



Town Council Meeting
December 09, 2024 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

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Pro Tem Tim Everline | Councilor Jon Arnold | Councilor Reneé Lannamañ (via Zoom) | Councilor David Miles | Mayor Graham Wells

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O'Keefe, Town Manager | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | Sean Parks, Town Planner | Morgan Cates, Public Services Director | Oscar Ojeda, Finance Supervisor | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

Motion made by Councilor Arnold to allow Councilor Lannamañ to participate and vote via Zoom; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline.

Voting

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

Nay: None

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Arnold to approve the meeting's agenda, while moving agenda item #12 (Finance Supervisor Report) to appear directly after the Consent 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

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 12, 2024, Town Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Consent Agenda, with Mayor Pro Tem Everline's and Councilor Miles' edits to the November 12, 2024, Town Council Meeting minutes being approved; 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

DEPARTMENT REPORTS (*Agenda Item #12 to appear in this place if the meeting during the Agenda Approval section of the meeting.*)

12. Finance Supervisor

The Town Council reviewed the new monthly financial report presented by Finance Supervisor, Oscar Ojeda. The report provided an overview of October's revenues and expenditures, with a detailed breakdown of general and specific funds. Council members expressed appreciation for the improved format, highlighting its clarity compared to previous reports. Suggestions for further enhancements included adding a column for the percentage of the annual budget expended to aid in quick assessment.

Key discussions focused on salary lines appearing over-budget due to a three-payroll month, and a significant expenditure in the water sanitation fund for the redesign of Water Treatment Plant No. 3. The Council acknowledged the challenge of allocating one-time project costs in monthly reports and encouraged continued refinement of the reporting process. The importance of implementing encumbrance accounting for multi-year projects was reiterated, with recognition of its partial use in certain areas like the police department. Mayor Wells and Councilor Miles emphasized that the financial reporting process is a work in progress, with ongoing efforts to ensure accuracy and usability.

PUBLIC HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

2. Consideration and Approval: **Lake Hills Utility Service Agreement**

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, introduced and explained this agenda item with the assistance of the Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the Utility Service Agreement that was being presented before the Town Council was for potable water and retail wastewater transmission services for the use of the residential portion of the Lake Hills Planned Unit Development (PUD).

Mr. Wilkes stated that the entity with which the Town was contracting was Reader & Partners LLC, who did not currently own the property that the Lake Hills PUD resided on. Mr. Wilkes stated that the Town should only execute this agreement once Reader & Partners LLC completed the purchase of the property.

Councilor Miles stated that, in the second “WHEREAS” of the agreement, the words “up to” needed to be added to appear directly before “571 equivalent residential units”.

The Council extensively discussed the ongoing negotiations with the Central Lake Community Development District (CDD) regarding wastewater treatment capacity. While an existing 2007 agreement ensures the provision of wastewater services, updates to the agreement have been in negotiation for several years to address evolving needs and infrastructure requirements. Council members expressed concern that unresolved issues with the Central Lake CDD could delay or jeopardize developments, including Lake Hills and other approved projects. It was noted that the Central Lake CDD has sufficient capacity for current developments, but they have expressed conditions requiring the updated agreement’s finalization.

To address these concerns, the Council changed the topic of the Town Council Workshop that had been scheduled for December 17, 2024, from Strategic Planning to focus solely on the proposed Central Lake CDD agreement. The importance of achieving a balanced and fair agreement was emphasized, as exclusivity clauses and other terms could limit the Town’s flexibility in pursuing alternative wastewater providers. The Council acknowledged the need to ensure long-term infrastructure planning while maintaining momentum on approved developments. Public and developer input will be considered as part of the ongoing discussions to finalize agreements and support community growth.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Martha MacFarlane, 63 Camino Real – Former Mayor, Mrs. MacFarlane, raised several key concerns regarding the Town’s negotiations with the Central Lake CDD. Mrs. MacFarlane emphasized the need to ensure that small entities within the Town, such as the Howey Market and Sunoco, are prioritized for wastewater connections. Mrs. MacFarlane also stressed the importance of retaining the Town’s retail wastewater function, particularly for developments like Bishops Gate, and stressed the importance of protecting the Town’s ISBA agreement.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Councilor Lannamañ suggested that perhaps Mayor Wells should be involved in the wastewater agreement negotiations with the Central Lake CDD. Mayor Pro Tem Everline and Councilor Miles both disagreed and stated that it should just be the Town Manager and the Town Attorney.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Lake Hills Utility Service Agreement contingent upon the phrase “up to” being added to appear directly before “571 equivalent residential units” in the second “WHEREAS” of the agreement and that the agreement would only be executed by the Mayor and the Town Clerk when Reader & Partners LLC had purchased the property for the Lake Hills PUD; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: Mayor Pro Tem Everline

3. Consideration and Approval: **Whispering Heights Final Subdivision Plan**

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, introduced Town Planner, Sean Parks, to explain this agenda item. Mr. Parks presented a staff report recommending approval with six conditions to ensure compliance with applicable codes and regulations. The six conditions that were presented by Mr. Parks were:

1. The plan for sewer is to use a force main to connect the project to the lift station on the school board property. The Town and the School District have worked out the terms of an easement to allow the connection, but the easement still needs to be finalized and recorded.
2. The Central Lake Community Development District has provided the applicant with a letter stating their willingness and ability to serve the project. The applicant still needs to pay the necessary fees to reserve the actual treatment capacity.
3. The applicant will need to provide current permits for stormwater treatment facilities, utility construction, and connection to Buckhill Road.
4. The School District has responded to the Town Planner's inquiry that the concurrency assessment is current and valid for 107 units. When the project size was increased to 156 units, the added units were not vetted for school concurrency. Staff recommends the Planning Board add the update to school concurrency as a condition of approval. The applicant will need to make an application for concurrency review to the School District for the additional units. The application should be filed prior to consideration of the application by Town Council.
5. Buffers- Please ensure the plan set meets the buffer requirements of the Town's Land Development Code (LDC) Sec 7.02.01 in effect at the time of plan submittal:
 - a. There is a note on Sheet L200 but the table on L200 does not call out the required wall and its materials and details.
 - b. The buffer table on Sheet L200 does not appear to accurately describe the location and requirements of proposed buffers. Please verify and revise as necessary.
 - c. Sheets L100-L207 do not provide details of the required wall. Please update the Wall Detail Sheet and these Sheets as applicable so that the Town can ensure consistency with the LDC requirements regarding height (must maintain six feet in height) and whether it has columns that meet the spacing requirements.
 - d. Please provide a separate graphic solely depicting the proposed buffer zones and their landscape requirements. Please note on Sheet L200 the location of the required wall. Additionally, please provide buffer details around proposed common areas and recreation areas.
 - e. The shrubs listed for the buffer on Sheet L100 do not all meet the minimum height requirement of 30 inches. All shrubs shall be at least 30 inches in height upon installation. Please revise plans.
 - f. A buffer detail sheet must be provided so the Town can review and ensure that the trees are not closer than the applicable LDC permits to a walk or wall and that the canopy trees will have root barriers.
 - g. Although not a requirement at the time of submittal, the LDC now requires root barriers. A root barrier is required for trees proposed for 7.5-ft or less from a sidewalk and/or street. It is respectfully requested that the plans incorporate this standard and note on the plans and provide a detail.
6. Wetland Protection - The applicant proposes a swale along the shoreline of Lake Harris. The swales should be vegetated with Florida native ectotonal and/or littoral zone vegetation such as Sand Cordgrass (*Spartina bakerii*) in order to provide both hydrological and ecological function and value in protecting the water resources of Lake Harris (Chapter 3, LDC). Additionally, how does the applicant propose that this swale including the required 50-ft wetland/surface water setback zone shall maintain its function in perpetuity? Chapter 3 of the LDC requires signage and proper maintenance of buffer zones and swales to maintain in perpetuity, the environmental and hydrological function and character.

Council members discussed the proposed conditions, which include engineering approvals, easements, and capacity reservations. Councilor Miles commended the planner's detailed report and inquired about the timeline for construction. Developer representatives indicated that construction would commence promptly following the resolution of remaining conditions, including utility and school concurrency agreements.

Councilor Miles stated that, in addition to the six conditions the Town Planner had presented, he would like to see a condition requiring the lift station fencing to be coated in green or black plastic to enhance aesthetics.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Whispering Heights Final Subdivision Plan with the six conditions that Town Planner, Sean Parks, had presented and his condition that all lift station fencing be coated in green or black plastic; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ.

Voting

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

Nay: Mayor Pro Tem Everline

4. Discussion: **Town Manager Annual Review Process**

The Town Council discussed the annual review process for the Town Manager, as required by the Town Charter. Mayor Pro Tem Everline emphasized the importance of conducting performance reviews annually and aligning them with the Town Manager's contract and salary cycle. Councilor Miles noted that the previous review form was effective and suggested extending the evaluation period to April to allow newer Council members sufficient time to assess the Town Manager's performance.

The Council reached a consensus to conduct the next review in April 2025, with the possibility of deciding at that time whether to adjust the timing for future evaluations. The Town Clerk outlined the evaluation process, which involves distributing review forms to Council members, compiling responses, and holding a public workshop to discuss the results. The Town Manager expressed openness to constructive feedback and confirmed the value of formalized evaluations. The Council agreed to proceed with the April review and revisit the timeline for subsequent evaluations as needed.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

5. Town Hall

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

6. Police Department

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

7. Code Enforcement

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

8. Public Works

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

9. Library

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

10. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board / Special Events

None

11. Town Attorney

None

12. Finance Supervisor

(This agenda item appeared directly after the Consent Agenda section of the meeting)

13. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, reviewed the Town's upcoming events schedule for the next month.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

14. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

Mayor Pro Tem Everline stated that he believed that the Town's streetlights were owned by Duke Energy and that someone needed to call them to get them cleaned. Mayor Pro Tem Everline also listed several Christmas lights that had been installed on streetlights within the Town that were non-functioning and needed to be fixed.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline explained that he would be attending a Lake-Sumter Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting for the Town on Wednesday, December 11, 2025. Mayor Pro Tem Everline questioned why the sidewalks on SR 19 near Venezia were closed and Morgan Cates, Public Services Director, explained that FDOT was managing that process.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline stated that there were palm trees embedded in other trees on Lakeshore and that they should be removed.

15. Councilor Arnold

None

16. Councilor Miles

None

17. Councilor Lannamañ

None

18. Mayor Wells

Mayor Wells stated that many of the bump-outs on Lakeshore Blvd were not being maintained by their sponsors. Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, stated that four bump-out areas had recently been adopted by new people. Mr. Cates also stated that the Sara Maude Mason Boardwalk project was commencing, and he was hopeful that it would be completed by the end of the month. Mr. Cates also stated that the Town's antique fire truck had been delivered to the Lake Tech facility for restoration.

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.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Mrs. Everline stated that the coyotes around Town were becoming more brazen, and she wanted the Town to do something about them. Councilor Miles suggested that staff should hire a contractor to remove the coyotes.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 Tangerine Ave. – Mrs. Gallelli thanked the Town’s Public Utilities Supervisor, James Southall, for assistance that he had provided.

Martha MacFarlane, 63 Camino Real – Mrs. MacFarlane reminded everyone that the Town would need additional appropriations to construct Water Treatment Plant #3.

Robert Jones, 104 S. Mare Ave. – Mr. Jones stated that he had just moved to the Town, and he was concerned about traffic on SR 19.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m. | **Attendees: 37**

Mayor Wells

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk