

**MINUTES OF THE HOWEY-IN-THE-HILLS TOWN COUNCIL  
MEETING HELD FEBRUARY 10, 2020**

Mayor MacFarlane called the Town Council Meeting of February 10, 2020 to order at 6:00p.m.

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

Also Present: Chief Thomas and Town Attorney Wilkes

**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.

**Minutes of the December 10, 2018: April 08, 2019: January 13, 2020: Town Council Meeting and the December 07, 2018 Special Session.**

**Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy seconded by Councilor McGill moved to approve Minutes of December 10, 2018; April 08, 2019, with correction: January 13, 2020: January 27, 2020 Town Council Meeting and the December 07, 2018 Special Session. Roll Call Vote Motion passed 4-0.**

**Old Business**

**Public Comments:**

**JoJo Lowe, 139 E. Central Ave.** - Tara not able to attend tonight. JoJo had a few announcements. Friday, March 20<sup>th</sup> is the Library Ground Breaking Ceremony. It starts at 4:00 p.m., followed by refreshments and meet the Artist at the Library. February 14<sup>th</sup> the Seniors Singles will meet at the Library from 4:00 – 6:00 p.m. for Valentine's Day. And last, February 21<sup>st</sup> is meet the Artist. It is not just Peggy Ernest, but 3 generations of the Ernest family, from age 1 to age 80.

**Shawn O'Keefe, 500 N. Florida Ave.** – Speaking as the newly elected President of The Howey's Men's Club. They meet every first Tuesday of the month. The next meeting is March 5, 2020 from 5:00 – 7:30 at the Mission Inn. There is usually a speaker of general interest and a social hour. Be sure to check out their face book page.

**Public Comments Closed:**

## **New Business**

**Consideration and Approval to appoint Rachael Bartolowits (107 E. Magnolia Ave) to the Parks and Recreation Board.**

**Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy seconded by Mayor MacFarlane moved to Approve and appoint Rachael Bartolowits (107 E. Magnolia Ave) to the Parks and Recreation Board. Motion passed 3-2. (Councilor Scott & McGill voting no.)**

**Consideration and Approval to appoint seven members to the Charter Review Board. (Dan Powers, Graham Wells, Donna Klein, Sal Gallelli, Pat Miller, Berniece Hower and Kathleen Ormsbee.)**

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated she has spoken to all of these people, and that they are willing participants. Potential start date is the end of the month.

**Councilor McGill** and **Councilor Scott** asked to vote on these people separately, not as a whole group.

**Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** stated all of these people have volunteered, they are all at public meetings, and work hard for the Town. He fully supports passing these people as an entirety.

**Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy seconded by Councilor Nebel moved to approve and appoint seven members to the Charter Review Board. (Dan Powers, Graham Wells, Donna Klein, Sal Gallelli, Pat Miller, Berniece Hower and Kathleen Ormsbee.) Motion passed 3-2. (Councilor Scott & McGill voting no.)**

## **Update: Venezia North/Talichet**

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated that there have been questions about Venezia North AKA Talichet, which is directly across highway 19.

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated she spoke to the Contractor and all of the tortoises have been removed safely.

**Mayor MacFarlane** gave the schedule and process for the Talichet Project.

**From:** Ron Roberts <[RRoberts@FlagshipDevelopmentLLC.com](mailto:RRoberts@FlagshipDevelopmentLLC.com)>  
**Sent:** Saturday, February 8, 2020 9:17 AM  
**To:** Martha Macfarlane <[mmacfarlane@howey.org](mailto:mmacfarlane@howey.org)>  
**Subject:** Talichet Development Schedule

Mayor

Per our conversation, here is a bulletized list of steps we will be performing to completely develop the Talichet project. Clearing of the property commenced 1/20/20. Let me know if you need something beyond this.

- Earthwork Clearing, Grubbing, Mass Grading 1/20/20 – 4/16/20
- Sanitary Sewer System 2/24/20 – 6/17/20
- Storm Drainage System 4/8/20 – 7/17/20
- Force Main 5/14/20 – 5/26/20
- Water Distribution System 5/19/20 – 7/24/20
- Roadway, Curb, & Sidewalk 5/18/20 – 8/27/20
- Lift Station Power/Start-Up 6/10/20
- Duke Energy Power Begin 6/15/20 – 8/28/20
- Landscape Hardscape Installation 8/1/20 – 8/28/20
- Final Walk & AsBuilts 8/21/20 – 8/28/20
- Record Final Plat 8/28/20

RON ROBERTS  
PRINCIPAL · EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT  
LAND ACQUISITION & DEVELOPMENT  
<image001.jpg>  
2406 CYPRESS GLEN DRIVE  
SUITE 107

**Councilor Scott** asked **Mayor MacFarlane** if we ever got the Contractor to agree to the back entrance on Florida Ave? The Mayor stated no, that #2 Road will be used for all construction traffic.

**Discussion: Island Drive.**

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated the agenda was amended because we received one response to RFB for the construction work on Island Drive. The bid came in at \$189,827.00. A decision has not been made yet. There will be much more conversation before any decisions are made.

**Councilor Scott** asked if the RFB had expired. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated yes.

**Discussion: Accounting Firms**

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated that our audit last year was not great, and that there were many findings. She also stated it was not the fault of the audit firm, and they have declined not to continue in the capacity as auditors. We have found another auditor that was approved at a previous meeting.

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated we have asked the prior auditor and another firm to give us an estimate on what it would take for them to come in and supplement our bill payable, payroll clerk for some time to help us address the audit findings. In everyone's packet there are 2 estimates, one from CRI (our previous audit firm) and one from Milestone. **Mayor MacFarlane** stated we haven't had a chance to talk to Milestone yet.

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated we really have to determine as a town if we want to continue risking audit items and having the state look at us. Or do we want to address this in house working thru it ourselves, which we really do not have the staff, or do we want to bring in someone that has the experience. We have to decide soon, by the end of the month to start audit process.

**Councilor Scott** stated when Chris Sears was here, we had issues with the same firm, we had a bad audit come back, but it was on their side not our side. Chris Sears and Council gave them a second chance.

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated it wasn't so much the firm, the audit findings were valid, it was a much more in-depth audit then in previous years.

**Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** stated that he believed the auditor said that the findings found were not uncommon to small towns.

**REPORTS:**

Town Hall – No Report

Finance – In the packet

Police Department – **Chief Thomas** welcomed George Brown back to the Police Department as a part time officer.

Public Services – Working with Library Contractor.

Code Enforcement – Officer George Brown is coming back as part time Code Enforcement.

Library – In the packet

Town Attorney – No Report

Council Members:

**Councilor Nebel** stated he had nothing for the agenda but wanted to thank everyone for all the support while he was out ill.

**Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** gave an update on the bike trail

**Councilor McGill** stated he was surprised to hear George Brown was re-hired, because it was not approved by the Mayor or Council and was not advertised.

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated it was advertised.

**Councilor McGill** stated that **Town Clerk Burke** said she did not know George Brown was hired.

**Councilor McGill** stated that the January 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and January 27,2020 Town Council Meetings that occurred were not legal because we didn't have a quorum.

A lengthy discussion ensued.

**Councilor McGill** stated that we are trying to save money on attorney fees, and asked why other than this meeting why is the Town Attorney needed. He said we need to choose carefully when he is needed.

**Councilor McGill** referenced the memo sent out by the Mayor about certain Council Members not be allowed in certain areas of Town Hall.

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated it's a security policy. Only town staff, public works employees and the police are allowed in the utility billing section of the building.

**Councilor McGill** stated that something needs to be done with **Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy's** unethical and abuse of power towards a town employee.

**Mayor Pro-Tem Conroy** stated that is extremely incorrect.

**Councilor McGill** stated he is being charged for record request when the Mayor is not.

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated she never made any record request, only copies of attorney bills.

**Councilor McGill** stated last spring we spoke about jobs going out for bid. He said he knows of 7 items that did not go out for bid.

(3 Minute break was taken)

**Mayor MacFarlane** stated to **Councilor McGill** that he has not mentioned anything that's been submitted for the agenda. She said she sent an e-mail and asked Councilor McGill to provide information in writing on the items that he wanted to talk about so that Council have more detail.

**Councilor McGill** stated he did not receive the e-mail and would do that for future meetings.

**Councilor McGill** spoke briefly regarding the de-annexation in Venezia and said 60% of signatures has been received.

**Councilor Scott** asked Chief Thomas about George Browns pay.

**Councilor Scott** stated he had concerns about the Towns bidding and purchasing process.

### **Public Comment:**

**Dale Kelly, 601 S. Dixie** – January 13<sup>th</sup> there was a meeting over in Tavares where I spoke about the town getting a master plan of where we are going in the future. I love Howey-in-the-Hills. The cost of the police department is worth it. My last request is, as a concerned citizen, I ask Mr. McGill to resign.

**Elwis Benson, 406 S. Florida** – Regarding Talichet, I don't understand why we have to lose on the flood zone. Unfortunately, our last council locked us into this development.

**Fran Wagler, 409 W. Central Ave.** – Boy Scouts came tonight, thank you to the residents for putting them in new scout forms. They will be at all the Town Council Meetings to do the Pledge of Allegiance.

**David Miles, 33 Camino Real** – Updated recall petition.

**Peter Tuite, 300 E. Croton Way** – I suggest hiring a qualified City Manager.

The meeting adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

ATTEST:



Debbie Tubbs  
Administrative Assistant I

  
Martha MacFarlane, Mayor