

Town Of Havana

Regular Council Meeting

January 27, 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. Councilwoman Nelson seconded and motion carried.

Recognition of Visitors

None.

Consent Agenda Items

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

Old Business

Old Elementary School Resolution 2026-14R-01

Mrs. Wilkerson, Town Manager, requests approval of Resolution 2026-14R-01 which updates the fines owed by the owners through January 27, 2026, to \$567,015.00. Mrs. Wilkerson stated that the owners had made considerable cleanup efforts to the exterior of the school property. All FDEP concerns have been cleared. To date no permits have been pulled for demolition and no zoning application has been submitted.

Councilman Wesolowski stated that something needs to be done. The owners have not responded to fines, letters nor any other communication efforts. He feels it is in the best interest of the Town to move forward with foreclosure. Councilwoman Key shared she has concerns with the costs that the Town will incur in regards to this. Councilman Wesolowski reminded the Council that there are interested buyers in the property. Councilwoman Nelson shared she will be good with what the Town Attorney recommends. She like Councilwoman Key is very concerned about the unknown expense that will become the Town's if foreclosure moves forward. The Town Attorney, Jody Finklea, again shared the process of foreclosure. He also reminded that cleanup efforts can be made and added to the lien. The unknown is if the foreclosure will be contested. Councilman Wesolowski reminded that if it went to auction there would be potential buyers.

The Town Manager requested confirmation from the Town Attorney that if the Town was not successful with the foreclosure that the Town would be responsible for legal fees which was confirmed. Councilwomen Key and Nelson continued to state that they are not comfortable with taking this risk.

Mr. David Wesolowski requested to speak on this matter. He stated that he has spoken to a prominent foreclosure attorney that stated it could be done for a flat fee between \$3K-\$5K and that there is more than one interested party in the property. He shared that hearings are usually via phone and short. Auction at the Courthouse steps and the Town does have the opportunity to say that they are not interested in bidding. He stated that only excess \$ after all liens, etc. are met goes to the owner.

Councilman McKinnon stated that he is concerned of the risks if the Town is not successful as attorneys can drag out cases for large legal fees. Mr. Finklea shared that code enforcement and foreclosure is difficult.

Councilwoman Nelson made a motion to update the fines on Resolution 2026-14R-01. Councilman McKinnon seconded, and motion carried. Councilman Wesolowski opposed the vote.

605 E 9th Avenue Resolution 2026-13R-01

Mrs. Wilkerson, Town Manager, requests approval of Resolution 2026-13R-01 which updates the fines owed by the owners through January 27, 2026, to \$18,115.00 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. At the last meeting, it was requested to move this item until the next meeting. Mr. David Wesolowski and Mayor Pro Tem Reed offered to go to the residence to meet with the property owner. Mr. David Wesolowski stated he did go by and offered to assist and has had no response from the property owner.

Mayor Pro Tem Reed shared that he has no issue with code enforcement or liens. He is concerned with personal issues in this situation. He also stated that he and Mr. Wesolowski were to go to the property, but he did not go. Councilman Wesolowski shared that until something happens with the old elementary school property that he doesn't feel comfortable voting for liens on personal homes. Councilwoman Nelson shared that the Town must have a process and follow it with consistency. Mayor Bass stated he has reviewed the files that code enforcement has worked on and all, but this one has complied. He shared that it is an eyesore when he comes out his drive and looks right. Mayor Pro Tem Reed shared he agrees with the process but feels this case is different. He also stated that it can't be because it's down the road from someone's home.

Councilwoman Nelson made a motion to approve and update the fines on Resolution 2026-13R-01. Councilwoman Key seconded, and motion carried. Councilman Wesolowski and Mayor Pro Tem Reed opposed the vote.

New Business

April Meeting – Date Change

Mrs. Wilkerson requested approval to move the April Council Meeting scheduled for April 28, 2026 to April 21, 2026. Municipal elections will be held on April 28, 2026 for all Council Members, Manager and residents may participate in the voting process.

Councilwoman Nelson made motion to approve the April Council meeting be moved to April 21, 2026. Councilman McKinnon seconded and motion carried.

CY2026 Election & Selection of Canvassing Board Members

Mrs. Wilkerson stated that the 2026 Annual Election for Council Seats will be held April 28, 2026, at the Havana Library from 7am to 7pm. Elections for Seats 4,5,6, and 7 will be held. Any of these seats with two qualifiers will require a vote. As such, the Town of Havana will need to select two members for the Canvassing Board. The members will need to be available on the evening of 4/28/2026 from 5pm until 9pm (estimated) for oversight and certification of the electoral process. Canvassing board members may not be an active candidate or participant in the campaign of any candidate. Historically, the Council has selected the Town Manager or Police Chief & a member of the Town Council to perform this function. The Manager is requesting the Town Council to nominate and agree by vote on two people to fill these spots.

Councilman Wesolowski made a motion for himself and Chief of Police Kenny Lewis to fill these spots. Councilwoman Key seconded and motion carried.

Resolution 2026-05R – MSCOP Paving 5th Street

Mrs. Wilkerson shared that the Town has an opportunity to apply for a road resurfacing grant through FDOT. Applications are due Mid-March 2026. In order to apply, the Council must pass a resolution in support of the project and application. This grant was applied for in FY25, but the project was not funded. The project is 5th Street SE from 9th Avenue to 11th Avenue. She is requesting approval of Resolution 2026-05R for application and for the mayor to sign all related documents.

Mayor Pro Tem Reed made the motion to approve the resolution and for the mayor to sign all documents. Councilwoman Nelson seconded and motion carried.

Resolution 2026-01R – Support GCB OCC

Mrs. Wilkerson shared that Gadsden County Board of County Commissioners is proposing to make grant funded improvements to the Havana Public Library in the amount of \$2,000,000. This project is funded through the Department of Commerce. As the Town owns the building and land, Havana's Town Council must agree to allow these improvements to the building.

Councilwoman Nelson made the motion to approve Resolution 2026-01R in support of the County improvements. Councilman McKinnon seconded, and motion carried.

Discussion Item: Honoring the passing of Dignitaries, Service Members

The Town Manager shared that at the January 13, 2026 meeting, Councilman Wesolowski raised the issue of wanting to honor the untimely passing of SFC Mark Henderson Jr., a local Gadsden County resident and active service member who passed away while on active duty overseas, by flying the flag at half-staff on the day of his funeral. Councilman Wesolowski emailed the Town Manager requesting the flag at Town Hall be flown at half-staff. Mrs. Wilkerson provided information noting that town staff didn't have the authority to lower the flags but would do so at the direction of the President or Governor. Mrs. Wilkerson shared that Councilman Wesolowski subsequent to the January 13, 2026 meeting took independent action on behalf of the Council and petitioned the Governor's office to request flying of flags at half-staff on 1/24/2026, the day of SFC Mark Henderson Jr.'s funeral. He sent an update on this issue via email to all Council Members on 1/16/2026 and sent an email to the Manager directing the flags to be lowered on 1/24/2026.

As requested at the 1/13/2026 mid-month meeting, this agenda item is intended to provide the beginning of discussion on what action should be taken by town staff, if any, to honor the passing of local residents. Whatever, the Council recommends the Town Manager will work with the Town Attorney to put this in place.

Councilwoman Nelson shared that she feels the Town should follow Government & State guidelines with regard to flags at half-staff. Mrs. Wilkerson requested the Council's desires to do anything in addition to those guidelines. Councilman Wesolowski agreed to the State guidance. He shared that initially his idea caught resistance and he then reached out to the Governor's office. He would like to thank the Town staff for lowering the flag and Concord for the large flag.

Councilman McKinnon made a motion that the Town follow State guidelines. Councilwoman Key seconded and motion carried. Mayor Pro Tem Reed wanted confirmation that the emails from Councilman Wesolowski that were sent to the Council should have come from the Town Manager and this was confirmed by the Town Manager and Town Attorney.

Discussion Item: StoneCastle

Mrs. Wilkerson shared that this agenda item has been added at the request of Councilman Wesolowski. A vendor, StoneCastle, reached out to Town Staff and all Council Members via email to offer a solution to provide a 3.45% APR on funds without having to switch banks. The Manager stated she did not actively research the opportunity when received as staff are at max capacity with other projects. However, based on council interest, she scheduled a call with Andy LaFear of StoneCastle to review this opportunity. After the call, it appears that the bulk of the Town funds would go into multiple smaller banking solutions, managed by StoneCastle, that offer a higher yield, and a minimal amount of funding would be held at CCB. Currently the Town is getting 2.5% APR at CCB based on total dollars held in all accounts. The Town has multiple accounts at CCB, some of which must remain as separate accounts per grant, loan or bond requirements. Mrs. Wilkerson stated that based on the minimal review, she is not sure this solution is a good fit based on current requirements to hold certain funds separate. The manager shared that currently the staff are working on the sewer RFP, construction of the new Public Safety Complex and all the grant reporting that supports it, along with setting up a loan to finish the construction, several new public safety grants, prepping for the FY2025 audit with the FMPA CPA onsite for two weeks, negotiating an electric utility territorial agreement, writing a scope of work on the \$7.4 million

sewer grant, purchasing a bucket truck, watching legislation for any potential bills that could affect our Town's operations or financial standing, completing our annual gas safety inspection with PSC, and onboarding two new staff members, one of which is the Town Clerk. The Manager is seeking Council guidance as to whether this opportunity is a high enough priority to shift focus away from other projects to fully research it and bring recommendation back to the Council. If so, which projects does the Town Council desire to be moved down on the list.

Mayor Pro Tem Reed requested the Town Manager's input on the top priorities. Mrs. Wilkerson shared that the Sewer RFP, Onboarding of the new Town Clerk and FY2025 Audit is top in her opinion. He stated he thinks these priorities should be worked on. Councilwoman Key shared she thinks the StoneCastle may be a good idea but at this time not a top priority. Councilman Wesolowski shared that the Town needs to come up with way to make money and not raise rates on the citizens. He reiterated that every time the budget comes around the Council says they don't want to raise rates, but they do. He thinks it needs to be looked into in the future. Councilman McKinnon shared that normally high yield rates indicate high risk. He stated that the Town has to make sure the money meets the requirements in the laws governing. Councilwoman Nelson reminded Council that Capital City Bank is local and convenient and she would need a spectacular rate to move.

The Town Manager appreciated the input and will make sure to put this on the list for the future.

Fire Pension – FY25 Detailed accounting Report

Mrs. Wilkerson shared that attached is the Fire Pension detailed accounting report that is required pursuant to s. 175.061 (8)(a), F.S. or s. 185-05 (8)(a). No action is needed and this report is informational only.

Task Order – Dewberry Engineers

The Manager shared a Task Order for approval from Dewberry Engineers for work related to the planning, permitting, design, bid assistance, and construction management services for the FDEP/SRF SAHM Lift Station Rehabilitation project. The total project cost \$7,436,144. The task order is for \$969,206. The Manager is requesting approval of this task order and authorization for the mayor to sign any related documents.

Justin Ford, Dewberry Engineering, shared the process for this project. He stated that it is 8-10 months away from turning dirt. DEP is very specific on this process Councilman Wesolowski inquired if the task order amount is set. Mr. Ford shared that the Fee Structure Guidelines are set by DEP and this amount was built into the grant. The total project amount is 100% grant funded.

Councilman McKinnon made a motion to approve the task order and to approve the mayor to sign any related documents. Councilwoman Nelson seconded and motion carried.

Request Approval to apply for Fire Grants – Gear Washer/Dryer

The Manger requests approval to apply for both the Firehouse Subs Grant and the FY26 Forestry Fire Grant for the purchase of an industrial fire gear washing machine, dryer and other safety equipment as determined by the Fire Chief. The total project cost will not exceed \$30,000. If a match is required for either funding opportunity, the matching funds will come from the Volunteer Fire funds.

Councilwoman Nelson shared that currently the HVFD has been using CVFD washer/dryer. These funds would be a huge asset to the VFD.

Councilman McKinnon made a motion to apply for both of these grants. Councilman Wesolowski seconded and motion carried.

Approval to Schedule – Sunshine Law Workshop

Mrs. Wilkerson requests Town Council consideration of holding a training workshop on the Sunshine Law. One of FMPA's attorneys, Dan O'Halloran does a fantastic monthly update on Sunshine Law for the FMPA Board of Directors, and has agreed to come do a 15-20-minute presentation for Council at one of the future meetings if the group would find it helpful. She stated it may be most effective to have this training after the new members, if any, are sworn in at the May meeting.

Councilman Wesolowski shared that he forgot to discuss the flags at half-staff at the meeting. He thinks this would be beneficial.

Councilman Wesolowski made a motion for the training and for it to be held after the election. Councilman McKinnon seconded and motion carried.

Resolution 2026-04R: Loan-Public Safety Complex

The Town Manager requests approval of Resolution 2026-04R, authorizing the Town Manager to secure a loan to finance the remaining portion of the Public Safety Complex construction, not to exceed \$100,000. She is also requesting approval for the Mayor or Manager to execute any related documents required to secure the loan. She shared that this \$100K is the amount that was above the grant. She is working to keep costs as low as possible. Capital City Bank proposal looks good. Prime Meridian rate is higher. CCB is offering interest only payments until complete with 10-year financing.

Councilman Wesolowski inquired as to if the Town is making sure the Construction Management team is doing things according to requirements and is the Town receiving updates on it and keeping track of where the money is going. Mayor Bass stated that everyone should go look at the building. Councilman Wesolowski asked if the Town gets updates and Ms. Wilkerson shared that they do. Councilwoman Key stated that bids were received prior to construction. Councilman McKinnon shared that bids were initially received. Draws from the funds are approved and the Town did sign a contract which contractually binds the Town for the remaining funds.

Mayor Pro Tem Reed made the motion to approve the resolution and permission for the Mayor or Manager to execute the related documents. Councilwoman Key seconded and motion carried.

Approval of Special Event Permit – 1st Street SE Road Closure

Mrs. Wilkerson is requesting approval of the special events permit that was submitted by New Jerusalem MB Church (311 1st ST SE). The request is for road closure of 1st ST SE between 12th AVE E and 11th AVE E from the hours of 10am-5pm on February 22, 2026, for the church Black History Celebration & Black Business Expo. Any approval given by Town Council will be considered conditional approval, contingent on the items required by the Town of Havana.

Mayor Pro Tem Reed made a motion to approve the special events permit. Councilman McKinnon seconded and motion carried.

Town Manager Report

- Happy Birthday to Councilman McKinnon
- Manager off 1/28/2026 for medical
- Thursday, 1/29/26 – RFP for sewer Services
- Park Trash Cans – Garden Club voted last November to supply. Trash cans have been ordered.
 - Councilman Wesolowski inquired if the trash cans were donated and status of new park benches. Ms. Wilkerson said they were donated and the park benches are ready to be deployed and both will be completed at the same time.
- New Hires – Town Clerk starts Thursday, 1/29/26, Street Department employee started 1/26/26 and another interview for the other street department employee on Thursday, 1/29/26.
- FMPA – CPA, Jim Arntz, who is a great asset will be onsite in February for FY25 audit prep.
- PSC Gas inspection this week.
- Substation work is finishing this week.
- Cameras have been installed at the sewer plant and substations.
- 2 Appropriations Request at the Capitol now.
- Sunday structure fire was at a local church
- WastePro renewals are 3-year not 5-year.

Recognition of Each Council Member

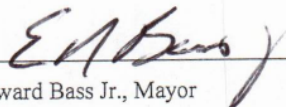
Councilman McKinnon inquired as to the time required for WastePro and Mrs. Wilkerson shared it is 120-days prior to renewal and a decision would need to be made to initiate the bid process in time.

Councilman Wesolowski again thanked the State and Governor for approving the flag at half-staff for Mr. Henderson.

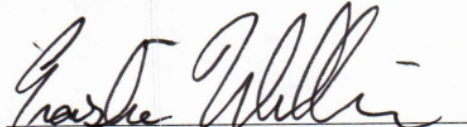
Motion to Adjourn

Councilman McKinnon made a motion to adjourn the January 27, 2026, council meeting. Councilwoman Nelson seconded, and motion carried.

Mayor Bass adjourned the meeting at 7:21pm.


Edward Bass Jr., Mayor

Attestation:


Shrylan R Alexander, Town Clerk

