

MINUTES OF HOWEY IN THE HILLS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD JANUARY 10, 2011

Mayor Sears called the Town Council Meeting of January 10, 2011 to order at 6:00 p.m.

Cub Scout Troop No. 254 led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.

Councilor Ernest led the Invocation.

Present: Mayor Sears, Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel, Councilor Ernest, Councilor Richardson, Councilor Hall, Town Attorney Blom-Ramos and Administrative Assistant Osborn.

NEW BUSINESS

Discussion: Tree Grant

Parks and Recreation Board Chairman Gainer explained the status of the Forestry Grant and asked for the contract from the last Town Council meeting to not be signed. As Chairman of Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, she was under the impression there was only a few people against the tree planting on Lakeshore Boulevard but she has found there are only a few people in favor of planting. She further said she has found that managing this grant will require at least 20 hours a week for the first six months and then 10 hours a week for the next six months. She presented two options to the Town Council.

- 1) Keep the grant. Plant trees only on Town property on West Central and Town Hall block with only approximately 10 – 12 trees but none on Lakeshore Boulevard. This will require fast and accurate work immediately for updated reports and bids. The grant is for \$19,225 which the Town can use for trees and the remainder for pruning with 10% allowed for project manager. With the scope and timeline of this grant, Mr. Sheppard has suggested the Town use Jim Thorsen who is administering a grant for the City of Eustis.
- 2) Walk away from the grant.

Councilor Ernest asked why the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee did not have a meeting before this meeting. Discussion ensued. **Chairman Gainer** introduced Jim Thorsen and Urban Forester. **Mr. Thorsen** said Option 1 would probably need an additional \$4,000 for administration and the grant would need to be modified. He further stated the Town's existing trees are in need of pruning. **Councilor Richardson** said he respects what Mr. Thorsen does but thinks we wasted your time as he has volunteered his time for this project. **Mayor Sears** asked Mr. Thorsen what kind of time frame would be satisfactory to the State. **Councilor Hall** said if residents don't want trees on Lakeshore Boulevard then don't put the trees on Lakeshore Boulevard. **Mayor Sears** said Mr. Sheppard sent an email stating he needs a time schedule or the Town could lose the grant. **Councilor Hall** asked if we can change the location and still get the grant with Councilor Richardson administering and move forward. **Councilor**

Richardson said the grant was obtained around this time last year and he met with Town Clerk Brasher and Mr. Sheppard to discuss placement of the trees. On December 13, 2010 the Town Council approved the contract with Legacy Scapes and since September he was very busy with the election. He said he met with a few people to get a feel for what is wanted on Lakeshore Boulevard and the Town Council suggested Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meet to decide some of these issues. **Councilor Ernest** said he is not interested in spending any additional money. **Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel** said she wants 3-4 inch trees. **Councilor Hall** suggested sending this back to the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee for placement on Lakeshore Boulevard between Laurel Avenue and Central Avenue and he is not in favor of spending extra dollars. **Mayor Sears** said the attractive part of the grant for him is pruning in the Town Hall Complex and along Lakeshore Boulevard and the Town would benefit from correct pruning. **Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel** read the email and said pruning is viable alternative for the grant and the Town should amend the contract.

Councilor Hall, seconded by **Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel**, moved to utilize the grant with no trees on Lakeshore Boulevard and do pruning then reallocate funds with Attachment E. Motion denied 0-5 with a roll call vote.

Mayor Sears asked Councilor Richardson if he would still be willing to administrate the grant for pruning. **Councilor Richardson** said it probably be better for the Town to get another consultant. **Mayor Pro-Tem Nebel** gave the history of the trees along Lakeshore Boulevard. **Mayor Sears** asked Mr. Thorsen if his price would still be consistent if we modified our project to more pruning. **Mr. Thorsen** said pruning would still require the supervision and his price would be the same.

Public Comments

- Deke Deloach gave his opposition to the project.
- Ann Griffin said no one wants the trees on Lakeshore Boulevard
- Patty Ritson said she had a meeting of 35 people and everyone opposed the trees on Lakeshore Boulevard.
- Ron Barto expressed his concern with Live Oaks and gave a handout.
- Clay Ormsbee handed out a petition and said he can get additional information if needed but does not want to lose the grant.
- Peggy Ernest said she is in favor of planting on Lakeshore Boulevard and the Town should not refuse the original plan.
- Katonya Yochum said if this goes back to Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee, then everyone needs to come and talk.
- Janice McClain the Town can't maintain what the trees they have.
- Angie Washo expressed her opinion against the project.
- Bethany Hall said do the pruning but get more quotes.
- Jean Garrett said the Town should be trimming trees every other year.
- Glennys Barber said the Town needs to maintain the existing trees.

Councilor Richardson moved to keep the grant in place as is and move forward. Motion died due to lack of a second.

Councilor Ernest, seconded by **Councilor Hall**, moved to send this item back to Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee to review with the help from Town Staff and bring a modification with Attachment E to Town Council on January 24, 2011. Motion carried 5-0 with a roll call vote.

Barry Crowder asked who will be working on this. **Mayor Sears** said he will bring this item back as to where the additional money will come from.

Collection of Unpaid Utilities and Lot Mowing

Mayor Sears gave detailed background on this item and he would like to discuss possible solutions to this problem. **Town Attorney Blom-Ramos** said a lot cleanup ordinance is a possibility. She said the Code of Ordinances only allows the Town to collect for charges on Code Violations and then lien property. The Town would need to adopt an ordinance for Special Assessments on the property tax bill and the legal fees for this are approximately \$5,000. This process must be in place by January 1st, but can be extended to March 1st, only if the Property Appraiser and Tax Collector agree. Discussion ensued. **Mayor Sears** said there are two (2) separate issues, clean up/lot mowing and availability fee. **Town Attorney Blom-Ramos** gave other options for the availability fee such as deposits on the accounts. **Mayor Sears** said the cost of putting this in effect is a problem. He further stated it would take a lot of mowing to justify putting this in effect and the auditor wants to know what the Town is doing about the high balances. **Mayor Sears** said he will have a proposal from Gray Robinson for discussion at the next meeting.

Utility Adjustments/Write-Offs

Mayor Sears explained the spreadsheet of past due accounts with large balances to possibly write off. As per the Town Auditor the Town needs to write off accounts with balances from 2008 and or 2009 to an "Allowance for Doubtful Accounts" for accounting purposes. **Councilor Richardson** asked if the Town can still collect if an account is written off. Discussion ensued. **Administrative Assistant Osborn** said if the balance is paid it will come out of the "Allowance for Doubtful Accounts".

Councilor Ernest, seconded by **Councilor Richardson**, moved to restructure debts in an "Allowance for Doubtful Accounts" with a \$24,338.61 allowance. Motion approved 5-0 with a roll call vote.

Patty Ritson made comment on title search concerns.
Diane Sullivan asked about the Availability Fee.

Mayor Report

Mayor Sears said he and Town Engineer Shira met with the City of Leesburg, City of Tavares and City of Groveland as per the Town Council's request concerning our water and reclaimed water. The City of Leesburg said if the Town could send wastewater their way, they may be able to send the Town some reclaimed. They have a large

reclaimed project by the turnpike and possibly they may someday be able to send reclaimed to us. The City of Tavares does not have reclaimed water available and the City of Groveland may possibly have reclaimed if we send them wastewater.

Mayor Sears gave an update on the Water Improvement Project. He said he met with Public Works Director Harwood Padgett, Town Engineer Shira, and Engineer Bailey to discuss the bids that came in and he will bring back to reject all bids. He gave details of what may have to be eliminated or down sized. He said the Recycle Workshop was successful and recycle bins are available at Town Hall.

Council Comments

Councilor Ernest expressed concern about the minutes not being done by the next meeting. **Mayor Sears** said all the information is available on the website and minutes will not be available on the website until they are approved. **Diane Sullivan** voiced her concerns that the minutes are not available the next day.

Councilor Hall said he would like to hold a Chili Cook off possibly the third weekend of February or maybe 1st or 2nd weekend of March and said if anyone has any ideas to contact him.

Public Comments

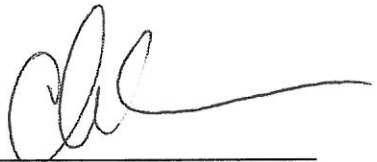
Peggy Ernest said the Town Council meeting time is too early for working residents as it makes it difficult for residents to be involved.

Barry Crowder discussed his public records request on Public Works overtime hours while working at the Christmas Festival and the deposit for the food vendor. **Mayor Sears** said he had a handout. **Councilor Ernest** explained his spreadsheet with expenses. Discussion ensued.

ADJOURNMENT AT 8:43 P.M.

ATTEST:


Administrative Assistant Osborn



Mayor Sears