



Welaka Gazette

January 2023

From The Mayor's Desk

Happy New Year, Everyone! As you are reading this, we are ringing in the New Year in Welaka and it's going to be an exciting year full of new opportunities.

As we start the new year, I want to recap some of the great things that occurred in 2022 and share with you some of our plans for 2023.

2022 brought great opportunity to the Town of Welaka. In July, we had Governor DeSantis present the Town with a check for 3.5 million dollars to help fully fund our new and advanced Wastewater Treatment Plant. In August, we received a \$76,000 grant from the Department of Economic Opportunity to create a plan to help manage growth in Welaka and ensure we control what happens. Finally, just this past December, we received \$600,000 to install a new state-of-the-art auto-read water meter system in the Town, along with upgrading a critical lift station.

Along with all the funding we have received, we also moved our entire book of ordinances online so it would be easier for our residents to locate information. We have also started re-writing our Land Use Development Code to ensure our codes and regulations are in place to protect the Town with future growth. We are also continuing work on our Town Charter and plan to have it out to our residents to review soon so that we can place it on the 2024 ballot for your consideration.

In 2023 we will continue to work on completing the major projects we began in 2022, including engineering and constructing the new Wastewater Treatment Plant and implementing our new auto-read water meter system. We have also applied for \$8.6 Million Dollars in grants to completely update our wastewater collection system and approximately \$150,000 to create a flood plan that will allow us to apply for millions of dollars in additional grants. We expect to learn the outcome of those grant requests in the coming months.

We are also working hard to completely update and revamp our building department by giving you five days a week inspections, lowering permit fees, and letting you apply for and manage your building permits online. Government works for the people, not the other way around, and we must do everything we can to make it as simple as possible for people to receive services from their Town.

We are also excited to see the outcome of our vision session for downtown Welaka that we hosted recently. This session was held to get input from our residents on how they would like the Town to look in the future. It is critical that we create this plan so that we can ensure any growth the Town

experiences will be under our control. We appreciate Council President Finch's hard work on this project.

In 2023, we will also be applying for several millions of dollars in grant funds through the Florida Department of Transportation to pave streets in the Town, along with a Legislative Appropriation Request to pave the Senator Jim King Trail, which is 2nd Avenue. I will present this to our Florida House of Representatives in Tallahassee during their regular session starting in March.

As we enter 2023, our Chief of Police, Mike Porath, is continuing to strengthen our Welaka Police Department by adding a new police vehicle and equipment. He is also working through the process of adding a 3rd full-time officer to the Police Department, which will go a long way in adding additional night and weekend patrols helping to keep our community safe. We appreciate Chief Porath's hard work in strengthening our Police Department.

We also have some exciting events coming to Welaka in 2023, including our Food Truck Fridays starting on Friday, April 7th. We are planning a fireworks show for later in the year, and the Events Committee is working on some additional events, including bringing back the Jazz in the Park Event.

Serving as your Mayor continues to be a great honor and a responsibility that I take very seriously. As a Town, we have gotten so much accomplished since I took office. Not because of me, but because of all of us working together to move Welaka forward. As you have heard me say before, "Teamwork makes the dream work," and it is through a collective effort of our Town Council, Town Staff, and residents, that we have been able to work together to accomplish so much. Much work is still to be completed, so we will roll up our sleeves and continue to press forward. Just like in 2022, we will continue to do it together.

Happy New Year, to everyone. It is going to be a great year! I hope 2023 brings you and your family many blessings and great opportunities.

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

A new year begins, and with it new challenges, opportunities, and potential blessings arise. We have an exciting schedule of upcoming events for the next couple of months; all are open to the public:

Citizens Advisory Monthly Meeting - Friday, January 6th & February 10th at 9 AM in the Council Room. The Town welcomes your input. Citizens' concerns and ideas for betterment are discussed.

Friends of Welaka Monthly Meeting - Monday, January 9th & February 13th at 9 AM at the Town Hall Pavilion. Volunteer opportunities and local outreach are discussed.

Welaka Events Committee Monthly Meeting - Monday, January 9th & February 13th at 5:45 PM at the Town Hall Pavilion. Did you enjoy the Food Truck Friday Events? The Christmas Parade? These events and others are discussed along with possible new events for the upcoming year.

Town Council Monthly Meeting - Tuesday, January 10th & Tuesday February 14th at 6 PM in the Council Room. Welaka's business and operations are discussed and voted upon. There is an opportunity for public comment. Voicing your concerns or opinions on policy matters is a way to let Council Members know what you think.

Charter Review Committee Meeting - Wednesday, January 11th & January 25th at 5 PM in the Council Room. Updating the Town's Charter for an eventual vote referendum is the goal.

Quarterly Town-Wide Cleanup - Saturday, January 14th at 8 AM at the Town Hall Pavilion. This is an opportunity to meet your neighbor and help beautify Welaka! Coffee and snacks are provided at 8 am and the cleanup begins at 9 am.

Annual Candidates' Forum - Wednesday, February 8th at 6 PM at the Shrimps 'R Us Pavilion. This year there are three seats that will be up for election: the position of Mayor and two Council Seats. This forum, put on by Friends of Welaka, allows you to have the opportunity to ask the candidates questions.

Farm Share Food Distribution - Friday, February 24th at 8 AM at the Town Hall Pavilion. This is a wonderful event put on by Helping Hands of Welaka to distribute food to the needy in our community.

If you have yet to be involved in any of the activities in the Town, now is the time. There is so much fulfillment in working with your fellow citizens and neighbors to create an even more wonderful Town.

Happy New Year to each and every one of you! May this new year, 2023, hold blessings and joy for you and yours.

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



**[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)

LOCAL VOICES MAKING LOCAL CHOICES



LOCAL CONTROL. LOCAL DECISION-MAKING. LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

Whatever we call it, it means **one thing**:
Local voices, making local choices.

From protecting the safety of our neighborhoods to preserving the unique interests of our communities, we are **unified, organized** and ready to **advocate**.

HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?



Stay informed and be ready for action by liking us on [Facebook.com/LocalVoicesUnited](https://www.facebook.com/LocalVoicesUnited).



Pick up the phone and text "Local Voices" to 50457.



Sign up for emails and alerts about important local issues.

Elevating Florida's Voices
From Sidewalks to the State Capitol

LOCAL VOICES UNITED

Who we are: Local Voices United is a **grassroots community** designed to **empower Floridians to speak up** in support of **local self-government**.

We believe that the government that is closest to the people – is most accountable to the people.



SCAN HERE for a short video highlighting ways to promote local voices in our state capitol.

WHAT IS LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT?

It's the idea that our communities should be governed by the people who live in them. This idea was enshrined in Florida's Constitution over 50 years ago, and it's essential to American democracy today.

SO, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM?

Government closest to the people is generally more responsive, accountable and effective. However, powerful special interests are trying to centralize control and override the decisions of local voters. "One-size-fits-all" doesn't work in Florida. Each community is unique and should reflect the needs of its residents.

We believe Florida's many towns and taxpayers deserve **flexibility and accountability, not one-size-fits-all solutions**.

Learn more at LocalVoicesUnited.com



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

Be a Part of
the Movement

ALL are
WELCOME!

Night of HOPE

*By God's grace, He offers everyone love and forgiveness.
We, The Church, want you to feel that love and forgiveness.*

That Joy & Peace that fills anyone in the presence of God and

That Feeling of True Acceptance.

Bring the whole family together to enjoy uplifting and encouraging Contemporary Praise & Worship.

Saturday Nights @ 7pm

Starting January 7, 2023

The Church of Welaka

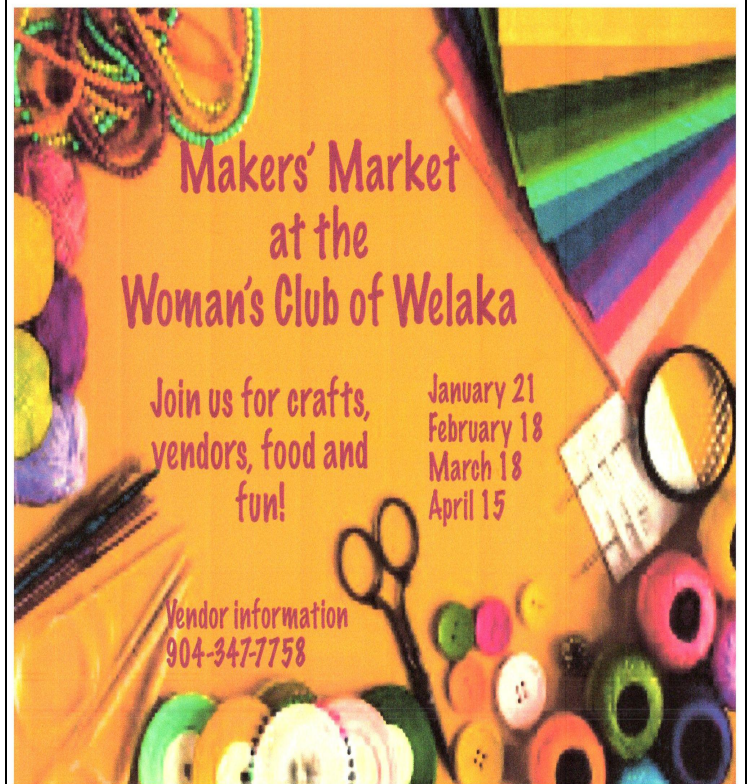
638 3rd Ave
386-467-3251

Makers' Market at the Woman's Club of Welaka

Join us for crafts,
vendors, food and
fun!

January 21
February 18
March 18
April 15

Vendor information
904-347-7758



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
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 102
townclerk@welaka-fl.gov

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

Welaka Utility Department

Emma Sledge - Utility Clerk
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 103
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

Welaka Building Department

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

Mayor's Office

Mayor Jamie Watts
(386) 467-9800 Ext. 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 Attorney, Patrick Kennedy
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
(386) 467-9800, Ext. 103 or Option # 3

PAY YOUR BILL ONLINE

USE YOUR CREDIT / DEBIT CARDS OR BANK ACCOUNT

Visit 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!



January

2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	
1	<p>Trash & Recycling Pickup</p> <p>New Years Day (Observed) TOWN HALL CLOSED</p>	3	4	5	<p>Citizens Advisory Board Meeting 9:00 AM Welaka Town Hall</p> <p>Ducks Unlimited Dinner Banquet 6:00 PM 104 Springside Shortcut Rd., Palatka</p>	7	<p>Night of Hope 7:00 PM Church of Welaka 638 3rd Ave., Welaka</p>
8	<p>Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup</p> <p>Friends of Welaka Meeting 9:00 AM Town Hall Pavilion</p> <p>Events Committee Meeting 5:45 PM Town Hall Pavilion</p>	10	11	12	13	14	<p>Community Town-Wide Clean-Up 8:00 AM Coffee & Snacks 9:00 AM Clean-Up</p>
15	<p>Trash & Recycling Pickup</p> <p>Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Observed) TOWN HALL CLOSED</p>	17	18	19	20	21	<p>Makers' Market 9:00 AM Women's Club of Welaka</p>
22	<p>Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup</p>	24	25	26	27	28	
29	<p>Trash & Recycling Pickup</p>	31					