



# Meeting Minutes

*Tuesday, February 20, 2024, 7:00 PM CT*

*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**

Seat 1 - Josh Davenport (JD), Council Vice President

Seat 3 - Garet Skipper (GS)

Seat 4 - Maxie Yates (MY)

Seat 5 - Teresa Harrison (TH), Council President

## **Town Council Members Absent**

Seat 2 - Greg Wells (GW)

## **Others Present**

Ben Tew (BT), Town Clerk

Cliff Kimble (CK), Fire Chief

Michelle Blankenship (MB), Town Attorney

Billy Martin (BM), Public Works Department

## **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

TH- Opening prayer, Pledge of Allegiance, and called meeting to order at 7:03 PM CT.

## **Consent Agenda**

- TH called for Consent to agenda items, Consent to previous council minutes including special meetings, and Consent to bills to be paid. JD motioned. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

## **Public Comment**

- No Public Comment.

## **Resolutions and Ordinances**

- **Ordinance 2024-01 West Florida Electric Coop Franchise [First Reading]**

The town's Franchise Fee Ordinance with West Florida Electric Cooperative expired in February. The previous franchise fee was 5% and was last passed in February 2023 for 1 year. The council in January directed a new Franchise Ordinance be written for 6.5%. The council discussed the length of the new ordinance. JD motioned to for the term of the agreement to be set for a 10-year term. GS

seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

Then GS made a motion to approve Ordinance 2024-01 AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF ESTO, FLORIDA, GRANTING TO WEST FLORIDA ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE ASSOCIATION, INC., AN ELECTRIC UTILITY FRANCHISE WITHIN THE TOWN OF ESTO, FLORIDA. TH seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

## **EVFD Report**

- **January Fire Department Report**  
The Fire Chief was not present.

## **Town Clerk's Report**

- **Financial Report**  
The Town Clerk, Ben Tew, gave an update on the town's financial accounts. The town was signing \$10,629 in checks. After the checks are cleared the town will have 6,719 in the General Fund account, \$4,511 in the Water Works account, \$6,706 in the Fire Department account. For the financial year so far, our revenue is \$100,020, and our expenditures are \$94,492. This includes our current bills and checks. Year to date we have a positive income of \$5,528. In January, the town had an income of \$20,742, and expenditures totaling \$15,721.
- **Water Customer Balances**  
The council discussed the fees associated with the water utility. Council member JD called for rolling back the \$20 late fees charged to water utility customers for January. He also proposed setting a \$35 flat fee for water utility reconnects. GS motioned to set the town's water service reconnect fee at \$35. TH seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried. JD made a motion to rollback the \$20 late fee for water utility customers. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.
- **Updated FY2023-24 Budget**  
The town Council and staff had a workshop on February 11, to update the town's budget. The updated budget has more detailed expenditure plans and includes new expenses and projected revenues. The total revised budget is \$270,026. JD made a motion to adopt the revised budget. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.
- **Local Communications Service Tax**  
The town's Local Communications Service Tax is very low compared to area municipalities. This was identified as a possible revenue source at the budget workshop. To increase the rate, the town council would pass an ordinance, it would be sent to the State Dept of Revenue before Sept 1, the new rate would take effect next calendar year on Jan 1. JD made a motion to direct the Town Clerk to prepare a new ordinance setting the town's Local Communication Service Tax rate at 5.000%. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.
- **Carr, Riggs, & Ingram Engagement Letter**  
Carr, Riggs, and Ingram presented an engagement letter for bookkeeping services for FY 2022-23 and the FY 2023-24. They would prepare the town books for an audit for FY 2022-23 -- reconcile bank statements, check payroll records, check accounts, and make adjustment entries. They would also do the same for FY 2023-24 going forward. This will be at the rate of \$135/hours, billed monthly. JD made

a motion to accept the engagement letter from Carr, Riggs, and Ingram. MY seconded. TH called for a vote. All in Favor -- Motion Carried. GS abstained from the vote citing conflict of interest.

- **FMIT Asset Survey**

FMIT sent a representative to look at the town's property and see what might need/want to be added as individual items on the town's insurance coverage. Any items added to our coverage would get immediate coverage, but they wouldn't increase our premium until next year. The town council discussed the identified new assets to add to the town's insurance schedule. The council decided to add the 10,000-gallon storage tank at the Noma Road well and the chain link fence at the well and water tower on Commerce Street.

## **Public Works Director Report**

- **Backflow Valve Tests Update**

The town clerk had sent certified letters to the 3 businesses that hadn't turned in an updated 2023 backflow valve test. The letters warned businesses that contact was required before February 8, or the businesses water would be cut off. All 3 businesses contacted the Town Clerk, and all 3 are working on getting valves installed or tested. JD made a motion that the town set a final cutoff date of March 25, for any business that hadn't turned in a 2023 backflow test. The town clerk was also directed to send another certified letter before March 1 that this would be the last extension. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **Tractor Repair**

The town's tractor had a problem with leaking fluid near the front axle. It was picked up for diagnostic by Atlantic Southern Equipment. Their quote to repair the tractor was \$1,927. GW motioned to approve \$1927 in repair costs. JD seconded. All in favor - Motion carried.

- **Disconnect Fees**

The issue had been discussed earlier in the meeting.

- **Consumer Confidence Report**

The town is required to prepare and distribute a Consumer Confidence Report [annual water quality report] to our water customers each year. It is due to be sent to the customers by July 1st. It can be mailed to each customer, or it can be published in a local newspaper and customers notified with specific language on their monthly water bills.

## **Streets Department**

- **County Stormwater Report**

The county had a meeting on February 12th of area public works directors and the County Emergency management staff. The meeting was to discuss a recently completed vulnerability report. Public Works Director Billy Martin attended the meeting. The county is going to be doing work to address storm water and drainage concerns.

## **Parks Report**

- **Park Internet Update**  
The town have received the equipment for providing Wi-Fi/ Internet access at the Community Center.
- **Community Garden Open House**  
The town is preparing for Community Garden Open House event. Advertising for the event has been purchased. There will be several inflatables, vendors, and community organizations. There will be a workday on February 24th to install the Born Learning Trail and the Community Garden raised beds.
- **Two-Toed Tom Festival Update**  
There will be a TTT Fest planning meeting on Tuesday, February 27 at 6:00 PM. Discussions will cover music entertainment, vendor applications and business sponsorships.

**Council Member Items**

- **Seat 1 - Council Member Josh Davenport**
- **Seat 2 - Council Member Greg Wells**
- **Seat 3 - Council Member Gareth Skipper**
- **Seat 4 - Council Member Maxie Yates**
- **Seat 5 - Council Member Teresa Harrison**

**Adjourn**

TH adjourned the meeting at 8:07 PM CT.

Meeting minutes typed and prepared by Ben Tew, Town Clerk.

---

Council Member Seat 1, Josh Davenport,  
Council Vice President

---

Council Member Seat 2, Greg Wells

---

Council Member Seat 3, Gareth Skipper

---

Council Member Seat 4, Maxie Yates

---

Council Member Seat 5, Teresa Harrison,  
Council President