



**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES
TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY OPEN DISCUSSION WORKSHOP
TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 155 F. Road, Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470
Tuesday, September 18, 2024**

CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Anita Kane called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Anita Kane, Vice Mayor Margaret Herzog, Councilmember Laura Danowski, Councilmember Phillis Maniglia (arrived at 6:05 p.m.), Councilmember Robert Shorr, Town Manager Francine Ramaglia, Town Attorney Glen Torcivia, Public Works Director Richard Gallant, Project Coordinator Jeff Kurtz, Town's Planning Consultant Kaitlyn Forbes (of Complete Cities) and Town Clerk Valerie Oakes were present.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Ms. Dianna Babington expressed ongoing concerns regarding drainage issues in her area with regards to the severity of the flooding, noting that recent heavy rains have exacerbated the problem. Staff explained that the Town is currently in the process of repairing the culverts but is facing challenges with residents' driveways. Over the past 30 to 40 years, residents have installed culverts at varying elevations, with some being too high or improperly placed, which has contributed to the drainage issues. Furthermore, the Town's code enforcement department is actively working with residents to address drainage issues. However, the Town cannot enter private property and make changes without permission. This is a common issue throughout the Town, as many subdivisions rely on residents to maintain their drainage swales and culverts. Town Manager Ramaglia provided an update on a draft ordinance that would allow the Town to declare flooding a nuisance issue, which would give the Town authority to intervene, fix drainage problems, and assess the costs to the affected property owners. The first draft of this ordinance was previously rejected, but a revised version has been prepared and is scheduled to go before the Council in the next 30 days.

Councilmember Maniglia referenced a past incident on Brian Road and questioned why the Town does not have the necessary equipment to clear clogged culverts and suggested that purchasing such a tool should be a priority. Staff confirmed that the Town has explored contracting with a company that provides culvert cleaning services. In the past week alone, the Town has received approximately 40 calls from residents about flooding on nearly every road in the community. They acknowledged the urgency of the situation but noted that the Town does not have the staff, budget, or equipment to fix every drainage issue simultaneously. They reiterated that property owners have a responsibility to maintain their drainage systems and that the Town can only step in under specific circumstances. Town Manager Ramaglia stepped in to acknowledge the concerns and noted that the Council will be reviewing proposals to allow the Town to intervene in cases where flooding is a persistent issue. She reminded residents that filling in historic drainage ditches worsens water flow and emphasized the importance of consulting Town Hall before making any changes to existing drainage systems.

Mr. Eric Green, a member of the CERT group, addressed the Council regarding a budget concern. He stated that it had come to the group's attention that a budget item for CERT was either eliminated or left out of the most recent budget. However, he had been informed that the unused funds from the 2024 budget would carry over into the new fiscal year and sought confirmation on whether this information was accurate. Staff confirmed that the carryover was correct, explaining that approximately \$4,400 in unused funds from previous years remained available. It was also noted that if additional funds were needed, the Council would be open to discussing and potentially approving additional allocations, as they value the CERT team's contributions to the Town. A Council member added that when the budget was reviewed, it was observed that CERT had more carryover funds than what is typically budgeted for them annually, which is why no new allocation was made in this cycle. Mr. Green clarified that while CERT does not require a large amount of funding, they do have occasional supply needs, particularly for resupplying their trailers with necessary equipment. Staff reassured him that the Town insures the CERT trailers and would be willing to assist with any additional needs, such as paint or other supplies, should the group require them.

The conversation then shifted to Emergency Management planning, where it was noted that the Town is working closely with CERT on a new Emergency Management Plan. As part of this effort, the Town plans to hold a tabletop exercise, a pre-storm preparedness event designed to simulate emergency response scenarios. Mr. Green inquired whether this exercise had been scheduled. Staff responded that while the event had not yet been scheduled, they would ensure he was informed once a date was set.

Mr. Robert Austin, emphasized his concern with the Recreational Vehicle issue in the community. The Town is a single-family rural residential neighborhood and not intended to function as a KOA-style campground, a trailer park, or a seasonal stop for northern RVers. While he agreed with the Council's decision to reject a high-end RV park due to its large number of sites, high nightly rates, and lack of community amenities, he pointed out that many residents seemed primarily concerned about the additional traffic it would bring to Southern Boulevard. He supports allowing equestrian properties to host a few seasonal RV sites, but he expressed frustration over year-round RV rentals.

He then shifted his attention to the Town’s employee salaries, expressing concern that Loxahatchee Groves is one of the lowest-paying municipalities in Palm Beach County. He noted that only two Town employees have been there for five years, which contributes to the staff turnover. Furthermore, cautioned that if the Town does not take a more strategic approach to expanding its tax base, future tax hikes could become unavoidable.

Ms. Ruth Menor, addressed the condition of Casey Road and the ongoing drainage issues affecting her property and those of her neighbors and requested a comprehensive drainage Public Works Director Gallant explained that all roads scheduled for paving this year have plans for culvert installations. Ms. Menor offered to host a Casey Road neighborhood meeting at her house to bring residents together and start working toward a comprehensive drainage solution with the Town.

Marianne Miles expressed concerns about drainage, road conditions, and the Town’s policies regarding legal expenses for council members. She reasoned that council members should be reimbursed for legal fees if they are found not guilty or if the case is dismissed, as they are acting in their official capacity to represent the Town.

ADJOURNMENT

The workshop recessed at 6:53 PM for a three-minute break before transitioning into the regular Town Council meeting.

**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES,
FLORIDA**

ATTEST:

Mayor Anita Kane, Seat 3

Town Clerk

Vice Mayor Margaret Herzog, Seat 5

Councilmember Phillis Maniglia, Seat 1

Councilmember Laura Danowski, Seat 2

Councilmember Robert Shorr, Seat 4