



MINUTES OF THE HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS TOWN COUNCIL  
HELD MARCH 8, 2021

Mayor MacFarlane called the Town Council Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.  
Mayor MacFarlane led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.  
Public Services Director led an invocation.

**Members Present:**

Martha MacFarlane, Mayor  
Ed Conroy, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Marie V Gallelli, Councilor  
Rick Klein, Councilor  
George Lehning, Councilor

**Staff Present:**

John Ernest, Public Services Director  
John Brock, Town Clerk  
George Brown, Code Enforcement (virtually)  
Thomas Wilkes, Town Attorney (virtually)  
Thomas Harowski, Town Planner (virtually)  
Tara Hall, Library Director (virtually)

Roll Call was performed, and it was determined that a quorum was present.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

1. **The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the February 22, 2021 Town Council Meeting and the February 25, 2021 Town Council Workshop Meeting.**

**Motion made by Pro-Tem Conroy to approve the minutes; Councilor Lehning seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.**

<b>Councilor Lehning</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Councilor Gallelli</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Council Klein</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor MacFarlane</b>	<b>YES</b>		

**NEW BUSINESS**

2. **Discussion/Proposal: Grant Writing Services with Kimley Horn presented by Allison D. Megrath, AICP.**

Martha MacFarlane, Mayor, introduced Allison D. Megrath, AICP with Kimley Horn. Ms. Megrath explained the services that Kimley Horn offers, especially in relation to grant procurement. She showed a list of potential priorities of grants to target for the Town. On the lists of grants that the town would want to target was: 1) Well #5, 2) New Police Department, 3) New Town Hall, 4) Sara Maude Mason Nature Preserve boardwalk replacement, 5) Town infrastructure replacement (waterlines and roads), 6) 3 New Town Markers to replace existing crumbling signs, 7) Sidewalk to connect Venezia south subdivision to town sidewalks, 8) Stormwater management (design a stormwater system to direct water in Lake Elizabeth),

9) Water Study/Water Master Plan, 10) Central Park Basketball Court and Pickle Ball, 11) Implement the Walkable Downtown project, 12) Connect to Mt. Dora – Tavares Bike Trail (MPO Project).

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy suggested that the town add the following projects to potential grant targets: 1) Creating charging stations for electric vehicles, 2) Further funding for the Sewer Program. Councilor Gallelli suggested that we add the project of adding an Electric sign for Town Hall to the list.

**3. Consideration and Approval: RESOLUTION 2021-04 A RESOLUTION OF THE TOWN COUNCIL OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO THE TOWN'S RETIREMENT PLAN; AMENDING RESOLUTION NOS. 2010-014, 2008-003, AND 96-301 TO SPECIFY THAT THE TOWN'S EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE CONTRIBUTION MATCH CHANGES FROM 5% TO 10%; PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.**

Mayor MacFarlane spoke about the resolution and explained why the Police Officers were not able to participate in the town match, this is because the Police Officers are able to participate in the Police Pension Fund.

**Public Comment**

Sal Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Questioned whether 10% match was comparable to other local municipalities.

**Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to approve Resolution 2021-04 A Resolution of the Town Council of the Town of Howey-in-the-Hills, Florida, pertaining to the Town's Retirement Plan; amending Resolution Nos. 2010-014, 2008-003, AND 96-301 to specify that the Town's employer/employee contribution match changes from 5% TO 10%; providing for an effective date; Councilor Gallelli seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.**

<b>Councilor Lehning</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Councilor Klein</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Councilor Gallelli</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor MacFarlane</b>	<b>YES</b>		

**4. Discussion/Approval: Review Alexander Simon Application for membership to Planning & Zoning Board.**

Mayor MacFarlane, Mayor asked Mr. Simon to speak about himself and why he was interested in serving on the Planning and Zoning Board. Mr. Simon spoke about his history, qualifications, and background. He explained that he has recently moved back to town from working overseas as a security contractor in Saudi Arabia and wanted to get involved with the Town.

**Motion made by Councilor Lehning to approve Alexander Simon application for membership to the Planning & Zoning Board; Councilor Gallelli seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.**

<b>Councilor Lehning</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Councilor Klein</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Councilor Gallelli</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor MacFarlane</b>	<b>YES</b>		

**5. Discussion: Preparation for Mid-Year Budget Review**

Mayor MacFarlane explained we are nearing time for the mid-year budget review. She explained that town council should do this review as a Town Council Workshop Session rather than during a regular Town Council Meeting so that it could get the appropriate amount of time. During the Budget review the town council will also work and budget amendment for the CARES fund monies that were received. It was agreed that Town Council will have Workshop Session about the Mid-Year Budget Review in late March or early April during regular work hours.

**6. Discussion and Approval: Removal and Stump Grinding for 6 trees on E Central Ave.**

Mayor MacFarlane gave some background on this discussion point. There are some trees on town property that compromising a property, crushing water lines, and causing a safety issue. These are 6 oak trees on the intersection of Central and Lakeshore. The town has an estimate for removal of the 6 trees and the grinding of stumps; the estimate is \$15,000. It was determined that root pruning would not be an option of these trees.

Councilor Klein questioned whether the town was liable to remove the trees and thought that taking this action was a slippery slope that he was not sure the town should do this.

**Motion made by Councilor Lehning to approve of the Removal and Stump Grinding for 6 trees on E central Ave; Councilor Gallelli seconded the motion. Motion approved by roll call vote.**

<b>Councilor Lehning</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Councilor Klein</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Councilor Gallelli</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor MacFarlane</b>	<b>YES</b>		

**Old Business:**

**7. Discussion and Approval: Town Hall Staffing.**

Mayor MacFarlane explained that candidates for the Finance Manager / Town Administrator position have been reviewed and was seeking the Town Council's approval to make an offer to candidate Sean O'Keefe. The Mayor stated that she thought he was the strongest candidate with

the strongest background. Mr. O’Keefe has a master’s in public administration, a background in securing grants, and contacts within the county and neighboring towns.

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy stated that he believed that hiring Mr. O’Keefe was a unique opportunity to get someone who was a long-time resident of Lake County, knows the county system (with a lot of contacts within the county), and that can provide valuable insight for the mayor. Councilor Gallelli felt that both final candidates were good candidates, but agreed Mr. O’Keefe was a great candidate.

**Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to approve of making a job offer to Sean O’Keefe for the Finance Manager/Town Administrator position; Councilor Gallelli seconded the motion. Motion approved unanimously by roll call vote.**

<b>Councilor Lehning</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Councilor Klein</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy</b>	<b>YES</b>	<b>Councilor Gallelli</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor MacFarlane</b>	<b>YES</b>		

### **Reports:**

#### **Town Hall**

John Brock, Town Clerk, gave the Town Hall report. Mr. Brock stated that the Town Hall has successful implement the Black Mountain Software Permit Module. The next module to be implement will be Cemetery Module. Mr. Brock will finish a series of training on Florida Record Management on 3/10/2021. Mayor MacFarlane stated that the town had also purchased the Business License Module and that the town was also looking at possibly purchasing the Asset Manager module.

#### **Police Department**

Lt. George Brown gave the Police Department report. Lt Brown warned that residents needed to be especially mindful to make sure and lock their car doors, particularly at night. There have been instances of car robberies where individuals have been walking the streets at night and checking car doors to see if the were unlocked; if they were, they were robbing items out of the cars. Please be vigilant and lock your car doors at night. Officer Dennis Pranowskes is leaving, he has taken a job with another agency. Office Pranowskes’ last day is March 13<sup>th</sup>.

#### **Code Enforcement**

Lt. Brown spoke about some of the Code cases that he was working on and had closed out since January. The biggest number of recent cases have been building issues where people are trying to do construction without building permits.

#### **Public Comment**

Sal Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Asked if any citizens have used their surveillance systems to catch the thieves that are committing robberies of unlocked cars at night. Lt. Brown answered that one occasion they were caught on camera, but the footage was not good enough to make an identification, but it did show there were 4 individuals that robbed the car.

### **Public Services**

Mr. John Ernest, Public Services Director, stated the department was continuing the water meter cleanup process, which will be a six-month process. The town is continuing to replace street valves, that the old valves from the 1920's continue to break and need replacing. At the Griffin park playground, they are replacing the borders around the playground, as soon as that is completed, they will add new playground mulch.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that the town had published the RFP for the wastewater line that runs in a downtown alley. It was stated that in about 3 weeks will know from the bids if we would be able to do both Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the project.

### **Library**

Tara Hall, Library Director, stated that the Grand Opening of the Library Educational Center (LEC) would occur on March 26<sup>th</sup> at 4pm. The library currently has nine public computers and they no longer need that many since many people come in with their own laptops. The library will drop their number of PC's down to 5 computers to free up more space for more bookcases and room in the library. There will be a shredding truck on the March 27<sup>th</sup> from 9a to 1p for the community to use. The library events like chess and yoga are back up and running with good participation.

Mayor MacFarlane explained that the Community Shredding event was being sponsored by St. Clair Realty and Friends of the Library. The event is also requesting that those that participate bring non-perishable food for the food bank and/or pet food for the animal shelter.

### **Parks & Recreation Board / Special Events**

Fran O'Keefe Wagler, listed upcoming events for Howey-in-the-Hills. The events are: Water Conservation presentation at the library at 7pm on 3/11, yard sale weekend for the upcoming weekend (no permit needed), Meet the Artist on Friday 3/19 at 6pm at the library, Easter Egg Dash at the Howey Mansion on 4/3 at 10a, Founders Day Citrus Festival at the Howey Mansion on 5/1 at 10a-4p. Mrs. Wagler was asking for donations of Easter candy for the Easter Egg Dash, please bring Easter Candy to the Library or Town Hall.

### **Town Attorney**

Thomas Wilkes, Town Attorney gave an update on the lawsuit against the following defendants, the town of Howey-in-the-Hills, Mayor MacFarlane, former Mayor Nebel, Chief Thomas, and officer Larry Chester by the plaintiffs Mr. Alimenti, Mr. McGill, and the late Mr. Ellis. The attorneys representing the defendants moved to dismiss the complaint and the court dismissed it

on grounds that the case was not correctly plead. If they plaintiffs wish to continue, they will have to split up their cases and file separately. So far only Mr. Alimenti has refiled the case and the only defendant that he has filed against is the Town of Howey-in-the-Hills.

### **Council Members**

#### **Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy**

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy spoke about a webinar on the Harris Chain of Lakes Management Plan which will happen on March 9, 2021 at 6pm and that on Thursday April 29<sup>th</sup> at the Venetian Center is a Lake Trails update from 5:30p to 7p (about funded bike trails). Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy also spoke about a meeting he attended on the impact of Covid-19 on revenues and that there was an expected 3.62% decline in revenues for 2021 for Howey-in-the-Hills.

#### **Councilor Lehning**

Nothing to report.

#### **Councilor Gallelli**

Councilor Gallelli spoke about the Social Meet that occurred two weeks ago, 4 people came and spoke about their business. This Thursday night, March 11<sup>th</sup> at 7pm, a representative from Lake County Water Authority will come to the LEC and speak about water conservation and manatees living the Harris Chain of Lakes.

#### **Councilor Klein**

Nothing to report.

#### **Mayor MacFarlane**

Mayor MacFarlane stated she got a call about the cemetery and that the caller was very complimentary about the state of the cemetery and that they were happy with the way the cemetery was being kept up. She has also gotten calls about people down at the boat ramp using it without the appropriate permits. The Mayor has spoken to chief about what we can do to deter this. Councilor Lehning suggested that we make the boat parking area a towaway zone for people without permits.

Mayor MacFarlane also said that she had recently spoken with Jennifer Bolling about the new Ordinance on Water Conservation that Ms. Bolling is helping the town draft. She thought that having the LCWA spokesperson speaking about Water Conservation at the LEC on March 11<sup>th</sup> was especially helpful and timely.

### **Public Comments**

Sal Gallelli, 1104 N. Tangerine Ave. – Suggested that we create a new Mausoleum for the cemetery, maybe trying to presale it before building it.

Myron Lewellen, 508 Bellissimo Pl – Suggested the town ask Kimley Horn what their policy is when they have two clients competing for the same grant.

Fran O’Keefe Wagler, 408 W Central Ave – Mrs. Wagler wanted to challenge everyone participating on Zoom to get 2 more people to participate during the next Town Council Meeting March 22<sup>nd</sup>.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Gallelli seconded the motion.**

The Meeting adjourned at 7:50 p.m. | **Attendees: 31**

  
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Mayor Martha MacFarlane

ATTEST:

  
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John Brock, Town Clerk