



**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES
TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY OPEN DISCUSSION WORKSHOP
MEETING MINUTES
JANUARY 23, 2024, 6:00 P.M.**

Meeting audio available in Town Clerk's Office.

CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Danowski called the meeting to order at 6:01 p.m.

PRESENT

Mayor Laura Danowski, Vice Mayor Robert Shorr, Councilmember Margaret Herzog, Councilmember Phillis Maniglia, Councilmember Marianne Miles, Town Manager Francine Ramaglia, Town Attorney Tanya Earley, Public Works Director Richard Gallant, and Acting Town Clerk Valerie Oakes were present.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Todd McLendon, 3041 D Road, directed his comments regarding transparency to the Mayor; specifically, to a situation pertaining to the Town that was not disclosed to the public. Mayor Danowski responded that in December of 2022, there was an electronic fraud funds transfer for a payment that appeared to be from a valid vendor that the Town utilizes. Payment was transmitted and found that it was erroneous. All of the funds were returned with the exception of a bank fee. Town Manager Ramaglia stated that the comments from the Mayor were accurate. Any perceived or suspected fraud over \$5,000.00 has to be reported to the Office of the Inspector General (OIG). The investigation was closed because all of the funds were recovered, and a clean audit was received. The matter was disclosed to Finance Advisory and Audit Committee (FAAC). An OIG report was submitted and along with a management inquiry; the OIG found that there was nothing further to investigate. Upon notification of the matter, the Town's insurance company was contacted immediately, then the FBI and the Town Council.

Mr. Woods had questions about road paving on G Road. Mayor Danowski explained that there was a problem obtaining road easements. Public Works Director Gallant provided information regarding eminent domain and adverse possession. Education on the topic has been provided to property owners, specifically, that the Town was

not taking property but rather granting permission to install drainage or paving for public use and that the property still remains in title of the owner and never becomes the property of the Town. If the property owners grant the easements, they have a commitment from the vendor that they will come back and complete paving the roads, and the same pertains to FP&L. Vice Mayor Shorr explained that during the paving phase a Resolution was adopted to provide for the streets that would be paved and requiring obtaining easements prior to paving. In order to move forward without easements, a Resolution would need to be brought before Council. There are two standards for neighborhood roads and town roads.

Mr. Hoffman stated that any Councilmember who is under an ethics violation should not be representing the Town of Loxahatchee Groves in Tallahassee with our tax dollars and questioned if any Councilmember was under investigation. Mayor Danowski responded that she is under investigation. Vice Mayor Shorr also responded that a complaint was filed against him and further explained that anyone could file a charge or complaint, but it would not be fair to stop performing duties until the charges were thoroughly and fairly investigated. Mr. Hoffman also felt that the Town needed to install roundabouts as soon as possible and not streetlights, which allow for the expansion of Okeechobee Boulevard, which would ultimately end up turning it into Military Trail. Mayor Danowski clarified that she was under investigation for an ethics violation and stated that if she is found not guilty of an ethics violation, then she will be eligible to be reimbursed for her attorney's fees by the Town of Loxahatchee Groves. Vice Mayor Shorr added that when he represented the Town in Tallahassee last year, he secured \$750,000.00, which was first time that we have received an appropriation from Tallahassee.

Cassie Suchy requested extra duty speed enforcement on Okeechobee Boulevard and suggest the Florida Highway Patrol, if the Palm Beach County Sherriff's Office is unable. The other issue is ingress/egress on E Road, trailers move as they have the right-of-way to go east onto Okeechobee. Suggested that the Town review the statutory guidelines regarding the Land Planning Agency and the Land Development Regulation Commission. It was her understanding that the Town should designate the Planning and Zoning Board to serve as the Land Planning Agency pursuant to Florida State Statute. Town Manager Ramaglia responded that the Town Attorney evaluated the entire process and requirements for the Planning and Zoning Board versus the Town Council review and would move forward accordingly. Town Attorney Earley added that pursuant to Ordinance 2019-04, the Town Council appointed the Planning Board as the LPA. The LPA pursuant to Florida State Statues has reviewed and commented on the Comprehensive Plan. The next step in the process is Town Council review and approval via ordinance in accordance with state law.

Katie Lakeman, 15162 25th Place North, had concerns about the grading of the existing dirt roads as it has not been done since August.

ADJOURNMENT:

There being no further comments the meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES, FLORIDA

ATTEST:

Town Clerk

APPROVED AS TO LEGAL FORM:

Office of the Town Attorney

Mayor Laura Danowski

Vice Mayor Robert Shorr

Councilmember Margaret Herzog

Councilmember Marianne Miles

Councilmember Phillis Maniglia

