

**HAVANA TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Regular Council Meeting**  
**November 28, 2023 @ 6:00 p.m.**

The council meeting was called to order by Mayor Loughmiller at 6:00 p.m.

Invocation was led by Councilman Reed followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Roll Call:**

Member(s) Present: Tim Loughmiller (Mayor), Eddie Bass (Mayor Pro Tem), Tabatha Nelson, Lawrence Reed, Matthew Wesolowski, Nick Bert, and Kendrah Wilkerson (Town Manager)

Member(s) Absent: Penny Key

**VISITORS:**

***Lester Beach 1002 Bell RD***

Mr. Beach stated for the record that as of current he is still fire chief for Havana as he has not received a letter from Mrs. Wilkerson relinquishing him of his duties. He stated he understood that Mrs. Wilkerson had sent out a text to all council members stating he relinquished all his duties but this is not the case. Mr. Beach requests at this time where he stands as a volunteer. Mrs. Wilkerson, Town Manager, stated during the meeting, Mr. Beach was told that he could either resign from chief or he would be removed from the position. After the meeting, Mr. Beach had sent out a text message to all volunteers stating that he had been relinquished from all his duties as chief and stating that the Assistant Fire Chief, Wade Nelson would be interim Fire Chief. Mrs. Wilkerson also stated that Mr. Beach does not have the right to a grievance hearing.

***David Wesolowski 310 N Main ST***

Mr. Wesolowski requests to speak on Agenda Item 01 after the presentation from the Town Manager is made. Mayor Loughmiller approved this request.

***Approval of Minutes:***

Motion was made by Councilman Bert and seconded by Councilman Wesolowski to approve minutes from the September 26, 2023, Council Meeting & Public Hearing for Lot Splits and the October 24, 2023, Council Meeting & Final Public Hearing for Lot Splits. Motion carried.

***OLD BUSINESS:***

### **1. Old Elementary School - 705 FL GA Hwy Havana, FL**

Mrs. Wilkerson, Town Manager, reviewed the ordinance violation issues that include grass/grounds not being maintained, sinkholes developing on the property and overall condition of property being a nuisance. Mrs. Wilkerson also noted the multiple notices including fines that have been sent to the owners and to date these violations remain unresolved and fines continue to accumulate. Mrs. Wilkerson is requesting the council to approve Resolution 2023-14R-1 recording fines to date in the amount of \$158,015. Mrs. Wilkerson also request advisement on whether the council wishes to pursue further legal action against the property owners, which will create a legal expense for the Town.

Mayor Loughmiller stated that property is now listed with TLC. Councilman Bass stated that the realtor was going to contact the owners. Originally there were three (3) owners but one of the owners walked away and was not responding. Councilwoman Nelson inquired as to the notifying process and Mrs. Wilkerson confirmed that all are sent certified mail. Mrs. Wilkerson also stated she has been contacted by local vendors interested in cleaning up, but no one followed back up with the Town.

David Wesolowski of 310 N Main ST stated he has had previous communications with the owners and does know that there is a lien on the property and huge tax debt at this time. Mr. Wesolowski stated that if the county forecloses the Town will not receive any \$\$ owed in fines. Mr. Wesolowski made a recommendation that since the Town is aware of the condition of the property that they should spend the money to foreclose on the property as it will definitely sell for more than what would be invested in legal fees. He recommended the Law Offices of Smith, Thompson & Shaw as a resource to reach out to. Mrs. Wilkerson will look into the costs.

Motion was made by Councilman Bert to look into the costs as well as approval of Resolution 2023-14R-1. Motion seconded by Councilman Bass and motion carried.

### **NEW BUSINESS:**

#### **2. Waste Pro Contract Increase and Rate Increase: Resolution 2023-03RS**

Mrs. Wilkerson, Town Manager, reviewed the current contract requirement for an annual rate increase based on CPI. This requirement is effective on the December anniversary date of the agreement with Waste Pro. Mrs. Wilkerson received written notice on 10/9/2023 that the CPI increase for the coming year will be 3.27%. Mrs. Wilkerson requests that the Town pass this cost increase along to our customers.

The current rate for both residential and commercial service is \$21.89. With the 3.27% increase, the 2024 rate would be \$22.61 per month. The current rate for recycling is \$7.04. The new rate for 2024 would be \$7.27 per month. Mrs. Wilkerson requests the council to approve the 3.27% increase for the garbage and recycle rate for 2024.

Motion was made by Councilman Bass to approve Resolution 2023-03R5 increasing garbage & recycle rates for 2024. A second was made by Councilman Bert and the motion carried.

### ***3. 2023 Staff Holiday Bonus***

Mrs. Wilkerson requests that Council approve a small holiday bonus as a show of appreciation and acknowledgement for our employees' hard work and dedication. The finance vacancy which has been open since October 1<sup>st</sup> has created enough funding cushion to give each Town employee a bonus of \$150, including truing up the taxes, without creating a budget deficit.

Motion was made by Councilman Bert to approve the holiday bonus to show appreciation for all the employees do. A second by Councilman Bass and motion carried.

### ***4. County Fire Contract Extension***

Mrs. Wilkerson shared that Gadsden County had provided a fire contract extension that extended the FY23 contract for a minimum of 180 days and noted which items were extended. Mrs. Wilkerson proposes an alternate extension which extends the FY23 contract for a full 180 days with no allowance for extension beyond that time. The alternate extension provides more comprehensive coverage and requires that the County take action to initiate a revised contract by mid-year. The alternate extension has been reviewed and approved by the Town Attorney and submitted to the County Administrator twice for review. Mrs. Wilkerson has spoken to the County Administrator, and he is aware of and has no concerns with the version. However, it has not been presented to the County Commissioners yet.

Councilman Bert made the motion to approve the alternate extension and forward to the County for approval. Councilman Wesolowski seconded the motion to approve. Motion carried.

### ***5. Updated Fire Guidelines - Town Employees***

Mrs. Wilkerson presented the updated fire guidelines effective 1/1/2024, upon approval by the Council. New language is underlined, removed language is ~~stricken through~~. These changes are updates on the previous changes approved by Council in January 2023. Mrs. Wilkerson recommends approving these changes.

Councilman Bert made the motion to approve the updated fire guidelines. Councilman Bass seconded the motion to approve. Motion carried.

### ***6. Selection of Vendor - Critical Facilities - Generator Bid***

Mrs. Wilkerson presented that the Town was awarded a grant to purchase and install generators at the following critical facilities: Town Hall, Fire Station, Police Department, 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue Lift Station, Dogwood Avenue Life Station. This project was initially put out for bid in April 2023 and two companies bid on the project. Both of the received bids received were

above the \$140K grant award amount. To date, the grantor (DEM) has not agreed to increase the award amount. In October, the decision was made to put the project back out to bid after receiving the recommendation from our grant manager.

The Town received two (2) bids from the recent bid opening. Received bids are as follows:

Lawson & Lawson     \$149K  
Zabbitt                \$356K

Mrs. Wilkerson stated the lowest bid was Lawson & Lawson at \$149K and recommends Council approval and authorization to proceed with grant review/approval.

Councilman Bass made the motion to approve moving forward with the bid from Lawson & Lawson and grant review/approval. Councilman Bert seconded the motion to approve. Motion carried.

### ***7. Certificate of Appropriateness Application - Penelope's Place***

Mrs. Wilkerson provided recommendation from the Planning/Historic Committee to the Town Council regarding the application for Certification of Appropriateness submitted by Stephen Barger for the property known as Penelope's Place, located at 318 1<sup>st</sup> Street NW, Havana, Florida.

Mr. Barger requests the following changes to their property: Two signs affixed to the building.

The Planning/Historic Preservation Committee recommend approval of the application as submitted.

Councilwoman Nelson made the motion to approve Certificate of Appropriateness application as submitted. Councilman Bass seconded the motion to approve. Motion carried.

### ***Report of the Town Manager:***

The Town Manager presented that HVFD responded to 16 calls (15 - County / 1 - Havana / 1 Structure). The structure fire was in the County. HPD responded to 124 events.

Mrs. Wilkerson reported that Town Hall will be closed December 13 from 11am - 1:30pm for the All-Staff Holiday Luncheon at Hazel Baker and December 26 for Christmas (State recognized). Mrs. Wilkerson reports that December 12<sup>th</sup> will be Regular Council meeting and the only meeting during the month.

Mrs. Wilkerson announced that Havana's beloved Police Chief Tracy Smith is retiring December 31, 2023. In honor of his selfless dedication to preserving the safety of our citizens, the following events are planned to celebrate this achievement.

- December 12, 2023 - Last Council Meeting (Presentation to the Chief)

- December 13, 2023 - Town Staff Luncheon (11a - 1p @ Hazel Baker)
- December 13, 2023 - Retirement Celebration / Open House (2p -4p @ Hazel Baker)
- Late December - Date TBD - Last Radio Call
- January - March 2024 - Acting Chief Kenny Lewis
- April - June 2024 - Acting Chief Khang Bui

The Town Manager, Mrs. Wilkerson, announced the New Fire Chief, Don Harrison. Mr. Harrison is currently employed as Street Supervisor and has agreed to take on the role and to work towards reducing the current ISO rating along with other needs of the HVFD.


**Recognition of Council:**


**Motion to Pay the Bills:**

Councilman Bert made a motion to pay the Town bills. A second was made by Councilman Wesolowski and motion carried.

Motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Bass and seconded by Councilman Bert. Motion carried and meeting was adjourned at 6:28 PM.

ATTEST:

  
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Shrylan R. Alexander, Town Clerk

  
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Timothy Loughmiller Jr., Mayor  
Eddie Bass - Mayor Pro Tem