



Town Council Meeting

April 24, 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.
Mr. Jim Steele, Lake County Poet Laureate, read a poem.

ROLL CALL

Acknowledgement of Quorum

MEMBERS PRESENT:

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

MEMBERS EXCUSED ABSENT:

Councilor George Lehning

STAFF PRESENT:

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

AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW

**Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the meeting's agenda; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ.
Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.**

Voting

Yea: Councilor Lannamañ, Councilor Miles, 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.

Councilor Miles asked to have Items #2 and #3 pulled from the Consent Agenda and considered separately.

1. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the April 10, 2023 Town Council Meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve of the Consent Agenda (now just agenda item #1); seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

2. Consideration and Approval: **Lake County Water Authority 2023 Stormwater Grant Program Agreement**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, to introduce and explain this item. Mr. O’Keefe explained that the Town had been awarded a grant from the Lake County Water Authority (LCWA) for necessary stormwater work.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite stated that he was very much in favor of this grant and thanked the Town for getting it.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment for this item.

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli expressed concern that the LCWA would not prepay the Town the funds awarded in the grant since the Town has to pay the vendors before the LCWA pays the Town.

Councilor Miles had questions for the Public Works Director. Councilor Miles wanted to know what the stormwater feature would look like, if it was fenced off, what the screening requirement was, and what its depth would be. Councilor Miles stated that he was concerned that alligators would get into it and attack dogs or kids if it was not fenced off. Councilor Miles stated that he was also concerned about kids drowning in the stormwater retention pond. Councilor Miles was also concerned that this project would mess up the appearance of the park area in front of Little Lake Harris. Councilor Miles wanted to know if the grant covered fencing around the stormwater retention pond. Councilor Miles also wanted the Town Manager to check to see if the Town could divert the money to the North Dixie Drive repaving project and add stormwater drainage to that project.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli for conditional approval of acceptance of the Lake County Water Authority 2023 Stormwater Grant (the acceptance was conditional on there being a fence around the stormwater feature and the grant paying for the fence); seconded by Councilor Miles. Motion approved unanimously by roll-call vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

3. Consideration and Approval: **Engagement of De La Parte, et al., for Consumptive Use Permit (CUP)**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, to introduce and explain this item. Mr. O’Keefe explained that the St. Johns River Water Management District (SJRWMD) was currently only

going to approve the Town's CUP for a five-year period (which was not one of their normal options) and was going to require the Town to complete a surface water study. Sarah Whitaker, the Town consultant and expert on CUP applications, has recommended that the Town retain de la Parte, Gilbert, McNamara & Caldevilla, P.A., who specializes in appealing to the Water Management District to get a fairer CUP consideration. A rebuttal to the SJRWMD would need to be written and submitted in May.

Councilor Miles stated that the ability to use effluent from a wastewater treatment plant for landscape watering, reducing reliance on potable water sources, was another reason for the Town to own and run a wastewater treatment facility. Councilor Miles was concerned about a provision in the engagement contract not complying with the Florida Prompt Payment Act.

James Southall, Public Utilities Supervisor, stated that the study that the Water Management District was trying to require the Town to complete would only benefit one potential development.

Councilor Miles stated that, rather than hiring de la Parte, Gilbert, McNamara & Caldevilla, P.A., the Town should just utilize one of the Attorneys from Gray Robinson, the Town's primary attorney firm. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that one of his colleagues, Tom Cloud, may be able to take on this work.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite stated that he thought it did not make sense for the Town to need an attorney. Mr. Tuite stated that he felt it would be a win if the town did not have a CUP large enough to allow any development.

Terri Blessing, 24913 Blue Sink Rd, Howey-in-the-Hills (unincorporated Lake County) – Ms. Blessing did not recommend hiring an attorney. Ms. Blessing also stated that she thought this would be a great opportunity to force developers to have larger lots as this would use less overall water.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment for this item.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to table this item to the next meeting's agenda; seconded by Councilor Lannamañ. Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

Voting

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

Nay: None

PUBLIC HEARING

None

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

4. Presentation: **Joint Planning Agreement (JPA) - Environmental Maps**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, to present this item to the Town Council. Mr. O'Keefe showed and explained the environmental maps that the County had created and shared with the Town during a JPA meeting.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Terri Blessing, 24913 Blue Sink Rd, Howey-in-the-Hills (unincorporated Lake County) – Ms. Blessing asked what the Town wanted. Ms. Blessing expressed that County residents on Number Two Road were angry at the Town and wanted a workshop between the Town and the County residents.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment for this item.

5. Discussion: **Town Participation in Florida Retirement System (FRS)**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, to introduce and explain this item. Mr. O’Keefe explained that the Town participation in FRS would help the Town recruit and retain qualified employees. Mr. O’Keefe stated that most of the municipalities in Lake County were participating in FRS. Mr. O’Keefe stated that, currently, the Town participates in a 457(b) fund that the employees can contribute up to 10% of their pay into and the Town will match that amount of their pay. Mr. O’Keefe explained that the FRS program was a state-run pension plan into which the employee would put in 3.0% of their pay and the Town would contribute 11.91% of the employee’s pay.

Councilor Miles asked about senior management. Mr. O’Keefe stated that only the Town Manager was considered Senior Management and that the Town would need to contribute 31.57% of his pay to participate in the program.

Mayor MacFarlane suggested that the Town Council should discuss this item in further detail during the May 2, 2023, Mid-Year Budget Workshop.

Mayor MacFarlane opened Public Comment for this item only.

Tim Everline, 1012 N. Lakeshore Blvd. – Mr. Everline stated that he felt it was a conflict of interest for Mr. O’Keefe to bring up this item and that it was not fiscally responsible. Mr. Everline stated that he would rather see the Town perform a comparable salary survey.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite asked if civil servants get Social Security.

Mayor MacFarlane closed Public Comment for this item.

Mayor MacFarlane announced a 5-minute recess before starting the next agenda item.

6. Discussion: **Date Selection for FY 2024 Budget Workshop Meetings**

Two dates and times were selected for the Fiscal Year 2024 Budget workshop meetings. The first Budget Workshop would be held on July 13, 2023, from 9 am to 11 am. The second Budget Workshop would be held on July 27, 2023, from 1 pm to 4 pm. Mr. O’Keefe stated that he would confirm with Councilor Lehning (who was not in attendance at this meeting) to ensure that these dates would work for him too.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

7. Town Manager

Sean O’Keefe, Town Manager, reminded the Council and audience of the Howey Founders Day event on May 6th and the Mid-Year Budget Workshop on May 2nd.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

8. Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli

Mayor Pro Tem Gallelli reminded everyone about the Events Committee meeting on April 25, 2023.

9. Councilor Lehning

Councilor Lehning was not in attendance.

10. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles asked for an update on the North Dixie Road repair/reconstruction project. Mr. O’Keefe stated that he would send an update out to all the Town Councilors on the project.

Councilor Miles asked if there was an update on the Citrus Road right-of-way (ROW) title research. Mr. O’Keefe said that there was nothing new. Councilor Miles asked Mr. O’Keefe if a title search expert had been hired yet and Mr. O’Keefe stated that one had not yet been hired. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that the Town may not need to do a title search.

Councilor Miles asked about the status of the grant application to purchase two generators for the Venezia neighborhood wastewater lift stations. Mr. O’Keefe stated that the Town’s grant application had been given the priority level of 4th out of 30 projects and that the submission date for the grant was May 31, 2023.

Councilor Miles asked why all the buildings off Central Avenue, near the Downtown Sewer Project, had not been forced to be hooked up to sewer service. Mayor MacFarlane stated that it was because the Central Lake CDD would not sell the Town ERUs necessary to hook up all the properties. Councilor Miles wanted to know why Lake County was not requiring the Central Lake CDD to allow the hookup of properties into their sewer treatment plant system, when they allegedly are the service provider for those services.

11. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ stated that residents in the Venezia neighborhood had asked her if Purple Plum Trees were OK to plant in the Town, Mr. O’Keefe stated that check into it and confirm with Councilor Lannamañ.

12. Mayor MacFarlane

Mayor MacFarlane asked if there was an update on the Lake County Fire Department’s interest in purchasing two acres of land from the Town on Number Two Road. Mr. O’Keefe stated that he would check into it.

Mayor MacFarlane also asked if there was an update on the Well Drilling Contract. Mr. O’Keefe stated that the signed contract had been sent to Mr. Hausinger for his signature.

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.

Banks Helfrich, 9100 Sam’s Lake Rd, Clermont, FL – Mr. Helfrich spoke about the theme of “meeting in the middle”. Mr. Helfrich sang a song.

Tim Everline, 1012 N Lakeshore Blvd. – Mr. Everline stated that he thought the Town needed to hurry up on changing the Town Comprehensive Plan to remove the requirement for grid streets to connect.

George Brown, Lieutenant with the Howey-in-the-Hills Police Department – Lt. Brown spoke in support of Police Chief Thomas and encouraged Town Councilors to speak with Chief Thomas. Lt. Brown stated that if Chief Thomas were to leave the Town, he and other officers would leave too in support of Chief Thomas.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 8:18 p.m. | **Attendees: 40**



ATTEST:

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John Brock", is written over a horizontal line.

John Brock, Town Clerk

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Martha MacFarlane", is written over a horizontal line.
Mayor Martha MacFarlane