



# Welaka Gazette

*February 2023*

## **From The Mayor's Desk**

I'd like to start this Gazette by saying thank you for your faith and trust in me these past twenty-three months. As you have heard by now, I was re-elected as your Mayor for a second term, and I look forward to serving you for the next two years. We have accomplished so much these past two years, but much is still to be done in our beautiful Town of Welaka. In April, I will be traveling to Tallahassee to lobby for our Legislative Appropriation Request to install drainage and paving on the Senator Jim King Trail (2nd Avenue). We are also applying for a Small County Outreach Program Grant this month through the Florida Department of Transportation to complete drainage and pave all of 4th Avenue. This will be the first of many grants and Legislative Appropriations we will be applying for to improve drainage and pave streets in Welaka.

We continue to focus on our water and wastewater system grants to enhance and strengthen our utility. The Town recently completed a Utility Asset Survey of our entire system to help us determine the overall condition of our system and to create a plan to ensure it is maintained for the future. It's interesting to note that part of the survey was to determine the value of our system, which is valued north of twenty million dollars. There are those who, in the past, have suggested that we turn over the Welaka Utility System to a private utility company. I am completely opposed to turning over a twenty million dollar asset of the Town to a private company, and that doesn't even take into account that we would lose our oversight of the system.

In the Gazette this month, you will see information on the upcoming Town Election for Welaka Town Council on March 7, 2023. We have significant decisions to be made in the coming year concerning economic development, infrastructure, the police department, land development, and Town architectural design. I am not endorsing any candidate for office. I believe it is up to the voters of Welaka to make that decision devoid of influence. However, I want to encourage all voters in Welaka to thoroughly educate themselves on the candidates so that they can make an informed decision on who they believe will best represent them. In this Gazette, we have included the names and contact information of all the candidates running for Welaka Town Council. I encourage you to contact them directly and ask questions you feel are important to you in deciding who you wish to support. Friends of Welaka will also be hosting their Third Annual Candidates' Forum on February 8, 2023, at 6:00 PM at the Shrimps R Us & More pavilion in Welaka. During this two-hour forum, residents can write down their questions so that the candidates can be asked to answer. I encourage you to attend. Voting is a sacred right that we are fortunate in this country to have, but with this privilege comes great responsibility. One of those responsibilities is to ensure we are thoroughly educated on each candidate so that we can each individually decide on who we believe will best represent us.

On a Town front, Chief Porath is continuing to do interviews for a third police officer for the Welaka Police Department. We are very excited about having a third officer who can help patrol on nights and weekends in Welaka. When you drive by Welaka Town Hall, you will also notice that the front of the building looks a little different. The Welaka Public Works Department has removed the old hedges in front of Town Hall to open up the area and make our building more visible. They will also be pressure washing and painting the Town Hall, adding new flower beds, and making the building entrance easier to access.

We are also continuing to work with our new Building Inspection Company to make the permitting department more streamlined and user-friendly. We have already moved to next-day permitting on most permits, and new home construction permits within ten days of application. One of the proposals I will make to the Welaka Town Council in our March meeting will be to lower the cost of our permits. While we want to ensure we are covering the cost of issuing building permits, we also want to ensure we are not putting an undue burden on the residents of our Town. The Zoning Board has also started its work with Town Attorney, Patrick Kennedy, on our new Land Development Code that will ensure the Town is in the driver's seat concerning all future development in Welaka. We want to protect the small-town charm of Welaka, and this new code will ensure that we can do just that.

Finally, the Charter Review Committee is busy finishing the first draft of the new Welaka Town Charter, and we expect to have that ready for our residents to review in the coming months. The first step was for the Committee to review the Town Charter of 1947, determine what needed to be changed, and then create a first draft. Next, they will hold public meetings to get input from our residents and answer any questions they might have. It will also be presented to the Welaka Town Council for their input. Lastly, it will be placed on the Ballot in 2024 to be adopted by the Town. This is a big project for the Town, and I encourage you to stay informed of what is happening with our new Charter.

As you can see, we continue to have much to accomplish in our Town. It is only through the help of our residents and volunteers that we have accomplished so much. Thank you again for the faith and trust you have placed in me to be the head of the Town. I look forward to continuing to serve you in the next two years.

*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**

As we are preparing for an election this year, I'd like to remind you of an important upcoming event, it's the Friends of Welaka's Third Annual Candidates' Forum. This year the event will be held on Wednesday, February 8<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 PM and will last approximately two hours. The location will again be at the outdoor pavilion at Shrimps 'R Us. For this election, there are four candidates vying for two seats. Incumbents Marianne Milledge and Tonya Long will face off against Kim Duggar and Sandra Walker.

Each candidate will have three minutes to introduce themselves and give opening remarks. Written questions from the audience for the candidates will be sorted for duplicity and selected randomly. The moderator will read the questions aloud, giving each candidate two minutes to answer. Each candidate will then be given the opportunity to present a three-minute closing statement which should include any rebuttals. If there is time at the end of the session, and all questions have been asked, the audience will be allowed to ask questions from the floor.

As voting is one of our most fundamental and important rights, I hope that you will make plans to attend. An informed decision on the future leadership of the town is crucial.

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](http://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](mailto:TownClerk@welaka-fl.gov)

## A \$25 REGISTRATION STICKER IS REQUIRED IN ORDER TO DRIVE YOUR GOLF CART IN WELAKA

Valid Driver's License, Insurance (with golf cart listed) & \$25.00 (Cash, Check or Money Order)

Join us for our first

### Wine Auction

Spend an evening with friends, wine, hors d'oeuvres and entertainment.

Saturday, February 4  
5:30-7:30  
Woman's Club of Welaka

Entertainment provided by professional concert pianist **Mr. Ron Marlowe**

A wine-themed gift basket will be auctioned at the end of the evening

A donation of \$5 per person is requested; additional donations of two matching bottles of wine are appreciated. Must be 21 years old to attend.

Makers' Market  
at the  
Woman's Club of Welaka

9:00-3:00  
Saturday, February 18

Vendor information  
904-347-7758

Find your heart's desire!

join us for vendors, crafts, food and fun!

Live music provided by Cam Newton

644 CR 309 in Welaka

### Florida Friendly Landscapes, The Plight of Manatees in the St Johns River System

Designing a Florida Friendly Landscape is not just a labor of love to beautify our homes and gardens, it also helps our environment and all those wonderful critters who share it with us! There are many things we can do to create a lovely, sustainable landscape without harming our precious Putnam County natural resources and wildlife. This Learning Workshop shares one example of how water pollution impacts wildlife in our waterways and introduces you to key principles of Florida Friendly Landscaping that can positively impact our environment.

All Learning Workshops will be from 6:00 to 7:00 p.m., preceded by a plant clinic 5:00 to 6:00pm, 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.

#### All Events Are Rain or Shine

#### Dates:

**Thursday, February 2 | 5:00 pm-6:00 pm Plant Clinic | 6:00pm-7:00pm Learning Workshop**  
Interlachen Community Center  
135 S County Road 315, Interlachen, FL 32148

**Thursday, February 16 | 5:00 pm-6:00 pm Plant Clinic | 6:00pm-7:00pm Learning Workshop**  
UF/IFAS Extension Putnam Auditorium  
111 Yelvington Road, East Palatka, FL 32131

**Monday, February 20 | 5:00 pm-6:00 pm Plant Clinic | 6:00pm-7:00pm Learning Workshop**  
Welaka Women's Club  
644 County Road 309, Welaka, FL 32193

**Tuesday, February 21 | 5:00 pm-6:00 pm Plant Clinic | 6:00pm-7:00pm Learning Workshop**  
Bostwick Community Center  
1252 Tillman Street, Palatka, FL 32177

**For More Information:**  
[pjulio@ufl.edu](mailto:pjulio@ufl.edu) or call 386-329-0318

# Family Fun Day



Bull whip Competition  
Instructions provided.

Bring your family and have an afternoon packed full of Fun, Friends, Music &

**CAVES**



Saturday, Feb 25, 2023  
1 - 4 pm  
40 Acre Park

Bring a picnic lunch.

Desert and drinks 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 or drugs.

Sponsored by:

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

**FAMILY MOVIE NIGHT AT THE PARK**

Showing: **Friday, February 24, 2023**  
**RIO**  
**Free Hotdogs, Free Popcorn**

Hosted by:  
Town of Welaka Police Department & Friends of Welaka

Jefferson Smith Park,  
1050 Elm Street, Welaka FL 32193

Movie will begin at 6:45pm. Be sure to bring chairs and blankets!  
Please note: No alcohol is permitted in the park.

Made with PosterMyWall.com

**GFWC WOMAN'S CLUB OF WELAKA, INC.**  
644 County Road 309 P. O. Box 154 Welaka, FL 32193  
Dec @ 386-546-2754 or Carol 904-347-7758



## 10th Annual Golf Tournament

### The Oaks Golf Club

Saturday, March 4, 2023

Registration 8:00 am - Tee Off 9:00am  
Rain out date Saturday, March 11, 2023

Scramble - Captain's Choice 1<sup>st</sup> \$200 & 2<sup>nd</sup> \$100  
Closest to the Hole - Men and Ladies \$25 each & one Random Drawing  
Club Member \$40 Non-Club \$50

We need Players, Sponsors, and Gift Certificates.

We need your help to make this the biggest success ever.

**Pick up a Form:** The Oaks Golf Club, Woman's Club on Tuesday.

**Forms returned by or before February 18<sup>th</sup> Receives \$2 free Raffle Tickets**

Immediately following the Tournament, enjoy a complimentary luncheon at the Oaks Club prepared by Welaka Woman's Club and get results of all Winners, Raffle Prizes and 50/50.

**A portion of proceeds will be donated to the Crescent City High School Band**

Organized 1959  
MEMBER

General Federation of Women's Clubs International  
GFWC Florida Federation of Women's Clubs

GFWC Welaka Letterhead 2014-16

Come play

**Bunco**

at the Woman's Club of Welaka

Saturday, February 25  
3:00-5:00 p.m.

Light snacks provided  
BYOB

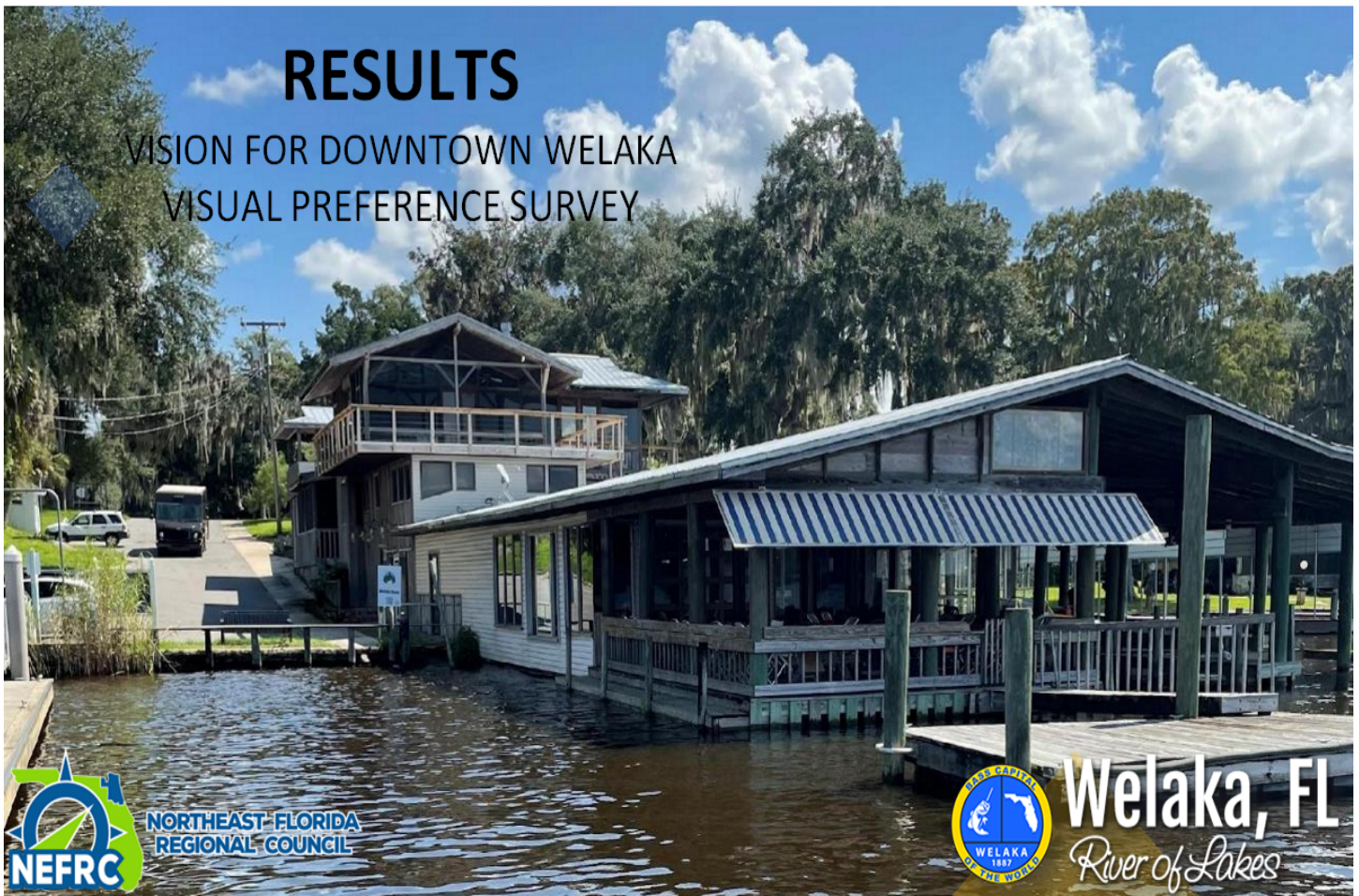
\$5 donation per player  
Must be 21 to play

Hope you can join us!

**Welaka residents are encouraged to participate in the Downtown Visionary Workshop(s) hosted by the NEFRC.**

*Please feel free to email the Town Clerk your request for this 24-Page Slideshow Visual Preference Survey, or stop by the Welaka Town Hall to pick up a copy of the printed presentation. They will be located in the lobby on the table.*

**The future dates for Meetings will be posted so please watch our Town of Welaka Facebook Page, our Website, [www.welaka-fl.gov](http://www.welaka-fl.gov), and our Town Calendar.**



# **IMPORTANT ELECTION DATES, TIMES & INFORMATION**

**Public Notice:** If you requested a vote-by-mail ballot to be sent to you before January 1, 2023, you will need to contact the Putnam County Supervisor of Elections Office at (386) 329-0224 to request one for the March 7, 2023 Welaka Town Election. February 25, 2023, by 5:00 PM, is the last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot from the Supervisor of Elections. Due to the recent change in election laws, the vote-by-mail ballot will not automatically be sent to you. You must call and request it.

**January 26, 2023, through February 2, 2023:** Vote-by-mail ballots will be mailed out.

**February 3, 2023:** First-day voters can go to the Putnam County Supervisor of Elections Office and vote in person.

**February 6, 2023:** Last day voters can register to vote in the March 7, 2023 Welaka Town Election.

**February 14, 2023 at 1:30 PM:** Logic and Accuracy Testing for the voting equipment. This will be held at the Putnam County Supervisor of Elections Office at 2509 Crill Ave Suite 900, Palatka, FL 32177. This meeting is open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

**February 25, 2023:** Last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot from the Supervisor of Elections. Voters can call (386) 329-0224 to make the request.

**February 26, 2023:** First day a family member or friend can pick up a ballot for someone else from the Supervisor of Elections Office. A ballot can only be picked up for someone else if the voter signs a letter authorizing someone to pick it up for them and they provide a valid ID. Please contact the Putnam County Supervisor of Elections at (386) 329-0224 for more information.

**March 7, 2023 from 7:00 AM to 7:00 PM:** Election day. The polling location is The Church of Welaka, located at 638 3rd Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193.

**March 7, 2023 at 7:30 PM:** Welaka Canvassing Committee will convene at the Welaka Town Hall, located at 400 4th Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193, to canvas the election and report the results. This meeting is open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

**March 10, 2023 at 1:30 PM:** Welaka Canvassing Committee will convene at the Putnam County Supervisor of Elections Office at 2509 Crill Avenue, Suite 900, Palatka, FL 32177, to finalize the election and officially certify the results. This meeting is open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

**March 10, 2023 at 7:00 PM:** Welaka Town Council will convene to swear in the two Councilmembers elected along with the Mayor. This meeting is open to the public, and residents are encouraged to attend.

## **WELAKA TOWN COUNCIL CANDIDATES for MARCH 7, 2023 ELECTION**

(Candidates numbered in alphabetical order)

**1. Candidate Name: Kim Dugger**

**Party: Non-Partisan**

**Address: 289 Maxwell Drive, Welaka, FL 32193**

**Email: welakastrong2023@gmail.com**

**Phone: (304) 477-5567**

**3. Candidate Name: Marianne Milledge**

**Party: Non-Partisan**

**Address: 239 Oak Ridge Drive, Welaka, FL 32193**

**Email: mspeas@bellsouth.net**

**Phone: (386) 467-8883**

**2. Candidate Name: Tonya F. Long**

**Party: Non-Partisan**

**Address: 711 1st Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193**

**Email: tflmini@gmail.com**

**Phone: (757) 291-5420**

**4. Candidate Name: Sandra M. Walker**

**Party: Non-Partisan**

**Address: 724 Shell Street, Welaka, FL 32193**

**Email: flasand67@gmail.com**

**Phone: (386) 559-0122**

# TOWN OF WELAKA CONTACT LIST

## Welaka Police Department

Michael Porath - Police Chief  
Direct Line: (386) 524-4015  
Town Hall Extension: 107  
[mporath@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:mporath@welaka-fl.gov)

## Welaka Municipal Services

Meghan Allmon - Town Clerk  
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 102  
[townclerk@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:townclerk@welaka-fl.gov)

Ellen Dickason - Assistant Town Clerk  
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 104  
[edickason@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:edickason@welaka-fl.gov)

## Welaka Utility Department

Emma Sledge - Utility Clerk  
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 103  
[esledge@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:esledge@welaka-fl.gov)

## Welaka AFTER HOURS Call Center

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

## Welaka Code Enforcement Department

Pauline Kinney (386) 530-0336  
[codes@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:codes@welaka-fl.gov)

## Welaka Building Department

Mark Criswell - Universal Building Inspector  
(386) 334-6593  
[building@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:building@welaka-fl.gov)

## Mayor's Office

Mayor Jamie Watts  
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 101  
Direct: 386-524-4009  
[jwatts@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:jwatts@welaka-fl.gov)

## Welaka Town Council

**Council President Jessica Finch**  
(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 2)  
Town Hall Extension: 200  
[jfinch@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:jfinch@welaka-fl.gov)

**Councilwoman Marianne Milledge**  
(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 3)  
Town Hall Extension: 201  
[mmilledge@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:mmilledge@welaka-fl.gov)

**Councilwoman Tonya Long**  
(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 4)  
Town Hall Extension: 202  
[tonyalong@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:tonyalong@welaka-fl.gov)

**Councilwoman Kathy Washington**  
(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 5)  
Town Hall Extension: 203  
[kwashington@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:kwashington@welaka-fl.gov)

**Town Attorney, Patrick Kennedy**  
[TownAttorney@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:TownAttorney@welaka-fl.gov)

**Waste Pro:** (386) 328-5445

### **HELP WELAKA SAVE TIME & MONEY GO PAPERLESS**

Please let us know if you'd like to receive your Utility Bill via e-mail and not mailed.

Call or email us or notate on your bill-stub.

Emma Sledge, Utility Clerk  
[esledge@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:esledge@welaka-fl.gov)  
(386) 467-9800, Ext. 103 or Option # 3

### **PAY YOUR BILL ONLINE USE YOUR CREDIT / DEBIT CARDS OR BANK ACCOUNT**

Visit [www.WelakaWater.com](http://www.WelakaWater.com) to set up your payments for single monthly or auto-pay monthly submission.

### **LATE PAYMENTS OR PAST DUE BALANCES ACTIVE**

Bringing the Town current with past due balances, assessing late fees, cut-off notices and administering door-hangers are no longer a thing of the past.

**ALWAYS REMEMBER TO PUT YOUR FULL ACCOUNT NUMBER ON  
YOUR CHECK OR MONEY ORDER PAYMENT PLEASE.**

*THANK YOU!*

# February

# 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 <b>Wine Auction</b> 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM Welaka Woman's Club
5	6 <b>Trash, Recycling &amp; Yard Debris Pickup</b>	7	8 <b>Annual Candidate's Forum</b> 6:00 PM Shrimp R Us & More Pavilion	9	10 <b>Citizens Advisory Board Meeting</b> 9:00 AM Welaka Town Hall <b>Town Water Flush Day</b> (May experience low water pressure)	11
12	13 <b>Friends of Welaka Meeting</b> 9:00 AM Town Hall Pavilion <b>Events Committee Meeting</b> 5:45 PM Town Hall Pavilion <b>Trash &amp; Recycling Pickup</b>	14 <b>Welaka Town Council Meeting</b> 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	15 <b>Meter-Reading Day</b>	16 <b>Zoning Board Meeting</b> 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	17	18 <b>Makers' Market</b> 9 AM - 3 PM Welaka Woman's Club <b>Black History Month Lunch</b> 10 AM - 2 PM Welaka's Helping Hands Jefferson Smith Park
19	20 <b>Trash, Recycling &amp; Yard Debris Pickup</b> <b>Plant Clinic &amp; Workshop</b> 5 PM - 7 PM Welaka Woman's Club	21	22 <b>Charter Review Committee Meeting</b> 5:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	23	24 <b>Farm Share Food Distribution</b> 9:00 AM Town Hall Pavilion <b>Family Movie Night</b> Jefferson Smith Park 5:30 PM - 9 PM	25 <b>BUNCO</b> 3 PM - 5 PM Welaka Woman's Club <b>Family Fun Day</b> 1 PM - 4 PM Welaka's 40-Acre Park
26	27 <b>Trash &amp; Recycling Pickup</b>	28 <b>Code Enforcement Board Meeting</b> 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall				