



Town Council Meeting
November 25, 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 | Councilor David Miles | Mayor Graham Wells

STAFF PRESENT:

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

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Arnold to approve the meeting’s agenda; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Arnold, Mayor Pro Tem Everline, 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.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline asked to pull agenda item #1 from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

Councilor Miles asked to pull agenda item #2 from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

1. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the November 12, 2024, Town Council Meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline stated that he would like to review the audio for the November 12th meeting prior to approving the minutes.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to table the November 12, 2024, Town Council Meeting minutes to the next Town Council meeting for further review; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

2. Consideration and Approval: **Authorization for Mayor Wells to execute approved Ordinance 2015-005**

Councilor Miles asked if the Town staff were aware of any additional previous Ordinances that were not signed. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe stated that he was not aware of any other Ordinances.

Councilor Miles asked Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, if the Town should go to former Mayor Sears to ask him to sign the Ordinance. Mr. Wilkes stated that the Town could ask him to sign it or Mayor Wells, but that this should be signed and corrected.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline asked what effect it would have by not signing the Ordinance now. Mr. Wilkes stated that the developer received their approval by the Town Council in 2016; the fact that Mayor Sears did not execute it is a technical issue with paperwork, and it doesn't change anything regarding the approval. Furthermore, Mr. Wilkes stated that there was no way to go back and change that simply because the mayor did not sign it in 2016.

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

Motion made by Councilor Miles to authorize Mayor Wells to execute previously approved Ordinance 2015-005; 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

PUBLIC HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

3. Discussion: **Meeting Procedures (Discussion Flow / Making Motions)**

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, presented Mayor Wells’ proposed Meeting Procedure changes to improve meeting flow and efficiency based on feedback from the November 12th meeting.

Recommendations included incorporating preliminary motions in staff reports to focus discussions on actionable outcomes, revising the discussion flow to follow a three-step process—council discussion,

public comment, and motions/voting—and limiting actions on "discussion only" agenda items to ensure transparency and adherence to agenda intent. These measures aim to streamline meetings without compromising robust dialogue, with council input invited for further refinement.

Councilor Lannamañ stated that she was in favor of the changes.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline stated that he was not in favor of the changes, and he believed that Public Comment should occur before Council discussions. Mayor Pro Tem Everline handed out a set of meeting procedures that he had received from the Town of Orchid, Florida and suggested that the Town Council should consider adopting the Town of Orchid's procedures. Mayor Pro Tem Everline suggested that the public should have as much time as necessary to speak and that the meeting should just go longer and that they could be started earlier.

Councilor Miles stated that he agreed with Mayor Wells' proposed method for doing business.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Mrs. Gallelli stated her primary concern was that public was heard and fairly considered prior to the Town Council voting on issues.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N. Tangerine Ave. – Mr. Ballou stated that he agreed with Mrs. Gallelli and did not like the idea of the public being heard after the Town Councilors had already had their discussion. Mr. Ballou stated that he also thought that the Town Council meeting November 12, 2024, was too long.

Martha MacFarlane, 63 Camino Real – Mrs. MacFarlane stated that Public Comment and Town Council discussion should occur prior to motions being made, due to the fact that too many motions in the past had to be walked back because the item was not fully discussed prior to the motion being made.

Andi Everline, 1012 N Lakeshore Blvd. – Mrs. Everline stated that, if Town Council discusses an item before Public Comment is made, the Town Councilors will have already made up their minds prior to listening to the public.

Ann Griffin, 215 E Laurel Ave. – Mrs. Griffin stated that she believed that the Town Council should listen to what the public says prior to having the Town Council discussion.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Mayor Wells stated that he would like to try to the meeting procedures for a few meetings and then re-evaluate in February. Mayor Wells asked a for a straw poll from the other Town Councilors to see if there was a consensus. Councilor Lannamañ and Councilor Arnold stated that they agreed with Mayor Wells about the proposed procedures; Mayor Pro Tem Everline and Councilor Miles suggested that the topic should be tabled for further evaluation.

Due to the heavy discussion and strong feelings about the proposal, Mayor Wells withdrew his proposal at this time.

4. Consideration and Approval: **Resolution 2024-011 - Budget Amendment FY24**

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, read Resolution 2024-011 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 AND WATER/SANITATION FUND, FOR THE BUDGET YEAR 2023/2024.

Mr. O’Keefe stated that the final budget amendment was necessary to be completed within 60 days of the end of the fiscal year by statute. Mr. O’Keefe stated that there were two budget amendments in the Resolution. The first was to increase the Special Events budget (listed under 1-574-340 budget line) by \$8,000 and reduce the Parks & Recreation budget (listed under 1-572-460) by \$8,000. This change was due to the Town’s Christmas tree being paid out of FY 2024 after it had been ordered in FY 2023.

Mr. O’Keefe stated that the second budget amendment was to increase the Sanitation Department budget (listed under 401-534-340 budget line) by \$24,000 and to reduce the Water Utility Services budget (listed under 401-533-340 budget line) by \$24,000. This change was necessary due to an increase in the number of customers having their trash collected.

Mayor Wells stated that he had worked with Mr. O’Keefe and Finance Supervisor, Oscar Ojeda, to produce the Resolution. Mayor Wells stated that he had also worked with both Mr. O’Keefe and Mr. Ojeda to create a new finance report that would be presented to the Town Council in December.

Councilor Miles thanked Mayor Wells for his assistance to the Town, praising him for the Budget Amendment Resolution being completed correctly.

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

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve Resolution 2024-011; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

5. Discussion: **Upcoming Strategic Planning Workshop**

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, explained that Councilor Arnold has been championing the upcoming Strategic Planning Workshop, and asked him to speak about the upcoming workshop.

Councilor Arnold stated that the purpose of the upcoming Strategic Planning Workshop (which had been scheduled for December 17, 2024, at 2:00 p.m.) was to identify what the Town Council’s ultimate destination was. Councilor Arnold stated that he would like to find out what each Councilor’s vision for the future of the Town was and asked everyone to bring their ideas.

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

6. Discussion: **Selection of Date for New Councilor Orientation Workshop**

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, stated that the purpose of this workshop was to educate incoming Town Councilors on elements to include: the Town’s operational structure, municipal planning principles (like the difference between the Town’s Comprehensive Plan and Land Development Code), Sunshine Law, and the basics of municipal finance.

Tuesday, December 10, 2024, from 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. was selected as the date and time for the Orientation Workshop.

Town Clerk, John Brock, spoke about the Florida League of Cities’ (FLC) Institute for Elected Municipal Officials (IEMO) training. Mr. Brock stated that the next available IEMO was in Gainesville

Florida on Friday January 24, 2025, through Saturday January 25, 2025. Mayor Wells, Mayor Pro Tem Everline, and Councilor Arnold all committed to going to this FLC workshop.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

7. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, announced that the public-facing offices of Town Hall and the library would be closed for Thanksgiving on Thursday and Friday, November 28-29, and extended holiday wishes to all. He reminded attendees of the adjusted December Town Council schedule, noting there would be only one meeting on December 9th at the regular time. He also highlighted additional opportunities for collaboration, including upcoming strategic workshops.

O'Keefe provided updates on various projects, including the FDEM/FEMA Bypass Lift Stations Grant for the Venezia subdivision, with paperwork underway for submission to the state office. The Sarah Maude Mason Nature Preserve project has faced delays due to hurricanes but is expected to be completed in December, though it may not be ready before the Christmas Festival's Reindeer Dash. Regarding the Citrus Avenue project, revisions to the surveys have been reviewed and approved by the Town Engineer, with the next step involving discussions with legal counsel to finalize the corrected documents.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

8. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

Mayor Pro Tem Everline highlighted concerns from residents about a lack of awareness regarding Town Codes. He shared his personal experience moving from an area without such regulations and noted that many residents, both new and long-time, may not fully understand local requirements. Existing informational materials at Town Hall, such as pamphlets on tree regulations and code compliance, are helpful but insufficient in addressing recurring questions about specific issues like tree removal, parking regulations, and the use of canvas tarps.

To address this, Mayor Pro Tem Everline proposed creating a comprehensive, cost-effective code information booklet or pamphlet. He suggested the code enforcement officer compile frequently referenced codes, including commonly misunderstood or enforced regulations, into a single resource. This booklet could be distributed to all households in Howey-in-the-Hills and provided to new residents upon moving in. He emphasized that this would improve awareness, streamline compliance, and provide a clear reference for residents, helping to address complaints effectively.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline also questioned why Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, had not received an annual evaluation this year and suggested that a date be chosen soon for the Town Council to complete this evaluation. Mayor Wells stated that he would investigate the process and get back with the Town Council.

9. Councilor Arnold

Councilor Arnold announced to those in attendance that the Howey Men's Club would be having a meeting on Tuesday, December 3, 2024, at 6:30 p.m. at the Mission Inn and was attempting to increase its membership.

10. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles asked about the status of the Stormwater Drainage Project that the Town had received a grant for. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the Town had put the project out for bid with a Request for Bids

(RFB) and had received 5 bids back. Mr. O’Keefe stated that lowest bid that the Town had received was double what the size of the awarded grant. Due to this difference in cost and grant awards, the Town Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, was seeking additional grant funding for this project before it would move forward. Councilor Miles stated that he believed that the Town’s Staff should have brought the five bids before the Town Council, so that they could formally reject them.

11. Councilor Lannamañ

None

12. Mayor Wells

None

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 she was having a problem with GFL not picking up her regular yard waste.

Martha MacFarlane, 63 Camino Real – Mrs. MacFarlane suggested that the Town utilize its website to communicate information about Code Enforcement within the Town, rather than producing fliers, due to the cost of printing the fliers.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Mrs. Gallelli had questions about where a resident could find information about the Town’s upcoming Christmas Festival on the Town’s website.

Cathy Coleman, 1004 N. Citrus Ave. – Mrs. Coleman stated that it was very hard to hear the Town Councilors in the back of the room when they did not directly speak into their microphones. Mrs. Coleman also spoke about agenda item #3, Meeting Procedures.

Mayor Wells thanked former Councilor Gallelli for her service as Town Councilor.

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 7:59 p.m. | **Attendees: 27**

Mayor Wells

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk