



# Meeting Minutes

*Tuesday, March 18, 2025, 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 - Krystal Bien (KB)

Seat 2 - Greg Wells (GW), Council President

Seat 4 - Maxie Yates (MY)

Seat 5 - Teresa Harrison (TH), Council Vice President

## **Town Council Members Absent**

## **Others Present**

Ben Tew (BT), Town Clerk

Billy Martin (BM), Public Works Director

Michelle Blankenship (MB), Town Attorney

Donetta & John Luke

Heather Huckaby

Tim Wells

Phyllis Reif

Tony Manis

## **Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance**

TH - Opening prayer

GW - Pledge of Allegiance, and called meeting to order at 7:00 PM CT.

## **Consent Agenda**

- KB motioned to approve the consent agenda, including the final agenda, February 18, 2025 Town Council Meeting Minutes, March 11, 2025, Special Called Meeting Minutes, and bills to be paid. MY seconded. All in Favor – Motion Carried.

## Public Comment

- Melissa Smith, a landlord, addressed the council with an update on tenant-led property cleanup efforts.
- Jack Davis, who resides just outside Esto, spoke about plans to open a ministry center at 1030 N Hwy 79.

## Resolutions & Ordinances

- **Ordinance 2025-02 – West Florida Electric Coop Franchise Fee**  
BT presented the revised franchise ordinance with West Florida Electric Cooperative. The agreement updates the franchise fee to 6.0% for a 5-year term. KB motioned to approve Ordinance 2025-02 on first reading. TH seconded. All in Favor – Motion Carried.  
BT will ensure the ordinance is properly advertised ahead of the second reading in April.
- **Public Property Damage Ordinance**  
The council discussed restructuring the draft ordinance to include civil fines for property damage, as suggested by MB. This change would allow for enforcement via the Holmes County Court System and require the appointment of a code enforcement official. The council directed staff to bring the revised ordinance for first reading at the April meeting.

## Special Agenda Items

- **Nuisance Code Violations**  
BT provided updates on two properties:
  - **1088 Joy Meadows Circle** – Certified letter sent; resident responded and is showing progress toward cleanup.
  - **3336 Rolling Hills Circle** – Certified letter sent; road blocking continues. The Holmes County Sheriff's Office was contacted, and the resident was advised to attend the meeting.

The council discussed both matters. No formal action was taken.

- **CDBG Grant Application**  
BT outlined progress on the town's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) application, including proposed infrastructure projects and the need for an income survey and Citizens Advisory Task Force (CATF). KB motioned to appoint the following members to the CATF: Tony Manis, Tim Wells, Phyllis Reif, John Luke, and Heather Huckaby. TH seconded. All in Favor – Motion Carried.  
A meeting date for the CATF will be scheduled within the next two weeks.

## Fire Department Report

Fire Chief CK presented the February report:

- 8 motor vehicle accident responses
- 4 brush fires
- 1 structure fire
- 2 storm damage calls
- 4 medical responses



- 3 mutual aid calls
- Approximately 3,500 gallons of town water were used.

## **Town Clerk's Report**

- **Financial and Town Billings Report**

BT reviewed March financials. Major checks totaled \$88,518, including:

- General Fund: \$65,000 (Alday Howell), \$9,556 (FMIT), \$3,097 (FDEM), \$1,125 (legal), and \$994 (insurance)
- Water Works: \$2,389 (FMIT), and other minor expenses
- Fire Dept: \$1,358 (credit card), \$409 (fuel)

Fund Balances (post-checks):

- General Fund: \$2,944
- Water Works: \$740
- Fire Dept: \$10,514
- Two-Toed Tom Festival: \$2,958

No March state revenue had been received at the time of the meeting. BT noted that the FMIT insurance premium of \$11,944.75 was due March 1. One water account was disconnected on March 18 following final notice.

- **Backflow Valve Tests / Business Tax Receipts Update**

BT presented an update on business backflow valve test compliance and business tax receipt renewals. All relevant businesses passed backflow inspections or had exemptions on file. The council reviewed a detailed list of current compliance.

- **Proposal for TechRadium IRIS Notification System**

The council discussed implementing the IRIS phone, text, and email alert system to improve boil water notice and emergency communications. KB motioned to approve the purchase of IRIS at \$1.15 per meter. MY seconded. All in Favor – Motion Carried.

- **Impact Fees**

BT shared research on impact fees, as previously requested by KB. The council reviewed relevant Florida statutes and local comparisons. No action was taken at this time.

## **Public Works Report**

- Sanitary Survey – Scheduled with FDEP for March 25, 2025.
- Consumer Confidence Report – Approved by FDEP. Will be mailed to water customers along with the capital improvement survey.

BM asked about personnel matters being handled publicly. MB explained the Sunshine Law and how HR responsibilities could be delegated. KB motioned to be appointed the council member responsible for HR oversight. TH seconded. All in Favor – Motion Carried.

BM also brought up a concern raised by a Family Dollar corporate contact regarding the use of their green space for the Esto Farmers Market. Although verbal permission had been previously given, MB advised obtaining written permission and adding Family Dollar as an additional insured. The council directed BT to follow up with the district manager.

### **Council Member Items**

- **Seat 1 - Council Member Krystal Bien**
  - KB brought up the issue of employee schedules and requested BT to only work during Monday-Friday.
- **Seat 2 - Council Member Greg Wells - none**
- **Seat 4 - Council Member Maxie Yates - none**
- **Seat 5 - Council Member Teresa Harrison - none**

### **Adjourn**

GW adjourned the meeting at 8:02 PM CT.

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



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Esto Town Council President