



Welaka Gazette

June 2023

From The Mayor's Desk

It is June in Welaka, and at the end of the month, we will be officially halfway through 2023; it's hard to believe half the year has flown by. June 1st marks the first day of the Atlantic hurricane season. As of this writing, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration predicts fifteen storms, with seven hurricanes and three major hurricanes. Last hurricane season was bumpy with Welaka being affected by two major storms and Hurricane Ian being the worst. Here are a few facts about Hurricane Ian that you might not have known: it ultimately became a category-five hurricane with its highest winds topping 160 mph. There were 161 fatalities, 13 missing people, and it caused \$113 Billion Dollars in damage. As you can see, Hurricane Ian was powerful, and while we were hit here in Welaka, we were fortunate not to experience the full brunt of the storm. I shared all that with you to educate you as a Town, just how important it is to be prepared for hurricane season.

One critical step you can take right now to prepare for hurricane season is to confirm your nearest shelter location if you have to evacuate. This is important because some residents require special needs when going to a shelter, so it might differ from other shelter accommodations during an emergency. If you are reading this and would require special assistance such as getting to the shelter, perhaps you need an oxygen machine, or have limited mobility, it is critical that you are on the special needs list for Putnam County. The time to prepare is now, not when a storm is days or hours away from striking us. There are two ways you can be put on the list. First, you can visit the <https://snr.flhealthresponse.com/> and register online with the Florida Department of Health. It's very easy and only takes a few minutes to do so. If you don't have internet access, we have you covered; you can stop by Welaka Town Hall and ask for a "Special Needs Registry Personal Survey Form" and we will gladly give you one. Another critical step you can take right now to prepare for hurricane season is to confirm you have adequate medication. During and after a storm, you might be unable to access a pharmacy for some days, so ensuring an adequate supply is essential. These two crucial steps will go a long way in preparing for a storm.

On a Town note, I wanted to update you on where the Town is with grants and other projects. Currently, the Town is managing four important grants. The first two relate to the new Wastewater Treatment Plant. I am excited to say that 30% of the engineering has been completed, and we expect to be breaking ground around the first of the year. We have also hired the engineer for our new auto-read water meter project and expect to be starting that project in about 60 to 90 days. I am excited about our new auto-read water meter system and its advantages to all of our residents. With the new system, we can detect leaks early, eliminating high water bills for our residents.

On a Town front, Police Chief Mikael Porath recently received a grant for the Welaka Police Department that will allow us to purchase two new fully equipped police pick-up trucks. As we build our Police Department, we will need this critical equipment for our new Officers. Regarding new Officers, Chief Porath is continuing to interview Officers for a third full-time law enforcement position; we anticipate having a new Officer very soon. Some have questioned the need for additional officers, but let me share an example from the Memorial Day weekend. By monitoring water and sewer flow, we estimate the population of the Town each day with a great degree of accuracy. On average, the population holds steady at around 720 people throughout the week. This past Memorial Day weekend, the Town's population swelled to 1,050 people. That is an increase of 330 more people in Welaka for the weekend. This increase is not insignificant in a city of 50,000 residents, but in

Welaka, that is a 45% increase in our population! With the rise in people, there is an increase in police services, so it is critical that our Welaka Police Department can meet the needs of our growing community.

Regarding roads and drainage, the Town recently applied for a grant through the Florida Department of Transportation for approximately \$800,000 to pave 4th Avenue. We should hear the results of that grant in the fall. After speaking to FDOT, I am confident that the Town will receive that grant. It is another step toward getting more roads paved in Welaka. We also recently received a grant for \$116,000 to do a Town-wide flood study and plan. This is critical to our future drainage project because issues that are backed up by a comprehensive flood plan are more likely to be funded by the state of Florida.

Finally, on the Town's events front, we are halfway through the Food Truck Friday season, and our events continue to grow. Like last year, we plan to have a fireworks show on Friday, August 4th. Last year, we were able to fund the show entirely with donations and sponsors. It would be greatly appreciated if any resident would like to give something toward the display. Please email our Town Clerk, Meghan Allmon, at townclerk@welaka-fl.gov or give her a call (386) 467-9800, ext. 2, for more information.

As I said earlier, we are almost halfway through 2023, and thus far, we have accomplished so much! Our water and wastewater projects are moving forward. Plans are being made to improve and pave roads. A plan will soon be in place to identify and fund critical drainage projects, and our police department is receiving state and local funding to meet the needs of our growing community and keep us all safe. This was only accomplished with the help of our residents and Town Council, who give their time to serve on our community Boards and Committees, to share their input. When I took office as your Mayor more than two and a half years ago, I stated, "Let's move Welaka forward together!" Folks, that wasn't a catch campaign slogan. That was a deep belief that we could only improve our community by working together, and these past few years have demonstrated how important that has been to our success. The improvements these past few years show just how much you care. So again, I would like to thank all of our Council Members, employees, and our residents for working to better Welaka.

In closing, I want to thank you for the opportunity to continue to serve as your Mayor. These past few years continue to be some of the best experiences of my life. We are doing great things in the Town together, and I look forward to seeing even more accomplished in the coming days, months, and years. Have a great month, everyone, and I look forward to talking to you next month.

Very Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie D. Watts" with "MAYOR" written in small capital letters below the name.

From The Council President

Recently, as I'm sure many of you were saddened to see the vacant lot to the south of Putnam Well Drilling on 309 almost completely cleared. Our Police Chief, Michael Porath, was able to halt the process, but not until after most of the trees were cleared. As it turned out, the person hired to perform the clearing did not have the license needed to work in the Town. Unfortunately, there was not much else that could be done since most of the trees were already down. Our Town Code Enforcement Officer, Pauline Kinney, and Public Works Supervisor, John Stuart, measured the remaining trees and found one heritage tree, which according to Ordinance 2015-2021, would have required a permit to remove. It was next to impossible to measure the ones that had already been cut; the requirements to designate as a heritage tree stipulate that the measurement be taken 4 1/2 feet above the ground.

So how can we keep this from happening again? It appears that we do have an Ordinance in place to prevent at least some of this. Ordinance 2015-2021 requires the retention of 15% of the Canopy trees in all zoning districts, except for Industrial and platted single-family lots. Additionally, there is always the requirement to obtain a permit before removing any Heritage or Champion tree.

With that said, more questions remain:

Are we to rely on property owners to tell us that they have heritage trees and need a permit?

Most of the verbiage in the Ordinance implies that there is a site plan in place or that the owner of the property will submit one. In this most recent case, apparently the owner cut the trees to better market the property. So, with no site plan submitted, how do we regulate?

How will property owners know that this Ordinance exists, and they cannot just clear their property?

It is my hope that in the very near future we will have answers and solutions to some of these issues. Welaka is known for its trees, and we must fight to protect them.

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

TOWN OF WELAKA BOARD & COMMITTEE MEMBER VOLUNTEER APPLICATIONS

If interested, please inquire with the Town Clerk or visit the Town's website main page to apply for the Welaka Code Board, Zoning Board, Charter, Events or the Citizens Advisory Committee.

Website: www.Welaka-fl.gov

E-Mail: TownClerk@welaka-fl.gov

CONGRATULATIONS

TO ALL OF THE
CRESCENT CITY JUNIOR/SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL
& SURROUNDING COMMUNITY
GRADUATES!

The future is yours!



Community Service Recognition

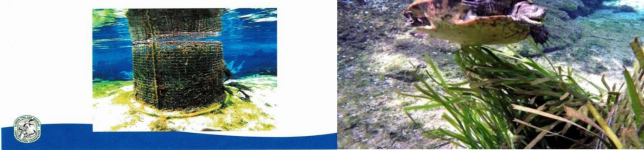
*Desmond J. Anderson (DJ) & Family
from Friends of Welaka*

NO GRASS means mostly NO BASS

It does not need to be that way— fund exclusion fencing

The Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission outfit called the Aquatic Habitat Restoration and Enhancement team— their crew out of Eustis has been busy growing eel grass aka: Vallisneria Americana

Eelgrass Won't Grow Outside Protection



Above: a cage full of 'Val' 's south end of Lake George 2021—chewed off stubble outside
Natures Lawnmowers: turtles, blue crab, and invasive tilapia and ?

Check it out : <https://tinyurl.com/2022Nov8eelgrass> FWCC presentation @ 3:50 min

FENCE OUT NATURES LAWN MOWERS & GRASS GROWS LIKE MAGIC!



March 2022 cage

July 2022 long cage



September cage

On left 'Tallahassee' on right 'St Johns' grass

Fence erected
March 2022; Grass
grew inside fencing;
March 2023 grass
making seeds!

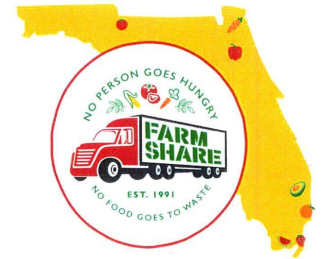
Cages proven Astor to the Shands Bridge.

**"SAVE THE ST JOHNS RIVER"
FUND EXCLUSION FENCING**

1. **CALL Tallahassee: Demand Help
'FIX THE RIVER'**

Sen. Hutson (Putnam Flagler) (850) 487-5007
Senator Davis (Duval) (850) 487-5005
Senator Bradley (Clay) (850) 487-5006
Senator Perry (Marion) (850) 487-5009
Rep Payne (Putnam) (850) 717-5020
Rep Garrison (Clay) (850) 717-5011
Rep Duggan (Clay) (850) 717-5012
Rep Stevenson (St Johns) (850) 717-5018
Rep Renner (Flagler St Johns) (850) 717-5019
Out of my pocket: TimHohere@yahoo.com

FARM SHARE FOOD DISTRIBUTION



HELPING HANDS -
WELAKA

June 8, 2023

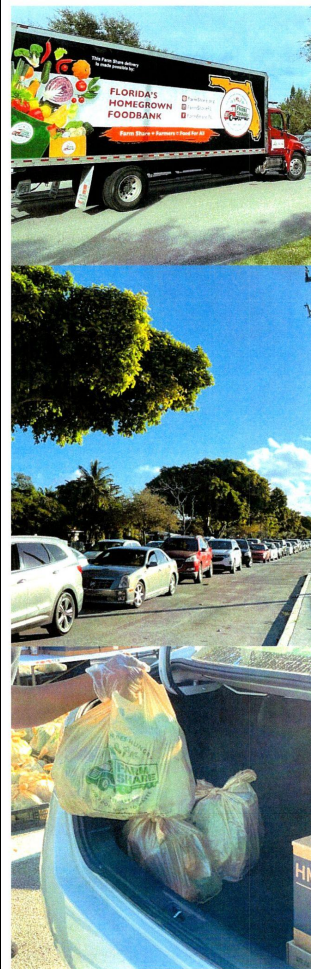
9AM

WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

WELAKA TOWN HALL
400 4TH AVE, WELAKA, FL 32193

Food is first come, first served.

DRIVE-THRU DISTRIBUTION
Farm Share is an equal opportunity provider



Family Fun Day

Fun, Friends & Music

Join the
Volleyball
Game!



Saturday, June 10, 2023
10am - Noon
40 Acre Park
Welaka, FL

Snack and water will be provided.

*There must be at least one adult present with the family. (Please do not drop off children unattended)
**This is a family event, please no alcohol, drugs or profanity.

Sponsored by:

The Church of Welaka
The Way, The Truth, The Life

Monday, June 19

Free UF/IFAS and Master Gardener events

5:00PM – 6:00PM **Master Gardener Plant Clinic**

6:00PM – 7:00PM **Learning Workshop**

10 Native Plants to Attract Pollinators

Welaka Woman's Club
644 Co Rd 309. Welaka

An Equal Opportunity Institution.

UF IFAS Extension
University of Florida

FLORIDA
MASTER
GARDENER
VOLUNTEER

**A REGISTRATION STICKER IS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO DRIVE
YOUR GOLF CART IN WELAKA**

Please bring your Driver's License, Proof of Insurance (with golf cart listed) & \$25.00 to the Town Hall

Fireworks Donations



August 4, 2023 Food Truck Friday River-Front Fireworks Show

- ★ Platinum Sponsors: \$2,500 ★
- ★ Silver Sponsors: \$1,000 ★
- ★ Bronze Sponsors: \$500 ★

★ Resident & Non-Resident Sponsors/Donations Welcome! ★

If anyone wishes to donate, we will be accepting financial support through July 31, 2023!

THANK YOU!

Town Of Welaka invites you to

FOOD truck

Fridays

April 7th May 5th June 2nd
July 7th August 4th
6:00 Pm - 9:00 Pm
Jefferson Smith Park, Welaka

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 Call Center

(386) 467-8677 / TDD: (800) 955-8771

Councilwoman Kathy Washington

(386) 467-9800, ext. 203

kashington@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!



June

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 Food Truck Friday 6 - 9 PM Jefferson Smith Park	2	3
4	5 Trash & Recycling Pickup	6	7	8 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall Farm Share Food Distribution Town Hall Pavilion - 9 AM	9 Town Water Flush Day (May experience low water pressure)	10 Family Fun Day 10 AM – 12 PM Welaka's 40-Acre Park
11 Community Kickball Jefferson Smith Park All Ages Welcome 4:00 PM	12 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	13 Welaka Town Council Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	14	15 Meter-Reading Day Zoning Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	16	17
18	19 Trash & Recycling Pickup Town Hall Closed (Juneteenth Observed) Plant Clinic 5 PM Workshop 6 PM Woman's Club of Welaka	20	21	22	23	24
25	26 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	27 Code Enforcement Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	28	29	30	