



MINUTES OF THE HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS TOWN COUNCIL  
HELD AUGUST 09, 2021

Mayor MacFarlane called the Town Council Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.  
Mayor MacFarlane led the attendees in the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag.  
John Ernest led an invocation.

**Members Present:**

Martha MacFarlane, Mayor  
George Lehning, Councilor  
Rick Klein, Councilor  
Marie V Gallelli, Councilor

**Staff Present:**

Sean O'Keefe, Town Administrator  
John Brock, Town Clerk  
John Ernest, Public Services Director  
Rick Thomas, Police Chief (Virtual)  
Thomas Harowski, Town Planner (Virtual)  
Thomas Wilkes, Town Attorney (Virtual)

**Members Excuses Absent / Attending Virtually:**

Ed Conroy, Mayor Pro-Tem

**AGENDA APPROVAL**

**Motion made by Councilor Gallelli to approve the agenda; Councilor Klein seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.**

**CONSENT AGENDA**

- 1. The approval of the minutes and ratification and confirmation of all Town Council actions at the July 26, 2021, Town Council Meeting.**

**Motion made by Councilor Lehning to approve the minutes; Councilor Gallelli seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.**

**NEW BUSINESS**

- 2. Consideration and Approval: Vacation of Oleander Ave. Easement – west of S. Florida Ave.**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Planner, Tom Harowski, to explain issue of the vacation of the easement. Mr. Harowski explained that over a year ago there was a request from Mr. & Mrs. Flack, of 607 S Florida Ave, for the Town to vacate an easement for a portion of W. Oleander

Ave., west of S. Florida Ave, that had never been used. This easement was one block deep and it extended to the beginning of the Talichet subdivision. The Planning and Zoning Board had considered this in May of 2020 and made a recommendation of support for the vacation with the condition that the Town be granted an easement for utilities down the middle of what would have been that right-of-way. Since May of 2020 though, it was decided that the Town would not need that easement for the connection of utilities to the Talichet subdivision. The property owner of the south side of the easement is the property owner for the residential portion of the Reserve subdivision project. There were three choices that were presented to the Town Council. The first would be to leave things as they are. The second would be for the Town Council to decide that the easement was no longer necessary and to vacate the easement (with the land splitting, half going to the Flacks and half going to the other property owner). The third option would be similar to option two, but for the Town to reserve a small easement down the middle for future utility use.

It was decided that Town Attorney, Tom Wilkes, would be asked to write a resolution for the Town to vacate the easement and that this resolution should come up before the Town Council at the next meeting.

Public Comment:

Lane Flack, 607 S Florida Ave – Mr. Flack explained that he was requesting for the Town to vacate the unused easement, he wants to extend his house on the south side.

### **3. Consideration and Approval: Lake County League of Cities appointment of Town Representatives – Director & Alternate Director**

Mayor MacFarlane explained that the Lake County League of Cities is an organization of which the Town is a member. The Town can use its membership to get information and to network. Currently the Town's voting delegate, or Director, is Mayor Pro-Tem, Ed Conroy, and it is time to select the new Director and Alternate Director.

Public Comment:

None

**Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to appoint Martha MacFarlane the Town's Director and Sean O'Keefe the Town's Alternate Director to the Lake County League of Cities; Councilor Lehning seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.**

### **4. Consideration and Approval: Howey Wireless Internet Project.**

The Mayor asked Town Administrator, Sean O’Keefe, to explain this grant / project and RFP. This grant is through the E-rate program. If the town is going to go forward with this grant application, the application must be submitted by the end of the week. The only entity to submit a proposal for the RFP was Lucien Wireless. This grant would be used to create a Town-owned municipal high-speed broadband utility. Mr. O’Keefe explained that the Town would not go forward with this project unless it got 100% grant funding for the project.

**Public Comment:**

Berniece Hower, 444 Bellissimo Pl – Mrs. Hower said she didn’t think there would be enough people signing up for the service. She also asked Mr. Sheldon Lucien (CEO of Lucien Wireless) if he had worked with grants before. Mr. Lucien stated he had worked with Verizon, Comcast, and Windstream in the past and had experience with grants, including e-rate. Mrs. Hower also asked how many people it would take to make the service worthwhile for the Town to offer it. Mr. O’Keefe stated that it would be somewhere between 200 and 500 people.

Doug Hower, 444 Bellissimo Pl – Mr. Hower asked if all Town residents would be charged or just the residents that sign up for the service. Mr. O’Keefe stated it would just be the people that sign up for the service.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite asked what would happen if no one signed up for the service. Mr. O’Keefe replied that grant would potentially fully fund the program for the first 12 months and if there were no users at that time, the Town could withdraw from the project. Mr. Tuite also stated that he felt that they are selling it as a fiber optic system, and it is not one.

Sheldon Lucien, CEO of Lucien Wireless – Mr. Lucien explained the technology going into the wireless system and how it compares to other technology, like 5G cellular service.

**Motion made by Councilor Gallelli to approve of the Lucien Wireless proposal and apply for the e-rate grant with the contingency that there be no cost to the Town of Howey-in-the-Hills; Councilor Klein seconded the motion. Motion was 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>Excused Absent</b>	<b>Councilor Gallelli</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor MacFarlane</b>	<b>YES</b>		

**5. Consideration and Approval: Howey Laptop and Tablet Project**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Administrator, Sean O’Keefe to explain this grant / project and RFP. This grant is through the E-rate program. If the town is going to go forward with this grant application, the application must be submitted by the end of the week. There was only one bidder for this RFP and that was Lucien Wireless. This grant application would be for the Town to

purchase 4,000 laptops and/or tablets. These laptops and tablets would then be checked out through the Lake County Library system for homeschooled kids in Lake County. Mr. O’Keefe explained that the Town would not go forward with this project unless it was fully grant funded.

**Public Comment:**

Berniece Hower, 444 Bellissimo Place – Mrs. Hower was concerned with how the laptop and tablets would be handed out.

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite said that he only personally knew of one person that was homeschooled and did not think that there was enough of a demand. Mr. Tuite stated that there would not be enough kids to merit the need for this project. Mr. Tuite also stated that the COVID pandemic would be over soon, so there would be even fewer children being homeschooled. Mr. Tuite also asked where the Town would put 4,000 computers and/or tablets.

Beth Flack, 607 S Florida Ave – Mrs. Flack stated that she thought there would be plenty of homeschooled children even after COVID is over.

Donna Klein, 701 N Lakeshore Blvd. – Mrs. Klein asked if the laptops would be limited to just homeschooled kids. Mr. O’Keefe stated that the nature of the grant would be for students or library patrons.

**Motion made by Councilor Gallelli to approve of the Lucien Wireless proposal and apply for the e-rate grant with the contingent that there be no cost to the Town of Howey-in-the-Hills; Councilor Lehning seconded the motion. Motion was 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>Excused Absent</b>	<b>Councilor Gallelli</b>	<b>YES</b>
<b>Mayor MacFarlane</b>	<b>YES</b>		

**6. Discussion: Town Water Rates – Implementation of 2018 Rates**

Mayor MacFarlane stated that the Town did not implement the approved water rate increase like it should have in 2018. Town Administrator, Sean O’Keefe, explained what the 2018 rates were. It was also stated that the Town Council did not believe that they needed to vote on this, but it could be implemented without a vote since they were previously approved for 2018, just not implemented at that time.

**Public Comment:**

None

**Old Business:**

**7. Consideration and Approval: Replacement of Deck on Howey Pier**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Administrator O'Keefe to explain the status of this project. Mr. O'Keefe stated that the RFP the Town issued only resulted in one bid and that bid was for approximately \$76,000, and if the Town choose to use aluminum decking instead of wood the cost would raise roughly another \$20,000.

Councilor Klein suggested that the Town go back out for more bids and reach out to more dock builders to get more bids. Councilor Klein volunteered to try to get more bids from local dock builders.

Public Comment:

None

**Motion made by Councilor Lehning to disapprove of the bid and resubmit the RFP to try to get more bids; Councilor Klein seconded the motion. Motion was approved by voice vote.**

#### **8. Discussion: Update – Sara Maude Mason Boardwalk Closure & Action Plan**

Town Administrator O'Keefe explained the project of cleaning the boardwalk had an RFP posted and the Town did not receive any proposals from vendors. Mr. O'Keefe explained that this project would also have to be reposted.

Public Comment:

None

#### **Town Reports:**

##### **Town Hall**

Town Clerk Brock gave the July Town Hall report. Mr. Brock presented the number of permits that were issued in July and listed the top 10 bad debt accounts for the Town's utilities. Mr. Brock stated that our Town's Building Service Clerk, Victoria Elfers, received her Notary Public commission. Mr. Brock also stated that Town Hall had successful rolled out the Daily Timecard module for our payroll system.

##### **Police Department**

Police Chief Thomas gave an update on the Town's golf cart crossing FDOT permit and is working to get the final permit submitted.

##### **Code Enforcement**

Police Chief Thomas stated that Ms. Botts, the Town's Code Enforcement Officer, was in school this week getting her CEUs updated.

### **Public Services**

Public Services Director, Mr. John Ernest, stated that there was a new hydrant installed on Florida Avenue, near SR. 19. He also stated there had been two main breaks that had been fixed and the hydrant flushing task is almost completed.

### **Library**

Town Administrator, Sean O'Keefe, read the Library Directors report.

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

Nothing to report.

### **Town Attorney**

Nothing to report.

### **Town Administrator/Financial Director**

Sean O'Keefe, the Town Administrator, presented his July Financial report.

### **Development Status**

Sean O'Keefe, the Town Administrator, introduced a map that he had created with an open-source GIS software project (QGIS) and stated that he would add more specific development information to it in the future.

### **Council Member Reports:**

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

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy stated that he pays \$86 a month for Comcast internet service, and he thinks that a municipal internet option would be a good idea. He stated that Public Works should present a water usage by month (this year vs last year) graph to Town Council each month.

#### **Councilor Lehning**

Councilor Lehning stated that he would like to see a presentation on the Town's Public Works department and the cost to the Town of water vs billing. He would also like an explanation on reading the water bills.

#### **Councilor Gallelli**

Councilor Gallelli stated that dogs should be on leashes if they are outside of their homes or fences.

### **Councilor Klein**

Councilor Klein stated that he thought the high-speed internet project was a great idea, that it would be a benefit the town.

### **Mayor MacFarlane**

Mayor MacFarlane stated that Town Hall would work on creating a presentation on water bills for a September Town Council Meeting. Mayor MacFarlane also stated that she was working on the Town's fee schedule and was looking to propose changes to it by the end of August, pulling fines and fees out of Ordinances and into Resolutions.

### **Public Comments**

Berniece Hower, 444 Bellissimo Place – Mrs. Hower explained that part of the cost of water for the Town came from having to pay the St. Johns River Water Management District for the Town's CUP and that people should be aware of that.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

**There being no further business to discuss, a motion was made by Councilor Gallelli to adjourn the meeting; Councilor Lehning seconded the motion.**

The Meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m. | **Attendees: 20**

ATTEST:



  
John Brock, Town Clerk

  
Mayor Martha MacFarlane