



Welaka Gazette

September 2023

From The Mayor's Desk

As I am writing this to you, we are making our final preparations for Hurricane Idalia. I am delighted to say that our staff is working like a well-oiled machine. The Welaka Utility Department began preparations for the storm on the Sunday before to ensure everything was ready and would remain online. The Welaka Public Works crew worked diligently to remove yard debris and ensure the storm drains are clean. The Police Department came on duty Wednesday evening and will remain on duty 24 hours a day before, during, and after the storm. As I have served as your Mayor for the past few years, we have put together a plan that has helped our staff prepare seamlessly for events like this. You can feel safe knowing that your Town is well-prepared for any emergency.

Speaking of emergencies, I am excited to announce that the Welaka Police Department has hired our 3rd full-time police officer, Tommy Owens. Officer Owens is a dedicated law enforcement officer with many years of experience with the Putnam County Sheriff's Office. We are fortunate to now have him serving our community. With the addition of Officer Owens, the Town of Welaka now has night and weekend police protection and service 7 days a week.

Some may question the need for a 3rd officer, however, with 1,200 people moving into Florida daily, we see more people entering and visiting the Welaka area weekly. As Sheriff Grady Judd has said, "Crime will rise to the level a community will tolerate." Our goal is to be proactive and not wait for the crime rate to rise before acting. We want to send a clear message that the residents of Welaka will not tolerate crime in their community. When you are out and about and see Officer Owens, please join us in welcoming him to Welaka and our Police Department.

On the grants front, we are very excited to announce that the Welaka Town Council voted to approve the 2 Florida Recreation Development Assistance Program Grant applications for \$200,000 each. The grants will be for a new Pickleball Park at the Field of Dreams on Pine Avenue and upgrades to the Jefferson Smith Park on Elm Street in Welaka. I am excited to see these two projects be advanced. These are projects that the residents have wanted for some time, especially our pickleball-playing residents.

We are also applying for a Water Quality Improvement Grant for wastewater collection system upgrades, including the Sportsman's Harbor area, for \$8.7 Million Dollars. We are also eager to hear from the Florida Department of Transportation to determine whether we received the Small Counties Outreach Program Grant for the paving of 4th Avenue for \$800,000. We are also working on a 3-year legislative appropriation for \$25 Million Dollars to build a new Welaka Police Department and Emergency Operations Center and an \$800,000 appropriation for the paving of 2nd Avenue. We are also approximately 50% through the \$13.5 Million Dollar Advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant design phase, which we expect to break ground in January or February of next year. Finally, we are planning for the \$600,000 grant we have received to install an auto-read water meter system in the Town. The new system will allow us to notify you of a significant leak in your home in as little as 20 minutes and a minor leak in as little as 24 hours. This will help us conserve water and ensure you don't receive an outrageously high utility bill from a leak at your home. We have made significant strides in improving the Welaka Water and Wastewater Utility Systems and will continue to prioritize them in the future.

On Land Development matters, the Welaka Planning and Zoning Department has added two new Board Members, Pamela Washington, and Jennifer Bures. Both new members have experience in land use and development, and we are excited to include them on our Board. The Board is continuing to work on our Land Development Code, which is critical to protecting the small-town charm of Welaka. We appreciate their work and input as we make crucial decisions about

the future of our Town. We are also very excited to announce that the Welaka Charter Review Committee is close to a final draft of the new Welaka Town Charter. The plan is to finalize in September so we can begin public hearings on the new Charter in October. Our goal is to solicit public input so we can complete it and place it on the ballot in March of 2024 for a vote from the residents. This new Charter is critical to the Town's future as it will create a Town Council/Manager form of government where the Town Council will hire a professional manager to oversee daily operations. I realize that for years, the Mayor has managed the operations of the Town; however, with the development we expect to see in South Putnam, we need a full-time professional overseeing the daily operations. The Mayor will still have a role as a Town Council member; however, the Town Manager will handle the day-to-day operations of the Town and report to the Mayor and Town Council.

As I close out this month's newsletter, I want to return to where I started, and that is with Hurricane preparation. The hurricane season runs through November 30th, and September is the most active time of the season. It is critical to ensure that you have plans and act before the storm bears down on you. This includes plenty of medication, canned food and water, and a plan of where you would evacuate, if required. The Town of Welaka has made great strides in ensuring it is prepared; it is also crucial that our residents do the same. Until next month, I hope everyone has a fantastic September. Stay safe, Welaka, and I will talk to you again next month.

Very Best Regards,

Handwritten signature of Jamie D. Watts, Mayor. The signature is in cursive and includes the name "Jamie D. Watts" followed by "MAYOR" in small capital letters.

From The Council President

You may have heard the mention of CRAs at some of our recent town council meetings. Although this was one of the recommendations in the findings of the NEFRC's visioning, it was also discussed prior to that process. 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 a Community Redevelopment Area or District?

Under Florida law (Chapter 163, Part III), local governments are able to designate areas as Community Redevelopment Areas when certain conditions exist. Since all the monies used in financing CRA activities are locally generated, CRAs are not overseen by the state, but redevelopment plans must be consistent with local government comprehensive plans. Examples of conditions that can support the creation of a Community Redevelopment Area include but are not limited to: the presence of substandard or inadequate structures, a shortage of affordable housing, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient roadways, and inadequate parking. To document that the required conditions exist, the local government must survey the proposed redevelopment area and prepare a Finding of Necessity. If the Finding of Necessity determines that the required conditions exist, the local government may create a Community Redevelopment Area to provide the tools needed to foster and support redevelopment of the targeted area.

What is a Community Redevelopment Agency?

The activities and programs offered within a Community Redevelopment Area are administered by the Community Redevelopment Agency. A five- to seven-member CRA "Board" created by the local government (city or county) directs the agency. The Board can be composed of local government officials and other individuals appointed by the local government. Although one local government may establish multiple CRA districts, there generally may be only one CRA Board. Each district must maintain separate trust funds and expend those funds only in that district.

What is a Community Redevelopment Plan?

The Community Redevelopment Agency is responsible for developing and implementing the Community Redevelopment Plan that addresses the unique needs of the targeted area. The plan includes the overall goals for redevelopment in the area, as well as identifying the types of projects planned for the area.

Examples of traditional projects include streetscapes and roadway improvements, building renovations, new building construction, flood control initiatives, water and sewer improvements, parking lots and garages, neighborhood parks,

sidewalks and street tree plantings. The plan can also include redevelopment incentives such as grants and loans for such things as façade improvements, sprinkler system upgrades, signs, and structural improvements. The redevelopment plan is a living document that can be updated to meet the changing needs within the Community Redevelopment Area; however, the boundaries of the area cannot be changed without starting the process from the beginning.

I hope this helps explain what a CRA is and is designed for. More information to come next month!

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



Plant a Live Oak Challenge for Welaka, FL

With so many trees being cut down, we need to plant now! If Welaka comes together, future generations will have the beautiful Live Oaks and the canopies that we all love!

If every resident and business will plant 1 live oak tree, together we will ensure that generations to come will be able to see those beautiful moss-covered trees throughout our town!

Thank You
Councilwoman Tonya Long

How to Plant a Live Oak ~ Please see the link below:

<https://treenewal.com/how-to-plant-a-live-oak-tree-the-ultimate-guide/>



A 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 Town Hall

New ORANGE Registration Stickers are available now at Town Hall

HAPPY LABOR DAY

Your hard work is appreciated!

Cheers
to our
HARDWORKING CITIZENS





PLEASE JOIN US FOR A 9/11 OBSERVANCE

In honor of those we lost and the heroes who rose, we invite you to join us for a special 9/11 observance. On this day of solemn remembrance, we come together as a community to reflect, remember, and honor the enduring spirit of unity that emerged from the ashes of that tragic day.

**WELAKA TOWN HALL
FLAG POLE
9/11/23
10:30 A.M.**



Welaka, FL
River of Lakes

Welcome our new Welaka Police Officer, Tommy Owens!



ATTENTION!

Please stop by the Welaka Town Hall lobby and pick up your hurricane preparedness Red Cross packets during normal business hours.

Monday-Friday 8 AM-12 PM, 1 PM - 5 PM

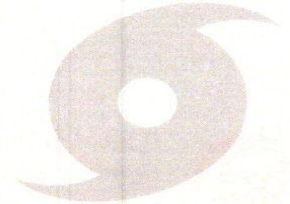


Be **Red Cross** Ready
Prepare so you can protect.

Hurricane

Preparedness Checklist

Hurricanes and tropical storms are rotating storms that form over warm waters. These storms bring high winds, heavy rain, storm surge (rise in water level), flooding and tornadoes. Climate change has caused hurricanes to strengthen faster and bring heavier rainfall. The most common cause of death during a hurricane is from drowning. These storms are dangerous and can damage places far inland. But we can take action to prepare. Prepare now to protect yourself, your loved ones and your home.



What to Do: Before

Make Plans to Stay Safe

Determine your best protection from high winds and flooding. Have a plan to evacuate and a plan to shelter safely.

If advised to evacuate, do so immediately

- You may have to leave your home quickly and go to a safe place.
- Know where you will go, how you will get there and where you will stay.
- Plan well in advance if you will need help leaving or use public transportation.
- Mobile, manufactured, trailer homes and recreational vehicles (RVs) are not safe in high wind events. Plan ahead by preparing to evacuate to a safe location.

Plan to shelter safely

- Be ready to live without power, water, gas, phone and internet for a long time.
- Practice going to a designated safe shelter for high winds. The next best protection is a small room with no windows on the lowest level of a sturdy building that is not likely to flood.
- Be aware that flooding can happen quickly. Have a plan to evacuate fast before floodwaters reach you.
- Create a personal support team of people you may assist and who can assist you.

Plan to stay connected

- Sign up for free emergency alerts from your local government.
- Plan to monitor local weather and news.
- Have a backup battery or a way to charge your cell phone.
- Have a battery-powered radio during a power outage.
- Understand the types of alerts that you may receive and have a plan to respond when you receive them.
 - A WATCH means **Be Prepared!**
 - A WARNING means **Take Action!**

Protect Your Home

Flood

- Clean out drains, gutters and downspouts.
- Stockpile protective materials such as plastic sheeting and sandbags.
- Consider installing a sump pump with battery backup.

- Alerts you may receive include: Hurricane Watch & Warning, Tropical Storm Watch & Warning, Extreme Wind Warning, Storm Surge Watch & Warning, Flash Flood Watch & Warning, Flood Watch & Warning.

Learn emergency skills

- Learn First Aid and CPR.
- Be ready to live without power. Utilities may be offline. Be ready to live without power, gas and water. Plan for your electrical needs, including cell phones and medical equipment. Talk to your doctor. Plan for backup power.

Gather emergency supplies

- Gather food, water and medicine. Stores and pharmacies might be closed. Organize supplies into a Go-Kit and a Stay-at-Home Kit.
- Go-Kit: at least three days of supplies that you can carry with you. Include backup batteries and chargers for your devices (cell phone, CPAP, wheelchair, etc.)
- Stay-at-Home Kit: at least two weeks of supplies.
- Have a 1-month supply of medication in a child-proof container and medical supplies or equipment.
- Keep personal, financial and medical records safe and easy to access (hard copies or securely backed up). Consider keeping a list of your medications and dosages on a small card to carry with you.

Protect Your Home

Wind

- Secure or bring inside outdoor items, such as lawn furniture and trash cans, that could be picked up by high winds and hurt someone.
- Anchor objects that would be unsafe to bring inside, such as gas grills and propane tanks.
- Trim or remove trees close enough to fall on your home.
- Protect windows with permanent storm shutters or sheeting.

- Consider elevating the heating system, water heater and electric panel.
- Review insurance policies with your agency.

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

MAYOR'S OFFICE

Mayor Jamie Watts

(386) 467-9800 ext. 101

Direct: 386-524-4009

JWatts@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA MUNICIPAL SERVICES

Meghan Allmon - Town Clerk

(386) 467-9800 ext. 102

TownClerk@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA TOWN COUNCIL

Council President Jessica Finch

(386) 467-9800, ext. 200

JFinch@welaka-fl.gov

Ellen Dickason - Assistant Town Clerk

(386) 467-9800 ext. 104

EDickason@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Kimberly Dugger

(386) 467-9800, ext. 201

KDugger@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA UTILITY DEPARTMENT

Emma Sledge - Utility Clerk

(386) 467-9800 ext. 103

ESledge@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Tonya Long

(386) 467-9800, ext. 202

TonyaLong@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA AFTER HOURS / EMERGENCY

(386) 467-9800

Councilwoman Kathy Washington

(386) 467-9800, ext. 203

KWashington@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA CODE DEPARTMENT

Pauline Kinney

(386) 530-0336

Codes@welaka-fl.gov

Town Attorney, Patrick Kennedy

TownAttorney@welaka-fl.gov

WELAKA BUILDING DEPARTMENT

Mark Criswell - Universal Building Inspector

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

Building@welaka-fl.gov

Events Committee: events@welaka-fl.gov

Waste Pro: (386) 328-5445

It is our pleasure to serve the Town of Welaka!



September

Welaka, FL
River of Lakes



2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4 Town Hall Closed (Labor Day) Trash & Recycling Pickup	5	6	7 Special-Called Town Council Meeting 1 st Budget Hearing 5:05 PM - Town Hall	8 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting 9:00 AM - Town Hall	9
10	11 Trash & Recycling Pickup 9/11 Observance - 10:30 AM Town Hall Flagpole Events Committee Meeting Town Hall - 5:45 PM	12 Welaka Town Council Meeting 6:00 PM - Town Hall	13	14 Welaka Fire Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Fire Station	15 Meter-Reading Day	16
17	18 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	19 Special-Called Town Council Meeting 2 nd Budget Hearing 5:05 PM - Town Hall	20	21 Zoning Board Meeting 6:00 PM - Town Hall	22	23
24	25 Trash & Recycling Pickup	26 Code Enforcement Board Meeting 6:00 PM - Town Hall	27	28	29	30

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

Thank you!