



Welaka Gazette

March 2024



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From The Mayor's Desk

In the last two newsletters, I covered the Town Charter and your current form of Town government. In this month's newsletter, I want to cover an issue that none of us are fond of, and that is taxes. More specifically, your tax bill, including how your tax bill is broken down and exactly where all the money goes. I will be the first to say we all pay a lot of taxes. We pay property, sales, gas, and income taxes, to name a few. What I want to talk about specifically this month from the Mayor's desk is property taxes, commonly called ad valorem tax.

I want to cover an important topic with you, and that is how the taxes you owe are calculated. Property tax in Florida requires three different agencies. The first is the county and the municipalities. Each year, those who you elect to represent you on a county level, including county commissioners and school board members, and on a local level, your Town Council, meets to set the annual tax rate called a millage rate. During that meeting, they also approve an annual budget. In Florida, there is a constitutional requirement that a county, city, or school board cannot exceed the total amount of money they anticipate spending that year. It's called the Balanced Budget Act and it says, unlike the Federal government, the state and local government cannot spend more money than they take in for the year. The tax rate or millage rate that a county, city, or school board sets is a percentage and is a multiplier times your property value to determine your tax bill for the year. In simple terms, if your property is valued at \$10,000 and your tax rate or millage rate is 10%, your tax bill would be \$1,000. That's $\$10,000 \times 10\% = \$1,000$.

The second agency is the property appraiser. The county property appraiser is an elected official whose job is to go throughout the county and set the taxable value of your property. The property appraiser does not set any tax rate or collect taxes directly from property owners, so they do not have a vested interest in setting a higher value to your property so they could collect more taxes. Their budget is paid by the county from taxes the county charges you. In the event you feel that the county property appraisal set your property value too high, you have the opportunity to appeal the value to the value adjustment board. The VAB has five members: two from the county's board of commissioners, one from the county's school board, and two citizens. They hear each appeal separately. During the appeal, you can submit evidence of why you think the value is too high. Some counties use special magistrates to conduct hearings and recommend decisions to the VAB. However, the VAB must make the final decision for or against you.

Once the county, city, or school board sets their tax rate for the year and the property sets your property value for the year, this information is sent to the tax collector, the third government agency. The tax collector, elected by the people, tabulates your property taxes by multiplying the tax rate by the property value. That's tax rate x property value. The tax collector is permitted to keep a portion of the taxes they collect on behalf of the county, city, or school board as a commission. These monies are used to help operate the tax collector's office.

Now that you understand how taxes are collected, I will dive into how much is collected by whom and for what use. But before I do that, I want to share a 2023 report from the Florida Department of Revenue on the state's tax (millage) rate by county. In 2022, the county with the highest tax (millage) rate in Florida was St. Lucie County, with a rate of 21.8496. To put it in simpler terms, if you live in St. Lucie County, you will pay \$21.84 in taxes for every \$1,000 of the value of your property. That's $.0218496 \times \$1,000 = \21.84 . You are probably asking what is the

tax rate of Putnam County? Well, for your most recent 2023 tax bill, it is currently set at 21.8584. Plus, you also pay a county landfill fee, basically a bill for your garbage to be picked up each week in the amount of \$255 annually.

So what are the total taxes collected if you live in the Town of Welaka, and where do they go? Well, they break down as follows:

- Putnam County General Fund - 8.84 mills
- Fire Taxing District - 1.10 mills
- School Local Required Effort - 3.11 mills
- School District Discretionary - 0.82 mills
- School District Capital Outlay - 1.50 mills
- Voted District School Debt - 0.86 mills
- Town of Welaka - 5.50 mills
- St. Johns River Water Management - 0.17 mills

So, how does this break down in your tax bill:

- Putnam County - 8.844 mills
- Putnam County Schools - 6.29 mills
- Welaka - 5.50 mills
- St. Johns River Water Management - 0.17 mills

On a county level, you pay 15.13 mills or \$15.13 on every \$1,000 of taxable property value. This is county and school taxes.

On a Town level, you pay 5.50 mills or \$5.50 on every \$1,000 of taxable property value.

On a state level, you pay 0.17 mills or \$1.70 on every \$1,000 of taxable property value.

How is this money divided up? Well, the county, school board, and state keep their tax money, and the Town keeps theirs. The county or school district does not give Welaka a portion of its tax money. The state returns part of the tax money to the Town in the form of grants. The St. Johns River Water Management administers grants for water and sewer projects.

So what does Welaka do with the tax money? Our tax money includes operating all government operations, including Public Works, maintaining parks and streets, and mowing all right of ways, operation of the Police and Building Departments, and other services like zoning changes and business tax receipts. The county tax money goes to operate Putnam County, including work done on CR309 and 308B. They also provide police services when the Town's Police Department is not on duty. They also provide fire services from the fire tax you pay. The school taxes are spent on the school district, including operating schools, paying the teachers and staff salaries, and other services like school buses. The state money goes to the St. Johns River Water Management to help manage our water bodies like the rivers and lakes, drainage planning, and drinking water management.

When I write these, my purpose is not to sway you in any way. It is designed to provide you with the information so you can better understand your government. I hope this explanation helps you better understand how your taxes are collected and what government agencies benefit from them. If you have any specific questions about your Town taxes, please call me at (386) 467-9800, ext. 101. I will be happy to sit down with you and explain them. I encourage you to contact your county commissioners and school board members for questions on county or school district taxes. As always, I hope this finds you well, and I look forward to talking to you again next month.

Very Best Regards,



Jamie D. Watts
MAYOR

From The Council President

This month I wanted to continue with the theme of February's Newsletter portion of the Finding of Necessity Study in the process of establishing a CRA (Community Redevelopment Area) for the Town of Welaka.

As you might recall, in January, our Town Attorney held a workshop to discuss the potential boundaries of the CRA. In February, based on the information in his presentation, I presented to you the 'Who and What' of the Finding of Necessity. This month I'd like to continue with the 'Where, Why and When' of the study.

As for Where, the primary purpose of the workshop was to determine the boundaries of the CRA within the Town limits. During the workshop, ideas were presented and discussed by audience members and a general consensus was reached. These boundaries were presented and approved during the February Town Council Meeting.

The Why (Why do the Finding of Necessity study), is quite simple. It is required in order to establish a CRA and will confirm if there is a viable area for establishing a CRA in the Town of Welaka.

Finally, the When of the study, lays out the timeframe to complete each aspect of the study:

30 Days – Conduct one public meeting to establish the proposed study area for the Finding of Necessity and explain the process.

30-90 Days – Analyze the study area on a property-by-property basis to determine whether the area meets the definition of a "Blighted Area" under section 163.340(8), Florida Statutes. Draft report of findings including a proposed ordinance/resolution if appropriate.

90-120 Days – Present findings at a public workshop/meeting.

120-130 Days – Schedule for Council Meeting and issue notices to taxing authorities of intent to adopt the Finding of Necessity in accordance with section 163.346, Florida Statutes, which shall include sending of the registered letters as required therein.

130-180 Days – Present the proposed Ordinance/Resolution establishing the Finding of Necessity to the Town Council for adoption.

I hope that you will follow the process as we move forward, whether virtually or through the newsletter, website, or by attending informational meetings in person. A full copy of the materials that Mr. Kennedy supplied during the Workshop are in the Town Hall lobby.

In Your Service,

Jessica Finch, Welaka Town Council President



Need A Meeting With Your Mayor?

To schedule a meeting with your Mayor, please email
TownClerk@welaka-fl.gov



Do You Have News for the Town of Welaka? Publish it here!

Please email the digital image to TownClerk@welaka-fl.gov



Need To Report An Issue or Make A Town Code Violation Complaint?

Street or Park issue? Report online at www.TellTownHall.com
Code Enforcement Complaint? Email codes@welaka-fl.gov



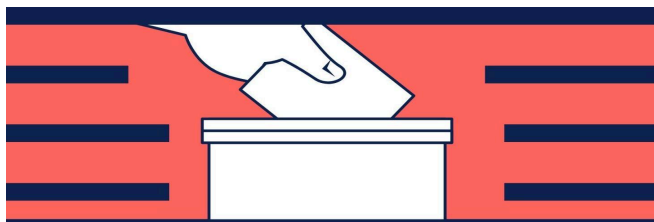
Eyeglass Recycling

Drop your unused glasses by the Welaka Town for the South Putnam Lion Club to pick up.



Sponsor an Event

The Events Committee is seeking sponsors as they plan new events for the future. If you know anyone who would like to sponsor any of our events, please reach out to our Events Committee at events@welaka-fl.gov.



ONE DECISION CAN CHANGE THE FUTURE

TOWN OF WELAKA UPCOMING VOTING SCHEDULE

Have an impact on our community. Be a registered voter!

EARLY VOTING: 3/4/24 - 3/16/24, 8:30 AM - 5:30 PM
PALATKA, INTERLACHEN & CRESCENT CITY LOCATIONS

ELECTION DAY VOTING: 3/19/24, 7:00 AM - 7:00 PM
ALL 21 PUTNAM COUNTY LOCATIONS INCLUDING
THE CHURCH (FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH)
638 3RD AVENUE, WELAKA, FL

Official Presidential Preference Primary Election Ballot
March 19, 2024
Republican Party
Putnam County, Florida

Balota Oficial de la Elección Preferencia Presidencial Primaria
19 de Marzo de 2024
Partido Republicano
Condado de Putnam, Florida

- Instructions: To vote, fill in the oval (●) completely next to your choice.
- Use only the marking device provided or a black or blue pen or marker.
- If you make a mistake, ask for a new ballot. Do not cross out or your vote may not count.
- Instrucciones: Para votar, llene por (●) completo el óvalo que está al lado de su selección.
- Use solamente el dispositivo paramarcas provisto o una pluma o plumón negro o azul.
- Si comete un error, pida una balota nueva. No tache porque su voto podría no contarse.

President (Vote for One)	PRECINCT 04.0 VOTERS ONLY REPUBLICAN, DEMOCRATIC, AND MINOR OR NO PARTY AFFILIATION
Presidente (Vote por Uno)	
<input type="radio"/> Ryan L. Binkley <input type="radio"/> Chris Christie <input type="radio"/> Ron DeSantis <input type="radio"/> Nikki R. Haley <input type="radio"/> Asa Hutchinson <input type="radio"/> Vivek Ramaswamy <input type="radio"/> Donald J. Trump	Welaka Town Council Member (Vote for Two)
	Miembro del Ayuntamiento de Welaka (Vote por Dos)
	<input type="radio"/> Jessica Finch <input type="radio"/> Glenn M. Hammond <input type="radio"/> Kathy Washington

Candidate names were certified by the Florida Department of State. Since the certification date, some candidates may have suspended their campaigns or withdrawn from consideration, but officially remain on the ballot. Votes cast for all candidates will be counted.

Los nombres de los candidatos fueron certificados por el Departamento de Estado de Florida. Desde la fecha de certificación, algunos candidatos pueden haber suspendido sus campañas o haberse retirado de la consideración, pero oficialmente se les exige que permanezcan en la boleta electoral. Se contarán los votos emitidos por todos los candidatos.

PUBLIC NOTICE

The Town Council for the Town of Welaka will hold a Special Meeting on Tuesday March 5, 2024, at 6:00 PM to consider proposed Land Development Code Article 2, Sections 2.1 – 2.3 regarding Zoning Districts and Permitted Uses. It will be held in the Town Council Meeting Room at the Welaka Town Hall, located at 400 4th Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193. All interested persons are invited to attend this meeting.

Persons with disabilities requiring accommodations to participate in this meeting should contact Town Hall at (386) 467-9800 or by writing to 400 4th Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193 at least 24 hours in advance to request accommodations.




FARM SHARE FOOD DISTRIBUTION

HELPING HANDS WELAKA

MARCH 8, 2024
9AM

WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

400 4TH AVE, WELAKA, FL 32193

Food is first come, first served.

DRIVE-THRU DISTRIBUTION
Farm Share is an equal opportunity provider





GARDENING WITH *Muscadines*

Planting, Installation, Training, and Pruning

WEDNESDAY

March

6

1:00 pm-4:00 PM

Ever After Farms U Pick
Grape Vineyard,
372 Sisco Road
Pomona Park, FL, 32181



Embark on a fascinating grape-growing journey with our "Gardening with Muscadine Grape" program, featuring expert guidance from Horticulture Agents Julio Perez, Judy Jean, Terra Freeman, and Brittany A. Council-Morton. This immersive experience covers essential techniques in planting, training, and pruning, ensuring both beginners and seasoned gardeners gain valuable insights. As a special bonus, participants will receive a personally chosen Muscadine Grape with registration, adding a delightful touch to their learning adventure. Don't miss this opportunity to learn from the best and cultivate your own Muscadine Grapes.

Register at

<https://MuscadineGrape.eventbrite.com>

Judy Jean
jean.cjudy@ufl.edu
or 386-437-7464
(Flagler County)

Terra Freeman
terraf@ufl.edu
or 904-209-0430
(St. Johns County)

Brittany Council-Morton
bcouncil1@ufl.edu
(386) 622-5776
(Volusia County)

Julio Perez
pjulio@ufl.edu
or 386-329-0318
(Putnam County)



SCAN ME

An Equal Opportunity Institution.

TREVOR THOMAS LIVE!
EST. 1991
LAUGHTER, INSPIRATION, & LIFE CHANGES
TREVORTHOMASLIVE.COM

Saturday, MARCH 9 @ 6PM
THE CHURCH OF WELAKA
638 CR 309, WELAKA, FL
LOVE OFFERING WILL BE TAKEN

UF/IFAS Extension Putnam County

Living Soils

Explore the wonders of living soil at our upcoming learning workshop! Dive into the dynamic ecosystem of microbial-rich soil, where plant roots and microorganisms exchange nutrients, benefiting gardening through improved nutrient cycling and soil structure. In sandy Florida soils, discover practical techniques like organic matter incorporation and cover cropping to nurture living soil. Gain insights into the local challenge of farmland degradation and the need for sustainable practices. Join us for an interactive session on the essentials of cultivating and maintaining living soil!

MASTER GARDENER PLANT CLINIC
All Learning Workshops (except Crescent City), will be followed by a plant clinic from 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm, so bring your plant questions and problems with you. Need help identifying a disease or pest? Bring photos or plant specimens and let one of our Master Gardeners help.

The Presentation on March 21 will be available via Zoom. To attend virtually Zoom registration is required & can be found at: <https://bit.ly/Livingsoil>

DATES:
ALL EVENTS ARE RAIN OR SHINE

Friday, March 15 | 5pm-6pm
Bostwick Community Center
1252 Tillman St, Palatka, FL 32177

Monday, March 18 | 5pm-6pm
Welaka Woman's Club
644 Co Rd 309, Welaka, FL 32193

***Thursday, March 21 | 5pm-6pm**
UF/IFAS Extension Putnam Auditorium
111 Yelvington Rd, East Palatka, FL 32131

Tuesday, March 26 | 5pm-6pm
Melrose Public Library
312 Wynwood Ave, Melrose, FL 32666

Wednesday, March 27
Class: 12pm-1pm | Plant Clinic: 1pm-2pm
Crescent City Commission Chambers
3 N. Summit Street, Crescent City, FL 321

For more information:
pjulio@ufl.edu or call 386-329-0318

An Equal Opportunity Institution.
The University of Florida is committed to providing universal access to all our events. For disability accommodations such as sign language interpreters and listening devices, please contact pjulio@ufl.edu at least 2 weeks in advance. Advance notice is necessary to arrange for some accessibility needs.
sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/putnam/

Sunday, March 31
7am
SUNRISE SERVICE

He Lives!
Easter Celebration

Saturday, March 30, 11am
EASTER EGG HUNT
The Story of Easter
Hot Dogs for lunch
(Kids under 12)

THE CHURCH of WELAKA
638 CR 309 * Welaka, FL 32193
(386) 467-3251

Welaka Methodist Church

682 Third Avenue, Welaka, FL

You're invited to share praise and worship for the following Lenten celebrations!

Everyone is invited!

February 14th - Ash Wednesday service @ 5 PM, followed by a potluck soup/salad community meal

March 24th - Palm Sunday Service @ 11 AM

March 31st - Easter Sunrise Service @ 7 AM

WEEKLY SCHEDULE

Sundays @ 10:15 AM Children's Sunday School

Sundays @ 11:00 AM Worship Service

1st Sunday Communion

Wednesdays @ 9 AM Bible Study of Revelation

Questions - Call Pastor Julie Williams @ (386) 467-2336

Town Of Welaka invites you to



March 1st April 5th May 3rd
June 7th July 5th August 2nd
5:30pm - 9:00 pm

Jefferson Smith Park, Welaka



EVERY WEDNESDAY

After School Tutoring

Reading & Math

FROM
4 - 4:30 PM

FRIENDS OF WELAKA

Please Contact:
Laurie Porath
(561) 267-7466

TOWN OF WELAKA CONTACT LIST

WELAKA POLICE DEPARTMENT

Michael Porath - Police Chief

Direct Line: (386) 524-4015

(386) 467-9800 ext. 107

MPorath@welaka-fl.gov

AFTER HOURS: (386) 329-0801

EMERGENCY: 911

WELAKA MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Meghan Allmon - Town Clerk

(386) 467-9800 ext. 102

TownClerk@welaka-fl.gov

Ellen Dickason - Assistant Town Clerk

(386) 467-9800 ext. 104

EDickason@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA UTILITY DEPARTMENT

Emma Sledge - Utility Clerk

(386) 467-9800 ext. 103

ESledge@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA AFTER HOURS

(386) 467-9800

WELAKA CODE DEPARTMENT

Pauline Kinney

(386) 530-0336

Codes@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Mark Criswell - Universal Building Inspector

(386) 467-9800 ext. 105 or Option 4

Building@welaka-fl.gov

MAYOR'S OFFICE

Mayor Jamie Watts

(386) 467-9800 ext. 101

Direct: 386-524-4009

JWatts@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA TOWN COUNCIL

Council President Jessica Finch

(386)467-9800, ext. 200

JFinch@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Kimberly Dugger

(386) 467-9800, ext. 201

KDugger@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Tonya Long

(386) 467-9800, ext. 202

TonyaLong@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Kathy Washington

(386) 467-9800, ext. 203

KWashington@welaka-fl.gov

Town Attorney, Patrick Kennedy

TownAttorney@welaka-fl.gov

Events Committee: events@welaka-fl.gov

Waste Pro: (386) 328-5445

Waste Pro: (386) 328-5445

Putnam County Animal Control

(386) 329-0396

It is our pleasure to serve the Town of Welaka!



March



Welaka, FL
River of Lakes



2024

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1 Food Truck Friday Jefferson Smith Park 5:30 PM – 9 PM	2
3	4 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup Early Voting Starts 3/4/24 - 3/16/24 8:30 AM – 5:30 PM Palatka, Interlachen & Crescent City Locations	5 Special-Called Town Council Meeting Welaka Land Development Code Review 6 PM - Town Hall	6	7	8 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting 9 AM - Town Hall	9
10	11 Trash & Recycling Pickup	12 Town Council Meeting 6 PM - Town Hall	13	14	15 Meter Reading Day	16
17	18 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	19 Voting & Election Day 7 AM - 7 PM Polls are at all 21 Putnam County Locations including The Church of Welaka - 638 3 rd Avenue	20	21 Zoning Board Meeting 6 PM - Town Hall Canvassing Committee Convening 4:30 PM Supervisor of Elections Office 2509 Crill Ave., Palatka, FL	22 Welaka Town Council Members' Swear-In 7:00 PM - Welaka Town Hall	23
24	25 Trash & Recycling Pickup	26 Code Board Meeting 6 PM - Town Hall	27	28 Tree Board Meeting 6 PM - Town Hall	29 Town Hall Closed in Observance of Good Friday	30
31 Easter Sunday						