



**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES
TOWN COUNCIL COMMUNITY DISCUSSION MEETING MINUTES
TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 155 F. Road, Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470
Wednesday, September 3, 2025**

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kane called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE FOLLOWED BY A MOMENT OF SILENCE

Mayor Kane led the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence.

ROLL CALL

Mayor Anita Kane, Vice Mayor Margaret Herzog, Councilmember Paul Coleman, Councilmember Lisa El-Ramey, Councilmember Todd McLendon, Town Manager Francine Ramaglia, Town Attorney Jeff Kurtz, Esq., Public Works Director Richard Gallant, Community Standards Director Caryn Gardner-Young, Chief Finance Officer David Dilena, and Town Clerk Valerie Oakes were present.

OPEN DISCUSSION

Mayor Kane read a written comment into record submitted by Cynthia Taylor. Ms. Taylor stated that she was unable to attend the meeting due to a prior commitment and requested that her comment be read aloud. She expressed that, while she was not familiar with all of the lobbyist jargon, the Town was very precious to her and to many residents. Ms. Taylor cautioned against decisions that prioritize money over the Town's rural lifestyle and expressed her support for the motions presented by Manish Sood.

Teresa Beresford addressed the Council regarding safety concerns in her neighborhood. She stated that criminal activity in the area had increased and described a recent pre-dawn SWAT raid across the street from her home. Ms. Beresford shared that she had witnessed other suspicious activity, including an individual parking a semi-truck for several weeks and handling a firearm, which she reported to law enforcement and the rise in rental properties had contributed to the problem, explaining that many property owners rent homes without conducting background checks or properly vetting tenants. Ms. Beresford noted that this trend has led to an influx of individuals unfamiliar with the community, creating safety concerns for long-term residents. She suggested

that the Town consider adopting an ordinance requiring property owners who rent homes to register and comply with specific rental standards, similar to those in Palm Beach County. Ms. Beresford stated that she no longer feels safe in her neighborhood, citing personal experiences with home invasions and transient activity near the old Loxahatchee firehouse. She expressed opposition to further development projects such as additional parks or a Recreational Vehicle (RV) Park, stating that such projects could attract more transient visitors and potentially worsen public safety issues in the community.

Vice Mayor Herzog who also serves as the President of the Loxahatchee Groves Landowners Association, announced that the Association's 2025 Scholarship Application links are now available on the organization's website. The deadline for submissions is Friday, September 12, 2025, by 5:00 PM Eastern Standard Time, and the scholarships are open to Loxahatchee Groves residents only. She explained that the program includes post-high school scholarships for college, university, vocational, technical, and special needs students. Applications can be accessed and submitted using fillable forms available on the LGLA website under the scholarship section at www.mylgla.com.

Aly Daly addressed the Town Council on behalf of more than 300 residents of Loxahatchee Groves, expressing strong opposition to the proposed zoning change and Bove Development's RV Park project and stated that the project would contradict the Town's Charter and threaten the rural character and lifestyle valued by residents. Ms. Daly emphasized that the proposal could bring approximately 600 transient residents into the community, increasing traffic, noise, and safety risks while potentially harming local wildlife, protected species, and water quality in the canals and aquifers. She asserted that the developer's financial offer for infrastructure improvements would primarily benefit the RV park rather than the Town's residents. She suggested that RV parks can reduce nearby property values by 10 to 15 percent and argued that the project could open the door to further large-scale commercial and residential developments that would erode the Town's rural identity and urged the Council to reject the proposed zoning change, protect the environment, preserve property values, and uphold the intent of the Town Charter. She stated that residents expect the Council to act in the best interest of the community and warned that anyone voting in favor of the project would lose the support of the voters.

**MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER MCLENDON/COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN
MOVED TO RECEIVE AND FILE. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY
(5-0).**

Brian McNeil addressed the Town Council and shared an analogy to emphasize the broader impact of zoning decisions on the Town. He compared the situation to a set of interconnected pendulum balls, explaining that while individual actions may seem isolated, each affects the whole system. Mr. McNeil stated that the primary concern was not the proposed RV park itself, but rather the zoning change that would allow it and future similar developments. He urged the Council to preserve the integrity of the Town's Comprehensive Plan and Charter, stressing that no zoning changes should be made that could undermine the Town's rural character or residents' safety; referenced recent local accidents on Southern Boulevard and Seminole Pratt Whitney Road, noting that residents were increasingly concerned about safety and overdevelopment. Mr. McNeil concluded by encouraging the Council to act responsibly, honor the Town Charter, and not drop the ball on protecting the community.

Phillis Maniglia addressed the Council and referenced the earlier comments from Ms. Teresa Beresford regarding increased crime activity along Citrus Road. She stated that she had recently spoken with residents in that area and confirmed that criminal activity appeared to be a growing concern and questioned why incidents involving vacant land, transients, and RVs on undeveloped properties were not appearing in police reports and noted that no Sheriff's Office representative was present in the meeting room at that time. She discussed zoning classifications within the Town, explaining that the zoning category was sometimes taken advantage of by property owners and that commercial zoning was concentrated primarily on the south side of Town. Ms. Maniglia asked how the Town intended to generate revenue without cutting staff, recalling that in 2018 the Town faced financial challenges when staffing levels and assessments were reduced and mentioned the continued need to signify infrastructure improvements and emphasized the importance of maintaining adequate personnel to manage operations effectively. Ms. Maniglia further commented on misconceptions surrounding the proposed RV project, stating that it had been misrepresented to the public and that the project would, in her view, generate new revenue for the Town. She explained that while she lived adjacent to the proposed site, she supported the project because she believed it would provide long-term financial benefits for the community. She also spoke about residential properties that rent space to individuals living in RVs, expressing concern that the Town does not currently require owners to disclose who occupies those RVs. Ms. Maniglia stated that this lack of regulation could pose safety risks by allowing unvetted individuals, including potential offenders, to reside within neighborhoods and requested stricter requirements for identifying RV occupants and to adopt zoning protections that prevent the development of multi-unit housing.

Cassie Suchy read a comment from Kevin Brennan. As a 16-year resident of Loxahatchee Groves, there is regret for not being able to attend the meeting in person and emphasized the importance of maintaining the Town's rural and agricultural character. He stated that the Town's success and desirability were the result of residents' ongoing efforts to preserve rural zoning and resist outside influences such as lobbyists, grant writers, and consultants. Mr. Brennan urged the Council to continue protecting the community's rural lifestyle and to stay with what has worked to make Loxahatchee Groves what it is today.

Katie Lakeman read a written public comment submitted by a resident who was unable to attend the meeting. The commenter expressed concern that the Town's recent grant applications and lobbying efforts could obligate the Town to take on debt, weaken rural zoning protections, and reduce local control by transferring authority to outside agencies. The commenter stated that such actions were unacceptable and contrary to the Town's rural values and long-term vision and requested that the Town dismiss any existing or pending grants that require the Town to assume debt, surrender rural zoning, or relinquish local zoning control, and terminate all current and future lobbying efforts or grant activities with similar conditions. The commenter also asked that the Town end the services of any lobbyists, grant writers, or consultants engaged in such work and prohibit the Town Manager from applying for or pursuing grants or lobbying activity without prior Council approval and public input. The commenter urged the Council to focus Town resources on essential priorities such as roads, drainage, and reserves rather than grants or initiatives that could compromise rural zoning or the Town's independence.

Tracy Rafterowitz addressed the Council and stated that the proposed RV park had not been discussed in detail during the meeting and expressed her opposition to the project, noting that most

residents she had spoken with were also against it. Ms. Raflowitz cautioned that approving the RV park could create significant problems for the Town and urged the Council to reject the proposal. She also commented on the upcoming renewal of the Town Manager's contract. While acknowledging that the Town Manager had kept the Town financially stable, maintained reserves, reorganized staff, and delivered budgets consistent with Council policy, Ms. Raflowitz expressed concern over ongoing issues such as overspending on legal and consulting fees, insufficient oversight of contractors, and delays in capital projects. She stated that while the Town Manager had handled the basics of operations effectively, greater attention was needed to improve cost control, accountability, and timely infrastructure delivery.

Manish Sood addressed the Council regarding the importance of protecting the Town's zoning and preserving its rural future. He stated that the Town could take immediate action to do so and referenced recent budget discussions in which one of the stated priorities was advancing southern corridor planning to responsibly expand the tax base for law enforcement, roads, drainage, and stormwater improvements. Mr. Sood expressed concern that Town management had focused too much attention and resources on the proposed RV project, which he described as costly and legally risky; estimated that staff time devoted to the issue had already cost taxpayers thousands of dollars and warned that it could open the Town to litigation from certain entities. He further stated that the Town Manager had applied for a Florida Commerce Planning Grant without a Council vote or public input and claimed that the grant could expose the Town to unintended consequences under state law. Mr. Sood cited Florida Statutes 288.0656 and 163.3187, explaining that designating the area as a Rural Area of Opportunity could make it easier for developers to pursue rezonings and large-scale land use changes along Southern Boulevard. He cautioned that this would create vulnerabilities and accelerate commercialization along the state roadway, which is classified as a strategic intermodal system highway. Mr. Sood concluded by reiterating his opposition to the grant application and stated that he would propose specific motions later in the meeting to prevent actions that could weaken the Town's rural protections.

Ms. Fried addressed the Council to express her opposition to the proposed RV park, stating that such a project would harm property values and attract undesirable activity. She asserted that there is no such thing as a true luxury RV park, explaining that while some may have higher prices, they do not offer higher standards or benefits for the community. Ms. Freed stated that allowing the project would lead to a decline in the Town's character and quality of life and suggested instead of approving an RV park, the Town should focus on developing community-oriented amenities such as an amphitheater, riding arena, and spaces for local gatherings, concerts, and holiday events. Ms. Fried stated that Loxahatchee Groves is an equestrian community and that there is not enough representation or emphasis on equestrian interests within the Town's leadership. She encouraged the Council to prioritize projects that strengthen community connections and preserve the Town's rural, family-oriented atmosphere.

Deborah Marshall addressed the Council and stated that she agreed with the written letter submitted by someone within the community, particularly the ten action points he outlined. She expressed her strong opposition to the proposed RV park, explaining that although some RV developments are presented as luxury projects, they often evolve into high-density, low-income housing. Ms. Marshall stated that while Councilmember Maniglia was passionate about the project, she believed that Ms. Maniglia had a financial interest in its approval. She further opposed any increase in taxes, noting that residents were already experiencing higher costs through recent

assessment increases and rising health insurance premiums. Ms. Marshall concluded by stating that the Town should also work within its means and that she opposed both tax increases and the RV park proposal.

Janet Eick addressed the Council and stated that she had been a resident of Loxahatchee Groves for forty-one years. She recalled the Town's earlier rural lifestyle, noting that she used to ride her horses to Lion Country Safari, which is no longer possible due to growth and development. She supported the comments of other residents who opposed the proposed RV park and encouraged the Town to focus on creating amenities that residents could be proud of rather than commercializing the area. Ms. Eick expressed concern about the appearance of canals and roads, which she said no longer reflected the natural beauty of the community. She questioned how waste from RVs would be managed and stated that the Town would likely need to install a dumping station if the project were approved. She concluded by urging the Council to protect the community's rural character and to return to its homegrown roots, saying that residents should love Loxahatchee Groves as it is or leave it alone.

Jo Siciliano addressed the Council and spoke in favor of pursuing grant funding opportunities, expressing concern about the idea of rejecting or eliminating 100 percent fundable grants. She stated that the Town had already paid lobbyists to prepare applications and argued that the money used for such grants comes from taxpayers, including local residents. Ms. Siciliano emphasized that grant funds should be used for needed infrastructure improvements, such as roads and canals, which have visibly deteriorated and expressed frustration with the Town's recent decisions not to pursue certain grants, such as the Transportation Planning Agency (TPA) grant that would have provided approximately four million dollars for roundabout projects. Ms. Siciliano noted that the Town declined the grant because of a repayment condition but stated that the project would have helped preserve the rural character of the area and prevent increased traffic on Okeechobee Boulevard.

Ms. Siciliano cautioned that refusing grant opportunities could leave the Town unprepared for future growth pressures from neighboring developments. She encouraged the Council to take a proactive and forward-thinking approach rather than reacting to short-term issues. She concluded by urging the Council to continue applying for grants, describing them as tax dollars that should benefit Loxahatchee Groves rather than other communities, and stated that using such funding would allow the Town to improve its infrastructure without additional local tax burdens.

Jane Harding addressed the Council and stated that while she supports grants that provide a positive benefit to the Town, she cautioned that such funding must be reviewed carefully to avoid hidden conditions that could require the Town to repay money or surrender local control. She commented that the large public turnout at the meeting demonstrated that residents were opposed to many of the items being discussed and urged the Council to take note of public sentiment. Ms. Harding stated that a job posting had appeared on the internet but not on the Town's website and asked why it had not been properly advertised. She questioned a reported thirty-three percent salary increase related to the division of Mr. Kurtz's position, expressing disbelief at the amount. Ms. Harding asked when the rescheduled RV park meeting would take place, noting that the previous one had been canceled with short notice. And stated that she agreed with all of Manish Sood's research and comments regarding the Town's financial challenges, emphasizing that the issue was

one of excessive spending rather than insufficient revenue. Ms. Harding described his analysis as thorough and well supported.

Lawrence Gaines addressed the Council and stated that he had been a resident of Loxahatchee Groves for forty years and that the proposed RV park would be located approximately fifty feet from his home and that he was strongly opposed to it. Mr. Gaines said he had spoken with the project developers and learned that they planned to place a substation near his property, which he opposed. He stated that he valued the quiet, rural environment of his neighborhood, where the sounds of horses and livestock are part of daily life, and expressed concern that the project would bring increased traffic and noise to the area. Mr. Gaines noted that while many residents had voiced opposition to the RV park, few lived as close to the site as he did and therefore would not be as directly affected.

He explained that the land proposed for the development had previously served as a water retention area to prevent flooding and stated that it should remain that way. Mr. Gaines also mentioned ongoing problems with tractor trailers using Tangerine Drive and expressed concern that the RV park and nearby hotel would add to traffic congestion. He urged the Council to maintain the surrounding area as residential, preserving properties of one to five acres, and to use common sense when considering the impact of additional development on traffic and community quality of life.

Town Clerk Oakes read into the record an email from Cheryl Reid stating that she was pleased to have Ms. Kennedy represent her in her effort to subdivide her property located at 935 C Road, Loxahatchee Groves, Florida, and authorizing Ms. Kennedy to speak on her behalf with Town officials. Town Clerk Oakes also stated for the record that an email was received from Monica Weber; however, it was not read into the record as it was determined to be inflammatory in accordance with Resolution No. 2024-20.

ADJOURNMENT

In lieu of formal adjournment, Mayor Kane transitioned directly into the next scheduled meeting at 6:43 PM.

**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES,
FLORIDA**

ATTEST:

Signed by:
Valerie Oakes
06E744C2F37E4A4...
Town Clerk

Signed by:
Anita Kane
F5AB3D69FF41435...
Mayor Anita Kane, Seat 3

Signed by:
Margaret Herzog
69ECD57738A5448...
Vice Mayor Margaret Herzog, Seat 5

Signed by:
Todd McLendon
6EF0CA7DB4EB49F...
Councilmember Todd McLendon, Seat 1

Signed by:
Lisa El-Ramey
07066C56061A4B9...
Councilmember Lisa El-Ramey, Seat 2

Signed by:
Paul T. Coleman II
2B235D3F5E51430...
Councilmember Paul T. Coleman II, Seat 4