



**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES
TOWN COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES
TOWN HALL COUNCIL CHAMBERS – 155 F. Road, Loxahatchee Groves, FL 33470
Thursday, May 01, 2025, at 5:00 PM**

TOWN COUNCIL AGENDA ITEMS

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kane called the special meeting to order at 5:00 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 Phillis Maniglia, Town Manager Francine Ramaglia, Town Attorney Glen Torcivia, Town Clerk Valerie Oakes, Project Coordinator Jeff Kurtz, Public Works Director Richard Gallant, and Code Officer Mario Matos were present.

ADDITIONS, DELETIONS AND MODIFICATIONS

Mayor Kane called for any additions, deletions, modifications or approval of the agenda.

COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC ON NON-AGENDA ITEMS

No public comment.

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Discussion of an Appropriate Response to Anonymous Allegations Against the Town

Mayor Kane openly discussed a text message believed to have been sent by Councilmember Laura Danowski, as well as a letter alleging it was from Town employees, and the actions taken by Town Attorney Torcivia in response to receiving the anonymous letter.

Councilmember Maniglia stated that she received a phone call from Town Attorney Torcivia regarding the anonymous letter. She explained that when he began to read the letter to her, she stopped him, advised that she was not interested in hearing it, and expressed that she viewed the matter as a “witch hunt.” She noted that she was opposed to any action being taken on the letter at this time. She further cited the Town Charter, emphasizing that the Town Attorney is to prosecute or defend matters only when directed to do so by the Town Council, and expressed frustration that this directive had not been followed.

Councilmember Coleman stated that he had been contacted by Town Attorney Torcivia regarding the matter and acknowledged that he had not been aware of the specific provisions of the Town Charter relating to anonymous allegations. He explained that, had he been aware, he would have opposed any investigation based on such a letter. He emphasized that while no one wants a hostile work environment, the Charter provides direction on how such issues must be handled, and he concluded that he could not support action on the matter.

Vice Mayor Herzog commented that, in comparison with prior Town Attorneys, some had been dismissed for less concerning actions. She expressed that the current Town Attorney appeared to be acting independently, “almost like a vigilante,” rather than taking direction from the Council. She stated her understanding that both the Town Manager and the Town Attorney are to follow the direction of the Council and concluded that the behavior in this matter was out of line.

Councilmember El-Ramey questioned whether the Town Attorney should continue conducting employee interviews in connection with the anonymous letter. She explained that she did not open or become aware of the letter until Monday and was therefore unaware it had already been shared with others. She asked why the Town Attorney proceeded with speaking to employees before informing the Council. She further stated that she was aware of the Town Manager sharing an email and text regarding code enforcement complaints, which appeared to have been generated by individuals present at the April 1st meeting. Regarding the anonymous letter, she noted it was unfortunate that it was linked to a former council member and cautioned against pointing fingers at who may have authored it. She emphasized that she herself had no knowledge of the letter until Monday morning, at which point she immediately forwarded it to the Town Attorney, as she believed that was the appropriate course of action.

Town Attorney Torcivia responded to the Council’s discussion regarding the anonymous letter. He stated that it was important to provide the full context of his actions, emphasizing his professional background of over 40 years practicing employment law, including litigation and investigations for local governments. He explained that in employment law, anonymous complaints are common and must be treated seriously due to concerns of retaliation and noted that federal agencies such as the U.S. Department of Labor, EEOC, and OSHA all accept anonymous complaints. He cited Town policy requiring prompt investigation of complaints, including those involving the Town Manager, and stated that once he became aware of the letter on Monday, he fulfilled his duty by reporting it to Council. He recommended the use of an independent investigator but recounted that both the Mayor and the Town Manager opposed that approach and suggested instead involving the Florida Institute of Government. Attorney Torcivia explained that, following those

discussions, he began preliminary steps to investigate the matter, but was later informed that permission to proceed was withdrawn. The anonymous nature of the letter did not eliminate the Town's obligation to investigate and reiterated his position that an independent review was the most appropriate course of action.

Town Clerk Oakes read into the record an email from the Cruz family and Tia Merkert.

Public Comments received from Mary McNicholas, Mr. Browning, Mr. Santana, Todd McLendon, Virginia Standish, and Jo Siciliano. Town Council discussion ensued

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER MANIGLIA/VICE MAYOR HERZOG MOVED TO STOP THE TOWN ATTORNEY TORCIVIA FROM MOVING FORWARD WITH ANY ACTION REGARDING THE ANONYMOUS LETTER WITHOUT COUNCIL AUTHORITY OR DIRECTION. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0).

Councilmember Coleman left the meeting but continued to participate in the meeting via Zoom.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER MANIGLIA/COUNCILMEMBER EL-RAMEY MOVED TO CONTINUE THE PROCESS OF BEGINNING THE TOWN'S STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS BY CONDUCTING SWOT INTERVIEWS WITH STAFF THROUGH AN OUTSIDE CONSULTANT, TO BE SELECTED AT THE NEXT COUNCIL MEETING. MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (5-0).

Public Comments received from Jo Siciliano, Todd McLendon, and Mr. Santana. Town Council discussion ensued.

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER MANIGLIA/ VICE MAYOR HERZOG MOVED TO SUBMIT ALL EVIDENCE TO PALM BEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE (PBSO) SO AN INVESTIGATION CAN BEGIN CONCERNING THE ALLEGED CRIMINAL ACTIVITY. MOTION PASSED (4-1 with COUNCILMEMBER EL-RAMEY DISSENTING).

MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER EL-RAMEY/ COUNCILMEMBER HERZOG MOVED TO SUBMIT ALL MATTERS RELATED TO THE ANONYMOUS LETTER, INCLUDING ANY ASSOCIATED THREATS TO PALM BEACH COUNTY COMMISSION ON ETHICS.

During the motion, Town Attorney Torcivia noticed that Ms. Levesque wanted to speak to the item. The Town Council recognized Ms. Levesque and requested that she speak at the podium. Therefore, the motion was not completed.

Gina Levesque, Intake and Compliance Manager, Palm Beach County Commission on Ethics explained that the Commission does not have authority to investigate or review matters unless they are filed as sworn complaints. Anonymous complaints cannot be pursued under current law, pursuant to recent state legislation. She noted that if materials are sent to the Commission, staff will acknowledge receipt and, if a Code of Ethics violation is alleged, provide the complainant with a formal complaint form as the only mechanism to initiate an investigation. If the matter appears related to process concerns, the Commission may refer it to the Inspector General's Office, which handles waste, fraud, abuse, and process-related issues. She emphasized that the Commission cannot conduct investigations outside this framework.

**MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER EL-RAMEY/ COUNCILMEMBER HERZOG
MOVED TO RESCIND THE EARLIER MOTION REFERRING
MATTERS TO THE ANONYMOUS LETTER TO THE PALM
BEACH COUNTY COMMISSION ON ETHICS. MOTION PASSED
(4-1 with MAYOR KANE DISSENTING).**

**MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER HERZOG/COUNCILMEMBER MANIGLIA
MOVED TO BEGIN NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE TOWN
MANAGER'S CONTRACT, INCLUDING AUTHORIZATION FOR
THE MAYOR TO CONDUCT THE NEGOTIATIONS. MOTION
PASSED (3-2 with COUNCILMEMBER EL-RAMEY AND
COUNCILMEMBER COLEMAN DISSENTING).**

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, Mayor Kane called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

**MOTION: COUNCILMEMBER EL-RAMEY/COUNCILMEMBER MANIGLIA
MOVED TO ADJOURN THE MEETINGS AT 6:24 P.M.**

**TOWN OF LOXAHATCHEE GROVES,
FLORIDA**

ATTEST:

Signed by:
Valerie Oakes
00E744C2F37F4A4...
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:
[Signature]
07060C96061A4B9...
Councilmember Phillis Maniglia, Seat 1

Signed by:
[Signature]
2B235D3F5E51430...
Councilmember Lisa El-Ramey, Seat 2

Signed by:
[Signature]
Councilmember Paul T. Coleman II, Seat 4