



## **Town Council Meeting**

**March 28, 2022 at 6:00 PM**

**Howey-in-the-Hills Town Hall**

**101 N. Palm Ave.**

**Howey-in-the-Hills, FL 34737**

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### **MINUTES**

Mayor MacFarlane called the Town Council Meeting to order at 6:06 p.m.  
Mayor MacFarlane led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.  
Mr. Jim Steele read aloud his poem, "Considerations".

#### **ROLL CALL**

Acknowledgement of Quorum

#### **MEMBERS PRESENT:**

Councilor George Lehning | Councilor Marie V. Gallelli | Councilor Rick Klein | Mayor Pro-Tem Ed Conroy | Mayor Martha MacFarlane

#### **STAFF PRESENT:**

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

#### **AGENDA APPROVAL/REVIEW**

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

#### **Voting**

**Yea:** Councilor Lehning, Councilor Gallelli, Councilor Klein, Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy, 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 March 14, 2022 Town Council Meeting.
2. Approval: **Playground Equipment Purchase**

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to approve the consent agenda; seconded by Councilor Lehning. Motion approved unanimously by voice vote.

## **Voting**

**Yea:** Councilor Lehning, Councilor Gallelli, Councilor Klein, Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy, Mayor MacFarlane

**Nay:** None

## **PUBLIC HEARING**

None

## **OLD BUSINESS**

### **3. Discussion: Griffin Park playground safety discussion**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Councilor Klein to introduce this topic. Councilor Klein stated that he is concerned about children's safety at Griffin Park. Councilor Klein wanted to have a barrier erected between the playground and Little Lake Harris that would keep alligators out of the playground area. Councilor Gallelli stated that she likes the way things are now because of aesthetics; she would not want a fence the length of the lake. Councilor Klein stated he only wanted a small fence directly around the playground area.

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy asked if there was any additional liability to the Town due to even having this discussion. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, stated that the Town was protected by Sovereign Immunity, but, if an incident is egregious enough, the Florida Legislature could impose a claims bill on the Town. Mayor MacFarlane asked Public Works Director, Morgan Cates, to ask the Florida Wildlife Commission about best practices. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy suggested that the Parks & Recreation Board should investigate this issue.

### **4. Discussion: Future of Sara Maude Mason Park**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Councilor Klein to introduce this topic. Councilor Klein asked if the Town could afford the maintenance of the Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve. Councilor Klein suggested that there were three options for Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve. One option would be to give the preserve to the state, the second option would be to forfeit sections of the boardwalk, and the third option would be to continue on like now and keep on searching for a grant to rebuild it.

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy stated that there was a lot of support for the preserve from the Town's residents. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy suggested that, as the Town grows, it will be able to afford the park.

Parks and Recreation Board Member, Pat Miller, stated the boardwalk had been rebuilt in 2015.

Councilor Klein suggested that the Town Council should revisit this topic every few months. Mayor MacFarlane committed to bringing this topic back up in a June agenda.

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy wanted to have the entrance to the park enhanced and suggested using parks impact fees to do it. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy also suggested that the Town Council budget a sinking fund in the future, which would be used as matching funds for grants.

Councilor Lehning suggested that the Town hire a consultant to plan and design what should be built in Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

### **5. Consideration and Approval: Whispering Hills Development Extension**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Administrator, Sean O'Keefe, to introduce this topic and he deferred to the Town Planner. Tom Harowski, Town Planner, gave a summarization of this staff report and stated

the developer needed more time to submit necessary survey work as part of the Final Subdivision review.

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to approve the extension request for the Whispering Hills Development by one year; seconded by Councilor Klein. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.

**Voting**

**Yea:** Councilor Lehning, Councilor Gallelli, Councilor Klein, Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy, Mayor MacFarlane

**Nay:** None

6. Consideration and Approval: **Building Official Agreement**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Administrator, Sean O'Keefe, to introduce this topic. Mr. O'Keefe explained the Town's current Building Official situation. Mr. O'Keefe explained that the Town was looking to continue utilizing the services of Alpha Inspections, the Town's current temporary Building Official / Inspection service. The Town would be looking to piggyback off the Alpha Inspections agreement with the City of Mascotte.

Councilor Klein suggested that the Town bring in someone for zoning approvals.

Shane Gerwig, Building Official with Alpha Inspections, spoke about what services Alpha Inspections would be providing and how they would be doing that. These services including reporting and tracking services, a Permit Tech on staff to fill in, if necessary, online inspection requests, and next day inspections. Police Chief, Rick Thomas, thanked Alpha Inspections for their assistance with Code Enforcement.

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to approve of the Building Official Agreement with Alpha Inspections contingent on the Town's Legal Department, Town Administrator, and Mayor's approval; seconded by Councilor Gallelli. Motion Passed unanimously by roll call vote.

**Voting**

**Yea:** Councilor Lehning, Councilor Gallelli, Councilor Klein, Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy, Mayor MacFarlane

**Nay:** None

**COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS**

7. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy thanked the previous Building Official, Ron Frank van Frankenstein, for his hard work. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy also wants the Town to explain the development review process to the citizens as it relates to the Bouis property. This would help the residents on the north section of "Old Howey" be aware of the DRC process.

8. Councilor Lehning

Nothing to report

9. Councilor Gallelli

Councilor Gallelli stated that she had spoken to many residents about the potential Bouis property development and interconnecting streets to the old section of Howey. Councilor Gallelli wanted to have a workshop with the public about the Bouis property / Thompson Grove development. Councilor Gallelli also suggested having a buffer zone between “Old Howey” and new developments.

Councilor Gallelli stated that she liked the new electronic message board sign in front of Town Hall. Mayor MacFarlane thanked the Friends of the Library for assisting with partially funding the sign. Mayor MacFarlane stated that the Public Works Department Director had done a great job in project management, ensuring the new sign was constructed and installed correctly.

10. Councilor Klein

Councilor Klein stated that he has spoken to many residents about the potential Thompson Grove development and is concerned about Old Howey losing its flavor or historic view. Councilor Klein suggested that that northern area of the town should be changed to a historic district to preserve its flavor. Sean O’Keefe stated that he would investigate what the historic district zone would entail, including its protections and limitations.

Councilor Klein also wanted the Public Works Department to create a maintenance schedule for all their tasks within the Town. This schedule would help the department when it came time for budget review.

11. Mayor MacFarlane

Mayor MacFarlane stated that the new Town Markers have been completed. Also, Mr. Wilkes, the Town Attorney, was working on the Town Charter changes and stated that the Town’s pending Charter changes were on schedule to be reviewed with the county Supervisor of Elections office.

Mayor MacFarlane deferred the remainder of her time to the Town Administrator, Sean O’Keefe. Mr. O’Keefe gave an update on the Onsyte Septic to Distributed Wastewater grant submittal. The Town has been awarded \$400,000 and Lake County has received \$1,000,000 for the same grant. The Town and County were working together towards the possibility of combining the Town and County’s grants.

Mr. O’Keefe also gave an update on the Town’s possible submittal of two Florida Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO) planning grants, one for Community Planning Technical Assistance and the second for a reanalysis of the Town’s Village Mixed Use designation. These two grants will be submitted by the April 11<sup>th</sup> deadline.

Councilor Klein stated that he had concerns about the Onsyte services.

**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.*

Todd Hawkins, 1110 Lakeshore Blvd – Mr. Hawkins is a new resident to the Town and wants to preserve the nature of the Town.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way - Mr. Tuite expressed his concerns about the Onsyte Septic to Distributed Wastewater system and did not believe they would be effective for phosphates. Mr. Tuite also stated that Sara Maude Mason was a teacher and that the park was for future generations. Also, Mr. Tuite stated that dogs were more dangerous than alligators.

Tim Everline, 1012 N Lakeshore Blvd – Mr. Everline stated that he was concerned about the Thompson Grove development and possibility of interconnecting streets. Mr. Everline also asked questions about the Town’s Land Development Code (LDC) and development process.

Darin Surr, 403 E Camelia Way – Mr. Surr suggested that the Town should use free labor for all the work that needed to be done at the Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve, such as Boy Scouts. Mr. Surr expressed his concern about the possible interconnecting roads into the older sections of Howey.

Mayor MacFarlane – Mayor MacFarlane stated the dates for the upcoming Town events. The Easter Egg Dash would be at the Howey Mansion on April 16<sup>th</sup>. Also, the Founders Day event would also be at the Howey Mansion on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

Kathy Coleman, 706 Santa Cruz Lane – Ms. Coleman stated to everyone at the meeting that the Friends of the Library would be running a Masquerade Ball as a fundraiser for the Town's library. The event would begin selling tickets on Monday, April 4<sup>th</sup>.

### **ADJOURNMENT**


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

The Meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m. | **Attendees: 39**

ATTEST:



  
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Mayor Martha MacFarlane

  
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John Brock, Town Clerk