

Town Of Havana

Regular Council Meeting

July 29, 2025 – 6:00pm

Meeting minutes

Call to Order

The July 29, 2025 Regular Council 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 including Councilwoman Key, Councilwoman Nelson, Mayor Eddie Bass, Mayor Pro Tem Lawrence Reed, Councilman McKinnon and Councilman Wesolowski. Councilman Seymour was not in attendance.

Recognition of Visitors

Karen Kent, 102 E 5th AVE, Havana, FL 32333 – Ms. Kent shared her thanks to all town staff for all that they do for the Town. However, she had a few concerns to share with the council. The flags on US27 North should have the Field of Blue should be over the road and not against the building. Inquired as to the status of signs for trucks that are entering onto US27 from 5th and 9th to keep them in the center lane. The dumpster at the Wanderings is disgusting and overflow ends up under the dumpster. When it is dumped the overflow is left. Why does the Town have Duke Energy and not Talquin Electric? She is very excited the agenda item for the ordinance for engine braking.

David Wesolowski – will speak on agenda items as they come up.

Michelle Cassidy, 904 Circle DR, Havana, FL 32333 – Ms. Cassidy shared that in the past she lived in Twin Ponds in a much larger home and her utility billing was less than where she lives now on Circle DR. What is the difference? Shared details from previous billing statements. She does not support the increases in rates. She would like for the Town of Havana to have professional fire fighters in the future due to the fire rating that is costing citizens.

Mayor Bass shared that it is extremely expensive to have a paid fire service. Ms. Cassidy inquired if it would be possible to apply for a grant and she volunteers her service to assist with the writing of the grant. Ms. Cassidy inquired if she could put her own sewer in and gas. Ms. Wilkerson, Town Manager, requested they meet to discuss her specific concerns with her utility billing and she is willing to set up a time after the meeting.

Request to Set the Agenda

Motion was made by Councilman McKinnon and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Reed to set the agenda. Motion carried.

Consent Agenda Items

Motion was made by Councilwoman Nelson to approve consent agenda items including June 10, 2025 and June 24, 2025 Zoning workshop minutes, pay bills, Resolution 2025-14R-07, reschedule budget hearing date due to BOCC conflict, approval of Special Event Permits (HMS). Councilman McKinnon seconded and motion carried.

OLD Business

No. 6 – Medical Facility Contract – Punchlist & Fundraiser Update

Town Manager, Kendrah Wilkerson, the council has previously approved for Dr. Browning to use the medical facility contingent on an approved contract including attachment A which is the punch list. Repairs that are noted the town has already done. There's a list of things that Dr. Browning has asked for. We are working with Dr. Browning on these items and he has been working on resources and quotes as well. Dr. Browning and several citizens are working on fundraising and the Town has a separate account set up for these repairs. Currently there is \$1625.00 contributed to date.

Dr. Browning shared about the fundraising ideas and the repair items. He shared that he appreciates the opportunity and his goal is to complete the fundraisers and get the repairs completed as soon as possible in order to begin practice and provide care for the citizens of Havana. There will be a donor wall for the names of the people that have contributed for the repairs.

Questions from the council included what is the goal date to open, who will be completing the work, time frame on the lease, etc. Dr. Browning shared that the repairs will be completed as the funds come in and necessary documentation is received for the quotes and it will be a mixture of contractors, volunteers, etc. Dr. Browning shared he has already agreed to the lease so as soon as it is ready for signature, he will begin moving forward so that the repairs can be completed. He wants to move forward so that patient care can begin.

NEW Business

No. 7 – FY26 Maximum Millage Rate

Ms. Wilkerson shared based on what was previously discussed at the prior budget workshop she is recommending setting the max millage rate of 3.1500. It is a slight increase over current. The goal and the way the budget is set right now is still based on holding the millage at 3.0000, but we do have some costs that haven't come in. We're still waiting on insurance. Whatever council sets tonight as the max millage is really what it can be, and we can come down back to current millage. But it's really difficult and kind of expensive to increase after we certify at this meeting. Therefore, she is recommending to set the tentative max millage a little bit higher with the goal of setting the budget based on current. When we get to those budget hearings in September and discuss the details, then make the decision that is necessary.

Councilman Wesolowski stated he would be against that. This is year three for me on the council, and the previous two years, we've had to increase the millage rate. Currently we are still one of the cheapest ones in the county. He shared that 5, 10, 20, 100 bucks a utility bill means something to people. He understands some people can pay it, but a lot of people that could mean a difference in maybe two meals instead of three. He reiterated he wouldn't be for moving it, even if it's let's go to the max and we can always come back down. I think if you give government a little bit and they promise to go back then it's rare that the government actually goes back, so he is against moving it to 3.15.

Councilwoman Nelson stated that if insurance rates do not increase then the rate could be 3.000. However, if it increases, the Town has to have the money to pay bills. Councilman Wesolowski stated that the difference is about \$18,000 and he feels there's got to be ways we can find that money somewhere. I think relying on people for the past three years to pay the increases is asking a lot and I just think at some point we must draw the line somewhere.

Councilwoman Key made the motion that we approve the 3.1500 and Councilwoman Nelson seconded. Motion carried with a vote of 5-1 with Councilman Wesolowski voting against the increase in millage.

No. 7 – Noise Ordinance Discussion

The Town Manager shared that the noise ordinance is on the agenda for council review and discussion to decide if any changes are requested and if so, which requirements and what language specifically, need to be amended as to change an ordinance does require adopting another ordinance.

Councilman Wesolowski inquired as to why the discussion is needed. Ms. Wilkerson shared that it was at the mayor's request. Mayor Bass shared that the noise behind his house is loud and goes into the late-night hours. Chief Lewis shared that the decibels change at 10pm. He shared that currently it is a misdemeanor but he

suggests a fine. Several citizens shared about noise disturbances in their area. Chief Lewis did state that if it is in the county that the Gadsden Sheriff Office would need to be contacted.

Councilman McKinnon made a motion to let the Chief of Police and the Town Attorney prepare an updated ordinance and bring back before council with the recommended language changes. Seconded by Councilwoman Key and motion carried unanimously.

No. 9 – Resolution for Rate Increase

The Town Manager stated that as discussed at the budget workshops, she is requesting approval of Resolution for Rates 2025-03R-2, which increases the electric, water and sewer rates as well as the electric customer access charge. Increases would be Electric 1.5% (Base + KWH), Water 5% and Sewer 10%. These increases are necessary to ensure continuity of utility operations at Town of Havana and to satisfy debt obligation requirements. She shared that the sewer system and infrastructure is very expensive. Many repair needs and a smaller customer base to spread it across.

Councilman McKinnon stated he does not want to decide tonight as he would like to wait and get a clearer understanding of the budget. He and several council members shared their concerns for the citizens but also for the need of the Town. Mayor Bass and Councilman McKinnon shared historical knowledge of the age of the sewer system as well as cost increases.

David Wesolowski, 310 N Main ST, Havana, FL 32333 – Mr. Wesolowski stated he feels the Town should look at other ways to spread the burden than rate increases. He shared concerns as not only is the Town's rates increasing but also the county. It is a lot for the citizens. He agrees with Councilman McKinnon that it would be wise to wait and get a clearer understanding of the budget before making a decision. Also, reiterated the need to look at interest rates on the money that the Town has on the books.

Councilman McKinnon made motion to table this item and get through the budget workshop and discuss at the next meeting. Councilman Wesolowski seconded, and motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING

No. 10 – Ordinance 412 Prohibiting Engine Braking

Ms. Wilkerson shared that staff were instructed to research and provide some language on an ordinance prohibiting engine braking within the town limits. And that ordinance is now attached for council review and consideration. With the council's approval, she would request that the town clerk read ordinance 412 by title only at this time. This is the first reading.

The Town Clerk read proposed Ordinance 412 by title only. Ms. Wilkerson requested confirmation from the Town Clerk that all advertising requirements were met. Ms. Alexander did confirm that advertising requirements have been met. Ms. Wilkerson noted that a business impact statement was posted on the Town's website on June 30.

Mayor Bass opened the floor for any public comment on the ordinance. No public comment.

Ms. Wilkerson reiterated that the second and final public hearing for Ordinance 412 will be on August 26, 2025 as part of the regular monthly council meeting. A decision would need to be made at this time.

Councilman McKinnon made a motion to approve the First Reading of Ordinance 412 – Prohibiting Engine Braking. Councilman Wesolowski seconded and motion carried.

Town Manager Report

Ms. Wilkerson reminded the council to complete their annual ethics training. She shared an update on the Public Safety Complex construction and ground breaking. Lincoln Ave waterline has had a few residual leaks that the water department have been working on. The storage tank liner is on the list of being replaced. There has been reported vandalism at the Dollar General Lift Station. Asphalt patching is scheduled 7/21/2025 and

playground fence installation is scheduled for August. Substation repairs started 6/23/2025. Updated on the status of the Digester and Equalization tank repairs and inspection. The fencing at the WWTP has been completed. Fire call report provided and police stats are on the table.

Motion to Adjourn

Councilwoman Nelson made motion to adjourn the July 29, 2025, regular council meeting. Councilman McKinnon seconded, and motion carried.

Mayor Bass adjourned the meeting at 7:00pm.

Edward Bass Jr
EDWARD BASS JR, MAYOR

ATTEST:

Shrylan R. Alexander
Shrylan R. Alexander, Town Clerk

