



Welaka Gazette

August 2022

From The Mayor's Desk

We are now in August; wow, where has the year gone? We were starting the new year, and here we are, racing toward the holiday season. I am pleased to share with you some great news. On July 14th, the Town of Welaka was awarded \$3.5 Million Dollars in a Job Growth Infrastructure Grant. This grant was given to us by Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity to complete the new advanced wastewater treatment plant, now taking us to \$13.5 Million Dollars. We even had the pleasure of receiving the check in person, from Governor Ron Desantis, himself. What an honor it was! With this funding, we will be able to build an advanced wastewater treatment facility and a state-of-the-art operation center to support it. These two grants were specifically designed to fund wastewater infrastructure projects. Some have asked me if the money can be used for other purposes, and unfortunately, it cannot. I realize that a new wastewater treatment plant might not sound glamorous, but it is a critical part of the operation of the Town. Our current plant is approximately thirty-seven years old, and the average life expectancy of a wastewater plant is forty years. If the plant were to fail, you would be unable to cook, wash clothes, bathe, or even flush your toilet. If this were to happen, it would make your home uninhabitable. I hope this clarifies just how critical this project is to the Town. Also, if the grant money had not been received, the Town would have been forced to take out a \$13.5 Million Dollar loan resulting in you having to pay massively higher water bills. We are very fortunate to have this project fully funded by grant money. We also recently applied for a Community Development Block Grant for Six Hundred Thousand Dollars to install an automated water meter reading system and do some upgrades to one of our critical lift stations. Finally, we are also looking at a third grant to improve the wastewater collection system in the Town. I will announce that grant next month, and what we propose will be huge news.

On the Public Works front, we continue to place new millings on the streets in Welaka. The project was slowed down due to finding a constant supply of millings for the roads. I am happy to say that the problem has been solved, and we are starting the project again. Also, on a road front, I am talking to our State Representative Bobby Payne about possibly getting a legislative appropriation to pave 2nd Avenue. The importance of this road is because it is the Senator Jim King Trail, so there could be funding to pave that street in honor of him since he served as the Florida Senate President. I am in the process of getting a cost estimate from an engineering firm that will be needed to submit the legislative appropriation. The next step would be to go to Tallahassee during the Legislative Session next March, and lobby the Florida Legislature and Governor to support the project. In the meantime, we are also talking to the engineers about other streets in the Town and what it will take with drainage and paving to complete other roads. I plan to seek grants from the Florida Department of

Transportation when the next grant cycle opens up, along with other funding agencies to help supplement the Town's funds; as I said before, the new millings are only a short-term fix as we seek grants to pave streets. We will find the funds to pave all of our roads. Your Welaka Town Council is committed to it, and I am also committed to it.

On the Welaka Police Department front, we are pleased with how hard our new Police Officer, Todd Bryant, and our Chief of Police, Mike Porath, are working to keep our Town safe. We have increased patrols in the Town and are continuing to stop those who are speeding through our streets. While we do not want to get a reputation as a speed trap, it is vital to send the message that the laws in Welaka will be enforced. We will continue to support the Police Department with the funding they need to run a safe and effective Police Department. We also appreciate our Chief's work applying for grants for new police vehicles, equipment, and camera systems. These items are huge expenses for a Town our size, and our Chief has been able to get brand new, fully equipped police cruisers and new camera systems in our parks without placing that burden on our taxpayers.

On an events front, we are very excited about our last Food Truck Friday of the year, August 5th, starting at 5:30 at Jefferson Smith Park. We will feature a dozen Food Trucks. Everything from German food to seafood to barbecue, so there is most certainly something to fit your appetite. We will have a dunking booth with our local elected officials and Town residents volunteering to be dunked to raise money for the South Putnam Lions Club. DJ Doctor Doom from IHeart Radio will play your favorite music all evening as we host Welaka's first-ever foam party. Around 8:30 PM, we will move to the riverfront in Welaka around Bryant's Wharf as we put on Welaka's First Town-Hosted Fireworks Display on the St. Johns River. This will undoubtedly be the biggest event the Town of Welaka has ever put on, and we hope you and your family will join us! We are also excited about our second annual Spooky Halloween Golf Cart Parade and Candy Giveaway that will be held on Sunday, October 30th. Also, plans will be underway very soon to prepare for our Annual Christmas Parade and Festival on Saturday, December 10th. Be sure to mark your calendar; you won't want to miss any of the events!

On a planning front, we are still planning to hold a Workshop for our Parks Ordinance and the Jim King Park in Sportsman Harbor. Unfortunately, we have had several staff members out sick, so we will schedule the Workshops as soon as everyone feels better. We are in budget season and have a budget meeting already scheduled for September 8th at 5:05 PM. By Florida Law, we are required to hold a meeting between September 3rd and September 18th, so we will have to work around this meeting dates. We have a lot we are trying to accomplish right now in the Town, and at times, it seems like there are not enough hours in the day, but I can assure you that we are making these items a priority. I am also pleased to announce that the Charter Review Committee has finished its preliminary draft of the new Welaka Town Charter. We will also be sending a copy to our Town Attorney so he can begin his legal review of the new Charter. Right now, we have a few matters to work through with the Putnam County Supervisor of Elections concerning Town elections and how they are addressed in the new Town Charter. We will then hold a series of workshops in 2023 to allow you, the residents, to ask questions and give us input. Right now, the plan is to place it on the 2024 election ballot, so the residents of the Town of Welaka can vote on its adoption.

As always, we have a lot that we are continuing to try to accomplish in the Town of Welaka, and I appreciate your patience as we continue to work together to move Welaka forward. My goal is to move

as quickly as possible while still moving slowly enough to be sure we are making the right decisions and continuing to get input from our residents. As always, it continues to be an honor and a privilege to serve as your Mayor. 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

More accessibility and more transparency. These are two things of utmost importance in local government, in fact at any level of government. These are two items that the Citizens Advisory Committee are considering when making recommendations to the Town Council. We have been approached by several local residents asking for these to be improved.

Some ideas that are being considered include a digital signboard located on Elm Street outside of the town hall with notifications being posted there. We have also spoken about email notifications of specially called meetings as well as cancellations of meetings. Although the Town is a big proponent of Facebook and website updates, it is clear by listening to our residents that those are not enough.

While these ideas are being actively pursued, I want to specifically encourage you to contact our board, with ideas, concerns, suggestions and the like. I have listed each Citizens Advisory Committee contact below.

Michael Anthony: welakalanding@gmail.com

Jessica Finch: jfinch@welaka-fl.gov

John Karichkowsky: jwkski@gmail.com

Isaiah Mills: isaiah.mills@comcast.net

Pam Olson: pam@ddsc.biz

Scott Turnbull: robert_turnbull@aol.com

The Citizens Advisory Committee also plans on having a “town hall style” meeting in the near future; details will be forthcoming. Please consider attending to make your voice heard.

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 or make a Codes Enforcement Complaint?
Report online at **www.TellTownHall.com**



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**





We are excited to welcome Officer Todd Bryant to the Welaka Police Department. Officer Bryant has been here since July 5th and is receiving a warm welcome from the Town. We are increasing our speed

patrol in the Town. We aren't turning into a speed trap, but we will be taking steps to ensure people are watching their speed in our Town. We appreciate Chief Porath and Officer Bryant's dedication to the Town and the Police Department. Community policing, where the residents know their law enforcement and the law enforcement knows their residents, is the most effective way to protect our community and keep us safe. We are excited to be a shining example of what that looks like in South Putnam.

HELPING HANDS OF WELAKA PRESENTS:

FUNDAY

SATURDAY AUGUST 6TH

JEFFERSON-SMITH BALLPARK

12 NOON-3 P.M.



MUST BE A WELAKA RESIDENT; PLEASE BRING PROOF OF RESIDENCY!!

CHILD MUST BE PRESENT TO RECEIVE A BACKPACK!!

EVERYTHING IS FREE!!

SUPPLIES DONATED BY: COMMUNITY MEMBERS, WELAKA BUSINESSES & ORGANIZATIONS



**FLORIDA 2022 PRIMARY ELECTION
PUTNAM COUNTY**

Last day to request a vote-by-mail ballot: Saturday, Aug 13th by 5pm local time

Early Voting: Monday, August 8, 2022 to Saturday, August 20, 2022 8:30 AM until 5:30 PM every day

3 Locations:

- Elections Office: 2509 Crill Ave, Suite 900, Palatka
- Interlachen Community Center: 135 S. County Rd. 315, Interlachen
- South Putnam Government Complex: 115 N. Summit St, Crescent City

2022 Primary Election Day: August 23, 2022 7:00 AM until 7:00 PM. You can cast a ballot after 7:00 PM if you are in line before 7:00.

How do I return a Vote-by-Mail (formerly absentee) ballot?

Mark your ballot at home, then mail it back or drop it off at the Elections Office 2509 Crill Ave. Suite 900 Palatka. Vote-by-Mail ballots must be in our office no later than 7 PM on Election Day. You can check your Vote-by-Mail ballot status at any time at soe.putnam-fl.gov/voters/vote-by-mail

What are the ID requirements for in person voting?

You will be asked to provide current, valid photo and signature ID to vote in person.

Any one of the following photo IDs will be accepted:

- Florida driver's license
- Florida identification card issued by the Department of Highway Safety and Motor Vehicles
- United States passport
- Debit or credit card
- Military identification
- Student identification
- Retirement center identification
- Neighborhood association identification
- Public assistance identification
- Veteran health identification card issued by the United States Department of Veteran Affairs
- License to carry a concealed weapon or firearm issued pursuant to s.790.06
- Employee identification card issued by any branch, department, agency, or entity of the Federal Government, the state, a county, or a municipality.

It is acceptable for you to provide a photo ID and a signature ID (e.g., a student ID with your photo and a credit card with your signature).

If you are unable to provide proper ID, you can still vote a provisional ballot. As long as you are eligible and voted in the proper precinct, your provisional ballot will count provided the signature on the provisional ballot voter's certificate and affirmation matches the signature on your registration record.



It's not about the needle. It's about the need.

One pint of blood saves three lives.

Give local. Save local.

Welaka Town Hall Blood Drive

Thursday, August 11

10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

1 Donor will win a \$50 Winn Dixie Gift Card!

Donate Platelets, Plasma, or Double Reds receive a \$20 eGift Card!

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 photo I.D. 16-year-olds require written parental permission.



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

Welaka Municipal Services

Meghan Allmon - Town Clerk

Direct Line: (386) 524-4010

Town Hall Extension: 102

townclerk@welaka-fl.gov

Welaka Utility Department

Kendrea Welch - Utility Clerk

Direct Line: (386) 524-4016

Town Hall Extension: 103

utility@welaka-fl.gov

Welaka Building Department

Justin Morris - Building Inspector

Direct Line: (386) 524-4013

Town Hall Extension: 105

building@welaka-fl.gov

Waste Pro: (386) 328-5445

Mayor's Office

Mayor Jamie Watts

(386) 467-9800 Extension: 101

Direct: 386-524-4009

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

Councilwoman Marianne Milledge

(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 3)

Town Hall Extension: 201

mmilledge@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Tonya Long

(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 4)

Town Hall Extension: 202

tonyalong@welaka-fl.gov

Councilwoman Kathy Washington

(386) 467-9800 (Option 7, Option 5)

Town Hall Extension: 203

kwashington@welaka-fl.gov



Town Awarded \$3.5 Million Dollar Job Growth Infrastructure Grant

The Town of Welaka has been fortunate to receive \$13.5 Million Dollars from two grants in the past nine months to build a new wastewater treatment plant in Welaka. What we witnessed with the Governor presenting the Town with a check for \$3.5 Million Dollars was the

culmination of hard work by many people to reach this point. I want to take this opportunity to thank our Welaka Town Council members, Council President Jessica Finch, Councilwoman Tonya Long, Councilwoman Marianne Milledge, and Councilwoman Kathy Washington. It requires a shared vision of the Welaka Town Council and a willingness to work together to move the Town forward. I appreciate the Welaka Town Council and all their hard work to help move Welaka forward; we could not do it without you!



The Town of Welaka would like to thank our Sponsors for our fireworks show we are having on August 5th. It is only through their generous support that we are able to host Welaka's first official fireworks display!

Platinum Sponsors

\$2,500.00



Bronze Sponsors

\$500.00



Resident Sponsors

Kenneth Schillo \$300.00

AUGUST 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
31	1 Trash & Recycling Pickup	2	3	4 National Chocolate Chip Cookie Day 	5 Last Food Truck Friday 5:30 - 8:30 PM Jefferson Smith Park Riverfront Fireworks 9:00 PM	6
7 National Lighthouse Day 	8 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	9 Welaka Town Council Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	10 Charter Review Committee Meeting TBA - Reschedule Date in September	11	12 Community Advisory Council Meeting 9:00 AM Welaka Town Hall	13
14	15 Trash & Recycling Pickup Water Meter-Reading Day	16	17 National Non-Profit Day 	18 Zoning Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	19 National Potato Day 	20
21	22 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	23 Code Enforcement Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	24 Charter Review Committee Meeting TBA - Reschedule Date in September	25	26 National Dog Day 	27
28	29 Trash & Recycling Pickup	30 National Beach Day 	31	1	2	3