

Town Of Havana

Regular Council Meeting

February 24, 2026 – 6:00pm

Meeting minutes

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Eddie Bass at 6:00pm. Invocation was led by Mayor Pro Tem Lawrence Reed, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

A roll call confirmed the presence of the following Council members, Councilwoman Penny Key, Group 1, Councilwoman Tabatha Nelson, Group 2, Councilman Matt Wesolowski, Group 3, Mayor Pro Tem Lawrence Reed, Group 5, Mayor Eddie Bass, Group 6 and Councilman Howard McKinnon, Group 7, ensuring a quorum for the meeting. Councilman Landon Seymour, Group 4 was not in attendance.

Set the Agenda

Councilman McKinnon made the motion to set the agenda. Councilman Wesolowski seconded and motion carried.

Mayor Bass stated that the Council will hear Item 7i. first under New Business.

Recognition of Visitors

None.

Consent Agenda Items

Councilman Wesolowski made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda items. Councilman McKinnon seconded and motion carried.

Old Business

Old Elementary School Resolution 2026-14R-02

David Wesolowski, 306 N Main ST, shared that he thinks the Town should talk to a foreclosure attorney. He feels the Town should take care of this old business item instead of assessing liens. Mr. Wesolowski stated that if the Town should start foreclosure and it would be inexpensive and move things forward.

Mrs. Wilkerson, Town Manager, requests approval of Resolution 2026-14R-02 which updates the fines owed by the owners through February 24, 2026, to \$581,515.00. No recent updates from the owners nor response to any notifications of updated fines.

Councilman Wesolowski agrees that the Town should move forward with foreclosure. He recommends bringing a foreclosure attorney to the next meeting for discussion. Mayor Pro Tem Reed recommends if the Town is not going to move forward with foreclosure, to at least put up signs or something in regard to the dangers on the property since the Town is aware of these. Town Attorney, Jody Finklea reminded that the Town does not own the property. He stated that anyone can make allegations but statutorily the Town has no

responsibility at this time. If the Town does decide to put up a fence, signs, etc., this is allowed and the costs can be added to the lien.

Councilwoman Nelson moved to approve the resolution updating the fines. Councilman Wesolowski made a motion to move forward with foreclosure. Councilwoman Key seconded the motion to approve the resolution. Councilwoman Nelson shared foreclosure is too scary if the owner decides to contest.

After confirming the motion by Councilwoman Nelson to approve the resolution and a second by Councilwoman Key, the motion carried with Councilman Wesolowski opposing.

605 E 9th Avenue Resolution 2026-13R-02

Mrs. Wilkerson, Town Manager, requests approval of Resolution 2026-13R-02 which updates the fines owed by the owners through February 24, 2026, to \$20,915.00 and for the Clerk to record the resolution in the public records of Gadsden County, Florida. There have been no cleanup efforts made to the exterior of the property.

Councilwoman Nelson made a motion to approve and update the fines on Resolution 2026-13R-02. Councilwoman McKinnon seconded, and motion carried. Councilman Wesolowski and Mayor Pro Tem Reed opposed the vote.

New Business

Town Manager Resignation – Effective 5/21/2026

Mrs. Wilkerson is resigning effective May 21, 2026, which is three months from today. This agenda item is aimed at starting the discussion about how the Town Council would like to conduct the recruitment process to find a new Manager. She has provided a recap for the Town Council in their packet of the timeline and history of the process used in 2022. She stated she feels this process is well done and recommends following it. The Council can make the decision to use the outside vendor FCCMA or do applicant review In-house.

Councilwoman Key stated that she feels In-house will be quicker and has an advantage. Mayor Pro Tem Reed agreed with Councilwoman Key. Councilman Wesolowski inquired as to the cost to use the outside vendor with the same process. Mrs. Wilkerson stated that she does not know.

Councilman McKinnon made a motion to use the same process and for all work to be done In-house. Councilwoman Key seconded and motion carried.

Mrs. Wilkerson stated that the ad will be posted to all websites and will be placed in the newspaper. She is requesting the Town Council complete the survey of what they feel is most important qualities in the new Manager and return to the Town Clerk by March 3, 2026. This will be used to rank the applicants. Mrs. Wilkerson recommends the Council to appoint someone to review the applicants and ranking for prioritizing at the end of month meeting. The Town will use an outside source for background checks. She is requesting input from the Council on any other events they desire.

Mayor Bass recommends choosing the applicant and having the new Manager meet the community. He recommends a start date at the end of May if possible. The Council discussed and agreed upon using the same ad and salary as previously used. Mrs. Wilkerson will send reminder dates to the Council.

Resilient Florida Grants (26PLN09) Task Order

The Manager shared that the Town of Havana was approved for grant funding to complete an Adaptation Plan, which priorities and identifies projects needed from the recently completed Comprehensive Vulnerability Assessment. This grant includes funding to initiate conceptual design of prioritized flood mitigation projects and is a no-match grant. The Town Council approved the acceptance of this award and project at the December 16, 2025, regular meeting. The grant outlines four deliverables (tasks) and the funding for this project and is funded as follows:

26PLN09 (Tasks 1-4) \$305,700

Dewberry Engineering has provided the Town with a proposed Task work Order to provide professional services for the Adaptation Plan for Havana under a continuing services contract that was competitively procured under CCNA guidelines. Mrs. Wilkerson is asking for Council approval to engage Dewberry Engineers to provide the work scope that is listed on the task order, and to execute any related documents as required under this grant.

Public Comment requested and none given.

Councilwoman Nelson made a motion to approve the Task Order. Councilman McKinnon seconded and motion carried.

Introduction – Ty Smith, Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce

Mrs. Wilkerson requested the Town Council approval for Mr. Ty Smith to come forward and introduce himself. Council approved.

Mr. Smith shared he is the new Executive Director of the Gadsden County Chamber of Commerce. He thanked the Council for allowing him to come and share. He is excited and looking forward to working with the citizens. He said the Chamber will work alongside with whomever is chosen as the new Town Manager and Havana Mainstreet. He also recognized Councilwoman Key has joined the member services with the Chamber.

Mr. Smith invites everyone to Day with the Chamber on March 12, 2026, at Havana Springs. It is like the Chamber's State of the Union. Discussion of the transitions, trials and triumphs. Also, it is a time to share with everyone what the Chamber of Commerce does.

The Council thanked Mr. Smith and looks forward to working with the Chamber.

FY2027 Budget Workshops

Mrs. Wilkerson shared that historically the Town has held budget workshops in June, July and August to discuss Council priorities and projects, and to identify the necessary funding sources to cover those requests. She made the proposal to Council to hold the budget workshops at 5pm on the day of the regularly scheduled council meetings, instead of mid-month, as many of the council members and residents travel during the summer. Proposed dates are as follows and if approved the Town Clerk will ensure advertising requirements are met.

June 30, 2026 @ 5pm Discuss projects/priorities/millage.

July 28, 2026 @ 5pm Discuss utility rates/millage/draft budget.

August 25, 2026 @ 5pm Discuss final draft changes.

Councilwoman Key made the motion to approve the proposed dates. Councilman McKinnon seconded, and motion carried.

Approval of Special Events Permit – Sprout & Shout (2nd Annual Event)

The Town Manager shared that Commissioner Alonzetta Simpkins has requested to partner with the Town to host a family- friendly community fair in the walking park. This event is the 2nd Annual Event and will provide community resources, health resources and activities for kids. Commissioner Simpkins is requesting to host the event under the Town's standard insurance policy.

Councilman McKinnon made a motion to approve the Special Events Permit for the 2nd Annual Sprout & Shout. Councilwoman Nelson seconded and motion carried.

Acting Town Manager – Effective March 3, 2026

Mrs. Wilkerson shared that she will be out of the office for a period of 2-3 weeks for medical reasons, effective March 3, 2026. Havana's code (Sec.2-85. Action town manager) calls for a letter to be filed with the Town Council, naming an assistant town manager during that time period. She is naming Chief Kenny Lewis as acting town manager during her absence and a letter is provided to Council Members indicating such.

No vote required.

Library Expansion Project

Mrs. Wilkerson shared that at the January Council meeting, a grant funded library expansion project was approved that included building up instead of building out. The upward expansion would necessitate the addition of an elevator which would absorb nearly \$500K of the \$2 million budget. In Havana, we have the available land space to increase the library footprint while leaving it one story, which would free up the funding slated for an elevator to be used for other improvements. She is requesting Town Council approval to change the project scope from a second story addition to an enlargement of the one-story building by 3500-4000 square feet.

Councilwoman Nelson shared she is in approval as long as the exterior matches. Mrs. Wilkerson shared she will reach out to the Grant Manager and request an updated mock.

Councilman McKinnon made a motion to approve the project scope change after final review of the mockup. Councilwoman Key seconded and motion carried.

MGAG – Notice of Increase to recover Swing Supply Charge Fund

The Manager shared that Municipal Gas Authority of Georgia (MGAG) supplies Havana's natural gas system. The staff were notified by MGAG that there would be an on-bill increase in February to cover the shortage and help recoup the Swing Supply Charge Fund as a result of the record cold temps/consumption and extremely high price of natural gas in late January/early February. The current MGAG bill lists 50% of Havana's share, or \$2,423.00. The remaining 50% will be spread out over the next five months, with on-bill installments of \$484.00. The costs will be recovered by the town through a small rate increase in the natural gas rate. The current rate resolution allows for the fixed floor rate of \$1.75 +/- any necessary adjustments so there is no need to amend the rate resolution to cover the additional expense. The decision has been made to wait till next month for utility billing to start recouping and the adjustments will be in small increments to recoup the costs.

No vote required.

Winter Storm Fern – Additional Extension Available

In late January/February, Winter Storm Fern brought several days & nights of extreme low temperatures across Florida and the southeast. A direct impact of the staggering increase in consumption was a corresponding increase in natural gas use and price. As gas demand increased beyond available supply, the price also increased. Cost of electricity went up some for us and we have to pass along. Everyone in the town did well to conserve during the peak times. On the next bill, the fuel adjustment will be \$.02673 per kwh. Our regular rate is \$.1278 per kwh. The combination of increased consumption along with fuel adjustment will create a hardship for some in our community. Havana is offering a one-time extra "WS Fern" extension for those that need it, that will not count against the three extensions granted each year. Message regarding this extension will be on the bottom of the utility bill so all customers will receive the information directly and info will be provided in Town Hall also.

Councilman McKinnon shared that the General Manager of FMPA stated that the peak hit before the sun came up. He stated that if we were relying on Solar, it would have been a bad situation. We must have a balance and natural gas is important.

Town Manager Report

- Current/Anticipated Town Vacancies: Electric/Gas Technician, Town Manager (5/21/26)
- Several Grant applications are pending at this time.
- Gus Bert Field – FRDAP Grant moved forward for funding consideration, fields being used by NWLL for practice – moving forward with funding, staff item list and working on quotes.
- Shade Cell/Shade Grant - \$50K grant not moving forward.
Councilwoman Nelson asked for a time frame on the grant funding. Ms. Wilkerson stated it is in the legislative now and there is no time frame. She also shared that proof of insurance has been provided for the teams practicing on the field.
- Council Elections – April 28, 2026 (Seats 4,5,6,7)
- Qualifying Period: Noon Monday, March 16th – Noon Friday, March 20th
- Pre-Qualifying begins two (2) weeks before the first day of Qualifying ** (Monday, March 2nd)
- Sewer Update – Digester Vendor has been selected, and repair date is pending.

Recognition of Each Council Member

Councilwoman Nelson reminded everyone to get with their insurance companies about the new ISO rating that goes into effect 3/1/26. She is hopeful that insurance companies will reward each citizen. Also, she wants to remind all citizens that the Town of Havana offers free energy audits for residents.

Mayor Bass wanted to thank Councilwoman Nelson and Donna Dunn for all of their hard work with regards to the ISO rating.

Councilman Wesolowski inquired as to when the trash cans and park benches will be deployed. Mrs. Wilkerson stated it is her understanding that the trash cans are already in place in the walking park. The Garden Club has requested a photo op when the park benches are deployed so scheduling is being worked on.

Mrs. Wilkerson shared that information in regard to the ISO rating is on the Fire Department Page on the website. Also, can be received at Town Hall.

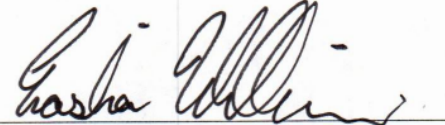
Motion to Adjourn

Councilwoman Key made a motion to adjourn the February 24, 2026, council meeting. Councilman Wesolowski seconded, and motion carried.

Mayor Bass adjourned the meeting at 7:10pm.


Edward Bass Jr., Mayor

Attestation:



Enosha Williams, Town Clerk

