

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Miles 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.

Shelby Kramble, 104 S Mare Ave. – Resident Shelby Kramble addressed the Council regarding the recent installation of "No Trespassing" signs on the vacant field off Number Two Road. She inquired about the reason for the signage and whether the Town had any plans for the property. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, responded,

stating that the signs were placed at the request of the Police Department due to ATV activity in the area and confirmed that there are currently no approved development plans for the site. Ms. Kramble then suggested that the Town consider designating the field as a green space, emphasizing the importance of preserving open areas as the surrounding community experiences significant residential growth.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Resident Andi Everline addressed the Council regarding a previous discussion on trash receptacle violations. She stated that, at the last meeting, she was informed that violation notices had been sent in error. However, upon reviewing the code enforcement report, she noted that multiple residents had still been cited.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, clarified that those violations had been issued in error and were subsequently marked as closed by the code enforcement officer. Mrs. Everline expressed concern that not all cases appeared to have been resolved, stating she would need to verify specific addresses. Mr. O’Keefe reiterated that the intent was to close those cases.

Erin Fox, 508 N. Florida Ave. – Resident Erin Fox addressed the Council regarding trash receptacle billing concerns. She questioned why residents were double billed if the code violation notices had been sent in error. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, clarified that, while the violation notices were mistakenly issued, the billing issue was separate, as some residents had requested additional trash cans and were billed accordingly.

Mrs. Fox stated that she was not informed of any additional charges and that when she contacted GFL, she was told her account only reflected billing for a single trash can. Mr. O’Keefe indicated that staff would need to investigate the issue further and that Town Hall Office Supervisor, Kim Bohrer, would follow up with her. Ms. Fox also noted that GFL informed her that residents could purchase a second trash can for a one-time fee of approximately \$125 to \$130, with no ongoing monthly charge. Mr. O’Keefe responded that this had not been the standard administrative practice with GFL for other residents.

Mrs. Fox requested that the contract between the Town and GFL be made publicly available for residents to review the terms and associated costs. Mr. O’Keefe confirmed that the contract details could be found in the packet from the meeting from when it was approved and could also be provided upon request.

Frances Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Resident Frances Wagler addressed the Council regarding an unresolved code enforcement case related to trash receptacles. She noted that, while other cases appeared to have been closed, hers remained open. She also contacted GFL, which informed her that her bill should be approximately \$31, whereas the Town was charging her double that amount. GFL also confirmed that purchasing an additional trash receptacle required a one-time fee of \$125, as previously mentioned by another resident, and that recycling bins were provided free of charge to encourage recycling. Mrs. Wagler expressed concern that she was being charged for a service she was not actively using and stated that she would be paying her bill but withholding the additional charge until the matter was resolved. She also requested that no late fees be applied, as she had never previously missed a payment.

On a separate note, Mrs. Wagler shared news about the upcoming annual Eagle Scout Dinner in Lake County, a fundraiser for the Boy Scouts of America. She was pleased to announce that this year’s honoree is Eagle Scout Sean Parks, and the corporate honoree is South Lake Hospital

Banks Helfrich, 9100 Sams Lake Rd., Clermont, FL – Mr. Helfrich spoke on the theme of compromise.

Eric Gunesch, 448 Avila Pl. – Resident Eric Gunesch inquired about discussions regarding the potential replacement of GFL as the Town’s waste collection provider due to ongoing service issues, including delays in trash pickup. He also noted that strong winds had scattered trash throughout the neighborhood and asked if there were any plans to seek a new vendor.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, responded that, upon reviewing GFL’s contract, there had been no breach of service that would warrant termination. He stated that he and the Public Services Director had recently met with

GFL to discuss service improvements, particularly concerning hydraulic fluid spills. However, at this time, there are no active efforts to replace GFL.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline asked whether the discussions with GFL addressed yard waste collection. Mr. O’Keefe confirmed that the topic had been covered and he referenced a previous report by Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, which outlined the issues and GFL’s commitments to improving service. When asked about the specific collection day for yard waste, Mr. Cates stated that GFL had committed to prioritizing timely pickups but acknowledged that delays sometimes occurred when trucks reached capacity. Mr. O’Keefe then reviewed his notes from the meeting, confirming that the designated yard waste collection day is Monday, with Tuesday serving as the backup day if necessary.

Robert Jones, 104 S. Mare Ave. – Resident Robert Jones inquired about the number of homes being built along Number Two Road. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, clarified that the Hillside Groves development includes 571 homes with a commercial section on the south side along Highway 19, while the Mission Rise development has approximately 400 approved homes. Mr. Jones asked whether these figures included the development near Highway 48, to which Mr. O’Keefe confirmed that his response was specific to the two developments closest to Mr. Jones’ area, including one near the cemetery.

Mr. Jones then asked if there were any plans for road expansion along Number Two Road. Mr. O’Keefe stated that the Town has dedicated some right-of-way for expansion, extending from the current developed area up to Mr. Jones’ location and slightly beyond. However, any further expansion beyond the town-owned portion would require coordination with Lake County.

Mr. Jones also inquired about the potential extension of Mare Ave. into the development. Town Manager O’Keefe explained that, while the idea had been previously considered, it was ultimately abandoned, and Mare Ave. will not be extended.

Councilor Miles provided a correction, stating that Hillside Groves was approved for 728 homes, not 571, and Mission Rise was approved for 415 homes, not 400.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N Tangerine Ave. – Resident Tom Ballou complimented the Town for the new boardwalk at the Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve.

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 requested for Agenda Item #1 to be pulled for discussion.

1. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the February 24, 2025, Town Council Meeting.

Councilor Miles requested modifications to the minutes for improved clarity. The first revision pertained to a statement made regarding extra garbage cans. Councilor Miles suggested modifying the final sentence of a paragraph in Andi Everline’s comments to ensure clarity. The original sentence stated, “If the resident in question no longer requires the extra cans, she may request their collection to avoid unnecessary charges” and it was requested that it be changed to, “If the resident in question no longer requires the extra cans, she may request the pickup of the extra cans to avoid unnecessary charges.”

The second proposed revision concerned language on wastewater capacity planning. Councilor Miles pointed out that the phrase “other partnerships” in the sentence referring to wastewater solutions might

not accurately reflect the Council’s discussion. He recommended replacing the word “partnerships” with “solutions,” as not all potential options involve formal partnerships.

Motion made by Councilor Miles with the two modifications to the minutes as previously discussed; 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: **Hausinger & Associates Change Order #2.**

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Hausinger & Associated Change Order #2; 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

PUBLIC HEARING

3. Consideration and Approval: (First Reading) - **Ordinance 2024-012 - Watermark Rezoning**

Mayor Wells read Ordinance 2024-012 out loud by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY IN THE HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO LAND USE; PROVIDING FINDINGS OF THE TOWN COUNCIL; AMENDING ORDINANCE 2022-16 AND THE TOWN’S OFFICIAL ZONING MAP TO INCLUDE WITHIN THE PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT (PUD) KNOWN AS WATERMARK PUD CERTAIN ADDITIONAL LANDS LOCATED TO THE SOUTH OF THE WATERMARK PUD, AS MORE PARTICULARLY DESCRIBED IN ATTACHMENT A TO THIS ORDINANCE; PROVIDING THAT THE CONDITIONS, REQUIREMENTS, RESTRICTIONS, AND OTHER TERMS IN ORDINANCE 2022-16 GOVERN THE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE ADDITIONAL LANDS; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY, CONFLICTS, CODIFICATION, RATIFICATION, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Town Planner, Lisa Busto, provided an overview of the ordinance and its amendments, including the addition of 65 new dwelling units on quarter-acre lots (10,980 square feet), which comply with the Comprehensive Plan amendment enacted on August 12, 2024. The total number of dwelling units within the PUD would increase to 290, maintaining a density of 2.19 units per acre. She noted that the Planning and Zoning Board reviewed the ordinance on February 27, 2025, and unanimously recommended its approval.

Following the staff presentation, the Mayor asked the applicant if they would like to speak. Applicant representative, Carolyn Haslam of Ackerman LLP, presented a side-by-side comparison of the original and revised conceptual plans. She emphasized that the additional acreage would be integrated into the development with a mix of lot sizes to ensure neighborhood cohesion. The applicant also addressed changes related to home size restrictions, open space allocation, pedestrian pathways, and compliance with the Town’s development standards.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Frances Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Resident Frances Wagler, who identified herself as a member of the Town’s Planning and Zoning Board stated that the board unanimously recommended the project

to the Town Council because the developer met all requirements outlined in the updated Land Development Code and Comprehensive Plan. Mrs. Wagler highlighted that, instead of concentrating different lot sizes in one area, the developer dispersed them throughout the project, exceeding expectations. This approach created a more balanced and integrated neighborhood design. She emphasized that the developer fulfilled all requested benchmarks, making the project a strong candidate for approval.

David Lyle, 604 Camino Real – Resident David Lyle had questions about presentation slides that Ms. Haslam had presented.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N Tangerine Ave. – Resident Tom Ballou had questions about the Town’s recent agreement with the Central Lake CDD.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Councilor Miles raised several questions and proposed modifications to the agreement, including updating language to reflect the finalized agreement with the Central Lake CDD, modifying block face restrictions, increasing tree caliper size in landscaping requirements, and ensuring root barriers for trees near sidewalks. The applicant agreed to incorporate these changes.

Councilor Miles also inquired about the feasibility of the Town acquiring an open space parcel adjacent to a former landfill site. The applicant and Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, noted that such a transfer could impose maintenance obligations on the Town. The Council ultimately decided not to pursue the acquisition.

Further discussions included a request for the applicant to explore adding natural gas service through Tampa Electric Company (TECO), adjusting streetlight intervals to 250 feet per Town precedent, and ensuring even distribution of lot sizes across development phases.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to move Ordinance 2024-012 to a second reading; 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

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

4. Consideration and Approval: **Budget Transfer #117**

Mayor Wells introduced and combined the discussion for Agenda Item #4, Budget Transfer #117, and Agenda Item #5, Resolution 2025-004 for FY25 Budget Amendment. Mayor Wells provided background on the need for these financial adjustments, explaining that they were part of an effort to align the Town’s accounting practices with the Uniform Accounting System (UAS) as required by state statute. Mayor Wells noted that the Town had historically misclassified certain expenditures, a common issue in smaller municipalities, but with the presence of a Town Manager and Finance Supervisor, corrective action was being taken. Mayor Wells acknowledged the substantial effort involved, with over 120 adjustments, and commended Finance Supervisor, Oscar Ojeda, for his work. Mayor Wells emphasized that these adjustments did not alter overall budget appropriations but involved the reclassification of funds, including the creation of two new funds to ensure compliance with the UAS.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, further explained the distinction between budget transfers and budget amendments. He stated that transfers typically involve reallocations within the same fund, while amendments are required when the total appropriation for a fund changes. In this case, the transfer involved reclassifying expenditures under newly established accounts, including a new executive account (512) for the Town Manager, a legal expenditures account (514), and a comprehensive planning account (515). Additionally, some accounts were corrected, such as moving the cemetery account from an incorrect classification under "airport" to the appropriate "other physical environment" category (539).

Councilor Miles inquired about maintaining a clear designation for the cemetery account, confirming that it would still be tracked as such under the new classification. He also questioned whether a separate fund for the cemetery had been considered. Mr. O’Keefe responded that this had not been considered, as cemeteries typically operate at a financial loss and are viewed similarly to parks in terms of maintenance costs.

The discussion then turned to the budget amendment (Resolution 2025-004), which involved the creation of two new funds:

1. Fund 152 (Transportation Fund) – Established to track restricted transportation-related revenues and expenditures separately from general infrastructure funds.
2. Fund 402 (Wastewater Fund) – Separated from the Water Utility Fund (Fund 401) to provide clearer financial oversight.

Mr. O’Keefe also explained there would be a reallocation of Sanitation Costs to be transferred from the Water Utility Fund to the General Fund for more accurate financial reporting.

Councilor Miles questioned why sanitation was moved to the General Fund while wastewater was given its own utility fund. Mr. O’Keefe explained that this decision improved financial transparency by separating major utility services while keeping sanitation simple, as it involves only a single revenue and expenditure line.

The discussion also included concerns regarding the Town’s road maintenance funding. Mayor Wells introduced the idea of financing a multi-year road repaving initiative using discretionary surtax revenues. Councilor Miles supported the idea, noting that the Town had historically done minimal repaving, leading to deteriorating road conditions. Mayor Pro Tem Everline expressed skepticism about taking on new debt, citing economic volatility and potential risks. Councilor Lannamañ suggested gathering data on the Town’s road network and estimated costs before making any financing decisions.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Erin Fox, 508 N. Florida Ave. – Resident Erin Fox noted that irrigation issues at the cemetery were potentially causing water waste.

Frances Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Resident Frances Wagler suggested implementing a fee for vacant lot owners who place yard debris at the curb for collection, as they do not currently contribute to sanitation fees.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve Budget Transfer #117; 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. Consideration and Approval: **Resolution 2025-004 Budget Amendment FY25**

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

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve Resolution 2025-004, Budget Amendment FY25; 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

6. Consideration and Approval: (First Reading) **Ordinance 2025-002 - Logos and Letterhead**

Mayor Wells read Ordinance 2025-002 out loud by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO THE TOWN SEAL, LOGO, AND OTHER SYMBOLS; AMENDING SECTION 31-1 OF CHAPTER 31 OF THE CODE OF ORDINANCES OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, ENTITLED “TOWN SEAL, LOGO, AND LETTERHEAD”; AMENDING THE OFFICIAL TOWN LOGO AND OFFICIAL LETTERHEAD, AND DESIGNATING A CENTENNIAL LOGO; AUTHORIZING USE OF THE TOWN SEAL, LOGO, CENTENNIAL LOGO, AND LETTERHEAD; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION; PROVIDING FOR SEVERABILITY; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTS; PROVIDING AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, provided an overview of the proposed changes, noting that the updated logo maintains the same theme, composition, and color scheme as the existing design but features enhancements for a more polished and refined appearance. Mr. O’Keefe described the revised lettering as a more vibrant gold, replacing the previous muted yellow-green tone. Mr. O’Keefe credited Town Planner, Lisa Busto, for her assistance with the graphic design and highlighted the addition of a centennial logo incorporating a commemorative banner.

Mayor Wells opened the floor for public comment. No objections were raised, and Council members expressed their approval of the updated designs. Seeing no further discussion, Mayor Wells closed public comment.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve Ordinance 2025-002 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: **Town Attorney Attendance at Town Council Meetings**

Mayor Wells introduced the discussion regarding the frequency of the Town Attorney’s attendance at Town Council meetings, considering whether adjustments could be made as a cost-saving measure while maintaining access to legal guidance when needed. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, explained that,

currently, the Town Attorney attends all regular and special meetings, and the discussion focused on the potential benefits and drawbacks of modifying this practice.

Councilor Miles raised concerns about ensuring legal representation during a period of expected growth and development in the Town. He inquired about past legal expenditures and noted that costs for the current fiscal year were projected to be approximately \$180,000, with prior years ranging from \$150,000 to significantly higher amounts during periods of litigation. He also questioned whether the Town should consider issuing a Request for Proposals (RFP) for legal services, though he acknowledged the value of the current representation provided by Attorney Tom Wilkes of GrayRobinson.

Councilor Lannamañ suggested a compromise where the Town Attorney or a designated representative could attend meetings once per month instead of twice, with legal consultation available via email or phone as needed. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that his attendance was ultimately the Council's decision, noting that, while having legal counsel present ensures immediate answers and insight into the dynamics of meetings, he was comfortable attending as needed. He also confirmed that most municipalities of similar size have an attorney present at meetings.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline inquired about the percentage of municipalities that do not have legal representation at meetings, to which Mr. Wilkes responded that it was a small number. Mayor Wells emphasized that his intention in raising the issue was to explore potential savings, citing a budgeted legal expenditure of \$343,000 for the current year. He explained that, in his experience with other municipalities, legal counsel was often consulted in advance and attended meetings only when necessary.

Councilor Miles expressed concerns about reducing legal oversight, particularly as the Town prepares for future development and legal complexities. Councilor Arnold referenced past legal challenges faced by the Town, cautioning against making uninformed decisions without immediate legal counsel. Councilor Lannamañ acknowledged the importance of cost management but favored maintaining legal representation at meetings until the Town's financial situation stabilizes.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Frances Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Resident Frances Wagler emphasized the importance of having legal guidance readily available, particularly given past challenges faced by the Planning and Zoning Board.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N Tangerine Ave. – Resident Tom Ballou supported maintaining the current arrangement for at least another year, noting the value of Attorney Wilkes' presence and legal expertise.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Following discussion, Mayor Wells acknowledged that Attorney Wilkes' offer to waive travel time fees would result in some cost savings.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to keep the attendance of the Town Attorney as it currently was through the end of the fiscal year; seconded by Councilor Miles. Motion approved by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: Mayor Wells

As it was 8:37 pm, Mayor Wells asked for a motion to continue the meeting by 30 minutes.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to extend the meeting an additional 30 minutes; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. 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: **Rescheduling the Town Council Meeting conflicting with Memorial Day**

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to move the second May Town Council Meeting to Tuesday, May 27, 2025; 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

9. Consideration and Approval: **Town Auditor Selection Committee**

Motion made by Councilor Miles to continue this agenda item to the next meeting; 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

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

10. Town Hall

The report was included in the meeting's packet.

11. Police Department

The report was included in the meeting's packet.

12. Code Enforcement

The report was included in the meeting's packet.

13. Public Services Department

The report was included in the meeting's packet.

14. Parks & Recreation

None

15. Library / Community Events

The report was included in the meeting's packet.

16. Town Attorney

None

17. Finance Supervisor

The report was included in the meeting's packet.

18. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, thanked everyone for attending the grand re-opening of the Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve Boardwalk.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

19. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

Mayor Pro Tem Everline provided an update on the most recent Lake Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting. He shared that the MPO is seeking public input on transportation needs in Lake County for the next 25 years. To facilitate community participation, he provided Town Clerk, John Brock, with an informational sheet containing a QR code that links to a public survey. Mayor Pro Tem Everline encouraged residents to complete the survey and provide feedback on local road conditions and infrastructure needs.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline also reported that he spoke during the meeting's public comment period to advocate for extending an upcoming study of the Route 19 corridor from Groveland to include the intersection at State Road 19 and State Road 48 in Howey-in-the-Hills. He further suggested that the study evaluate the feasibility of adding a third lane through the Town. Councilor Miles proposed extending the study even further to the Tavares city limits, and Mayor Pro Tem Everline agreed to bring that suggestion forward. Additionally, he recommended that the MPO consider installing a traffic signal at the intersection of Central Avenue and State Road 19.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline shared key information from the meeting, including that the cost of resurfacing one mile of road currently stands at \$1.2 million, and that \$591 million has been allocated for transportation projects in Lake and Sumter Counties over the next five years. He noted that declining gas tax revenues due to increased electric vehicle usage is a nationwide concern, and MPO officials are exploring alternative funding solutions.

Before leaving the meeting, MPO staff informed Mayor Pro Tem Everline that Howey-in-the-Hills has never had representation on the MPO's Community and Technical Advisory Committees. They encouraged the Town to participate in these committees to ensure its transportation needs receive proper attention. Mayor Pro Tem Everline stated that he has been in contact with MPO officials and expects to receive an invitation to future meetings.

Following his MPO report, Mayor Pro Tem Everline shared concerns he received from residents regarding the Town's code enforcement practices. Some residents feel that interactions with the Code Enforcement Officer have been more punitive than helpful, particularly regarding garbage receptacle regulations. He emphasized that Code Enforcement should focus on assisting residents rather than creating a sense of harassment and encouraged a respectful approach in addressing violations.

20. Councilor Arnold

Councilor Arnold reported that the Town has drafted a safety resolution, currently under review by the Town Engineer, aimed at improving pedestrian safety along State Road 19. While some wording adjustments are needed, the resolution's intent is to prioritize the installation of a safe pedestrian crossing. He expressed hope that the Lake Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) would

elevate the project on its priority list and coordinate its implementation with upcoming resurfacing efforts, ensuring a safer crossing for residents.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline and Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, briefly commented on enforcement practices, noting that regulatory oversight should align with established standards. They reiterated that enforcement efforts, including those related to garbage receptacles, should be conducted with fairness and consistency.

21. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles requested an update on the letter directed to the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) regarding the paving contract and related requests. Councilor Miles noted that at the previous meeting, the Town Council had instructed the Town Manager to send this letter. Councilor Miles requested that a copy be provided to all Council members once it is sent. He acknowledged that the letter had not yet been sent but expressed confidence that it would be completed before the next meeting.

22. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ inquired about the status of new street signs. Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, confirmed that the signs were scheduled for delivery on Wednesday. He added that an additional order would be placed soon to replace other signs throughout the Town.

Mr. Cates further explained that extra signposts and stop signs were included in the order due to frequent damage caused by garbage trucks, tractor-trailers, and delivery vehicles. He anticipated that installation of the new signs would begin by the end of the week.

23. Mayor Wells

Mayor Wells expressed gratitude to Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, for overseeing the boardwalk project and noted the success of its grand opening. Mayor Wells acknowledged the Troops of St. George for providing food and refreshments and thanked former Mayor Martha McFarlane for officiating the ribbon-cutting ceremony. Mayor Wells also highlighted the presence of County Commissioners Sean Parks and Anthony Sabatini.

Councilor Miles noted the absence of the county commissioner representing Howey-in-the-Hills at the event, and Mayor Wells confirmed that all commissioners had been invited.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline inquired about a damaged mirror at the curve of Camellia and Citrus. Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, confirmed that the Police Chief had reported the issue and that a replacement was being arranged. Mr. Cates also provided an update on upcoming road projects, stating that the contractor had scheduled work to begin between mid-April and early May. Mr. Cates estimated costs at approximately \$250 per linear foot, which includes full road reconstruction, curbing, drainage swales, and sidewalk connections. Mr. Cates emphasized that the Town was receiving a favorable rate compared to standard county and MPO resurfacing projects.

Mr. Cates also expressed appreciation to the previous and current Town Council, as well as the Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, for supporting the boardwalk project. He commended the contractor for their resilience in rebuilding the boardwalk after sustaining damage from two hurricanes during construction.

Councilor Lannamañ praised the quality of the completed boardwalk and its impact on the community.

Resident Erin Fox inquired about the impact of upcoming road construction on school bus routes, particularly along Citrus Avenue. Mr. Cates assured that he would coordinate with the school district to relocate bus stops as needed and notify parents in advance.

Resident Frances O’Keefe Wagler raised concerns about the timing of road construction in relation to the Town’s Centennial celebrations at the Howey Mansion. She requested that construction be delayed until mid-May to ensure full access to The Howey Mansion estate and its surrounding parking areas. She further suggested that construction be postponed until the summer months when the estate has lower activity.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 8:58 p.m. | **Attendees: 42**

Mayor Wells

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk

DRAFT