

**MINUTES OF THE HOWEY IN THE HILLS TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD OCTOBER 14<sup>TH</sup> 2019**

Mayor Martha MacFarlane called the Town Council Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.  
Boy/Scout Troop led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.  
Public Services Director John Ernest led the Invocation.

**Present:** Mayor MacFarlane, Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy, Councilor McGill, Councilor Scott, and Councilor Nebel.

**Also Present:** Administrative Assistant II Eller, Chief Thomas, Attorney Heather Ramos, Public Services Director Ernest, and Administrative Assistant I Tubbs.

**PRESENTATIONS**

Sunshine Law & Code of Ethics Annual Review presented by Attorney Heather Ramos. It was a short presentation due to all Councilors, Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy, and Mayor MacFarlane had just attended the annual training.

Second presentation was the Town Council Roles/Responsibilities, Meeting Agendas, and Meeting Protocol presented by Mayor MacFarlane. Public Service Director Ernest described his duties and responsibilities as Public Services Director, and Chief Thomas read allowed his Mission Statement. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated every Town Councilor elected is representing everyone in the town of Howey. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated The Town Clerk acts as the Financial Officer, does payroll and works on insurance for the town employees. The Town Clerk also manages the minutes of the meetings and records ordinances. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated as Mayor she is the Chief Executive Officer of the Town, she manages the meetings, both Town Council and Special Session meetings. She establishes the agendas for the Town Council Meetings, and directs and supervises all administration.

**REPORTS/COMMENTS:**

**Finance Report-**No Comment

**Police Department Report-** No Comment

**Code Enforcement Report-** No Comment

**Attorney Report-** No Comment

**Library Report-**No Comment

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated that she just received the Finance Report, therefore will discuss her findings at the next meeting on October 28<sup>th</sup>.

**Chief Thomas** asked residents to please lock their cars and houses because there had been a car burglary and a stolen vehicle in Howey. The Howey Police Department is working with all county agencies to catch these thieves. **Mayor MacFarlane** thanked the resident's who provided video to the Howey Police Department.

**Public Services Director Ernest** stated he hired a **Code Enforcement Officer**, but when he went to the Dr., his Dr. said this position would not be good for his heart and advised him not to accept the position.

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated that the job has been re-posted on our website as well as other work-related sites. This is a part time position, with a 16-hour work week. **Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** stated The League of Cities post's jobs as well.

**Attorney Heather Ramos** reported that Town Clerk Burke has received a de-annexation petition from Venezia. She stated she is working diligently on it and will comply with all the statutory requirements.

#### **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.***

Item number one (1) on the agenda was deferred until a future meeting because the minutes for February 11<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and September 23<sup>rd</sup> were not provided as the Town Clerk is out on medical leave. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated she hopes to have more meeting minutes available for review.

**Staci Mauro (500 S. Dixie Dr.)** introduced herself. She is a resident of the town since 2013. Staci and her husband are both teachers and have a daughter 7. She said she wants be appointed to the Parks and Recreation Board as she and her family enjoy all the activities in town and wants to be more involved.

***Councilor Scott** seconded by **Councilor Nebel** moved to approve Staci Mauro (500 S. Dixie Dr.) to the Parks and Recreation Board. Motion passed 5-0 with a roll call vote.*

#### **Consideration and approval to accept the Fiscal Year 2017/2018 audit.**

The auditor was scheduled to attend the meeting but was not there. This consideration was tabled until the Auditor could be at the meeting, which was re-scheduled for October 28<sup>th</sup>. **Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** stated there were some issues with the audit being late. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated that there were several auditor(s) turn overs during our audit. Also, the Auditor(s) were not readily available to us to answer questions. Our Accountant is a part time employee, and responsible for submitting most of the information to the auditors, in addition we are a small office with only a few employees. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated that we were very prepared, but this year was a difficult process because the auditors were not available to us like in past years. It did take a long time the Mayor stated, but it did get done and we did get the matching funds.

***Councilor Scott** seconded by **Councilor Conroy** to table Consideration and Approval to Accept the Fiscal Year 2017/2018 Audit until October 28<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting when the Auditor is present. Motion passed 5-0 with a roll call vote.*

**Chris Sears**, the contractor for the project, spoke about the Consideration and Approval of façade design for 104 & 106 South Palm Avenue. He agreed the owner wants to dramatically change and upgrade the 2 units to look similar to a "Winter Garden" kind of look. **Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** asked for The Building Officials comments, **Building Official Ron Frankenstein** stated he was fine with the design and engineering.



**Public Comment – JoJo (139 E. Central Ave.)** stated that the trees and grass look awful in front of that property and asked if that was going to be cleaned up? **Chris Sears** stated yes that it would be. **Mrs. Gallelli (1104 N. Tangerine Ave.)** asked if there will be any cost to the Town? **Mr. Sears** said no there would not be.

**Councilor Scott** seconded by **Councilor Conroy** to approve the façade design for 104 & 106 South Palm Ave. Motion passed 5-0 with a roll call vote.

#### **Consideration and Approval to execute the Building Services Contract with Progressive Inspections, Inc.**

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated that there was a typo under billings, 4A in the middle. The amount should read \$150,000.00, not \$250,000.00. She stated this would be corrected.

**Councilor Scott** and **Councilor McGill** both stated that they had not seen the contract posted on the Agenda on our website, therefore they had no time to review and asked that it be tabled until the next meeting.

**Mayor MacFarlane** continued with discussion and asked **Building Official Ron Frankenstein** to come up and talk about the changes to the contract. **Building Official Ron Frankenstein** stated that he, Town Clerk Burke, and Councilor McGill had a meeting and imputed the changes. **Building Official Ron Frankenstein** stated Councilor McGill wanted the reinspection fees to be changed to 50/50, **Building Official Ron Frankenstein** agreed to 80/20.

A lengthy discussion ensued.

**Councilor Nebel** motioned to approve with changes.

**Councilor McGill** again stated the contract was not available for review.

**Councilor Scott** stated it was the first time he saw the contract.

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated a motion needs to be voted to table or approve.

A lengthy discussion ensued.

**Councilor Nebel**, seconded by **Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** to approve with changes.

**Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** recanted his approval vote.

**Councilor Scott** seconded by **Councilor McGill** moved to table the Building Services Contract with Progressive Inspections, Inc. until next meeting. (October 28, 2019) Motion to table was 4-1. (Councilor Nebel voted no.)

#### **Town Consumption Use Permit (CUP).**

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated “our cup is runneth over”, and that it is 99.9% sure it will run over this year as well. **Public Services Director Ernest**, explained the town is given a certain amount of usage per year for consumption. When we do go over, we don’t pay for it, we just won’t get as much consumption the following year. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated that we are working with St. Johns Water Management on a Corrective Action Plan. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated the watering of lawns is a big problem in our Town. She also reminded residents when they can and cannot use their irrigation system. She also asked that the residents look at their irrigation systems very closely and learn how they work.

## **Resolution to establish a Charter Review Committee.**

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated at least every ten (10) years, the Town Council may appoint and fund a Charter Review Committee. If the Charter Review Committee proposes amendments, such amendments shall be presented to Town Council. Charter Review Committee applications were available for residents to complete if they were interested. There will be a vote at the next meeting.

## **Council Report**

**Councilor Nebel** suggested to residence to not cut their grass so short, keep it about 5" high, especially St. Augustine grass. With the hot temperatures, the sun just beats down on the grass. By keeping it 5" it will thicken up and hardly no watering will be necessary because the dew will take care of the watering.

**Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** spoke about Website ADA Compliant. He has a nice slide set from The League of Cities, he will send the URL to all the staff members. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy asked Mayor MacFarlane to lead the way regarding legal costs to the Town.

**Councilor McGill** first asked **Mayor MacFarlane** to address the slandering letter that was passed out at a past Town Council Meeting, he stated the individual that passed this letter out has been identified. He went on to say that it was not fair to Councilor Scott and his wife Shelly Scott because they were named in it. **Mayor MacFarlane** stopped Councilor McGill at that point and stated that subject was not Town Business and would not be discussed. A lengthy discussion ensued about what is Town business and what is not Town business between Mayor MacFarlane and Councilor McGill. **Councilor McGill** stated he put 9 items on the agenda to discuss and that Mayor MacFarlane did not approve any of them to be put on the Agenda. A lengthy discussion ensued. **Councilor McGill** wanted to speak on holding residents accountable, Mayor MacFarlane said it was not on the agenda, therefore it would not be discussed. **Councilor McGill** stated that he received the petition in his box regarding the de-annexation by the Venezia residents. He asked the residents to do their homework before moving forward. **Councilor McGill** stated he too is doing his research and studying different case laws.

**Councilor Scott** spoke about Town Ordinances.

**Mayor MacFarlane** spoke about the Chain of Lakes Restoration Council Meeting that took place October 4<sup>th</sup>. She stated we had a very good representation.

**Mayor MacFarlane** gave update on Bishop Gate.

## **Public Comment-**

**Marcus Lucien, 229 Messina Place** – said, he is proud to live in Howey-in-the Hills but appalled at Councilor McGill and other Council Members being shut down when trying to speak. He said he has been to four (4) Town Council Meetings, and just like tonight there is no change. He stated as a tax paying citizen he is very concerned about the high taxes.



**Pat Miller, 201 S. Lakeshore Blvd-** asked each The Town Council if any of them had ever attended any other Town Council Meetings outside of Howey. She stated everyone needs to be respectful and professional, and that the “snarky” remarks are not acceptable.

**Sal Gallelli ,1104 N. Tangerine –** said, he is sad to see all the turmoil. He suggested having a “dunk tank” and paying money to throw 3 balls to dunk **Councilor McGill** and **Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** to loosen things up a bit.

**Marnie Drabik, 524 Bellissimo Pl. –** Read a written statement describing why she wants to de-annex out of The Town of Howey-in-the-Hills.

**David Miles, 33 Camino Real –** said, he hopes that the people who want to leave the City, leave the City. He said he does not think they will save money by de-annexation.

**Greg Birdfield, 230 Messina Pl. –** said, he sees both sides, but there should not be so much fighting. He stated let us de-annex.

**Altarcha Wiley, 511 Bellissimo Pl. –** said, she has been a resident for 17 years and wants to de-annex.

**Gary Fisk, 210 Messina –** said, he is a proud resident of Venezia. He stated he viewed the audit reports and wants to know who is going to take responsibility for the overage in the budget.

**Veronica Lucien, 229 Messina Pl. -** said, she is very concerned about the high-water bills and high taxes. She stated she doesn't know why the taxes are so high when the Town does not provide medical response. She enjoys going to the Howey Market and the Town Library.

**Fran Wagler, 409 W. Central Ave. –** Brought adult applications for the boy scouts charter. She asked that everyone please participate. Fran gave updates on all the fun events coming up, including the Christmas Festival.

**Marie Gallelli, 1104 Tangerine –** said, she was happy when Venezia joined the Town of Howey. And welcomes all new people to the community.

**Myron Lewellen, 508 Bellissimo Pl. –** said, he has never seen meetings like this. He would like to see a Town Council Meeting where there are no agendas, just the residents attending and having a question & answer session.


**Bernice Hower, 444 Bellissimo Pl. –** said, she has lived in Howey for 2 years and thinks it's great, enjoys living here, and doesn't mind paying the taxes.

**Penny Cox, 487 Bellissimo Pl. –** said, she is fighting for survival and that her home is her largest investment. She said she was stopped by Howey Police Department for solicitating when she was only visiting her neighbors. She signed the de-annexation petition and she wants out.

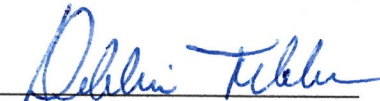
**Bernie Alimenti, Former Resident –** said, to set the record straight, Venezia residents have had meetings, and are well aware of the 25% sur-charge per meter.

**Doug Hower, 444 Bellissino Pl.** – said to Venezia residents your decisions can only be as good as your information. He also stated, Lake County does not want the roads.

The Meeting adjourned at 8:38 p.m.

  
Martha MacFarlane,  
Mayor

ATTEST:

  
Debbie Tubbs  
Administrative Assistant I