



**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES
TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY OPEN DISCUSSION WORKSHOP
MEETING MINUTES**

**TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 155 F. Road, Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470
Tuesday, June 04, 2024**

TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kane called the meeting to order at 6:22 P.M.

ROLL CALL:

Mayor Anita Kane, Vice Mayor Margaret Herzog, Councilmember Laura Danowski, Councilmember Phillis Maniglia, Councilmember Robert Shorr, Public Works Director Richard Gallant, Town Manager Francine Ramaglia, Town Attorney Tanya Earley, Public Works Director Richard Gallant, Public Works Superintendent Craig Lower, Project Coordinator Jeff Kurtz, Town's Planning Consultant Kaitlyn Forbes (of Complete Cities), Town's Financial Consultant Chris Wallace (of Munilytics) and Town Clerk Valerie Oakes were present.

OPEN DISCUSSION:

Virginia Standish raised several concerns. First, she emphasized the dangerous traffic conditions on the east side of B Road near Southern Boulevard, particularly due to construction activity and lack of oversight at the intersection by the new hotel or commercial development. She requested that PBSO monitor the area during peak traffic hours for public safety. Second, she asked the Town to coordinate with the fire department to assess the functionality and readiness of local fire hydrants, citing recent fires in the area and the importance of ensuring they are operational. Third, she questioned why business tax receipts (BTRs) are being issued to properties that are in continued code violation or have not addressed longstanding compliance issues. She pointed out that some of these properties contain hazardous materials and stressed that the BTR process should involve proper inspection before approval.

Doug Schaper requested an update on ongoing issues at 1032 H Park Road, describing the situation as an ongoing battle for the past two to three years. He cited numerous code violations, continuous dump truck traffic, and open sewage problems, for which he has contacted the health department but received no response. He also raised serious concerns about animal mistreatment, stating that the property owner attempts to hide violations by planting hedges. He emphasized that he has previously addressed these issues in past meetings and is seeking a status update from the Council or staff on actions being taken. Mayor Kane stated the property he mentioned was currently in code violation so therefore they are unable to speak on that issue and then directed Town Manager Ramaglia to respond. Town Manager Francine Ramaglia acknowledged his concern regarding the property at 1032 H Park Road and expressed appreciation for his assistance in monitoring the situation. She confirmed that there are active code violations on the property related to the issues he mentioned, including the presence of a new arena. Ms. Ramaglia noted that the town is currently fining the property owner \$250 per day, with plans to issue repeat violations that would increase the fines to \$500 per day. She emphasized the town's limited access to the property and credited the speaker and other neighbors for helping provide critical information that the town has been unable to obtain directly. Doug Schaper expressed deep frustration with the Town's handling of persistent code violations at 1032 H Park Road. He contrasted the leniency shown toward this property with the swift action taken against a neighboring property at 832 H Park Road, where a red tag and cease-and-desist order were promptly enforced. He questioned whether enforcement is being selectively applied based on perceived citizenship or cooperation. He recounted a disturbing incident on the previous Thursday at approximately 1:10 p.m., when four individuals in unmarked vehicles, who appeared to be SWAT team members, attempted to access the property. He implied this indicates criminal activity or unsafe behavior occurring on the premises. He emphasized that he moved to the area for peace and quiet and is now facing what he described as a deteriorating neighborhood environment. He urged the town to stop allowing the property owner to hide behind hedges and visual blockades and demanded that the Town use the enforcement authority available under the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC) to put an end to the ongoing violations. He closed by pleading with the Town to take decisive action, stating, "It's getting old."

Frank Standish raised concerns regarding a 700-foot stretch of pavement on North B Road, stating that the paving is not a full two inches thick as expected. He questioned how the Town could sign off on such a project, noting that the road is frequently used by heavy equipment, specifically referring to approximately 16 to 18 trucks per week already travelling the road. He warned that the current section of pavement “isn’t going to last,” and further expressed concern that B Road is deteriorating under such heavy use. He asked two questions: Why was that section accepted if it does not meet the expected two-inch thickness and is the Town planning to redesign the paving specifications for B Road to handle the truck traffic more effectively? He ended by pointing out that residents paid for two inches of pavement but did not receive it, implying accountability is needed.

Paul Coleman thanked the Town Manager and staff for quickly addressing water level concerns after he raised the issue, joking that “God did that” due to the timely rain. He echoed Virginia Standish’s concern about fire hydrants, clarifying that most dry hydrants that rely on canal water—so maintaining water levels is crucial for fire safety. He then shifted roles, announcing as Vice President of the Loxahatchee Groves Landowners Association that they awarded eight \$1,000 scholarships this year, supported by local donors like Swank Farm and Red Barn. He expressed pride in the effort and hopes to expand it next year.

Robert Austen followed up on Doug's earlier comment, stating that the same property received multiple truckloads of block and brick over Labor Day—when staff likely wouldn’t notice—and he regrets not getting photos. He spoke with a resident moving from the property who found another lot just blocks away to relocate their camper, highlighting what he described as a persistent issue. He criticized the lack of a full-time code enforcement officer due to limited tax revenue, stating it's evident by the number of rundown trailers and people living in RVs long-term. He emphasized that Loxahatchee Groves is “not a trailer park” and warned that allowing year-round RV presence—especially if not strictly tied to equestrian season—would degrade the town's rural character. He concluded by stressing that people are simply rotating campers between lots, and that this behavior must be addressed.

Cassie Suchy addressed the Council by referencing the Town Charter, emphasizing that Loxahatchee Groves was incorporated to protect its rural character, low density, open spaces, agriculture, and equestrian ties. She thanked Council members for intervening on issues related to 161st but criticized what occurred the day after the last Council meeting, calling it a “travesty.” Describing how, despite a cease-and-desist order issued after a resident’s comment, a Public Works employee used an excavator to remove trees from that resident’s easement as well as trees behind her own fence. The incident was later blamed on a “rogue employee,” but the speaker rejected that explanation, asserting that no low-level worker would make such a decision independently and suggesting the employee was covering for someone higher up. She continued the issue back to the evening’s developer presentation, arguing that town staff should have informed the developer of the community’s values, culture, and Charter before any investment was made. Ms. Suchy expressed concern that staff do not fully understand or represent the town’s vision, leaving Council at a disadvantage. She urged greater accountability not just for frontline staff, but also for leadership, insisting that the Council, who were elected as the community’s voice, must ensure they’re setting the direction, not being led astray by staff influence.

ADJOURNMENT:

Mayor Kane adjourned the community meeting at 6:42 p.m.

**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES,
FLORIDA**

ATTEST:

Town Clerk

Mayor Anita Kane, Seat 3

Vice Mayor Margaret Herzog, Seat 5

Councilmember Phillis Maniglia, Seat 1

Councilmember Laura Danowski, Seat 2

Councilmember Robert Shorr, Seat 4