



**Town of Esto, Florida**  
***The Home of Two-Toed Tom***

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# Meeting Minutes

*Tuesday, July 18, 2023, 7:00 PM CDT*

*at Esto Town Hall, 3312 2nd Ave South, Esto, FL 32425*

*The data reflected in these proceedings constitute an extrapolation of information elicited from notes, observations, recording tapes, photographs, and/or videotape. Comments reflected herein are sometimes paraphrased, condensed, and/or have been edited to reflect essential subject matter addressed during the meeting. Parties interested in receiving a verbatim account of the proceedings are responsible for coordinating with the Esto Town Clerk and providing their own representative and equipment pursuant to Chapters 119 and 283, Florida Statutes.*

## **Town Council Members in Attendance**

Teresa Harrison (TH), Council President  
Josh Davenport (JD), Council Vice President  
Garet Skipper (GS)

## **Town Council Members Absent**

Greg Wells (GW)

## **Others Present**

Krystal Bien (KB), Town Clerk  
Billy Martin (BM), Director Public Works / Water Works Director  
Shawna Powell (SP), Assistant Town Clerk  
Jeremy Mutz (JM), Town Attorney  
Ben Tew (BT)

## **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

TH- Opening prayer, Pledge of Allegiance, and called meeting to order at 7:00 PM CST.

## **Consent to agenda items, previous council minutes including special meetings, and bills to be paid**

JD- Motion, adds that the council will postpone signing of the minutes until the next meeting.

GS- Second

All In Favor

## **Public Comment**

BT- Toed Tom Festival Update

Explains 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting was held. Less attendance, but a lot was accomplished. Appointed 2 voting members to the committee, Shawna Powell and Michelle Miller. Together the 3 appointed, Cliff Kimble and Courney Collins as other voting members. The committee set the date for the TTT Festival.

It was decided it will be on the second Saturday of each September. Next year will be September 14, 2024. It's been announced on FB. Vendors have already reached out with questions and interest.

The TTT Festival Committee discussed logos. A logo was decided.

Fundraising ideas were discussed. Set a chain of command and who will cover in case of an emergency. Discussed festival and general TTT merchandise. Krystal is going to oversee the selling and organizing of the merchandise.

Next meeting, the festival committee will discuss events. Make decisions regarding car show, pageant, cake walk, and other activities.

JD- Praises BT for the progress of the festival planning.

BT- Asks the council what sort of commitment they are willing to make as the town for the upcoming budget for the festival. Explaining that the last known records from past festivals, it cost approx. \$5,000 each. Asks, if Town can contribute at least that much it would ensure that there will be at least a festival at the level of previous years. The merchandise sales, business donations, vendor fees, and other fundraising will lift the festival higher than those previous years.

The council discussed the festival funding, and organizing the bookkeeping for the event. It was decided that a bank account that was previously used for the festival would be emptied and returned to its original purpose. The account currently held funds for audit and bookkeeping expenses primarily. The council directed those funds to be moved to a new bank account.

GS- Motion to place \$450 into the TTT account monthly.

JD- Seconds

All In Favor

BT- States that is all he wanted to cover. Reminds that the next meeting will be held on July 31 (Monday) at 6pm. Invites the council to attend. States that anyone from the community is welcome and encouraged to attend. Reminds that they are being held as special meetings so that anyone including council members can attend.

KB- Confirms that they are held as special meetings, they are advertised, minutes are taken, so that as many council members who would like to attend are able to legally and with our concern.

Group Discussion: TTT activities and who could oversee those activities, joking and comradery, words of optimism.

### **Esto Volunteer Fire Department Report**

\*\* Chief Cliff Kimble is absent, no one present to give his report, paper report not submitted to Clerk at this time. Will attach paper report to minutes when they are received.

### **Public Works / Water Works Report**

Explains that is his now DOT MOT certified. Explains that there will be a lot more safety equipment necessary.

JD- Asks if the town will now need to buy barricades.

BM- States that the county and DOT will help with some the supplies, but that a few barricades are needed for emergency work.

JD- Asks if both him and the general laborer are certified.

BM- Clarifies that it is only him.

JD- Asks for a list of items needed and cost.

BM- Reminds that there will need to be special lighting on the vehicles. Mentions that there is a need for a different vehicle.

Explains that the DOT wants for the county to start cutting the grass on the side of the road due to staffing shortages.

TH- Asks for clarification that they want to county to go it.

BM- Explains that the county is already doing it for Bonifay. States that someone from the county is supposed to attend the next meeting to speak with the council about all the details. The DOT will pay the Town, the Town will pay the county.

JD- Expresses concerns regarding a similar agreement the Town was previously in. The DOT said they would pay the Town to pay a contractor. The cost for the contractor went up, but the money from the DOT to the Town did not increase.

Further discussion about the last time the Town was responsible for maintain the highway right of way. And concern that even if the town was only a intermediary paying the county for right of way cutting services that the town could be help liable if the county doesn't perform to the state DOT standards.

BM also mentioned that the Esto is covered by a road improvement grant the county has been awarded. The info was given to Billy by Alday-Howell. Further details to be given later.

BM also mentioned that the town could get county inmates to work grass cutting and other maintenance services. There would be supervision and transportation concerns.

JD brought up that the town's van needed replacement. KB said that Greg Skipper advised waiting 30-60 days for vehicle prices to drop. He told her that vehicle auction prices are dropping. JD wanted the council to look at a new vehicle in the next few months. He stressed that the van could break at any time and there was no backup. KB mentioned getting a vehicle from the Sheriff's office. She had contacted other local and state agencies that could provide a vehicle at a reduced rate. JD said that the town needs a reliable vehicle. KB stressed that the water works can not afford a vehicle, so it would have to be paid for by the general fund. She did not want to put the general fund under too much pressure. There was discussion about keeping payments around \$400 a month. Discussion about buying newer with a warranty, versus used with an extra warranty. There was discussion about financing through a local bank to get a better interest rate. GS brought up how many vehicles through water works could be disposed of. There was discussion of what the current water works vehicles could be salvaged for. GS also suggested the idea of disposing of the current town vehicles and letting employees use personal vehicles and the town reimbursing their mileage. KB again brought up the new expenses

the town had been discussing, \$800 per month for bookkeeping services, \$450 donated each month to the Two-Toed Tom Festival, and adding in possible \$500 a month vehicle payment. BM was advised to keep an eye out for a good deal and the town would move quickly to secure a new vehicle if he sees one. Circling back the town's current vehicles have to be disposed appropriately through a public auction or donated. JD talked about how the town would need to come up with a down payment if a vehicle was financed through a loan. (There was a sidebar about the town's credit score and how too many inquiries could affect it.) JD suggested if the council needs to have a special meeting to approve a new vehicle purchase, everyone should be ready to be available.

## **Town Clerk Report**

KB returned to the topic of a new town vehicle and wanted to bring up a concern that any new vehicle be treated and maintained appropriately, and not treated as a personal vehicle. JD responded that the vehicle should be for town employee use during business hours, but not used inappropriately.

GS said the town needs to put policies in writing and get a written vehicle use policy, and get everyone to sign it. That would prevent misunderstandings. He questioned if we get can better insurance rates with some employee safety trainings. There was discussion about putting a new vehicle on the town's FMIT policy.

KB mentioned that the town has settled with the Hagan family on outstanding legal issues.

A town resident, Bobby Billue(sp?) wants to know if he is allowed to put commercial chicken house on his property. There was discussion about concerns about property size. There was also discussion about what the man's property was zoned for. If his land was zoned agriculture then there isn't much to stop him.

TH also questioned if the man would have to contact the health department. JD said the resident would have to meet county, state, and federal requirements to establish a commercial chicken house.

There was discussion about environmental contamination into local waterways and lakes. JD stated that there's nothing the town could do to stop someone with agricultural zoned land establishing a commercial chicken house, any environmental concerns or regulations would have to come from another agency, not the town. SP suggested having the citizen come to a future meeting to explain his plans.

KB also mentioned that Bobby Billue is looking for someone to cut his property and whether the town could help him clear his ditch. BM said he would give it a try.

KB reported that as an audit update the town has reached 12.75 hours with Carr, Rigsby and Ingram Accountants for the final audit. She said there were less than 100 entries left for the bank accounts. And then go through the final entries that need the accountant's help, because they are odd. There is a glitch in QuickBooks that some transactions got posted in the wrong place and those need to be fixed. KB said she believes things will be finished in the next two weeks.

FMIT offers grants for different things -- usually 50-50 match grants. The town can submit for a grant before spending our part and FMIT will sign off before the town needs to spend any money. Then the town can spend the money, submit the proof of purchase and FMIT will reimburse 50% of the money spent. KB said she would get with the FMIT to get further details.

In August the budget will need to be complete so the first tentative budget meeting can take place on September 7 at 6:00 PM. KB asked the council to consider any employee raises before the budgets are set, because once they get printed in the newspaper after the tentative meeting the budget are pretty much set as the town's budget for 2023-2024. JD said Tony Manis is deserving of a raise, in appreciation of his hard work. KB was going to send the council her working, tentative budget and they could suggest any changes or additions, before the next council session.

The letter to the County Commission about the fire department was brought up. KB has been waiting to get the letter signed by council. GS said he was advised by his employer not to sign the letter. JD suggested waiting until GW could be available. GS said he would edit the letter to be more direct and briefer. JD offered to edit the letter.

### **Final Call for Council Discussion**

TH brought up that the council had discussed in June about increasing what the council makes each month. JD said to go ahead and increase the council's payment to \$75 since the council had discussed it previously. GS asked how long the rate had been \$50 and TH replied it had been so since 2011. GS said he thought the rate should be at least \$75, and JD suggested \$100. JD motioned that the council's per meeting pay should be \$100. GS seconded. Motion Carried.

TH asked KB is the town had heard anything from the state since the town had turned in the 2020 and 2021 audits. KB said the state commission probably hadn't reconvened yet, and probably wouldn't until August. KB also said, "fingers crossed by the first week of August our audit is in." She said August is a weird month in that there is just a short time frame between town council meetings. GS and JD commented on the state's possible response to getting 2022's audit 30 days late compared to the 2020 and 2021 audits which were years late.

### **Meeting Adjourned**

TH adjourned meeting.

Typed and prepared by Shawna Powell, Assistant Town Clerk & Ben Tew, Town Clerk

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Teresa Harrison, Esto Town Council President

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Josh Davenport, Esto Town Council Vice President

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Greg Wells, Esto Town Council Member

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Garet Skipper, Esto Town Council Member