

Town Of Havana

Regular Council Meeting

July 30, 2024 – 6:00pm

Meeting minutes

Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Loughmiller at 6:00pm. Invocation was led by Chief Kenny Lewis, followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

Roll Call

A roll call confirmed the presence of the following council members including Landon Seymour, Matt Wesolowski, Tabatha Nelson, Mayor Loughmiller and Mayor Pro Tem Eddie Bass, ensuring a quorum for the meeting. Council members absent were Lawrence Reed and Penny Key.

Recognition of Visitors

Doug Stevens, 790 Champion Oaks Drive, Havana, FL introduced himself to council and the public as District 1 School Board candidate. Mr. Stevens shared that he had been in Gadsden County for 20+ years and taught at East Gadsden for eleven years. He left East Gadsden to become a director of a non-profit and then a relationship director. He requested support in his bid to serve Gadsden County as District 1 School Board seat.

Request to Approve Minutes

Motion Made by Councilman Wesolowski to approve council minutes for June 25, 2024, July 9, 2024 and July 09, 2024 Budget Workshop minutes. Seconded by Councilman Bass and motion carried.

Old Business

Old Elementary School Resolution 2024-14R-7

Ms. Wilkerson, Town Manager, requests approval of Resolution 2024-14R-7 which updates the fines owed by the owners through July 30, 2024, to \$294,515.00. As mentioned in the May meeting, notice was posted on the property as of April 26, 2024, that back taxes are owed and if not paid the property will be sold at public auction on 8/7/2024. Current owner has paid the taxes on the property and this owner has bought out the other owner which resolved the legal issue between them.

Councilman Wesolowski discussed option to increase fines from \$100/day to \$500/day in order to move forward with foreclosure. Mayor Loughmiller inquired if it was possible to proceed with actions similar to what happened with the Alexander Building. Ms. Wilkerson confirmed it is an option but the concern is the price ticket that would be involved and the Town would have to front the money. Much discussion was had in regards to a much more aggressive approach and the options in order to resolve this nuisance issue.

David Wesolowski, citizen, provided the information that he had spoken to Smith, Thompson, Shaw in Tallahassee and that it would only cost a couple hundred dollars to foreclose. He feels that the Town is at risk if no action is taken. Ms. Wilkerson will get clarification from Town Attorney on process to foreclose and sale property. She will also request the attorney to be present at the next meeting. Council members agreed to hold off moving forward until next council meeting.

Councilwoman Nelson made motion to approve Resolution 2024-14R-7. Councilman Bass seconded. Motion carried.

New Business

Proposed Max Millage

Ms. Wilkerson seeks Council approval of Town of Havana FY 24-25 Proposed Tentative Millage Rate of no less than 3.00. As mentioned at first budget workshop, Council should select the highest millage rate that would be considered this budget cycle. It is very easy to come down but much more difficult to increase the mills once the rate has been certified to the property appraiser.

Ms Wilkerson explained the reason the increase is needed. The Town must raise property taxes to offset the increased costs associated with providing quality of life and safety services for the residents. She reviewed the fiscal impact the increase will have. She also stated that citizens should be given an opportunity to speak on the issue and ask any questions before council votes.

Councilman Bass stated that a large portion of the town are already struggling. After much discussion among the Council members on the options and the impact on all citizens, Mayor Loughmiller asked if citizens wanted to speak. No citizens requested to speak on the matter.

Motion made by Councilwoman Nelson made the motion to set it at 3.25 mills to allow for more room to adjust during the budget process. Councilman Bass seconded the motion. Motion carried with all in favor except Councilman Wesolowski.

Request to schedule - 1st and Final Public Budget Hearings

The Town Manager explained the process that is required to set the Town's 1st and Final Public Budget Hearing to adopt FY 24-25 Budget and the Tentative Millage Rate. Ms. Wilkerson also reminded the Council that if the Tentative Max Millage is set at 2.6561 or higher, ALL seven council members must attend and must vote to approve at BOTH public hearings. The tentative dates requested are Monday, September 9, 2024 at 7:00pm and Monday, September 23, 2024 @ 6pm.

Councilman Seymour made the motion to approve the tentative public hearing dates requested and for the Town Manager to set these dates. Councilman Bass seconded, and motion carried.

Resolution 2024-03R Tap Fee Increase

Ms. Wilkerson seeks Council approval of Resolution 2024-03R, which proposes to increase tap fees for utility services according to cost to serve. Historically the Town has charged a \$500 tap fee for each new utility service established. We believe this fee has not been increased in at least 20 years. The recommended fee increases as +/- cost to serve which will mean if the costs exceed the tap fee, the customer must pay the difference before services will be turned on. Conversely if the actual cost is less than the tap fee, the Town will refund the difference to the customer. The Town does not have the financial ability to continue to absorb these costs.

Recommended Rates: Electric \$1000/Gas \$2500/Water \$1500/Sewer \$1000

Ms Wilkerson provided for council the breakdown of the estimated cost associated with each of these tap fees. Utility crews will provide an estimate prior to in order that the customer may make the decision to move forward or not. Upon completion of the job, the crew will turn in the final numbers to true up the costs. Town staff will notify the customer of additional amount owed or any anticipated reimbursement of a portion of the tap fee.

Councilman Bass made the motion to approve Resolution 2024-03R. Councilman Wesolowski seconded, and motion carried.

Fire Pension – Detailed Accounting Report

Ms. Wilkerson is providing the Detailed Accounting Report for the Town of Havana Fire Pension Fund for the last two years (FY22 & FY23) per statutory requirement. The Board of Trustees are required to 1. Provide a detailed accounting report of its expenses for each fiscal year to the plan sponsor and the Department of Management Services and make the report available to each member of the plan and post the report on the board's website, if the board has a website. These reports have also been provided to the Fire Chief for dissemination to all members and have been posted on the website.

No action is needed – report is for informational only and satisfies statutory requirements.

Approval of Special Events Permits (3)

The Town Manager presents three special events permits that have been submitted by Havana Main Street for the below festivals:

Woodfest 9/7/24

Pumpkinfest 10/12/24

Winterfest 12/14/24

The requests include hanging and removal of banners, closure of the downtown and parking lots, use of electrical outlets, cones & barricades, police and additional trash cans and same day trash service and bag change out. All of the services will create an expense for the town other than closure of the downtown and parking lot.

Councilwoman Nelson stated some concerns for the businesses downtown, long lines to gain entrance and in the past people have left, and the cost of the street sweeper in order to clean up afterwards. Nancy Saunders, Havana Main Street, confirmed that they were getting additional port-o-toilets and opening multiple gates for entrance. Ms. Wilkerson stated the Chief of Police has complete discretion on # of staff working these festivals. Chief Lewis stated they have the staff needed as Part-time staff will handle the events and Full-time will cover calls. Councilman Wesolowski offered that if HMS needed any help with trash, to please get with him.

After much discussion, Councilwoman Nelson made the motion to approve the special events permits for the festivals and the town costs to go to Havana Main Street. Councilman Bass seconded, and motion carried.

Town Manager Report

FDEP was onsite for Water/Sewer and minimal issues noted for water. However, sewer findings were not good and a meeting is scheduled for Monday with the town attorney and OMI/Jacobs. No fines at this time but a list of items needing immediate attention. Recent lightening damage at Town Hall which effected modems, routers, and SCADA. Recent power outages were weather related. Recent sale of old equipment.

Police Department – Healthy Havana – every Friday @ 7:30am in Community Park and continues to grow and is a great opportunity to build relationships with staff and citizens. Calls for service have been provided with the council packet as well as provided for citizens.

Fire Department – Chief Lewis held EVOC Training this past Saturday (7/27) and it went well. Total Calls 18 (County 16 & Town 2)

Ms. Wilkerson stated that there will not be any further approvals for private parties at Hazel Baker Community center due to the recent damages. Civic groups and Non-Profits already approved by the council will continue to use the facility.

Recognition of Each Council Member

Councilwoman Nelson thanked Chief Lewis for EVOC Training. Councilman Wesolowski thanked the Town Manager and crew for the stop signs and clean up that have been provided. Each council member had the opportunity to contribute remarks or raise issues.

Motion to Pay the Bills

Councilman Bass made motion to pay the Town bills. Councilman Wesolowski seconded and motion carried.

Motion to Adjourn

Councilman Wesolowski made motion to adjourn the July 30, 2024, council meeting. Councilman Bass seconded, and motion carried.

Mayor Loughmiller adjourned the meeting at 7:21pm.

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TIMOTHY LOUGHMILLER, JR, MAYOR

ATTEST:



Shrylan R. Alexander, Town Clerk

