



Town Council Meeting
September 08, 2025 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 Present and Proper Notice Given

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Pro Tem Tim Everline | Councilor Jon Arnold | Councilor Reneé Lannamañ | Councilor David Miles (via phone) | Mayor Graham Wells

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O'Keefe, Town Manager | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney (via Zoom) | Town Attorney, Heather Ramos | Morgan Cates, Public Services Director | April Fisher, Town Planner | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION OF GUESTS

None

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to allow Councilor Miles to participate and vote remotely via phone; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to remove Item #8 (Salary Study), #9 (Library Assistant Pay), and #10 (Retention Incentive FY26) from the meeting's agenda; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. Motion approved by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: Councilor Arnold, Mayor Wells

PUBLIC QUESTION & COMMENT

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. The general Public Question & Comment period will be limited to a maximum of thirty (30) minutes unless extended by the Presiding Officer.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N. Tangerine Ave. – Town resident, Tom Ballou, criticized the Council for ignoring citizen input and likened their decision-making to persistent developers. He expressed concern over a recent 3–2 vote allowing a traffic signal instead of the originally agreed-upon roundabout at the new Publix entrance on Highway 19, following pressure from the developer. Mr. Ballou urged the Council not to allow further changes to the development agreement.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Town resident, Andi Everline, raised concerns about increased morning traffic and speeding on Lakeshore Blvd., suggesting a need for greater police presence. She also criticized the Town’s ongoing lack of ADA compliance, citing inaccessible fishing piers, a non-inclusive playground, and hazardous sidewalk gaps along Lakeshore Blvd. that pose risks to pedestrians and wheelchair users. She urged immediate attention and regular maintenance.

Clay Ormsbee, 301 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Town resident, Clay Ormsbee, asked whether the Town has a broader employee retention issue beyond police turnover and whether low pay might be a contributing factor. He also offered assistance with restoring the shoreline area, emphasizing its importance to the Town's beauty. Mr. Ormsbee volunteered to research and help replace the marine-grade red and green nautical lights and protective cages, as he did during the 2009 boat ramp project, and invited staff to contact him for support.

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 Eveline requested to pull Agenda Items #3, #4, and #5 from the Consent Agenda for discussion.

1. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the August 25, 2025, Town Council Meeting.
2. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the August 25, 2025, Town Council Budget Workshop.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the Consent Agenda (Agenda Items #1 and #2); seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. Motion approved by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

3. Consideration and Approval: **Piggyback Agreement - Aquatic Vegetation Control**

Council deliberated on a proposed piggyback contract for aquatic vegetation control along Lakeshore. Councilor Miles asked whether funding was available in either the current or upcoming budget. Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, stated that, while current budgeted funds under Parks & Recreation could cover this fiscal year’s portion contract, those funds were typically reserved for storm response and urgent repairs. Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, clarified that the contract, estimated at \$8,750 annually, is included in the amended FY26 budget and would become a recurring item.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline voiced support for the project, noting the long-standing need, but raised concerns about vague language in the contract stating that the contractor would inspect the site “from

time to time.” He emphasized the importance of defining service frequency and clarifying who determines when treatment is needed.

Town Attorney, Heather Ramos, confirmed that, although this is a piggyback contract, the Town is permitted to add clarifying terms through an addendum. She committed to modifying the agreement to specify that the contractor would operate at the direction of the Public Services Director, with monthly inspections and additional service as requested. She also noted that the contract contains a termination-for-convenience clause allowing the Town to end the agreement at any time without penalty, beyond payment for completed services.

Councilor Lannamañ asked for funding confirmation and details on contract duration. Mr. Cates explained that the initial term is 12 months with optional renewals for up to three additional years, likely with incremental cost increases. However, he expressed hope that, once under control, the treatment schedule could shift to bi-monthly to reduce future costs. Mr. Cates added that PWC, the selected vendor, came highly recommended by the City of Leesburg for their effective maintenance of multiple water bodies.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Clay Ormsbee, 301 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Town resident, Clay Ormsbee, expressed strong support for the aquatic vegetation control contract, emphasizing that such work is not optional but essential ongoing maintenance. He noted that features like nautical lights and fishing piers also require regular upkeep. Mr. Ormsbee highlighted that, since 2009, the Town has collected approximately \$45,000 from boat ramp key sales, suggesting those funds should support shoreline maintenance. Comparing Howey’s waterfront to neighboring cities like Sanford and Mount Dora, he urged the Town to prioritize completing and maintaining its shoreline amenities.

Joshua Husemann, 671 Avila Pl. – Town resident and Parks and Recreation Board Chair, Joshua Husemann, voiced strong support for funding shoreline improvements. He noted that Parks and Recreation Board has discussed the Lakeshore area for over three years, but their requests for funding have repeatedly been denied. Mr. Husemann emphasized the need for ADA-compliant infrastructure, such as accessible finger piers, and acknowledged the complexity added by nearby swales requiring proper concrete work. He urged the Council to include the project in the budget, stating that completing it would mark a long-awaited success for the Parks and Recreation Board.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to approve agreement with Town Attorney’s modifications; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

4. Consideration and Approval: GFL Sanitation Rate Increase

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, clarified that the proposed 4.58% increase was a contractually permitted cost-of-service increase from GFL to the Town, based on the municipal cost index, not a rate increase for residents. This cost is already accounted for in the Town’s FY26 budget and does not require passing the cost onto the residents.

Town Attorney, Heather Ramos, confirmed that the 4.58% increase is allowed by right under the 2022 agreement. However, she raised concerns about two additional charges that GFL had recently introduced, fees for extra residential carts and for white goods/bulk item pickup, which were not included in the original agreement. Ms. Ramos emphasized that, under the current contract, GFL may not charge the Town for more than one cart per residence unless the contract is formally amended.

Further, Ms. Ramos committed to drafting a simple amendment to the agreement for future Council review. This amendment would:

- Clarify that only one residential trash cart is included per household under the standard service rate.
- Address the ambiguity surrounding white goods and bulk item pickup, which the Town had been inconsistently billed for.
- Reaffirm that contract ambiguities are interpreted in favor of the Town, limiting GFL's ability to unilaterally implement new fees or service changes.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Andi Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Town resident, Andi Everline, expressed concern over inconsistent yard waste pickup, noting unannounced schedule changes, delayed collection, and instances of yard waste being mixed with trash. She asked whether residents should continue separating yard waste and using extra bins. Mayor Wells asked for the staff to follow up with the vendor for clarification.

Alan Hayes, 111 Island Dr. – Town resident, Alan Hayes, stated that he would like to make sure trash pickup stayed at twice a week and wanted to see that in writing.

Marie Gallelli – 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Town resident, Marie Gallelli, had questions about the allowed CPI increase.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N. Tangerine Ave. – Town resident, Tom Ballou, raised concerns about recurring hydraulic fluid leaks from GFL trucks damaging Town roads, noting that cleanup is often neglected despite reports. He urged the Council to address this issue in the upcoming contract amendments.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to just approving the 4.58% rate increase, not an amended agreement at this time; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

5. Consideration and Approval: Public Utilities Truck Acquisition

Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, presented a request to reinstate the purchase of a utility truck into the FY26 budget. Mr. Cates proposed acquiring the vehicle through a 60-month lease-to-own agreement to spread out the cost. He explained that the additional truck is needed to support expanded utility operations, reduce reliance on contractors, and allow for on-call rotation between staff members, particularly Public Utilities Supervisor, James Southall, who has been covering nearly all utility callouts for years without extended leave.

The new truck would enable Public Utilities Worker, Bradley Braunstein, a staff member currently training for water utilities certification, to handle weekly lift station checks and take on-call duties. The Town currently has five lift stations, with more expected due to development. Mr. Cates recommended either a Ford or Chevy, excluding Dodge due to compatibility and maintenance logistics with the Town's existing fleet. He noted the quotes were based on the state contract but said he was also exploring the Florida Sheriff's Association contract for a potentially lower price.

Councilor Miles inquired about financing details, noting the quoted markup and lack of disclosed APR. The vehicle would be leased through Bancorp, and Mayor Wells confirmed that the interest cost over

five years was comparable to a 5% bank loan. The lease amount, about \$10,917 annually, would total approximately \$54,000 over the lease term.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline and other councilors asked about the truck's operational use, confirming it would be taken home when staff are on call and used for inspections, emergencies, and access to off-road lift station sites. Council consensus supported reinstating the vehicle in the FY26 budget, with direction to pursue the lowest-cost option between Chevy and Ford.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Marie Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. - Town resident, Marie Gallelli, raised questions about discrepancies in the vehicle quotes for the proposed utility truck. She noted that the Chevy was listed as a 2026 model, while the Ford was inconsistently listed as both 2025 and 2026. Mr. Cates clarified that both trucks would be new 2026 models, as the ordering window for 2025 had already closed.

Ms. Gallelli also pointed out a difference in pricing breakdowns: the Chevy included a clear dealer markup of \$1,328, while the Ford listed a \$2,195 destination charge with no separate dealer markup. Mr. Cates explained that the Ford pricing included all relevant costs on the first page, and the additional pages showed typical sticker price details.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the Public Utilities Truck Acquisition; seconded by Councilor Miles. Motion approved by roll call vote.

Voting

Yea: Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Mayor Wells

Nay: Mayor Pro Tem Everline

Mayor Wells called for a 5-minute recess at 7:46 p.m.

Mayor Wells reconvened the Town Council meeting at 7:52 p.m.

PUBLIC HEARING

6. Consideration and Approval: (Second Reading) **Ordinance 2025-005 - Platting Process Changes**

Mayor Wells read Ordinance 2025-005 out loud by title only.

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO DEVELOPMENT; PROVIDING FINDINGS; AMENDING SECTION 4.09.00 OF THE HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS LAND DEVELOPMENT CODE; DELETING OBSOLETE AND INCORRECT LANGUAGE REQUIRING VACATION OF PRIOR PLATS BEFORE REPLATTING; CLARIFYING AND REVISING PROCEDURES AND REQUIREMENTS FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF PROPOSED PLATS OF LAND TO CONFORM TO 2025 AMENDMENTS TO PART I OF CHAPTER 177 OF THE FLORIDA STATUTES; REQUIRING TOWN COUNCIL APPROVAL AS A CONDITION TO APPROVAL OF PLATS FOR PRIVATE, GATED SUBDIVISIONS; PROVIDING FOR CODIFICATION, SEVERABILITY, AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Town Planner, April Fisher, introduced the second reading of Ordinance 2025-005, noting that revisions had been made by the Town Attorney based on Council feedback from the prior meeting. She confirmed that the revised ordinance was included in the meeting materials and had received a recommendation of approval from both Town staff and the Planning Board.

Mayor Wells opened the floor for public comment on the item; however, no members of the public chose to speak.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to approved Ordinance 2025-005; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

7. Consideration Approval: **Minor Amendment to Hillside Grove PUD Phase 2**

Town Planner, April Fisher, presented a proposed minor amendment to Phase 2 of the development, stemming from prior Council discussions. The amendment includes three changes: increasing lot widths from 27 to 29 feet, reducing the number of townhome lots by eight, and replacing a planned full-access connection to Number 2 Road with a cul-de-sac and emergency access. The access change follows a determination by Lake County that a second full-access point could not be approved due to its proximity, approximately 1,320 feet, to an existing access in the Mission Rise development. Staff recommended approval of the revised plan.

Mayor Wells opened the floor for public comment, but none was offered. Upon returning to Council discussion, Councilor Miles stated he supported the increased lot sizes and the reduced unit count but opposed the cul-de-sac. He urged the Town to work jointly with the developer and Lake County to restore the originally approved second access, citing safety concerns for a development of more than 50 homes with only one entry point.

Applicant representative, William Ray, of Ray & Associates, explained that Lake County staff, including the engineering director, traffic planner, and District Commissioner Kirby Smith, had firmly denied a second full access point, citing public safety concerns due to its proximity (approximately 1,320 feet) to an existing entrance in the nearby Mission Rise development.

Councilor Miles strongly objected to replacing the full access with a cul-de-sac and emergency-only access, calling it a public safety hazard. He reiterated that the original development approval required two full access points and expressed frustration with Town leadership for allowing the change. Councilor Miles further suggested the Town revisit the issue with the County and warned that failure to advocate for the Council's original conditions might lead him to seek the removal of the Town Manager. He emphasized that the road in question lies within Town limits and that the Town had previously been informed that Lake County was considering transferring jurisdiction to Howey-in-the-Hills.

Mr. Ray responded that the proposed emergency access would be built to support heavy vehicles, such as fire trucks and ambulances, and would be similar to other stabilized access points used within Town limits. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, voiced broader concerns over a recurring pattern where conditions approved by the Council are later rejected or weakened by outside agencies without adequate pushback from the Town. He urged stronger efforts to find workarounds or alternative solutions rather than deferring to non-elected staff decisions from the County or FDOT.

Mayor Wells questioned whether one County Commissioner could unilaterally block such access and proposed escalating the issue to the full Lake County Board of Commissioners. Councilor Lannamañ echoed concerns about limited access but noted that no formal decision had yet been made regarding the road's transfer from County to Town jurisdiction.

After a lengthy discussion, Councilor Miles supported tabling the item to allow time for further negotiation with Lake County and indicated he would personally reach out to the Board of County Commissioners to advocate for a second full access point, consistent with the Town's original development approval.

Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, reiterated that both Town and County staff had repeatedly discussed the access issue, and Lake County's engineering and public works teams remained firm in denying a full-access connection to Number 2 Road. He clarified that the County is currently surveying the road, but due to inconsistent right-of-way along its length, a full access point remains unfeasible under current conditions.

A development representative, Alexandra Flores, clarified the distance between proposed access points as approximately 1,050 feet, not a full quarter mile, and noted this was a key factor in the County's denial. Councilor Miles remained firm, criticizing the inconsistency in County standards and asserting that public safety should override staff objections. He also criticized what he perceived as insufficient advocacy by the Town Manager.

Mr. Wilkes expressed broader frustration with a recurring dynamic in which conditions approved by the Town Council are later overturned by unelected County or FDOT staff. He called for a more assertive approach to defending the Town's planning decisions and expressed concern about the lack of competing engineering solutions or advocacy for alternative designs.

Mayor Wells agreed that escalating the issue to the full Lake County Commission was appropriate and asked Councilor Miles to take the lead in engaging the County, while cautioning against unfairly blaming the Town Manager. The Council ultimately voted 3–2 to table the item until October 13, 2025.

Ms. Fisher reminded the Council that the existing developer agreement gives Lake County sole permitting authority for connections to Number 2 Road. Ms. Flores requested permission to continue submitting engineering plans for other parts of Phase 2, with the understanding that approval would be contingent on resolving the access issue. Ms. Flores also asked to be allowed to be included in the meetings that Councilor Miles and Mr. O'Keefe would be having with the Lake County Board of County Commissioners. The Council agreed this was reasonable.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to table this agenda item to the October 13, 2025, Town Council meeting; seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Everline. Motion approved by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ

Mayor Wells recognized that it was 8:44 p.m. and asked for a motion to extend the meeting

Motion made by Mayor Wells to extend the meeting to 9:30 p.m.; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

8. Consideration and Approval: **Salary Study**

This item was removed from the meeting's agenda during the Agenda Approval section of the meeting.

9. Consideration and Approval: **Library Assistant Pay**

This item was removed from the meeting's agenda during the Agenda Approval section of the meeting.

10. Consideration and Approval: **Retention Incentive FY26**

This item was removed from the meeting's agenda during the Agenda Approval section of the meeting.

11. Consideration and Approval: **Selection of Lake County Educational Concurrency Review Committee Member**

The Town Council discussed the request from Lake County Schools to appoint a representative to the Education Concurrency Review Committee, which meets annually to evaluate the school concurrency program and future school planning based on development data. While several attendees were suggested, including the Town Planner and Town Manager, Council ultimately voted to appoint Councilor David Miles to serve as the Town's representative.

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to appoint Councilor David Miles as the Lake County Educational Concurrency Review Committee Member; seconded by Councilor Arnold. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

Yea: Mayor Pro Tem Everline, Councilor Arnold, Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, Mayor Wells
Nay: None

12. Discussion: **Woodard and Curran Study**

Councilor Lannamañ requested clarification on the recent vote related to the Woodard & Curran wastewater study, expressing concern over the process and the communication surrounding it. She noted that Council voted to advance the full report, including Option 3, to the state for potential funding consideration, but emphasized the importance of understanding that the Central Lake CDD is not currently for sale. Councilor Arnold clarified that the intent of the vote was simply to forward the report to the state for review and potential funding, not to initiate acquisition, recognizing that conditions may change over time.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline and Councilor Arnold both expressed dissatisfaction with how the vote was handled at the previous meeting, noting that it was unclear and last-minute. Councilor Lannamañ stressed the importance of proactively notifying affected parties, such as the CDD and consultants, before such votes occur, rather than letting them learn about developments during public meetings. It was also noted that Woodard & Curran had not communicated with key stakeholders, including the CDD's managing partner, which Council agreed should be addressed through improved follow-up and outreach. Mayor Wells acknowledged that the report and presentation were available ahead of the meeting but agreed with the broader point that clearer communication in advance would be beneficial.

13. Discussion: **Town Attorney RFQ**

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, informed the Council that five proposals were received for Town Attorney services, including one from the current firm, GrayRobinson. He clarified that, unlike other consultants, the Town Attorney is directly selected by the Council, making this process more like a job interview by the full Council.

Staff recommended that Council hold interviews, preferably one hour each, with all five firms, scheduled over several days. Councilors generally agreed, with suggestions to space interviews across multiple days to avoid overload and maintain fairness. There was consensus that each firm was qualified and deserved a face-to-face meeting.

Council expressed a preference to schedule interviews in early October, given existing September obligations (budget hearings, council meetings, personal travel). Mayor Wells and others suggested submitting availability (including AM/PM preferences) to the Town Clerk to identify overlapping time slots for scheduling.

Councilor Lannamañ inquired whether all firms must be interviewed or if some could be excluded based on review. The Town Manager clarified that Council has discretion, but there was strong consensus to interview all five due to the quality of proposals submitted.

Council tentatively agreed to finalize interview dates at the next Council meeting. The goal was to complete the interview process and make a selection by the end of October.

14. Consideration and Approval: **Local Option Gas Tax Letter of Support**

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, informed the Council that Lake County is considering increasing the local option gas tax by 5 cents per gallon, raising the total from 7 to 12 cents (the legal maximum). The Board of County Commissioners is scheduled to vote on this on Monday, September 23. The request for municipal support, including letters of endorsement, came from Lake 100 and others.

Mr. O'Keefe explained that, while the majority of the revenue would go to the County, municipalities would receive a share based on population. Mayor Wells noted that the Town currently receives approximately \$1,100/month from the current 1-cent County gas tax and could expect an estimated \$5,500/month more if the 5-cent increase is approved, totaling an additional \$60,000 annually for Town road improvements.

Councilor Miles made a motion to send letters to each County Commissioner in support of the gas tax increase, citing the region's road funding shortfalls and rapid development. He emphasized the need for immediate investment in transportation infrastructure.

Motion made by Councilor Miles for the Town Manager to send a letter to the Lake County Board of County Commissioners supporting this measure and asking for the Board of County Commissioners to support with a super majority vote; seconded by Mayor Wells. Motion approved by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: Councilor Arnold

Councilor Arnold expressed concern about enacting a tax without voter approval and supported a public referendum instead. Mayor Wells countered that tax referendums often fail, and a failed vote would leave roads unfunded despite urgent needs.

15. Discussion: **Scheduling the Town Manager Performance Evaluation Review Date**

The meeting date for the annual Town Manager Performance Evaluation was set for a Town Council Workshop to be held on October 7, 2025, from 3:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

16. Town Hall

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

17. Police Department

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

18. Code Enforcement

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

19. Lake County Fire Rescue

None

20. Public Services Department

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

21. Parks & Recreation

None

22. Library / Community Events

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

23. Town Attorney

None

24. Finance Supervisor

This report was included in the meeting's packet.

25. Town Manager

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, provided several updates. Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, is finalizing the request for proposals (RFP) for the boat ramp dock project, with the goal of advertising it in late October or early November. Mr. O'Keefe announced that the Final Millage/Budget Public Hearing was scheduled for Wednesday, September 24 at 5:05 p.m., following the Monday Council meeting that same week.

Councilor Everline inquired about attending the upcoming IEMO II training conference in Orlando. Although the Town does not currently have a formal policy for approving Council travel and training, funds are available in the budget. Council members discussed prior experiences attending the conference, including the value of networking events and the logistics of lodging and parking reimbursement.

Councilor Miles' remote phone connection was disconnected from this meeting at 9:18 p.m.

Mr. Cates announced that the Town of Howey-in-the-Hills will once again participate in the annual Lake County Water Cleanup event. The Town will partner with the Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (FWC), Lake County Water Authority, Lake County, the cities of Leesburg,

Eustis, and Tavares, as well as Keep Lake Beautiful. The cleanup will take place on Saturday, September 20, from 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Howey boat ramp.

COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENT

26. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

Mayor Pro Tem Everline shared that the second annual “Tip-a-Cop” event was held the previous Saturday night at J.B. Boondocks. While attendance appeared lower than last year, he noted it was still a nice event benefiting charitable causes. He also mentioned he was the only Town Council member or staff in attendance.

Mayor Pro Tem Everline stated that he plans to ask the Town Manager to schedule a future meeting segment on marketing, where he will share ideas gathered at a recent conference, many of which, he noted, would not incur costs for the Town.

27. Councilor Arnold

Councilor Arnold informed the Council that he had submitted his name for consideration to serve on a Florida League of Cities (FLC) committee, following an invitation in one of their weekly communications. He explained that his intent was to ensure Howey-in-the-Hills secured a seat on the committee, which focuses on education and training. If selected, he suggested the Town could later determine who would be the best-qualified individual to serve.

28. Councilor Miles

None

29. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ expressed strong concern regarding the Town’s fiscal responsibility in light of current and emerging economic challenges. She emphasized the importance of Council taking a thoughtful, prudent approach to spending, particularly as budget approval approaches. Councilor Lannamañ cautioned against overreliance on projected revenue from future development, noting that site plans do not guarantee construction or home sales, especially in an unstable housing market. She referenced national economic indicators, including rising layoffs, increasing household debt, and Florida’s high foreclosure rate, as reasons for fiscal caution. She also requested clarification regarding funding for new water meters and whether associated costs would be collected upfront. Councilor Lannamañ urged the Council to prioritize maintaining adequate reserves and protecting staff employment, stressing that financial mismanagement could ultimately force difficult decisions, such as layoffs. She asked for her concerns to be formally recorded in the minutes.

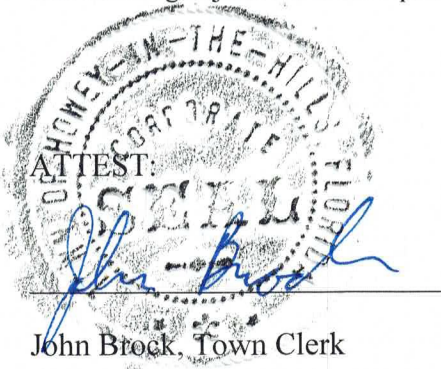
30. Mayor Wells

Mayor Graham Wells noted that the newly released July finance report, covering 10 months of the fiscal year, shows the Town is approximately \$250,000 over in revenues and \$415,000 under in expenses. He stated that, from a budgeting standpoint, the Town is in strong financial shape and is on track to bolster fund balances or reserves. Mayor Wells highlighted the effort that went into preparing the upcoming budget for adoption, emphasizing that it delivers a general fund surplus, reduces the tax burden by \$123,000 compared to the rollback rate, and maintains current rates for water, wastewater, and sanitation. He praised the budget as a strong, carefully prepared document that reflects responsible fiscal stewardship.

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 9:30 p.m. | Attendees: 68





Graham Wells, CMC, Mayor