



Town Council Meeting
September 11, 2023 at 6:00 PM
Howey-in the-Hills Town Hall 101
N. Palm Ave., Howey-in-the-Hills,
FL 34737

MINUTES

Mayor MacFarlane called the Town Council Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
Mayor MacFarlane led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.
Councilor Reneé Lannamañ delivered an invocation.
Councilor Reneé Lannamañ delivered a remembrance to the 9/11 tragedy and led the Council in a moment of silence for the victims of 9/11.

ROLL CALL

Acknowledgement of Quorum

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Councilor Reneé Lannamañ | Councilor David Miles | Councilor George Lehning | Mayor Pro Tem Marie V. Gallelli | Mayor Martha MacFarlane

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O'Keefe, Town Administrator | John Brock, Town Clerk | Rick Thomas, Police Chief | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney (Zoom) | Tom Harowski, Town Planner (Zoom) | James Southall, Public Utilities Supervisor (Zoom)

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the meeting's agenda; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Councilor Lehning, Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli, Mayor MacFarlane

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 August 28, 2023 Town Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the Consent Agenda; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Councilor Lehning, Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli, Mayor MacFarlane

Nay: None

PUBLIC HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

2. Discussion: Town Staff Vacation Requirements

Mayor MacFarlane introduced this item. Mayor MacFarlane explained that the Town Staff had maximum leave accrual for vacation of 160 hours. Several of the town's employees are currently maxed out on their vacation accrual and they are not in violation of any policy because the Town currently does not have a policy requiring Town Staff to take vacation. Mayor MacFarlane stated that this is a problem because the Town needs to ensure that it has adequate backup for people, and it puts the Town at a financial liability to have to pay the maximum amount of vacation out if the employee resigns from the Town. Mayor MacFarlane asked for the Town Council's perspective on mandating the Town Manager to change the Town's policies and require all employees to take at least 5 consecutive days off each 12-month period.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that she thinks Town Staff should have to take their vacation because the employees will come back refreshed.

Councilor Lehning asked if the Town Council did create a policy mandating that each person had to take a week off each 12-month period, what the penalty to an employee would be if they did not take the week off. Mayor MacFarlane stated that usually there was not a penalty, just that if the employee got to their 51st week without a week off they would be sent home on vacation for a week.

Councilor Lannamañ stated that not taking vacations was not only unhealthy for the individual, but it was unhealthy for their home life. Councilor Lannamañ also wondered if individuals were being cross-trained in other responsibilities so that they could cover for people.

Councilor Miles stated that there were auditing requirements that anyone that works in the financial management function (or any management role) specifically that they must take at least 5 consecutive days off, each year, so that someone else can sit in and do their jobs for that time period. This is an internal control function, and the Town Auditor should be checking for this.

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe stated that the Town's Directors were actively working to update the Town's Personnel Policies.

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

Motion made by Mayor MacFarlane to direct the Town Manager to add to the Town Personnel Policy that each Town Staff member must take 5 consecutive workdays off each year; seconded by Councilor Lehning.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañi, Councilor Miles, Councilor Lehning, Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli, Mayor MacFarlane

Nay: None

3. Discussion: **Budget Line Item Transfer vs. Account Level Balancing**

Mayor MacFarlane introduced and explained this item. Mayor MacFarlane stated that it was very cumbersome to have everything balanced to the line item rather than to the account level; it was difficult to read and deal with. Mayor MacFarlane stated that, historically, the Town had budgeted to the account level (Cost Center). Mayor MacFarlane stated that she believed at a prior meeting the Town Councilors had directed the Town Manager to manage the Town's budgets to the account level and not to the object level.

Councilor Miles gave a definition of what a Cost Center was and stated that it would be better to manage the Town's budget in this manner (managing the budget on a Cost Center basis for balancing). Councilor Miles stated that standard caps are usually \$1,000, \$5,000 or \$10,000 and that different department directors might have different caps. Councilor Miles stated that significant transfers should still come before the Town Council for approval.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli asked if the Town would lose transparency by moving to Account Level Balancing. Councilor Miles stated that it would not and suggested that the Town should have a policy with a cap on how much an object line could go over budget, by department director authority, without having to go to a Budget Adjustment.

Councilor Miles suggested that the Town Manager should come up with a written policy authorizing department directors to use Account Level Balancing and stating what the caps were for the Account Level Balancing that a department director could authorize. Councilor Miles suggested a \$5,000 cap for the larger departments. The cap would be the maximum amount of money that could be transferred into an object line for the fiscal year.

There was a consensus from the Town Council to direct the Town Manager to have to come back to the Town Council with a written policy authorizing department directors to use Account Level Balancing and stating what the caps were for the Account Level Balancing that a department director could authorize.

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

4. Presentation: **Town Organizational Chart and Responsibilities**

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, explained that the presentation for this meeting would not include an Organizational Chart, but would be a Function-Based Accountability Chart, to show the major functions that pertained to a departmental area. Prior to the presentation of the Function-Based Accountability Chart, Mayor MacFarlane stated that each area of the chart should have Personnel Management and Contract Management added to each of the Department Directors' areas.

Councilor Miles asked about who the Code Enforcement Officer worked for. Mayor MacFarlane explained the history of who the Code Enforcement Officer worked for and why it had changed in the past. Mr. O'Keefe explained that the Code Enforcement Officer reported directly to the Town Manager.

Town Clerk, John Brock, presented the Function-Based Accountability Chart. With the assistance of Police Chief, Rick Thomas, Mr. Brock began with the Town's largest department, the Police

Department. Mr. Brock then explained the functions within the Library Department and roles of some of the auxiliary groups that assist the library, such as the independent 501(c)(3) organization, the Friends of the Library (FOL). Mr. Brock also began the presentation of the Public Works and Public Utilities Department's functions.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment at this point.

Beth Flack, 607 S Florida Ave. – Mrs. Flack stated that she took great offense at Councilor Miles calling the FOL a “slush fund” for Library Director Tara Hall. Mrs. Flack asked for an apology from Councilor Miles.

Councilor Miles disagreed with having to apologize.

Mayor MacFarlane asked for the presentation to continue.

Mr. Brock completed the presentation of the Function-Based Accountability Chart by presenting the Town Hall Department.

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

Mayor MacFarlane called the Town Council Meeting to recess at 7:44 PM. Mayor MacFarlane reconvened the Town Council Meeting at 7:48 PM.

5. Discussion: **SMART Goals Update**

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, summarized his SMART Goals Update that was included in the meeting’s packet.

Councilor Miles stated that he wanted the Town to provide water and wastewater services to the proposed Drake Point Development and would like to see the Town Manager pursue having them annex into the Town. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that it was fairly common when talking to a development that was non-contiguous to the Town, but the Town was supplying utilities to it, to have them sign an agreement to annex (as a voluntary annexation) if and when the development becomes contiguous to the Town.

Councilor Miles stated Dr. Lynch had forwarded a marked-up draft for a donation of a 4.5-acre parcel to the Town and Councilor Miles had sent that draft to the Town Manager and Town Attorney. Councilor Miles stated that he hoped this agreement for the donation of Dr. Lynch’s land would come before the Town Council soon for approval.

Mr. O’Keefe stated, that in support of one of Councilor Lannamañ’s SMART Goals, that the Town Planner was working on an Action Plan Update for Developments that will assist the Town Councilors on understanding where they are in the process of development. This action Plan Update would come before the Town Council soon.

Councilor Miles and Councilor Lehning asked when the Town Planner would be sending out the compilation of Land Development Code (LDC) and Comprehensive Plan amendments suggestions that each of the Town Councilors had created.

There was a consensus from the Town Councilors that they just wanted their submitted comments on the LDC and Comprehensive Plan returned to them compiled by the Town Planner and that the Town Planner should submit that and whatever else he had created to them by Friday, September 15, 2023. Tom Harowski agreed to submit that as requested.

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

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

6. Town Hall

This department report was submitted in the meeting's packet.

7. Police Department

Police Chief, Rick Thomas, added to his submitted report that 2 of his officers saved the life a of a drug overdose victim during the weekend prior to the Town Council Meeting.

8. Code Enforcement

None

9. Public Works

This department report was submitted in the meeting's packet.

10. Library

This department report was submitted in the meeting's packet.

11. Parks & Recreation Advisory Board / Special Events

None

12. Town Attorney

None

13. Finance Supervisor

None

14. Town Manager

None

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

15. Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli stated that the Town Manager had told her that the State had acknowledged receipt of the packet necessary for the 4.25-million-dollar state appropriation for Water Treatment Plant #3.

16. Councilor Lehning

Councilor Lehning asked about the status of the Rebuilding of Dixie Dr. project. Mr. O'Keefe said that the construction crew was not finished yet, but that they were very close to completion.

Councilor Lehning asked about the well drilling project. James Southall, Water Utilities Supervisor, stated that the drilling team was supposed to have the drilling rig on site during the next week and could then start the drilling process.

Councilor Lehning asked about the Citrus Ave. Right of Way (ROW) project. Mr. O’Keefe stated that Lake County had consented to transferring the ROW to the Town and that the next step would be to work with the property owner to realign the ROW.

17. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles asked if Lake County had supplied the final paperwork for the transfer of the Citrus Ave. ROW. Mr. O’Keefe stated that this had not happened yet.

Councilor Miles asked for the Public Works Director to supply a 5-year prioritized list of Road Reconstruction projects showing what order roads would be worked on in the Town. Mr. O’Keefe stated that this would be supplied next week, and the Public Works Director would make a presentation on this topic during the next Town Council Meeting.

Councilor Miles asked for an update on the hiring process for the Finance Supervisor position.

18. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ stated that she would like to see a Town Hall Meeting/Workshop for the citizens of Howey-in -the-Hills so that she would hear what is important to citizens of the Town. Councilor Lannamañ suggested that there should not be a topic for this meeting and citizen comment time limits should be removed or at least extended to 5 minutes for this meeting. Councilor Lannamañ suggested that this meeting could be scheduled for November.

Councilor Lannamañ wanted a status update on where the Town was on updating the Town’s Land Development Code in relation to required trees and would like to see this topic come before the Town Council before 2024.

Councilor Lannamañ stated that she would like to see fresh looks or plans from the Town Planner.

Councilor Miles asked permission to add two items to his report and Mayor MacFarlane granted his request.

Councilor Miles asked if there was a way to put an expiration date on developments that did not have a sunset date.

Councilor Miles stated that he would like to see a lower millage rate for the Town and that he was going to make a motion in the future to lower the millage rate to 7.45. Councilor Lannamañ suggested that she might support that next year.

19. Mayor MacFarlane

Mayor MacFarlane stated that the packet that the Town Manager had submitted to the State for the Town’s 4.25-million-dollar appropriation had some errors in it.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that she thought the Town needed to create an Education Packet for residents and that the upcoming Venezia Block Party would have been the perfect time to have a table and hand out a packet like that.

Mayor MacFarlane also stated that she wanted to see the Town sponsor an educational game of “Let’s Balance” (this game was about how a municipality balances a budget) for residents sometime in the future. Mayor MacFarlane stated that she would be willing to moderate this game.

Mayor MacFarlane asked about a timeframe from FDOT for the sidewalk improvements project on State Road 19. Mayor MacFarlane tasked the Police Chief to get a status update on this project.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that she thought it was a state law that the Town needed to send out meeting agendas and packets for meetings one week before the meetings were scheduled. Mayor MacFarlane acknowledged that this would be hard and would like to see these items sent out at least by Wednesday prior to a Town Council meeting.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

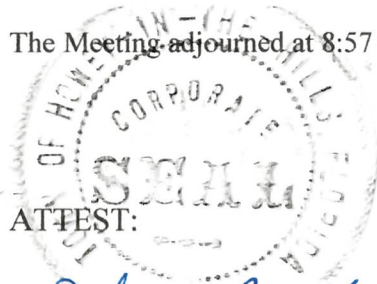
Any person wishing to address the Mayor and Town Council and who is not on the agenda is asked to speak their name and address. Three (3) minutes is allocated per speaker.

Tim Everline, 1012 N Lakeshore Blvd – Mr. Everline apologized if someone thought that he was attacking the Mayor, as that was not his intention and he apologized to the Mayor if she thought he was attacking her. Mr. Everline suggested that the Town Manager should remind the Town Councilors that they have a Code of Core Values for Civility and Ethics and that it is the right of citizens to make comments at meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m. | **Attendees: 20**



ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk

Mayor Martha MacFarlane