



Town Council Meeting
January 27, 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

MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mayor Pro Tem Tim Everline | Councilor Jon Arnold | Councilor Reneé Lannamañ | Councilor David Miles | Mayor Graham Wells

STAFF PRESENT:

Sean O'Keefe, Town Manager | Tom Wilkes, Town Attorney | Morgan Cates, Public Services Director | Rick Thomas, Police Chief | John Brock, Deputy Town Manager / Town Clerk

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

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 November 25, 2024, Town Council Meeting.
2. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the December 09, 2024, Town Council Meeting.
3. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the January 13, 2025, Town Council Meeting.

4. Consideration and Approval: **Resolution 2025-001 - Rules of Order**

Mayor Wells explained that there were two changes in the January 13, 2025, Town Council Minutes. The first change was that Councilor Lannamañ was incorrectly listed as attending the meeting remotely via Zoom, when in fact she had attending the meeting in person. The second change dealt with the fact that Mayor Wells had asked the Town Clerk to add more information about the Library Directors introduction as the beginning of the meeting. The Town Clerk had made both of those changes and had added the revised minutes to the meeting packet.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve the Consent Agenda; 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

PUBLIC HEARING

5. Discussion: **Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG – DR) Application for Funding**

Mayor Graham Wells opened the public hearing regarding the Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) application for funding. Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, introduced Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, to provide details on the grant application.

Mr. Cates explained that the Town had previously applied for FEMA and FDEM grants to fund two lift station bypass generators. While the first lift station project has received its contract, the second is still awaiting finalization despite approval. The CDBG-DR grant, administered through Florida Commerce, would cover the Town's 25% funding share required for the FEMA grant, effectively reducing the Town's cost for both projects from \$339,334 to zero.

Councilor Miles inquired about the legality of using federal CDBG-DR funds to cover the local share of another federal grant. Mr. Cates and Mr. O'Keefe confirmed that the CDBG-DR program was designed for this purpose, with application forms specifically requesting details on FEMA funding. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, added that Congress likely established the program to backfill funding gaps in FEMA projects.

Councilor Miles also questioned the cost disparity between the two lift stations, noting that Lift Station #2's project was significantly higher. Mr. Cates explained that additional funds were requested to replace outdated pumps at the second station, which were difficult to maintain and repair.

Discussion continued regarding the long-term viability of the upgrades, with Mr. Cates confirming that, once completed, the lift stations would have reliable, on-site backup generators to operate during power outages.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Tom Ballou, 1005 N. Tangerine Ave. – Mr. Ballou thanked the Town's staff for their diligent work in attempting to get this grant for the Town.

Marie V. Gallelli, 1104 Tangerine Ave. – Mrs. Gallelli thanked the Town's staff for their hard work, and that this grant was a good idea for the Town.

Martha MacFarlane, 63 Camino Real – Former Mayor, Mrs. MacFarlane, raised concerns about Howey-in-the-Hills' eligibility for CDBG funding, noting that previous applications were denied due to

insufficient public input and income-level disqualifications. Mr. O’Keefe explained that this particular CDBG-DR grant allows for “urgent need” in addition to just income levels, as the lift stations are essential for disaster preparedness.

Councilor Miles stated that the Town almost had an overflow event at the Talichet lift station (during a hurricane this year) and that the in-place generators that this project would supply would free up the mobile generator for use with the Talichet lift stations during emergencies such as hurricanes.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Motion made by Mayor Pro Tem Everline to approve the Town’s submission of the application for this CDBG-DR grant; 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

6. Consideration and Approval: **HALFF 12” Change Order**

Mayor Graham Wells introduced the agenda item regarding the consideration and approval of a 12-inch water main change order.

Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, provided an overview, explaining that Halff has been working on the Water Treatment Plant No. 3 project, which includes Wells No. 5 and No. 6. As part of their work, Halff conducted an analysis of the Town’s overall water system and developed a new Water Master Plan. During this review, it was determined that the existing 8-inch water main connecting the Town’s two Water Treatment plants was inadequate and should be upgraded to a 12-inch water main to ensure proper integration with the system and to support the Town’s infrastructure needs.

Mr. O’Keefe clarified that this \$162,480 change order represents an extension of Halff’s existing agreement and will cover the design work necessary for the 12-inch water main interconnection at the site. He noted that this upgrade is essential due to aging infrastructure and potential failure risks, particularly concerning fire suppression. He referenced page 30 of the master plan, which highlights concerns about critical failure potential.

Councilor Lannamañ inquired about the source of the funding for the change order. Mr. O’Keefe stated that the funds would come from the unallocated fund balance of the Water Impact Fee Fund. He further assured that sufficient funds would remain, estimating that approximately \$800,000 would still be available across the Water Impact Fee Fund and the Water Utility Fund. Mayor Wells reinforced that the impact fee fund would not be depleted, nor would the general fund be required to cover the cost.

Councilor Miles raised concerns regarding the proposed pipeline route. He noted that the current path involves North Dixie Avenue, which underwent a \$400,000 reconstruction less than two years ago. He suggested an alternative route that would extend the pipeline two blocks further down Palm Avenue before connecting at Pine Avenue to avoid damage to the newly paved road.

Mr. Troy Mitchell, a representative from Halff, explained that the selected route was chosen for its efficiency and alignment with existing infrastructure. However, he stated that the project team would evaluate Councilor Miles' suggestion to determine feasibility.

Further discussion addressed the phasing of the 12-inch water main upgrade. Mr. Mitchell clarified that only Phase 1—the interconnection between the two water treatment plants—would be the Town's responsibility. The remaining phases would be developer-driven and funded through impact fee credits, ensuring that future development projects bear the financial responsibility for additional pipeline extensions.

Councilor Miles also requested that Halff update the project's maps to reflect the most current Interlocal Service Boundary Agreement (ISBA). Mr. O'Keefe acknowledged that the ISBA maps in the master plan were outdated and agreed to update them accordingly.

Councilor Miles then inquired whether the existing 8-inch pipe would remain in service. Mr. Mitchell explained that some sections would likely be left in place to support six-inch lateral connections, but the new 12-inch pipe would serve as the primary conduit between the water treatment plants.

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

Motion made by Councilor Lannamañ to approve the Halff 12" Change Order; 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

7. Consideration Approval: Resolution 2025-002 - Endorsing Mayor Wells Nomination to the FMIT Board of Trustees

Mayor Graham Wells introduced the final item of new business, Resolution 2025-002, which seeks to formally endorse his nomination to the Florida Municipal Insurance Trust (FMIT) Board of Trustees.

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, provided background on the resolution, stating that it would secure the Town Council's official endorsement of Mayor Wells' nomination and authorize Town staff to submit the necessary documentation to the Florida League of Cities.

Councilor David Miles asked Mayor Wells if he was willing to accept the nomination, to which Mayor Wells stated that he would.

Councilor Miles then made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-002, which was seconded by Councilor Lannamañ.

Mayor Wells opened Public Comment for this item only.

Marie V. Gallelli, 1104 North Tangerine Ave. – Mrs. Gallelli inquired about the benefit to the Town of having a representative on the FMIT Board. Mayor Wells explained that, while larger cities typically dominate board representation, having a delegate from Howey-in-the-Hills could provide a voice for smaller municipalities like Astatula, Montverde, and Umatilla, ensuring that their interests are represented. He acknowledged that his nomination was not guaranteed to be accepted but felt that advocating for small-town participation was worthwhile.

Town Clerk, John Brock, further clarified that FMIT serves municipalities that use the Florida League of Cities' insurance programs (such as the Town of Howey-in-the-Hills). Having a representative from Howey-in-the-Hills on the board would increase the Town's visibility and was good for small municipalities. Mr. Brock also noted that FMIT covers all travel and lodging expenses for board members, ensuring no cost to the Town for Mayor Wells' participation.

Mayor Wells closed Public Comment for this item.

Motion made by Councilor Miles to approve Resolution 2025-002; 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

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

8. Town Manager

Town Manager Sean O'Keefe provided an update on ongoing projects and upcoming initiatives. He expressed enthusiasm for the progress made during the meeting and highlighted that staff continues to make steady advancements on various Town projects.

Mr. O'Keefe reported that the Town is actively engaging with property owners in the North Citrus area and is currently reviewing the second round of plat submissions for that area.

Additionally, Mr. O'Keefe commended the significant efforts of Town staff over the past two weeks in preparing for the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) Workshop, scheduled for January 28, 2025, at 2:00 PM in Town Hall. He emphasized that all related documents were available online for public review and encouraged residents to attend the workshop.

Mr. O'Keefe also noted the presence of three new council members, stating that their participation is expected to bring fresh perspectives and insights into the planning process. He welcomed public engagement and reiterated that the CIP workshop serves as an important foundation for future infrastructure planning and development.

COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

9. Mayor Pro Tem Everline

Mayor Pro Tem Everline stated that he had a good experience at the recent Florida League of Cities (FLC) training. Mayor Pro Tem Everline stated that the experience was worthwhile, not just for the training, but also for the networking.

10. Councilor Arnold

None

11. Councilor Miles

Councilor Miles provided an update on the Watermark Planned Unit Development (PUD) amendment, noting that he and other council members received a draft document from Watermark's attorney. He found the proposal to be well-prepared and commended the developer for adhering to the Comprehensive Plan changes adopted by the Council last year. While the amendment adds several acres

to the development, he noted that all additional housing units comply with the quarter-acre lot minimum requirement for that zoning classification.

Councilor Miles suggested that three to four acres of open space near the old town dump site be deeded to the Town rather than to the Homeowners' Association. He stated that, while there is no definitive plan for a park in that area, it would be beneficial to expand the Town's existing five-acre parcel to provide greater flexibility for future use.

Regarding road infrastructure, Councilor Miles observed that the revised plan no longer includes the previously approved Revels Road relocation, likely saving the developer approximately \$1 million. He emphasized the importance of ensuring that the developer contributes to the planned traffic circle at the Revels Road and Mission Rise intersection. Additionally, he requested that the developer upgrade Revels Road—which is a Town-owned road—at least up to the second entrance of the development. He also suggested evaluating an alternative entrance off State Road 19 directly into Phase 3 of the community.

Councilor Miles expressed concern that Watermark is proposing only one pool and cabana area for a 300-home development. He suggested the addition of a second recreational facility, possibly including a community center for residents.

Regarding PUD compliance with Town codes, he identified several discrepancies in the proposal:

- **Garage Size:** The minimum two-car garage size in the draft document is smaller than the current Town code requires.
- **Lot Coverage:** The maximum lot coverage in the proposal is 60%, which exceeds the 55% standard typically approved for similar communities.
- **Model Repetition:** The proposal allows for three identical houses within a 300-foot block face, which he considers excessive given that only four houses would fit within that distance.
- **Utility Infrastructure:** The agreement does not explicitly require the transfer of all water, wastewater, and reclaimed water infrastructure to the Town, which he would like to see added.
- **Tree Standards:** The proposal still lists 2-inch-caliper street trees, whereas the Town recently increased the standard to 3-inch-caliper trees.
- **Natural Gas Availability:** He suggested that all new developments within the Town be required to offer natural gas service to residents.

Councilor Miles also inquired about the wastewater agreement between the Town and the Central Lake Community Development District (CDD). Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, confirmed that all Council-requested changes were accepted, and the agreement is awaiting final legal descriptions before signing. Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, added that the Mission Rise legal description is being removed since that development is no longer vested, and the final agreement will soon be ready for the Mayor and Town Clerk to sign. Councilor Miles requested that Council members be notified once the document is completed.

In closing, Councilor Miles stated that he would be absent from the February 10th meeting due to international travel and requested an excused absence.

12. Councilor Lannamañ

Councilor Lannamañ raised concerns regarding GFL's (Green for Life Environmental) waste collection service, specifically regarding fuel spills on Town roads. She reported that a GFL truck leaked hydraulic fluid on Bellissimo and Venezia roads and, during a heavy rain event, the spill was observed entering the stormwater system. She noted that two residents had stated that they reported the issue to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), prompting GFL to send a hazmat team to clean up the

contamination. However, she emphasized that road damage caused by GFL's trucks is becoming a significant issue, particularly in Venezia, where the pavement is deteriorating.

Beyond the spills, Councilor Lannamañ highlighted inconsistent service by GFL, stating that the company frequently operates at irregular hours, skips scheduled pickups, and has trucks that break down and remain in place for extended periods. She noted that residents have expressed frustration with these ongoing issues. Additionally, she raised concerns about the \$20 per bulk item pickup fee, questioning whether GFL is truly serving the Town's best interests. She requested a review of the Town's waste collection contract and suggested exploring alternative service providers.

Public Services Director, Morgan Cates, acknowledged the concerns and thanked Councilor Lannamañ for providing videos of the hydraulic fluid spill. He encouraged residents to report any broken-down trucks directly to Town staff, as GFL had not always notified the Town when breakdowns occur. While the videos provided evidence of oil sheens on the road, proving that GFL was the source of the leak remains challenging. Mr. Cates confirmed that he had contacted GFL management but had yet to receive a response. He intends to escalate the issue and request a meeting with GFL's supervisors.

Regarding road damage, Mr. Cates noted that diesel and gasoline leaks significantly degrade asphalt, while hydraulic fluid may have a lesser impact. However, he reiterated that any damage to Town roads must be repaired and that GFL had been previously instructed to clean up spills in other areas, such as Cypress. In the past, he had requested that GFL equip all trucks with spill kits to contain leaks immediately, but he was unsure whether they had implemented this measure. He encouraged residents to report future incidents promptly.

Councilor Lannamañ expressed appreciation for Mr. Cates' responsiveness and noted that she had directed affected residents to contact him directly regarding concerns.

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, clarified that the \$20 per bulk item charge was negotiated in the most recent contract to keep overall collection costs lower. The fee is based on cubic yardage (\$20 per cubic yard), which typically equates to a large appliance. Councilor Lannamañ responded that some residents were reportedly being charged per item, citing an example where two office chairs would cost \$40 to dispose of. She requested clarification from GFL on whether the fee is indeed per cubic yard, as stipulated in the contract.

Councilor Lannamañ inquired about updates on street sign replacements throughout the Town. Mr. Cates stated that he has been in contact with vendors and is working with the City of Tavares' supplier to obtain new signs at a cost-effective rate. Mr. Cates had already assessed the signs and posts in need of replacement and had replaced stop signs in Venezia, which had become aged and damaged.

Councilor Lannamañ also asked whether the State could replace the Venezia Boulevard sign facing State Road 19, but Mr. Cates confirmed that this was the Town's responsibility. Councilor Miles requested that the replacement signs on Camellia Avenue be spelled correctly, which was acknowledged by Mayor Pro Tem Everline.

Councilor Lannamañ referenced a recent update from Councilors Everline and Arnold regarding the MPO (Metropolitan Planning Organization) meeting, which discussed potential traffic improvements. She expressed interest in applying for a pedestrian safety enhancement at the Palm Avenue intersection, where residents have reported vehicles failing to yield to pedestrians at the existing flashing crosswalk.

Mr. O'Keefe confirmed that a safety resolution passed by the Council was the first step in advocating for improvements. Councilor Arnold added that the MPO views crosswalks as a safety issue rather than a traffic issue, which may expedite the process.

Councilor Everline noted that Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) plans to resurface the area in 2026 and will conduct a study before the project begins to determine whether the crosswalk needs enhancements, including potential signalization. Councilor Lannamañ expressed support for this initiative and thanked her colleagues for their efforts.

Councilor Miles raised concerns regarding the Town's electricity franchise agreement with Duke Power, which is set to expire in May 2027. He noted that Duke's tree-trimming contractors have significantly damaged trees in the area and suggested that future franchise negotiations include a requirement for burying all electric lines underground within the Town. He emphasized that this would reduce storm-related outages, enhance aesthetics, and align with current underground utility requirements for new developments.

Town Manager, Sean O'Keefe, stated that he had already discussed the topic with Duke Power representatives, who indicated that a phased undergrounding approach may have been included in past agreements, though it does not appear in the current contract. Councilor Miles suggested a five-year implementation period and reiterated that such an initiative could ultimately save Duke money while improving reliability and preserving trees.

13. Mayor Wells

Mayor Graham Wells provided an update on the Institute for Elected Municipal Officials I (IEMO) training that he, along with two other council members, attended. He described the training as highly beneficial, aside from one session, and encouraged other council members, particularly newly elected officials, to consider attending future sessions.

He noted that the next IEMO II training session is scheduled for April and suggested that interested members visit the Florida League of Cities website to review the course agenda. It was clarified that attendees must complete the first-level course before advancing to additional training.

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.

Marie V. Gallelli, 1104 N Tangerine Ave. – Mrs. Gallelli inquired about the status of the Thompson property. Town Manager Sean O'Keefe stated that there were no new updates.

Mrs. Gallelli also asked about the Citrus Road work and whether it could be coordinated with the temporary closure of the Howey Mansion in July to minimize disruptions. Mr. O'Keefe responded that the project is expected to be completed much sooner, with an anticipated completion by April. He noted that the Town is waiting on a few final signatures before moving forward with construction.

Ms. Gallelli also raised concerns about GFL's waste collection services, specifically regarding:

- Inconsistent yard waste pickups, which were previously scheduled for Thursdays but now vary.
- Delays in regular trash collection, sometimes shifting from Monday to Tuesday.
- Uncollected hurricane debris on Temple and Laurel, which was reportedly placed out in time for scheduled pickups.

She also requested confirmation that GFL trucks are equipped with spill kits to address hydraulic fluid leaks.

Lastly, Mrs. Gallelli expressed opposition to acquiring additional acreage near the former town dump site.

She concluded by thanking the Council for ensuring that microphones are used effectively, as many in the audience have difficulty hearing discussions.

Martha MacFarlane, 63 Camino Real – Mrs. MacFarlane requested a copy of the report from the recent Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) meeting, attended by Councilor Arnold and Mayor Pro Tem Everline. Mrs. MacFarlane expressed appreciation for the progress made in addressing concerns at a key intersection and requested that the report be included in future Council packets.

Mrs. MacFarlane also voiced support for Councilor Lannamañ’s concerns regarding GFL’s hydraulic fluid spills, stating that the issue is widespread throughout town. Mrs. MacFarlane noted that her neighborhood recently re-sealed its roads, but GFL trucks left hydraulic fluid stains almost immediately. Mrs. MacFarlane reported sending photographic evidence to the Town to address the issue and criticized GFL’s claims that the leaks are merely water runoff, stating that the pink-colored fluid is clearly hydraulic fluid.

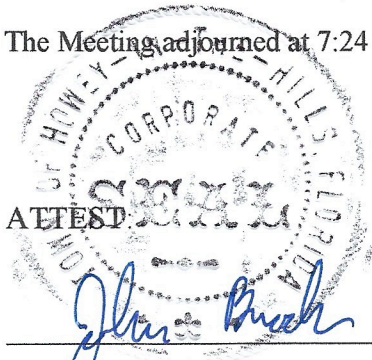
Town Manager, Sean O’Keefe, and Town Clerk, John Brock, directed Ms. MacFarlane to the Council meeting packet from January 13, 2025, meeting where a summary of the MPO meeting was already documented.

Mrs. MacFarlane thanked the Council for the information.

ADJOURNMENT

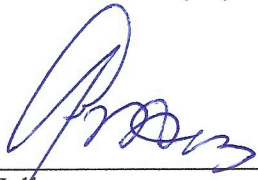
There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Councilor Miles to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Lannamañ seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

The Meeting adjourned at 7:24 p.m. | Attendees: 27



ATTEST

John Brock, Town Clerk



Mayor Wells