



Welaka Gazette

October 2023

From The Mayor's Desk

Happy October, everyone! Fall is officially upon us, and I don't know about you, but I am glad we are finally seeing some cooler weather. These 100+ degree days have been terrible. With the cooler weather, we begin to welcome the holiday season. Our first event for the season will be our Spooky Golf Cart Parade and Candy Giveaway on Sunday, October 29th, at 4:00 PM. The parade will start at Downtown Park and will parade all over Town, ending at Jefferson Smith Park, where we ask you to park your carts and pass out candy to the children. So put on your best costume, decorate your cart, and join us for a spooky good time. Our second big event we look forward to this year is our 3rd annual Christmas by the River event. As always, it will start with our Christmas Parade at noon, followed by music, food trucks, and a craft festival in the Downtown Park. We will end the night with our annual Boat Parade on the St. Johns River. It will be on the 2nd Saturday in December, and we will share more with you in the November newsletter.

On the Town front, I have several big topics to discuss. The first is our budget. I am happy to announce that the Welaka Town Council has adopted our 2023-2024 budget. This year's budget includes the salary for a 4th Police Officer and some essential equipment for the Town. The largest being a new brush-hauling truck. Our current dump truck is over 40 years old and is in poor condition. It was worn out when the Town purchased it in 2005, and it's even worse now. When I became Mayor, the Town spent a fortune repairing worn-out equipment. We have now updated most of our equipment. We also have a maintenance program in place and our tracking equipment so we can move it out when it reaches the end of its useful life, instead of spending more to fix it than it's worth.

Another big topic I need to discuss with you is our Town Charter. I am excited to announce that after almost two years, the Welaka Charter Review Committee finished the draft of the new Town Charter. This has been a long, tedious project for the Charter Review Committee with over 30 meetings and over 235 hours going into the new Town Charter. Remember, our Charter is equal to our United States Constitution. It forms our local government, keeps your elected officials in check, and protects your rights as a citizen of Welaka. Our Charter was last updated in 1947 and was so outdated that parts were unconstitutional. Most of the Charter Review Committee's work was to make the updates to ensure it complied with Federal and State law. However, some updates that will benefit our Town residents include requiring six months' residency before you can run for Mayor or Town Council. Currently, someone who does not live here could run for office, and as long as they moved here after they were elected, they could do that. Our new Charter will require you to live in Welaka for six months before you can run for office.

A second significant area of improvement is moving the Town from the Mayor running the Town to a Town Manager overseeing day-to-day operations with oversight by the Town Council. As Mayor, I spent approximately forty to sixty hours a week managing the operations of the Town. My salary is \$800.00 per month, which requires me to have a second source of income. I am fortunate because I own several businesses; however, the Town cannot rely on the elected Mayor to oversee day-to-day operations. With the growth we expect in South Putnam County, we need a full-time, professional manager to ensure the Town is run responsibly. We witnessed with Hastings what happens when a Town is mismanaged. If the Town is not managed correctly, you could see your taxes skyrocket, public services reduced, and even the Town dissolved. Ultimately, your Town services, such as water and sewer, would be turned over to a third party not accountable to you, the residents of Welaka, and with no regard to what is best for our community. We have come too far to have something like this happen.

The third significant change involves your Police Department. Under the new Charter, the Welaka Town Council will only be able to dissolve or turn over the Police Department to an outside agency after first putting it on the ballot and having it approved by the residents. This is your Police Department, and you should be the one who gets to decide if it exists, not five elected officials. Two things to remember are: first, the Mayor position will remain, and you will elect that person; however, they will not have any administrative duties but will still have the same voting power as a Town Council Member. Along with the Council, they will give the Town Manager direction to oversee operations and monitor what they do. Secondly, on October

21st at 9:00 AM, the Charter Review Committee will begin to hold a series of workshops to review the Town Charter with the residents. I encourage you to please attend. In March of 2024, the new Charter will be placed on the ballot for a vote of the people, and I encourage you to be informed about the new, proposed Charter before you go to vote. So please mark your calendar and attend these critical meetings.

On a final topic, there has been some discussion about side-by-sides in Welaka. The Citizens Advisory Board has had multiple talks about their legality for months. My position is that the Town has issued stickers for side-by-sides for years, so personal responsibility has to be taken on the Town's part. On October 9th at 5:05 PM, there will be a workshop at Welaka Town Hall to discuss side-by-sides and their future in our Town. Please join us that evening and make your voice heard.

We have some crucial meetings happening in Welaka in October. As your Mayor, I encourage you to attend them and stay informed about your government. As always, it is a privilege to speak to you each month. I hope everyone has a great October, and I look forward to talking to you again next month.

Very Best Regards,

Handwritten signature of Jamie D. Watts, Mayor. The signature is in black ink and includes the word "MAYOR" in small capital letters at the end.

From The Council President

You may have heard the mention of CRAs at some of our recent Town Council Meetings. You may have also read my portion in last month's newsletter. Since we've been discussing this for quite some time, I wanted to take this opportunity to share more information with you regarding the process, formation, and ultimately desired results. This information comes directly from the Florida Redevelopment Association's website.

What is Tax Increment Financing?

Tax increment financing is a unique tool available to cities and counties for redevelopment activities. It is used to leverage public funds to promote private sector activity in the targeted area. The dollar value of all real property in the Community Redevelopment Area is determined as of a fixed date, also known as the "frozen value." Taxing authorities, which contribute to the tax increment, continue to receive property tax revenues based on the frozen value. These frozen value revenues are available for general government purposes. However, any tax revenues from increases in real property value, referred to as "increment," are deposited into the Community Redevelopment Agency Trust Fund and dedicated to the redevelopment area.

It is important to note that property tax revenue collected by the School Board and any special district are not affected under the tax increment financing process. Further, unlike in some states, Florida taxing entities write a check to the CRA trust fund, after monies are received from the tax collector. In California, the increment is sent to the CRAs directly out of collected county tax revenues, before they are distributed to each taxing entity.

The tax increment revenues can be used immediately, saved for a particular project, or can be bonded to maximize the funds available. Any funds received from a tax increment financing area must be used for specific redevelopment purposes within the targeted area, and not for general government purposes.

How does the CRA Process Work?

A public meeting begins the designation process. Several steps will have to be accomplished before the Community Redevelopment Area becomes a reality. These steps are briefly outlined below.

- I.** Adopt the Finding of Necessity. This will formally identify the blight conditions within the targeted area and establish the area boundary.
- II.** Develop and adopt the Community Redevelopment Plan. The plan addresses the unique needs of the targeted area and includes the overall goals for redevelopment in the area, as well as identifying specific projects.
- III.** Create a Redevelopment Trust Fund. Establishment of the Trust Fund enables the Community Redevelopment Agency to direct the increase in real property tax revenues back into the targeted area.

The Florida Legislature addressed CRAs in 2002 from an intergovernmental point of view, to strengthen the ability of cities and counties to manage CRA creation, notices and term issues. Disputes between cities and counties involving CRAs can be resolved locally by interlocal agreements, and should be, since they usually involve growth management issues other than just funding.

I hope this helps explain what a CRA is and how the process works.

In Your Service,

Jessica Finch, Welaka Town Council President



Need A Meeting With Your Mayor?

To schedule a meeting with your Mayor, please go to www.MayorWatts.com and select the date and time that works for you.



Do You Have News for the Town of Welaka? PUBLISH IT IN THE WELAKA GAZETTE!

For more information, please contact the Welaka Town Clerk, Meghan Allmon, at TownClerk@welaka-fl.gov



If you would like to recognize a Town of Welaka resident for dedicated community service to our Town, a local student with exceptional grades, or to nominate a Town resident who is celebrating a landmarked birthday such as turning 100 years old, please contact our **Welaka Town Clerk, Meghan Allmon**, at TownClerk@welaka-fl.gov. We will be happy to recognize them at our next Council Meeting by public recognition.



Eyeglass Recycling – How You Can Help

South Putnam Lion Club would like to remind you that you can drop your unused glasses by Welaka Town Hall in the drop-box in the main hallway. Donate glasses and change someone's life. Imagine if you could help a child read, an adult to succeed in their job, or a senior citizen maintaining their independence. Help to provide our community with more opportunities to grow and thrive.

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

Need to report a street or parks issue? Report online at www.TellTownHall.com
Or make a Codes Enforcement Complaint? Email codes@welaka-fl.gov



Helping Hands of Welaka Toy Drive

Helping Hands of Welaka is collecting toys to give out to the children who attend the Welaka Christmas Parade & Festival in December of this year. If you would like to donate, please contact **Harriet Vanslyke** at (631) 764 - 2308



Sponsor an Event


The Events Committee is seeking sponsors as they plan new events for the future. Some of the events include having a fireworks show at one of our events. Like all things, these things cost money. While the town sponsors these events, we do not have it in the budget to do everything we want to do. 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




BLOOD DONATION SAVES LIVES

**Welaka
Womans Club
Blood Drive
Tuesday, October 24
10:00 am – 5:00 pm**


Scan to book your appointment today! 

All donors will receive a recognition item and a free cholesterol screening. Donors must be 16 or older, weigh at least 110 pounds, and show proof of ID. 16-year-olds require written parental permission.



\$\$\$
Gift Card

All blood donors will get a T-shirt & e-gift card!



LIFESOUTH
Community Blood Centers

BREAST CANCER AWARENESS MONTH



OCTOBER 2023

**AN ANNUAL REGISTRATION STICKER IS REQUIRED BY OCTOBER 1, 2023
IN ORDER TO DRIVE YOUR GOLF CART IN WELAKA**



Please bring your driver's license, proof of insurance (with golf cart listed) and \$25.00 to the Welaka Town Hall.
New ORANGE Registration Stickers are now available!



**October 6 & 7, 2023
Friday & Saturday**
Starts at 8:00am
Household & Kitchen, Furniture, Books, Clothes & MORE
BAKE SALE
FOOD for purchase
THE CHURCH
638 CR 309
WELAKA
(386) 467-3251

OCTOBER is
Domestic Violence
AWARENESS
MONTH



ANNUAL BUSINESS TAX LICENSE REQUIRED BY OCTOBER 1, 2023

Applications and Fee Schedule ORD 2022-07 are located in the Town Hall foyer and on the front page of the www.Welaka-fl.gov website.

 **APPLY**

BUSINESS LICENSE

NEW LICENSES & RENEWALS

You Must Provide:
Insurance Certificate(s)
Business License(s)
(Credit/Debit Card, Cash, Check or Money Order)



**COMMUNITY
CLEANUP**
Saturday, October 14th, 2023

Join
Friends of Welaka
at the Town Hall Pavilion

COFFEE AND PASTRIES AT 8 AM ~ PICKUP BEGINS AT 9 AM
CLOSE TOED SHOES AND GLOVES RECOMMENDED

Made with PosterMyWall.com



Monday, October 16

Free UF/IFAS and Master Gardener events

5:00PM – 6:00PM **Plant Clinic**
6:00PM – 7:00PM **Learning Workshop**
Bog Gardening and Carnivorous Plants

Welaka Woman's Club
644 Co Rd 309, Welaka

An Equal Opportunity Institution.
UF IFAS Extension UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA
FLORIDA MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

Florida City Government Week Discussion

Location: Welaka Town Hall
Event Date: Saturday, October 21, 2023 - 10:00am to 12:00pm
Please Visit: [Florida City Government Week \(floridaleagueofcities.com\)](http://floridaleagueofcities.com)

A week-long annual event when Florida's cities celebrate, showcase, and engage citizens in the work of municipal government.

The focus will be on the forms of government and update on the Charter Committee.





**Welaka National Fish Hatchery's
2023
KID'S FISHING RODEO**

Sponsored by
U.S. FISH & WILDLIFE SERVICE
PROUD CO-SPONSORS
Johnny Morris Bass Pro Shops
Happy Fishin'!
FRIENDS OF WELAKA

**SATURDAY
October 28**
Registration 8-8:30 am
Fishing 8:30-noon

Welaka Fish Hatchery
Beecher's Springs Ponds
1011 County Road 309
Bring your rods and bait!

Raffle Prizes
for each age group
5-8
9-12
13-16

QUESTIONS?
Contact Us
at 386-467-2374 or
at FriendsOfWelaka@gmail.com

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JOIN US!

FAMILY FUN!

Hot Dogs & Chili

Games

RAFFLE

CAKE WALK

Fall Fest

at THE CHURCH

Saturday, October 28

6-8pm

The Church of Welaka
638 3rd Avenue
Welaka, FL 32193

UF/IFAS Extension Putnam County

UF IFAS Extension
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Bog Gardening & Carnivorous Plants

Many different interesting plants grow in bogs. Some of the most unusual and interesting are the carnivorous plants. In this learning workshop, we will learn how to select and grow the easiest carnivorous plants to grow at home, how to make a bog garden/planter, and some companion plants that can grow with them.

MASTER GARDENER PLANT CLINIC

All Learning Workshops (except Crescent City), will be preceded by a plant clinic from 5:00 to 6:00 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.

DATES:
ALL EVENTS ARE RAIN OR SHINE

Thursday, October 05 | 6pm-7pm
Interlachen Community Center
135 S County Rd 315 Interlachen, FL 32148

Monday, October 16 | 6pm-7pm
Welaka Woman's Club
644 Co Rd 309, Welaka, FL 32193

Tuesday, October 17 | 6pm-7pm
Bostwick Community Center
1252 Tillman St, Palatka, FL 32177

***Thursday, October 19 | 6pm-7pm**
UF/IFAS Extension Putnam Auditorium
111 Yelvington Rd, East Palatka, FL 32131

Wednesday, October 25
Class: 12pm-1pm | Plant Clinic: 1pm-2pm
Crescent City Commission Chambers
3 N. Summit Street, Crescent City, FL 32121

Tuesday, October 31 | 6pm-7pm
Melrose Public Library
312 Wynnwood Ave, Melrose, FL 32666

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

The Presentation on October 19 will be available via Zoom. To attend virtually Zoom registration is required & can be found at https://bit.ly/bug_eating_plants.

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 paulio@ufl.edu at least 2 weeks in advance. Advance notice is necessary to arrange for some accessibility needs.

sfyl.ifas.ufl.edu/putnam/

Introducing

THE FLORIDA SUNSET CHALLENGE

May the best sunset win.
Are you up for the challenge?

FLORIDASUNSETCHALLENGE.COM

CONTEST RUNS
OCTOBER 1 TO OCTOBER 31

FLORIDA SUNSET CHALLENGE

visit **WELAKA** VISIT **PALATKA**

HOW IT WORKS

It's City VS City and Sunset VS Sunset

ENTRIES ACCEPTED OCTOBER 1 TO OCTOBER 31

1. CAPTURE AND SHARE
2. TAG AND HASHTAG
3. ENGAGE YOUR AUDIENCE

THE BATTLE OF THE MOST LOVED PHOTOS BEGINS IN EARLY NOVEMBER

The top four photos with the most reactions will be selected and entered into the semi-finals. These photos will go head-to-head on Visit Welaka Instagram stories for users to vote on their favorite.

In the finals, the 2 Semi-Final winners will battle head-to-head on Visit Welaka Instagram stories.

Who will be the ultimate winner of the Florida Sunset Challenge?

THE GRAND PRIZE

Your Choice:
A Hog Waller Weekend Experience
OR
A 2-Night Stay at Grand Gables Inn Bed & Breakfast

THE WINNING CITY GETS BRAGGING RIGHTS & A TROPHY

FLORIDA SUNSET CHALLENGE

visit **WELAKA** VISIT **PALATKA**

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

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 / EMERGENCY

(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

It is our pleasure to serve the Town of Welaka!



October

Welaka, FL
River of Lakes



2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup Pink Out Putnam Kickoff with Mammogram Bus 9 AM - 4 PM - Town Hall	3 Town Council Meeting 6:00 PM - Town Hall	4 Charter Review Committee Meeting 5:00 PM - Town Hall	5 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting 9:00 AM - Town Hall	6 Town Clean-Up 8:00 AM - Town Hall Pavilion	7 FL City Government Week Discussion 10 AM - 12 PM - Town Hall
8	9 Trash & Recycling Pickup Town Public Workshop 5:05 PM - Town Hall (Side-by-Sides)	10 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup Meter-Reading Day	11 Zoning Board Meeting 6:00 PM - Town Hall	12 Code Board Meeting 6:00 PM - Town Hall	13 Town Halloween Event & Golf Cart Parade w/Candy Jefferson Smith Park 4 PM - 6 PM	14
15	16 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup Meter-Reading Day	17 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup Meter-Reading Day	18	19	20	21
22	23 Trash & Recycling Pickup	24 Code Board Meeting 6:00 PM - Town Hall	25	26	27	28
29	30 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	31				

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU OR YOUR BANK'S BILL-PAY FEATURE PUTS YOUR FULL ACCOUNT NUMBER ON YOUR PAYMENT.

Thank you!