



Welaka Gazette

May 2021

Our New Town Newsletter

I am pleased to say that we received really good feedback from our residents on the look and feel of our Town newsletter. Each month we will be adding new information to it to keep you the residents informed about your government. We will also be featuring a Town Calendar of Events in next months newsletter so if you have a community event you would like added to our June's newsletter and Calendar please contact our Deputy Town Clerk Rhonda Walsh at rwalsh@welaka-fl.gov and give her the date, location and event and we will be happy to add it. Submissions must be made by the 25th of each month to be placed in the following month's newsletter.

From The Mayor's Desk

As I sit here today writing to you, it has been just 56 days since I raised my right hand and took my oath of office to be your new Mayor, and I have to say that the experience has been amazing. We have a fantastic Town Council that focuses on the Town's best interests and moving us forward. Thus far, it has been a privilege to work with a fantastic group of people who share a collective interest in prospering the Town. It definitely makes my job as Mayor a little easier when I have a group of people willing to work with me.

The month of April was a busy month. First, we hired a new Town Attorney, Mr. Patrick Kennedy. My Kennedy has been a long-time resident of Putnam County and this area. He has worked both in Putnam County Government and several years ago for the City of Crescent City. He brings both a knowledge of the Law and a unique perspective being in previous governmental roles. I have negotiated a contract with Mr. Kennedy that the Welaka Town Council recently approved, giving us a flat rate each month instead of being billed by the hour. This is vital because we are updating the Town Ordinances, Charter, and codes, and zoning. The amount of work is daunting, and if we were to be instead billed by the hour for his services, it could easily double or triple the rate he is charging us.

This brings me to my next point, and that is our Town Ordinances. We have approximately 50 Town Ordinances. Many of which have not been updated since the 1960s and need significant work. At our next regularly scheduled Council Meeting on May 11th, we will discuss the ordinances and assign each Councilmember one ordinance to work on individually with the assistance of our Town Attorney. This will allow the Town Council to cover more ground and get our ordinances up to date more quickly.

We, the Town Council, also have a significant decision to make in the coming weeks concerning the appointment of a new Town Councilmember to replace the vacancy left on the Council by the passing of Councilman Washington. On May 6, 2021, at 5:30 PM, the Welaka Town Council will be holding a special called Council Meeting at Welaka Town Hall located at 400 4th Ave. Welaka, Fl. 32193 to interview prospective candidates for the position. As your Mayor, I implore you to please come out that night and join us for that meeting as we are planning to make a selection that night to fill that position. This is your Town Government. I encourage you to be a part of it by being at that meeting.

On a community note, we also have some exciting things happening in River Hill Subdivision, located just above Welaka Villages on CR308B. Right now, we have nine new homes under construction in the subdivision and nine new permits being pulled for a total of eighteen new homes to be added to the Town of Welaka in the next 12 months. These are exciting times for Welaka. We see healthy growth that will benefit our community and expand our tax base. I am also pleased to say that Welaka Town Council has approved me to plan a 4th of July parade for the Town. We plan to have a parade and a community event similar to Welaka SpringFest but located at Downtown Park. Right now, the planning is still early on. I will be releasing more on our Town Facebook Page and Website and will have all the dates and list events scheduled for that day in the Junes Newsletter.

In closing, I want to thank you again for the trust you have placed in me to be your Mayor. I take my responsibility very seriously and will continue to work hard every day to make sure Welaka is a little bit better than it was the day before.

Respectively Submitted

Mayor Jamie D. Watts

From Our Council President

This month the Welaka Town Council will be tasked with several important decisions. One of the first will be to fill our late fellow Councilman's seat. Willie Washington was an icon in our Town. His wisdom and dedication to Welaka will be remembered with great regard. Much thought and consideration will be given to this. Our goal is to honor his legacy by finding a qualified, talented individual who will bring the same dedication to the position.

In addition to this momentous decision, we will also begin the work of updating many of our Town Ordinances, some of which have not been updated in decades. Much conversation has centered around our noise ordinance and our golf cart ordinance. If you have attended any of the recent Council Meetings you might have heard some of the issues that residents have brought to our attention. We will certainly be addressing these and will want your input. These are, however, just a couple of ordinances that will need our attention. Others, such as our animal control ordinance and our tree replacement ordinance, are up for consideration as well. In fact, our Mayor has highlighted over ten that he considers priorities. This is where you come in. As Mayor Watts has said, we, as your Council, will need your ideas and thoughts. Our job is to serve your needs and represent

you all in the decisions that we make. I speak for all of us when I say, we are both humbled and proud that you have put your trust in us.

In Your Service,

Jessica Finch

Welaka Town Council President

Utility Updates

The Town of Welaka would like you to be mindful of what you send down your drains. We currently process about twenty-four million gallons of sewer water a year, and you would be shocked at the items we see end up in our sewer system. Everything from bullets to toys to clothing has ended up in sewer systems across America through the years. The items clog pipes, damage equipment resulting in higher bills for everyone. Remember the general rule that if it's not water and you would eat it, you probably shouldn't send it down your drain or out of your toilet. Please join us in doing your part to care for our Utility System.

Our Community



We wish to thank Nicole from Keep Putnam Beautiful for leading the Town Wide Clean Up of Welaka on Saturday, April 10th. We had a fantastic turnout of over 50 Town residents and local volunteers. It was so good to see our residents taking part in bettering our Town. We look forward to additional service opportunities with Keep Putnam Beautiful in the future.

COVID 19 Vaccine Drive

On Thursday, April 22nd, the Town of Welaka, in cooperation with the Florida Department of Emergency Management and the Putnam County Health Department, hosted the first COVID 19 mobile vaccination drive in Putnam County. We are pleased to say that over 35 residents of the Town and the area came out that day to get vaccinated. The Florida Department of Emergency Management even worked with us and went to several homes in the area to administer the vaccine to residents who are home-bound. We will be holding a second mobile vaccination drive at Welaka Town Hall on May 6th from 9:00 AM to 6:00 PM. There is no cost for the vaccination, and you do not have to be a resident of the Town of Welaka to get a vaccine. Please come out that day and do your part to slow the spread of COVID 19.



Monthly Town Meetings

All meetings are at Welaka Town Hall

Located at 400 4th Ave. Welaka, Fl. 32193

May 11, 2021

Zoning Board Meeting 5:30 PM

Code Enforcement Meeting 5:45 PM

Town Council Meeting 6:30 PM

All three will be live streamed on our Town of Welaka Facebook Page

Special Called Council Meeting May 7, 2021 5:30 PM (To select a candidate to fill the vacancy left after the passing of Councilman Willie Washington)

May Meter Reading

Will be reading water meters May 17th. If you have any issues with your water or sewer remember the Town Utility Department is available 24 hours a day at (386) 467-8677 or TDD (800) 955-8771. We ask you to please do your part in conserving water.

Garbage Pickup

Garbage and Recycling pick up will be May the 3rd, 10th, 17th, 24th and June 1st. Yard debris pick up will be May the 3rd, 17th and June 1st. Please remember to call Waste Pro at (386) 328-5445 if you have any issues with your garbage, yard debris or recycling pick up.

Pay Your Water Bill Online

You can now pay your water bill online using our Online Utility Bill pay system. To get started go to www.welakawater.com and create your account. In your account you can track your monthly water usage and even set up your account for auto pay so you never have to worry about a late charge again. If you need assistance setting up your account online please call our Utility Department at (386) 467-9800 option 4. You can also drop your payment by Town Hall anytime using our Utility Payment drop box located to the right of the front door of Town Hall.

April's Recognitions and Proclamations

In April, we did not have recognition or proclamations. 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 a turning 100 years old, please contact our Town Clerk Jennifer McDaniel at (386) 467-9800 or by email at jennifermcdaniel@welaka-fl.gov. We will be happy to recognize them at our next Council Meeting by public recognition.

Are You A Veteran Or Do You Know One In Welaka

It is important to honor our United States Military servicemen and servicewoman's sacrifice to our Country. To do this, we would like to invite a resident of the Town of Welaka who is or has, in the past, honorably served in our military to come out to our monthly Council Meeting and lead us in our pledge of allegiance. We ask you for your help in identifying these brave men and women who live in our Town. If you have yourself served or know of someone in our Town, please contact our Deputy Town Clerk Rhonda Walsh at (386) 467-9800 or email her at rwalsh@welaka-fl.gov so we can add them to our list. We would even like to feature them in our newsletter if they allow us to do so.

A Moment In History



Last month we briefly shared with you the history of the Bryant family who founded the Town of Welaka. We also shared the part of Octavia (Tivie) Bryant Stephens, the daughter of James Bryant, the founder of our Town. In the picture, you see Octavia's daughter Rosalie on the right side of her. We recently visited Greenwood Cemetery in Welaka and found the graves of both Octavia and Rosalie. Octavia suffered many heartaches during her time in Welaka, including the death of her husband and mother just a few days apart. I will leave you with an expert from Octavia's diary.

On Sunday, February 28, 1864, dear Mother was taken with a congestive chill. On Friday, March 4, 1864, Davis [her brother] came with the news of the death of my dear, dear husband. He was killed in battle near Jacksonville on March 1. Mother grew worse, and on Sunday, March 6, she was taken from us between 12 and 1 o'clock. She passed quietly away from Typhoid Pneumonia). At seven o'clock p.m. I gave birth to a dear little baby boy, which although three or four weeks before the time, the Lord still spared to me. Mother was buried on the 7th, and Rosa [her daughter] was taken with fever but recovered after two days. Davis returned to Lake City on the 10th, and Willie [her oldest brother] arrived here on the 12th, and he and Henry [a third brother] left today for Monticello, Willie going to



Lake City to see Davis, expects to return in a few days, our relatives and new-made friends have been kind in visiting, Aunt Julia has devoted nearly her whole time to us since the first day of Mother's sickness.

I have named my baby Winston, the sweet name of that dear lost one, my husband, almost my life. God grant that his son, whom he longed for but was not spared to see, maybe like him. I now begin as it were a new life. I pray that the Lord will give me strength to bear up under this great affliction, and with His help and the example of those two dear ones [her husband and second daughter

who died soon after birth] now with Him I may be enabled to do my duty in this life and be prepared when the Lord calls me to meet them in that "better world" where there will be no parting and no more sorrow.
we call home.

Join Us On Facebook

We are pleased to say we are now broadcasting all of our Town of Welaka meetings on Facebook so you can attend our meeting even if you cannot come in person. By June 1st, we will also be broadcasting them on Youtube for those who do not have Facebook. I encourage you to watch our Town meeting to help stay up to date on what is happening in our Town. Broadcasting our meeting is just one way to keep you involved in our government and maintain transparency in everything we do. Just go to Facebook and search for Town of Welaka and be sure to like our page to be kept up to date on all the great things happening in our Town.

COVID 19 Vaccine Clinic At Welaka Town Hall



In cooperation with the Florida Division of Emergency Management, the Town of Welaka will be hosting a mobile vaccine clinic at Welaka Town Hall to administer the Moderna COVID 19 Vaccine. It is available to those who are 18 years of age and older and is free of charge. You do not have to be a resident of Welaka to receive a vaccine.

Where:

**Welaka Town Hall
400 4th Ave. Welaka, Fl. 32193.**

When:

**Thursday, May 6, 2021
9:00 AM to 6:00 PM**