

**TOWN OF INTERLACHEN
TOWN COUNCIL BUDGET WORKSHOP MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, JUNE 10, 2026 – 10:00 A.M.**

CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Conner called the meeting to order at 10:00 am and dispensed with the formalities.

ROLL CALL

Council Members present were Chairperson Joni Conner, Vice-Chairperson Carolyn Bennett, Beverly Bakker, Anna Rose Larsen, and Carolyn Meadows. Mayor Hanes was also present.

COUNCIL CHAIRPERSON: JONI CONNER

Chairperson Conner had no comments.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION:

PRESENTATIONS:

Chief Gary Warren – Interlachen Fire Station #4.

Chief Gary Warren expressed appreciation to the Council for its continued support of Interlachen Fire Station #4. He reported that three personnel have been added to the department and stated that the Town's funding will be used to provide training and educational opportunities for these individuals to support their development as career firefighters. Chief Warren reiterated his gratitude for the Town's support in helping make this possible.

Aeron McNeill – Executive Director of Community Support Services for Putnam County.

Aeron McNeill provided an overview of Animal Services staffing and operations. She reported that personnel levels have been increased to meet service demands and noted that Animal Control Officers are state-certified. Animal Services handles cats and dogs, while the Sheriff's Office Agricultural Deputy is responsible for livestock and poultry-related matters. McNeill highlighted features of the department's new facility.

McNeill stated that Animal Services focuses animal health and welfare and partners with organizations that provide spay and neuter services. She also reported that the department actively conducts adoption events and that 202 pets have been adopted since December 2025.

McNeill expressed appreciation for the Town's support of Animal Services and its partnership in hosting pet adoption events. She stated that Town funding will be used to support animal care needs, including food, bedding, and flea prevention medications. Council Member Conner requested that October 17 be tentatively scheduled for the next Town-sponsored pet adoption event.

Discussion and Consideration of the Proposed 2026/2027 Budget for all Departments.

Town Clerk Mrs. Payne requested Council direction on allocating the travel budget to ensure fairness, transparency, and responsible use of public funds. Following the discussion, Council directed the Clerk to separate the Mayor's travel expenses from Council travel expenses and identified General Ledger Account 511.490, Mayor's Expenses, as the appropriate budget line item.

Council also directed that attendance at NEFLC dinner meetings be limited to four representatives, consisting of the Mayor, the Chair or Vice Chair, one Council Member, and the Town Clerk. A rotation system will be implemented to provide equal participation opportunities.

Council Members were directed to submit anticipated travel and seminar expenses for Fiscal Year 2027 to the Clerk within two weeks.

The Clerk reviewed the grant applications submitted by the Town, including two Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) paving grants, a Community Planning Technical Assistance (CPTA) grant for planning activities, and a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) for housing rehabilitation. The total value of the grant applications is \$3,183,600, with a required Town match of \$25,000.

The Clerk also reviewed the Town's capital improvement plans related to paving, parks, public works, general government, and water infrastructure. Council reached a consensus that water infrastructure should remain the Town's highest priority, with particular emphasis on improvements to the water tank located on Tremont Street. Council also expressed support for continuing street sign improvements and requested an evaluation of the feasibility of incorporating sidewalks within the Azalea Drive and Sleepy Hollow area.

The mayor encouraged the Council to consider future economic development opportunities. Council requested that the mayor research the feasibility and estimated costs associated with developing a wastewater system to serve commercial properties.

The Clerk reviewed the proposed salary plan, noting it is the last year of a five-year strategy to gradually keep the pay spread between minimum wage. Current staffing levels include four administrative employees, six police employees, and eight public works employees. Since the implementation of the plan, the Town has added one part-time police officer and two public works employees.

Council discussed incorporating base pay ranges for all positions, implementing employee evaluations, and adding Lieutenant and Assistant Supervisor classifications to the pay scale. The Clerk also presented a request for a salary adjustment for the Town Clerk position and reviewed the scope of the position, including increased responsibilities associated with Town growth and revenue-related initiatives. Council proposed a 5.45% salary increase to better align the position with other department heads.

The Clerk reviewed health insurance costs by department. She noted that the Council selected the health insurance plan for the upcoming fiscal year at the May Town Council meeting, and that the presentation focused on the departmental breakdown of healthcare costs for the selected plan.

The Clerk reviewed the Town's estimated taxable value of \$93,178,507 and presented projections regarding the potential impact of proposed property tax exemptions that may appear on the November ballot. Based on current estimates, taxable values would decrease by approximately 16.6% under the proposed \$150,000 exemption and by approximately 19.7% under the proposed \$250,000 exemption.

The Clerk reported that the Town has 3,344 parcels, of which 440 are designated as homestead properties. Of the homesteaded parcels, approximately 21% currently have no taxable value. Under the proposed \$150,000 exemption, approximately 85% of homesteaded properties would have no taxable value, increasing to approximately 98% under the proposed \$250,000 exemption. Similar comparative data for surrounding jurisdictions were also presented.

Council supported the development of a public informational graphic outlining the potential impacts of the proposed exemptions on the Town. The graphic will be factual and informational in nature and will be reviewed and approved by Council before publication.

The workshop adjourned at 11:22 am.