



MINUTES OF THE HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS TOWN COUNCIL
HELD AUGUST 23, 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.
Mr. John Ernest gave a brief invocation.
Mr. Jim Steele read an untitled poem.

Roll Call:

Members Present:

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

Staff Present:

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

AGENDA APPROVAL

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to approve the agenda; Councilor Lehning 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 August 9, 2021, Town Council Meeting.

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to approve the minutes; Councilor Gallelli seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by voice vote.

PUBLIC HEARING

None

NEW BUSINESS

2. Consideration and Approval: **Rate Increase for TMH Consulting for FY 2021-2022**

The Mayor explained that Tom Harowski (the Town's contracted Town Planner) had not had a rate increase in three years and that she thought it was appropriate. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy

stated that he felt that Mr. Harowski has done a good job for the Town and that the small increase was appropriate.

Public Comment:

None

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to approve the rate increase; Councilor Klein seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote.

Councilor Lehning	YES	Councilor Klein	YES
Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy	YES	Councilor Gallelli	YES
Mayor MacFarlane	YES		

3. Discussion: **Town Staff COVID-19 Protocols**

Mayor MacFarlane mentioned discussion about whether the Delta variant of COVID-19 has created a need for the Town to go back to the previously adopted level of COVID-19 protocols that had been in place. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy stated that he had been in the health care industry for 46 years and he hoped that the Town Council would, at a minimum, ask all Town employees to get vaccinated and all wear masks, because they work with the public. Councilor Gallelli stated that she strongly believes in the efficacy of the vaccine, but that she doesn't agree with a mandate.

Public Comment:

None

4. Discussion: **ARPA Funding**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Administrator, Sean O'Keefe, to explain the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and how it relates to the Town. Mr. O'Keefe gave an overview of the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) and the application process that the town has undergone thus far to receive the funding. He reviewed the four primary categories of acceptable uses of the funds according to the Department of the Treasury, and that all funds would need to be expended by December 31, 2024. He announced the updated amount to be received (two tranches of \$297,000 each) and clarified that the timeline for distribution was still unclear, but that he anticipated the first tranche of funding arriving in the upcoming fiscal year, if not sooner.

Public Comment:

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite asked if the ARPA funding could be used for sewer, specifically along the lakefront, to reduce nitrates in the water. He also referred back to the previous item regarding COVID-19 and recommended either a financial incentive or a requirement for town employees to receive the vaccine.

Berniece Hower, 444 Bellissimo Place - Mrs. Hower commented on the ARPA agreement and thanked the Town Administrator for his efforts in submitting a request for this funding.

5. Consideration and Approval: **East Coast Modular Building – Modular Building for Police Department and Town Hall Staff Overflow.**

Mayor MacFarlane summarized the necessity for space for both the Police Department and the Town Hall staff, with a general need for both individual office spaces and meeting spaces. The modular building would be placed between the Police Department and Town Hall, and would be connected with sewer, water, electric, and internet. The funding for this project would come out of Police Impact fees or the ARPA funding. Public Services Director, John Ernest, would coordinate the electrician and the plumber.

Public Comment:

Berniece Hower, 444 Bellissimo Place - Mrs. Hower thought it was a great idea and that the Town needed this space.

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to approve the purchase of the Modular Building and the associated cost of making it usable; Councilor Gallelli seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote.

Councilor Lehning	YES
Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy	YES
Mayor MacFarlane	YES

Councilor Klein	YES
Councilor Gallelli	YES

Old Business:

6. Discussion: **Central Avenue Commercial Development Program.**

Mayor MacFarlane asked Town Administrator, Sean O’Keefe and Town Planner, Tom Harowski, to explain their thoughts encouraging commercial development in the downtown area. The ideas to spur growth along the Central Avenue corridor include three opportunities. The first idea considered was creating a Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA). The second idea was to create a special taxing district; however, this option typically is used more by big cities

rather than smaller towns. Lastly, there was an idea of allowing some of the larger developments to buy transfer rights (which would let them set aside less land than they normally would be required to for Commercial development within their PUDs) and for the Town to use this money to help foster growth within the Central Avenue corridor. This last option would require a change to the Town's Comprehensive Plan.

Councilor Lehning stated that he thought the Town would need a marketing or sales plan to foster commercial growth into the downtown area. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy stated that he thought that Mr. Harowski and Mr. O'Keefe needed to develop a workshop for landowners and business owners inside and outside of Howey-in-the-Hills to try to get best practices and create an education plan. Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy also stated that the Town needed to work on a plan to assist affected landowners to hook up to the new Central Avenue sewer.

Public Comment:

Peter Tuite, 300 E Croton Way – Mr. Tuite stated that he was concerned and would like to see the Town ban fast food restaurants or dollar stores from coming into the town. He also wanted the Town to have full design review and approval of any commercial development wanting to come into the Town.

7. Consideration and Approval (First Reading): **Ordinance 2021-007**

AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS, FLORIDA, PERTAINING TO LAND USE; REZONING A 10-ACRE PARCEL OF PROPERTY LOCATED NORTH OF SOUTH PALM AVENUE, WEST OF SOUTH FLORIDA AVENUE, AND EAST OF SOUTH MARE AVENUE AND IDENTIFIED WITH LAKE COUNTY PROPERTY APPRAISER PARCEL NUMBER 35-20-25-000100000100 AND ALTERNATE KEY NUMBER 1036194; AMENDING THE TOWN'S ZONING MAP TO ZONE THE PROPERTY FOR PLANNED UNIT DEVELOPMENT; PROVIDING FOR CONFLICTING ORDINANCES, SEVERABILITY, CODIFICATION AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

Mayor MacFarlane read the title of the Ordinance and explained that this Ordinance would approve of the rezoning of the 10-acre parcel and would also approve the Developer's Agreement for the parcel. This land would be rezoned from county agricultural and would be added to the existing PUD.

Councilor Gallelli stated that the developer was asking not to have to connect this development to the proposed Reserve development and that the developer wanted to be able to have 60' by 120' lots.

Christopher Germana, with Germana Engineering (the Civil Engineer for the project) stated that the lot size minimum would be 60' by 120', but that many of the lots would be between 120' and 150' in depth. Mr. Germana also stated they were asking for side setbacks of 5'.

Ron Roberts, with Flagship Development, stated that currently the houses in Talichet are 11' apart and that they are asking for these new houses to only be 10' apart, so they are only asking for the new houses to be 1' closer.

Councilor Klein said he felt that the product on the lot was more important than the size of the lot, he said that newer homes do not need lots as large as they used to because they are on city water and sewer instead of septic and wells.

Mayor MacFarlane stated that there are examples of homes with smaller lots sizes like these already established in the older parts of Howey-in-the-Hills. Mayor MacFarlane stated that she was hesitant about approving this new addition because there is only one permanent entrance into and out of Talichet.

Public Comment:

Michael Huculak, 667 Avila Place – Mr. Huculak just moved here from Minneola. He moved away because of too much traffic and is not in favor of the connecting street to the new development.

Andy & Dawn Hooten, 460 Avila Place – Mr. Hooten was not in favor of Talichet connecting to the Reserve community and does not see a benefit to it.

Beth Flack, 607 Florida Avenue - Mrs. Flack asked if existing residents in Town would get to have 10' setbacks since this new area would have that.

Eric Graves, 440 Avila Place – Mr. Graves is happy with the town but is not in favor of a connection between Talichet and the Reserve.

Julie & Nathan McDaniel, 468 Avila Place – Mrs. McDaniel stated she did not want a connection between Talichet and the Reserve.

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy to move this Ordinance forward to a second reading; Councilor Gallelli seconded the motion. Motion was approved unanimously by Roll Call Vote.

Councilor Lehning	YES
Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy	YES
Mayor MacFarlane	YES

Councilor Klein	YES
Councilor Gallelli	YES

Council Member Reports:

Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy

None

Councilor Lehning

None

Councilor Gallelli

None

Councilor Klein

None

Mayor MacFarlane

Mayor MacFarlane reminded everyone that there would be an unveiling and dedication of the Citrus Tour signs at the Griffin Park gazebo on the corner of Central and Lakeshore. This unveiling would occur as part of the Citrus Tour and would be on Wednesday, August 25, 2021 at 1 p.m. Mayor MacFarlane also stated that the sale of the Town property on Laurel to Mr. Sears was completed and the Town had received its funds.

Mayor MacFarlane also stated that Public Services Director, John Ernest, would be retiring from the Town in October.

Public Comments

Frances O’Keefe Wagler, 409 W Central Ave. – Mrs. Wagler wanted to let everyone know about a fundraiser for Howey Officer Hamelink who was in the hospital suffering from COVID-19. This fundraiser would be a raffle ticket sale that was happening at the Howey Market, and it was concluding on August 28, 2021.

ADJOURNMENT

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

The Meeting adjourned at 7:40 p.m. | **Attendees: 38**

Mayor Martha MacFarlane

ATTEST:

John Brock, Town Clerk