



Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, November 21, 2023, 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

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

Town Council Members Absent

Others Present

Ben Tew (BT), Town Clerk
Billy Martin (BM), Director Public Works / Water Works Director
Cliff Kimble, Esto Volunteer Fire Department Chief

Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance

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

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 so motioned. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

Public Comment

There were no members of the public at the meeting.

Agenda Items

- **Resolution 24-06 Transition to Redline Data Systems Rural Billing for Water Utility Billing**
BT, Town Clerk read Resolution 24-06 (attached) directing the town's transition to the Rural Billing software from Redline Data Systems for water utility billing. JD motioned to adopt Resolution 24-06. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **Resolution 24-07 Commitment to Support the Two-Toed Tom Festival**

BT, Town Clerk read Resolution 24-07 (attached) committing the town's funds to support the first year of the Two-Toed Tom Festival. JD motioned to adopt Resolution 24-07. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **Water Operator Issues**

The town council discussed recent issues with the Water System and miscommunications or discrepancies with the Water Operator. JD said the issues lead back to miscommunications between the Water Operator and the Public Works team as to who is responsible for checking the well on each day. JD and BM were going to set down put together standard operating procedures for well checks and a well check schedule. GS said he knew all the water testing reports hadn't been late in the past year.

- **Ford F-150 Sealed Bid Auction**

The council opened the sealed bids that had been submitted for the town's surplus Ford F-150 truck. The winning bid was \$785 from Terrence Clark, an Esto resident. GW made a motion to accept Clark's bid if it was paid in cash full, with no partial payments, and a deadline of 15 days to make the payment. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **Internet Access at John Clark Park Community Center**

BT had spoken to Version3 and Verizon Wireless about options for bringing internet service /access to the Community Center at John Clark Park. The council decided to pursue the option from Verizon Wireless. The Town Clerk was directed to get more details from Verizon.

- **Holmes County Health Department**

Health Department representatives met with the town clerk about several topics. The Health Department has also volunteered to purchase the town a set of disc golf equipment.

- **Born Learning Trail Markers**

The Health Department can provide a series of signs and activities for parents and children to do at the park.

- **Open House for Community Garden**

The Health Department wants to relaunch the town's Community Garden by having an Open House event in the Spring.

- **Anti-Smoking/Tobacco Efforts**

The Health Department also wanted to discuss with the council anti-smoking and tobacco options for the town.

- **Use of Water Rate Increase Funds**

BT, Town Clerk wanted to town council to discuss the use of the funds projected coming from the increased water rates, starting on January 1. He proposed the funds could be set aside for a saving plan or paying down the town's debts.

- **New Town Seal**

BT proposed the town adopt new seal that updates the town's image and slogan. He presented 3 options - One focused on the legend of Two-Toed Tom, One focused on the area's agricultural industry, and one focused on Florida tourism. JD motioned to adopt the seal design focused on Two-Toed Tom. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

Public Works Director Report

- **Backflow Valve Requirements & Testing**

The town requires annual backflow valve tests, but none had been done for 2023 yet. BT asked for a motion to send a letter to town businesses about the backflow valve tests. JD made the motion that businesses that provide public access to water, then those businesses are required to have a backflow preventer and annual test. GW suggested the letter must set a time frame for compliance and then disconnection if the tests are not completed. GS so motioned, GW seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **N-Lite-N/SCADA Lightning Damage Claim**

The town had submitted an insurance claim to FMIT for lightning damage at the well. The damage had already been fixed by N-Lite-N/SCADA. This was a reimbursement claim for the repair costs. FMIT said the claim had some inconsistencies, and the lightning affidavit was on the previous year's form, not the current and needed to be resubmitted.

- **Grounding System Proposal**

N-Lite-N has proposed a grounding system for the wells. The cost to ground both wells is \$19,969. JD suggested the town needed to get another electrician to provide a competing estimate.

- **2024 Lead & Copper Survey**

The Federal EPA is requiring all water systems to perform a survey of possible lead and copper lines. The Florida Rural Water Association has money and plans to help systems meet this new requirement. The town might need to send letters to all water customers though.

EVFD Report

- **Activity Report for October 2023**

Fire Chief CK reported there were 3 structure fires, 3 brush fires, 2 LZs, 1 MVA (Motor Vehicle Accident), for a total of 9 calls and used 2,000 gallons of water.

CK brought up that the truck was needing repair. He said the turbo needs fixed. He got several quotes. JD motioned to spend the money to repair the truck. CK asked if the town could set up a billing / charge account with a local auto parts store so the EVFD could get parts without needing to use the EVFD charge card. GW seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

CK reported on the EVFD's Santa in the Park event. He said he has almost 2 full sheets of names. Toys and gifts hadn't been purchased yet.

CK said the EVFD had purchased new T-shirts for the crew. They hadn't had any new ones in several years.

CK reported that County Fire Board, has said that the fire department is allowed to charge insurances for crash responses. EVFD would have to start processing paperwork, after each crash response, but the funds would go straight to the department.

- **Holmes Co. Commission FY 2024 Funding**
BT had contacted the County Finance Department about the FY 2023-2024 allocation for the EVFD. The County Commission approved the allocation and the check had been received and deposits. The county contributed the same amount as FY 2022-2023.
- **Town FY 2024 Funding**
GS motioned the town start making monthly transfers from the General account to EVFD account to meet the amount budgeted for the fire department . JD seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

Two-Toed Tom Festival Update

The Two-Toed Tom Festival Committee had a meeting on November 6. The committee approved spending \$190 to purchase more TTT tumblers. The original sales had given the festival \$285. The Chairman of the West Florida Electric Coop has committed they will be a \$5,000 sponsor for the festival. The Committee voted to have the parade float be part of 3 upcoming Christmas parades: Enterprise on Nov 28, Geneva on Dec. 1 & Graceville on Dec. 8.

Town Clerk Report

- **Financial Update**
BT, Town Clerk gave an update on the town's financial accounts.
- **2023 Town Council Election**
The election was advertised in the Holmes County Advertiser on October 25, 2023, and November 1, 2023. The election notice was also posted in the town hall, on Facebook, and the town website. The candidate qualifying period ran Monday, October 30, 2023, through Friday, November 3, 2023.

One candidate qualified for each seat up for election, and so were declared the unopposed winners after the qualifying period. A notice of the election being cancelled was run in the November 15 edition of the Holmes County Advertiser. The election cancellation notice was also posted in the town hall, on Facebook and on the town website.

The election results will be certified by the Town Clerk and the Town Council at the December regular town meeting. The council members elect will be sworn in at the January regular town council meeting.
- **2022 AFR**
Tuesday, November 14, Mark Smith with Ferguson, Sizemore and Associates, came to the Town Hall and assisted the Town Clerk with filing the town's FY 2022 AFR with the State Revenue Department. Mark Smith has presented the town with an Engagement Letter for the FY 2023 audit. The price for the FY 2023 Audit is \$8,000. JD motioned the Engagement Letter be amended to included assisting with the FY 2023 AFR. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **2023 Audit**

Carr, Riggs & Ingram has been working on preparing the town's books for the required FY 2023 audit. She has adjusted the starting balances for the year, gotten copies of all bank account statements, and other financial documents. The town still does not have an Engagement Letter for CRI's work. JD motioned that the town pause work with CRI until the town has a signed Engagement Letter. GW seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried. GS Abstained.

- **ARPA Funds Uses**

The town has \$6,391.00 in remaining ARPA/Coronavirus funds. In October the town clerk was directed to move \$6,000 into the town's General Fund account, to cover the town since the account balance was very low. JD motion that the remaining \$391 ARPA funds be moved from the TTT / Improvement account into the General Fund account. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried. JD motioned the remaining ARPA funds be used for specific spending items - Rural Billing transition, Park Internet project, payment toward FY 2023 audit, etc. GS seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **NRWA-USDA Loan / Water Policy**

The Florida Rural Water Association Representative in talking with the town clerk mentioned that a requirement of our NRWA/USDA loan is that the town cannot give away, or discount water. According to Mearns, the town cannot give credit for water sales. JD disputed the assertion. The town clerk is working to get a copy of the loan agreement and details to confirm this point.

- **2024 Business Tax Receipts Letter**

The town requires all businesses, including home-based businesses, to have a Local Business Tax Receipt. JD made a motion for the clerk to send reminder letters to all businesses in the water system reminding them of the annual requirement. GW seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.

- **Employee Benefits Update**

The town provides a health insurance benefit of \$300 per month for full-time employees. This benefit started a few months ago. Since then, one month the benefit was paid in a regular paycheck, and the other month it was paid as a separate paycheck. Processing the benefit as a separate paycheck incurs a fee of \$48 from the payroll company. This would double payroll processing expenses for the year. BT was directed to continue paying the health care reimbursement benefit in a regular paycheck each month. GS said he would investigate ways the town could implement a true healthcare benefit package.

Correspondence

- **TRIM Completion**

The State of Florida has sent the town a letter saying we have completed the TRIM process successfully.

- **Rural Infrastructure Fund (RIF) Grant Application**

Alday-Howell Engineering worked hard to get an application in quickly. They applied to do design and planning for a repaving project covering the Dixon Heights area of town.

- **FMIT Asset Survey**
FMIT sent a representative to take pictures of the town's property to update their files on the items we have insured. The FMIT rep says we can wait for the asset survey to come back before needing to address any issues.
- **Central States Water Resources (CSWR)**
Central States Water Resources is interested in discussing the purchase of the Town of Esto's Water Works.
- **Florida's Fiscally Constrained Energy Efficiency Program**
The Florida Dept of Agriculture has a grant for fiscally constrained counties and municipalities to perform energy efficiency retrofits on public and community buildings. The deadline to apply is December 13, 2023. BT said he had finally found a commercial solar installer that would be able to perform the town's proposed solar projects at John Clark Park and the junkyard property. GS motioned for the town to apply for the Energy Efficiency Program grant. JD seconded. All in Favor -- Motion Carried.
- **USDA Electric Infrastructure Loan & Loan Guarantee Program**
The USDA electric program makes loan and loan guarantees for cooperatives, utilities, and nonprofits to finance the construction of electric facilities. BT thought this might be a funding source for the town's solar projects. GS suggested the town should investigate municipal bonds as a funding source for the town's solar project.

Council Member Items

- **Seat 1 - Council Member Josh Davenport**
- **Seat 2 - Council Member Greg Wells**
- **Seat 3 - Council Member Garet Skipper**
- **Seat 5 - Council Member Teresa Harrison**

Adjourn

TH adjourned the meeting at 8:52 PM CT.

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

Council President, Teresa Harrison (Seat 5)

Council Vice President, Josh Davenport (Seat 4)

Council Member Seat 2, Greg Wells

Council Member Seat 4, (Open)

Council Member Seat 3, Garet Skipper