



# Meeting Minutes

*Tuesday, October 15, 2024, 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**

Seat 1 - Krystal Bien (KB)

Seat 2 - Greg Wells (GW)

Seat 4 - Maxie Yates (MY)

Seat 5 - Teresa Harrison (TH), Council President

## **Town Council Members Absent**

## **Others Present**

Ben Tew (BT), Town Clerk

Billy Martin (BM), Public Works Director

Michelle Blankenship (MB), Town Attorney *\*called in via phone\**

## **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

TH- Opening prayer, Pledge of Allegiance, and called meeting to order at 7:05 PM CT.

## **Consent Agenda**

- Motion to Approve: The minutes of the following meetings were approved:
  - September 17, 2024, Town Council Meeting
  - September 21, 2024, TRIM & Budget Meeting
- Bills to be Paid: The bills for payment were reviewed and approved.
- GW motioned for approval of consent agenda including final agenda, previous meeting minutes, and bills to be paid. KB seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

## **Public Comment**

- No members of the public wished to address the council

## Resolutions & Ordinances

- **Resolution 25-03: Water Rate Increase in 2025**

Resolution 25-03 proposes a 7.5% increase in water rates for 2025, as part of the town's Revenue Plan to fund essential water system improvements. The increase is part of a long-term plan for capital improvements. KB motioned for approval of Resolution 25-03. GW seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **Ordinance Setting Speed Limits**

The council discussed the need for a local ordinance setting speed limits within town limits. Florida Statutes set a default speed of 30 mph in residential areas, but municipalities can set lower limits with an investigation. No formal action was taken.

## Special Agenda Items

- The town's Water Operator resigned, and the position has been advertised. Efforts are underway to hire a replacement. One application has been received. The council discussed the urgency of filling the position due to the need for water system oversight and testing. A council member and the Public Works Director will meet the applicant. GW motioned that the council member be allowed to offer the position to the applicant after the interview. MY seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

## Fire Department Report

- Chief Kimble provided a report on Fire Department activities and incidents during the month of September.

## Town Clerk's Report

- **Financial Report**

The town reviewed its financial status, including bill payments and account balances. Major bills include payments for water system services and the upcoming payroll. The town's accounts have some negative balances but are expected to stabilize after state payments arrive.

- **FY2023-24 Preliminary Report**

A preliminary review of the FY2023-24 financials shows a shortfall of approximately \$20,700, though this was offset by remaining ARPA funds and transfers from other funds. Detailed expenses and revenue for each department were reviewed.

- **Update on FY2022-23 Audit**

The audit for FY2022-2023 is underway, with Mark Smith of Ferguson Sizemore Associates handling the process.

- **Backflow Valve Tests & Business Receipt Tax Notices**

Commercial water customers are reminded of the requirement to perform annual backflow valve tests. The Florida League of Cities offers a program to assist with collecting delinquent business tax receipts.

- **PTO Policy**

The council discussed a proposed amendment to the town's PTO policy, requiring employees to request and receive approval for PTO in advance. KB motioned to amend the PTO policy to require 1 weeks' notice and approval for time off. GW seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **Disposal of Surplus Equipment**

The town clerk said the Town Hall contains a large amount of surplus electronic equipment that is no longer in use. The council discussed the disposal or sale of this equipment. The clerk was directed to put together a list of the equipment to be disposed of.

- **Grant Writing Firm RFP**

The council discussed the need for a grant writing firm to assist with obtaining funds for town projects. The town clerk was directed to reach out to a company that had previously presented to the council.

## **Public Works Report**

- **Annual Water Quality Tests**

The results of the Florida Department of Environmental Protection (FDEP) annual water quality tests were reviewed. The town received a waiver for the Synthetics Organic Contaminants (SOCs) test, but the previous Water Operator had requested the expensive (\$2,500) test anyway.

- **Meters Needing Replacement**

The Public Works Department identified 11 water meters that need to be replaced. The council discussed the meter replacements. GW motioned to authorize the purchase of 5 new meters paid for from the Water Works Maintenance account. KB seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried. The town clerk was directed to prepare copies of the Water Works budget to examine at the November meeting.

- **Lead Service Line Inventory Update**

The town is working to meet the federal requirement for a lead service line inventory. The final results were delayed, but the deadline for submission to the EPA is fast approaching.

- **Leak at Base of Water Tower**

A pipe at the base of the water tower is leaking. The issue is under investigation, and assistance from Florida Rural Water was sought.

## **Streets Department**

- **Street Sign Maintenance**

The council discussed the need to repair or replace street signs damaged by wear and tear.

## **Parks Department**

- **Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program (FRDAP) Grant**

The town applied for the FRDAP grant, but it scored below the threshold for approval. The council discussed ways to improve the score for future submissions. GW motioned to create a Capital Improvement Plan to improve future FRDAP scores. KB seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

## **Two-Toed Tom Festival Report**

- **Two-Toed Tom Festival Wrap-Up**

The final financials for the 2024 Two-Toed Tom Festival show a net gain of \$2,250. The council discussed the festival's success and the 2025 festival.

## **Council Member Items**

- **Seat 1 - Council Member Krystal Bien**
- **Seat 2 - Council Member Greg Wells**
- **Seat 4 - Council Member Maxie Yates**
- **Seat 5 - Council Member Teresa Harrison**

## **Adjourn**

TH adjourned the meeting at 8:30 PM CT.

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

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Council Member Seat 5, Teresa Harrison,  
Council President