



# Welaka Gazette

*December 2022*

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

It's December in Welaka, and I don't know about you, but I am glad to see Hurricane Season behind us. This year has been a trying time in the Town, with two major Hurricanes happening within just 42 days of one another. While the Town was spared the worst of the storms, our neighbors in Sportsmans Harbor experienced severe flooding with both storms. This year was a learning process for my administration, never having dealt with preparing for and going through a major Hurricane. I am happy to say our Town fared so well due to the fantastic team of dedicated Town employees who worked alongside me to ensure our residents stayed safe. As the storm approached, Chief Mike Porath scheduled twelve hour shifts before, during, and after the storm to ensure that our Town residents had constant police protection. It was very comforting to know that if something had happened, our Welaka Police Department was there, ready to respond immediately. In the Utility Department, I had the pleasure of working alongside our Utility Supervisor, Tyler Buford, along with Pauline Kenney, as they worked to keep the sewer system on and water flowing to the Town. Unfortunately, as the water began to rise in Sportsmans Harbor, they were forced to shut down the sewer system in that area to protect the integrity of the system. Fortunately, State Representative Bobby Payne worked hard to arrange for the Florida Division of Emergency Management to bring bathroom and shower trailers at no cost to the Town. This went a long way in helping residents whose sewer we had to shut off due to flooding, feel a little more normal. We appreciate Representative Payne and Putnam County Commissioner Bill Pickens for coordinating with us to provide the resources the Town needed during that difficult time. I also want to acknowledge the Executive Director of Public Safety J.R. Grimes and Putnam County Administrator Terry Suggs for their help with our Town. It is an excellent example of how municipal, county and state governments can work together to help our residents. Our Public Works Supervisor, John Stuart, worked tirelessly with his crew to get the Town cleaned up and back to normal in less than a week. Our various departments are working together like a well-oiled machine to meet the needs of our residents, and I couldn't be more proud of them all! Finally, I want to acknowledge Events Committee Chairwomen Courtney Desouza and Felicia Robbins Stalder for their work with the American Red Cross in delivering hot meals, MREs, and flood clean-up kits to our residents in Sportsmans Harbor, but also our neighbors in River Park West and in Dunns Creek. Welaka had an opportunity to come to the assistance of our fellow communities, and we definitely rose to the challenge.

Another great thing about December is all of the exciting Holiday Events happening this month. Saturday, December 10th, will be a BIG day in Welaka with our annual Christmas Parade starting at noon on CR309. The parade will go from Mill Street to the red light at the intersection of CR309 and 308B. There will be a kid's corner at Downtown Park starting at 2:00 pm, where every child that

attends will receive a toy and an opportunity to meet Santa. Also, at Downtown Park, from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm, there will be an opportunity to get some last-minute holiday shopping done with our arts and crafts vendors. Along with the arts and crafts show, we will also have various Food Trucks and DJ Dr. Doom from iHeart radio, who will play your favorite Holiday songs from 12 noon to 4:00 pm. Lastly, at 6:00 pm will be our lighted boat parade on the St. Johns River. The parade will start at Sportsmans Harbor and go to River Bend Condos, so everyone on the river in Welaka that evening can see it. If you don't have a place to view it on the river, please join us on our newly renovated floating dock at Bryant's Wharf.

On an economic development front, I am pleased to say that the Town had its first public meeting with input from our residents on how they want the Town to look in the future. When I took office as your Mayor, I heard loud and clear from our residents about protecting the small-town charm of Welaka, and I couldn't agree more. The purpose of the meeting was to create a Master Plan for the Town where the residents can give the Town Council their input through Zoning and Ordinances. We can then put measures in place to protect the look and feel of the Town. I realize that some don't want us to discuss economic development or the plans for the Town's Future out of fear that it will bring it to pass. However, we are all aware of the fifty-two hundred acres purchased on the north end of Welaka, and while we do not know what the project will be or when it will come to pass, one thing is inevitable: growth is coming to Welaka. We stand at a crossroads where we can either stick our heads in the sand like our friend the ostrich and hope for the best, or we can take the bull by the horns and create a plan for Welaka that will protect the look and feel of our Town. They say, "the best way to predict the future is to create the future." This Master Plan will ensure that the residents that live here in Welaka have a say in its future, as it should be. I want to thank our Council President, Jessica Finch, for taking on the momentous project and guiding us through it. We could not have done this without her.

In closing, it continues to be an honor and a privilege to serve as your Mayor. While it is a bit challenging at times, the pleasure I get from watching our community improve and work together to meet the needs of our residents far exceeds any stress I feel from being your Mayor. Thank you for allowing me to continue to serve you in this capacity, and I look forward to 2023 and all the opportunities it brings to our Town.

*Very Best Regards,*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie D. Watts" in a cursive style. To the right of the signature, the word "MAYOR" is printed in a small, sans-serif font.

## **From The Council President**

If you missed last Tuesday's Visioning Workshop hosted by Northeast Florida Regional Council, at the GFWC Woman's Club of Welaka, Inc., you missed a great presentation! I wanted to take a moment to clarify some of the feedback I have received since that meeting. Somehow there is a misconception that property owners are going to be forced to sell their property to create a downtown. That

perception is completely inaccurate. However, some of the property in the proposed area will eventually change hands. After that happens, did you know with the current C1 zoning in these areas, that someone could build a funeral home? Or a laundromat? Not to say that these aren't potential viable businesses that have a place in our community, but, again, it is about location. The current lack of architectural guidelines leaves the downtown without any cohesiveness. The nearby residents of the proposed downtown district will be further protected, not less protected by creating stricter zoning and architectural guidelines in this area.

If you did happen to miss the workshop, you still have time to see the presentation on our Town's Facebook page, and rate some of the options being presented. The post is dated November 23<sup>rd</sup> and has several Architectural Elements presented as well as several Architectural Styles. For each photo, please rate with a number between 1-5 with 1 being "Strongly Dislike," 3 being "Neutral," and 5 being "Strongly Like." These are not either-or choices; in fact, if you like two choices equally, you can rate them the same.

I hope that you will take the time to be part of this visioning process.

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)



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

## [WELAKA GOLF CART RENEWALS BEGAN OCTOBER 1, 2022](#)

[You Must Provide:](#) Valid Driver's License, Insurance (with golf cart listed) & \$25.00 (Cash, Check or Money Order)

[WELAKA BUSINESS TAX RECEIPT RENEWALS \(Occupational Licenses\) BEGAN OCTOBER 1, 2022.](#) [You Must Provide:](#) Business License Application, Proof of Insurance & applicable fee (Cash, Check or Money Order, see Ordinance 2022-07 for fee schedule).



**SAVE THE DATE: December 10th, 12:00 Noon**

Join us for a fun-filled day in the Town of Welaka! From a street parade on CR309 with a flyover to kickstart the day, to arts and craft vendors, food trucks, DJ Dr. Doom playing everyone's favorite Christmas tunes, a special guest appearance from Santa Clause himself, and a lighted boat parade at 6:00 PM!

Thanks to Helping Hands of Welaka, Santa will have a special gift for each child at the Downtown Park area (until they run out).

Arts and crafts vendor spots are still available.  
Please Contact Debbie Edwards at (386) 364-9002





*Thank you*

Friends of Welaka would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Bruce "Bull" Horning of Welaka Fish & Crab and Cheryl Brenner of Brenner Marine for their generous donation of chicken and ribs to our first annual donor and volunteer appreciation event. Not only did they provide the meat, Bull donated his time to deliciously prepared the food as well.

In addition, Louie Williams provided a wonderful venue for the event, the Welaka Yacht Club, located at 110 Riverbend Road. He and his staff also assisted us with the setup and cleanup after the event.

Giving is not just about making a donation, it is about making a difference. Because of the generosity of these fine folks, Friends of Welaka was able to provide a wonderful event for over 80 guests. Thank you again!

The  
**Woman's Club of Welaka**  
 would like to invite you to our  
**Annual Christmas Bazaar**  
**10:00-2:00**  
**Saturday, December 10**  
**644 CR 309**



Handmade ornaments and crafts.



upcycled furniture

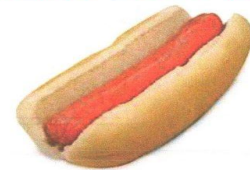


decorative bottle lamps



baked goods

Please join us!



hot dog lunches

The Church of Welaka Presents

# O, Come, Emmanuel!

Written and Directed by David H. Matthews

Starring Paul Pitts, Candy Enzor, Ed Pilkington & Diane Wintamute

*A musical celebration of the birth of our Lord and Savior*

Saturday, December 17, 2022 at 6 pm  
 &  
 Sunday, December 18, 2022 at 3 pm

*A heartwarming Yuletide program of familiar Carols and Testimonies featuring Michael and Donna Hinson, Curtis and Vivian Moore, and Emily Matthews.*

**The Church of Welaka**

638 3rd Ave., Welaka, FL 32193  
 (386) 467-3251

Pastor: Dan Holland

*Free refreshments served after each performance.*



*We apologize for the confusion due to conflicting schedules the banquet has changed.*

## **Dinner Banquet Update**

### **Jan. 6th • 6 p.m.**

Conventry Oaks  
 104 Springside Shortcut Rd

**Smoked Prime Rib**  
*by Hawg Wash BBQ Joint of Welaka*

Single Ticket	Cooler Table	Gun Table
\$75	\$1,000	\$1,500

For More Information  
**Ray Roerick (406) 853-7867**  
 or email [palatkaheat\\_airbdd@yahoo.com](mailto:palatkaheat_airbdd@yahoo.com)

# 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

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## WELAKA CHRISTMAS EVENT INFORMATION

**December 10, 2022, Saturday, 12 Noon**

**VENDOR FEE: \$30**

*(Pay at Town Hall or Mail to Town of Welaka)*

### Christmas Street Parade

Wendy Wood (904) 237-8917  
[wwg8tor@gmail.com](mailto:wwg8tor@gmail.com)

### Arts & Crafts Vendor

Debbie Edwards (386) 364-9002  
[bldjedwards@hotmail.com](mailto:bldjedwards@hotmail.com)

### Food Trucks

Courtney Desouza (904) 554-6458  
[events@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:events@welaka-fl.gov)

### Lighted Boat Parade on the River

Diana Gonzales  
[diana.gonzales@amerisbank.com](mailto:diana.gonzales@amerisbank.com)



# DECEMBER 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
27	28	29	30	1	2 Christmas Tree Decorating Party Welaka Town Hall 4 - 6:00 PM	3
4	5	6	7	8	9 Community Advisory Council Meeting 9:00 AM Welaka Town Hall	10 Christmas Parade, Arts & Crafts Festival & Boat Parade, 12 PM -Woman's Club Annual Christmas Bazaar, 10AM-2:00PM
11	12	13 Welaka Town Council Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	14 Charter Review Committee Meeting 5:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	15 Zoning Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall  Meter-Reading Day	16	17 Church of Welaka Musical Christmas Celebration 6 PM & 3 PM
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26 Christmas Day Observed (Town Hall Closed)	27 Code Enforcement Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	28 Charter Review Committee Meeting 5:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	29	30	31 New Year's Eve