



# Welaka Gazette

*October 2022*

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

As I am sitting here writing to you, we are still working to help our residents in Welaka who experienced flooding from Hurricane Ian. While the Town was spared the devastation of a direct hit from the storm, flood waters still surround many homes in our community. I have lived in Florida since I was four years old, and I have never witnessed a storm that was as unpredictable as this hurricane.

Early last week, it was predicted that Ian would make landfall somewhere around Tampa. Many south of Tampa thought they had dodged a bullet, only to watch its predicted track move further and further south as the days passed. I spoke to the Mayor, Holly Smith, of Sanibel Island on Friday, and she is devastated by the destruction her community has suffered. She shared with me that "people have to take these storms seriously and avoid being too confident on the predicted path of the storm."

I want to share with you some of the steps the Town of Welaka took before, during, and after the storm, and all of the hard work and long hours my team put into protecting our Town and keeping it safe. First, Public Works Supervisor John Stuart, AJ, and Ken started Monday preparing the Town for the rain by mowing the drainage ditches and cleaning out the culverts. As a result, we had minimal flooding in the central parts of Welaka. On Tuesday, I started briefings with the Putnam County Emergency Operations Center and the National Weather Service on the storm's status and began to plan on a local and county level. On Tuesday evening, your Welaka Town Council met and adopted a local State of Emergency Resolution, which gave the Chief and I the ability to manage the critical assets of the Town and opened up federal dollars to the Town, and, ultimately, our residents. On Wednesday, our Public Works Department continued to button up the Town, securing the parks and cutting grass in the ditches, all while the rain was falling.

On Wednesday night at 10:00 PM, our Utility Supervisor Tyler Buford, Utility Specialist Pauline Kenney, and I, took hourly shifts out in the storm monitoring the Water, Wastewater, Vacuum Station, and Lift Stations to ensure that the water and sewer stayed on for the Town. This hourly check went on for 40 hours. At the same time, the Utility Crew went on duty to monitor the Utility System; our Police Chief, Mike Porath, and Officer Todd Bryant, started twelve-hour shifts, ensuring you all had 24-hour police protection before, during, and after the storm. At 4:00 AM on Thursday, the power in the Town of Welaka went out, and for the next several hours, I worked closely with representatives from FPL to get the power turned back on for the entire Town. We even had Doug, a lineman for FPL, stay around that morning in Welaka to ensure the power stayed on before he left the

area. At around 4:00 PM, the storm began to ease, but the Utility Crew and the Welaka Police Department stayed vigilant throughout the night.

Friday morning, after the storm passed, the Public Works crew began cleaning up the Town and picking up debris that our residents began to pile by their driveways. On Friday morning, I was visited by Tim Parker, the Putnam County Property Appraiser, and Commissioner Bill Pickens, the Chairman of the Putnam County Board of County Commissioners; who accompanied me to Sportsmans Harbor in a High Water vehicle driven by our Fire Department Chief, Scott Turnbull, to assess the damage for FEMA. At the same time that morning, we closed Sportsmans Drive off to local traffic only in order to limit the wake from unnecessary vehicle traffic. We also closed down the Welaka Boat Ramp to prevent boats from leaving the boat ramp and creating wakes as they left the area.

On Friday afternoon, I received a call from Senator Marco Rubio's Office asking for a damage report and letting me know that Senator Rubio was working to open up individual FEMA assistance to our area. I also received a call from the Governor's Office telling me they were working with Putnam County to get the Florida Division of Emergency Management out to Welaka to assess the damage to our infrastructure.

On Saturday morning, the Public Works department continued to work to pick up debris from our residents' homes. That afternoon I received a phone call from Senator Rubio's Office informing me that individual assistance had been opened up for Putnam County. Around noon on Saturday, the Florida Division of Emergency Management arrived in Welaka and met with me to assess the damage to our infrastructure. By Saturday afternoon, most of the debris from the storm had been picked up by our Public Works Department. Also, the Welaka Police Department returned to its regular post-storm work schedule on Saturday afternoon. Before going off duty, Chief Porath suggested we place the Town dump truck in Sportsmans Harbor for the residents to place their trash in, since the Waste Pro truck could not get to all parts of the Harbor. The idea worked well for those who could not get trash picked up due to the flood waters. On Sunday, the team took a much-needed break but continued monitoring the Utility System off and on all day.

By Monday morning, the flood waters in Sportsmans Harbor had receded enough to begin turning on the sewer system to parts of the Harbor, so the Utility Crew spent most of the day restoring the system. By Monday afternoon, the sewer to Sportsmans Drive and Scott Street had been restored, and the Utility crew was now waiting for the water on the side streets in the Harbor to recede so they could restore the sewer to these streets and bring the system fully back online. I also received a phone call from Senator Rubio's Office informing me that staff would be here on Wednesday, October 5th, at Welaka Town Hall to help affected residents register for FEMA assistance. I shared all of that with you to give you an idea of all that was going on behind the scenes in Welaka over the last several days. Also, to impress how the team operated like a well-oiled machine to keep the lights, water, and sewer utilities online, the community safe with Police protection, and the Town cleaned up after the storm. In the past few days, I have received accolades from residents for all I did, and while I appreciate it, the true heroes are my team of dedicated Town employees who worked long hours with little sleep to ensure your Town was safe and you were protected from the storm. They are often not acknowledged for all they do, so please, if you see them out in Welaka, thank them for their hard work, dedication and loyalty; it means more to them than you will ever know. Until next month I hope everyone stays

safe, and please remember to join us on Sunday, October 30th at noon for our 2022 Halloween Golf Cart Parade and Candy Giveaway.

*Very Best Regards,*

*Jamie D. Watts* MAYOR

## **From The Council President**

So the storm has moved past us and it wasn't as bad as many of us anticipated, thankfully. Most of us have completed the cleanup, but many of our residents are still dealing with the high waters of Hurricane Ian. When I began thinking about our neighbors in Sportsmans Harbor, I thought about ways to help.

Obviously, first and foremost, because of the high water, it is important not to make a bad situation worse. Although our intentions may be good, driving into the flooded areas of the Harbor and other low-lying areas serve no purpose and exacerbate the problem. The same would also apply to all the boats on the river. Water levels are still high, and we are expected to be in the flood stage for at least another week. Creating a wake causes water to be pushed onto people's properties, and in some cases, even into their homes.

On a broader level, I pondered how to be a better neighbor. As I sought out opinions, I got a variety of answers, including these:

- Keep your yard and property maintained
- Pay attention to the noise levels that you cause
- If you see something that raises suspicions, call the authorities

All good and meaningful things, but as I studied these closer, I realize these all fall under this basic tenet:

Do unto others as you would have them do to you. The inverse is equally as true:

Don't do unto others what you don't want done unto you.

Let us be good neighbors.

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 BEGIN 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) BEGIN OCTOBER 1, 2022. You Must Provide: Business License Application, Proof of Insurance & \$20.00 (Cash, Check or Money Order)**

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Oct. 1, 2022

DR-4673-FL NR 003

FEMA News Desk: 770-220-5292 | [FEMA-R4-NewsDesk@fema.dhs.gov](mailto:FEMA-R4-NewsDesk@fema.dhs.gov)

## **News Release**

### **Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns and Volusia Counties Eligible for FEMA Assistance**

ATLANTA – Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns and Volusia counties are now eligible for FEMA assistance after Hurricane Ian.

Individuals and households in Flagler, Putnam, St. Johns and Volusia counties can apply for FEMA Individual Assistance, which may include temporary housing assistance, basic home repairs and certain other uninsured disaster-related needs.

These counties join Charlotte, Collier, DeSoto, Hardee, Hillsborough, Lee, Manatee, Orange, Osceola, Pinellas, Polk, Seminole and Sarasota counties, which were previously approved for Individual Assistance.

Survivors can apply for disaster assistance at [disasterassistance.gov](https://disasterassistance.gov), by using the [FEMA mobile app](#), or by calling 800-621-3362 from 7 a.m. to 11 p.m. Eastern Time. If you use a relay service such as video relay service (VRS), captioned telephone service or others, give FEMA the number for that service.

For an accessible video on how to apply for assistance go to, [youtube.com/watch?v=WZGpWI2RCNw](https://youtube.com/watch?v=WZGpWI2RCNw).

For information on Florida's recovery from Hurricane Ian, visit [fema.gov/disaster/4673](https://fema.gov/disaster/4673). Follow FEMA on Twitter at [@femaregion4](https://twitter.com/femaregion4) / [Twitter](#) and at [facebook.com/fema](https://facebook.com/fema).

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*FEMA's mission is helping people before, during, and after disasters.*

# WELAKA'S 2022 HALLOWEEN

## GOLF CART PARADE AND TRICK OR TREAT OCTOBER 30TH

CANDY FOR THE KIDS, FOOD & FUN  
GOLF CART "GHOSTLY" PARADE

12PM Lineup Begins at Downtown Park And The Parade Ends At Jefferson Smith Park.

Golf Cart Decorations And Rider Costumes Encouraged.  
(Please no alcohol on the parade or at the parks!)



### TRICK-OR-TREAT

Immediately After Parade At  
Jefferson Smith Park  
Bring Your Own Candy Please. You  
May Hand Out Candy From A Golf  
Cart Or Setup A Table



### COMMUNITY GOSPEL SINGING FUNDRAISER EVENT

**NOVEMBER 5, 2022 4:00 - 6:00 PM**

**672 3rd Avenue, Welaka, FL 32193**

Historic *Emmanuel Episcopal Church*, the oldest structure in the town, which was built before Welaka was incorporated! This event is in memory of our Priest, Father Les Singleton. Brad Kay, with Hawg Wash BBQ, is smoking 8-9 pd. Boston Butts that can be purchased for \$45, or single-sliced for \$10 pd. **PRE-SALE AVAILABLE (386) 530-0228**

### Putnam County Dinner Banquet



Join us for a night of conservation! Great prizes, including DU merchandise, outdoor merchandise and guns.

Friday, October 7, 6:00PM

Putnam County Dinner Banquet  
Putnam County Fairgrounds

Join us at the  
Woman's Club of Welaka  
644 CR309

## Sip 'n' Paint

Rescheduled! Rescheduled!

Saturday, October 8  
2:00-4:00 p.m.  
with C-Gypsea Art

Enjoy an afternoon with friends,  
snacks, creativity and fun!

Donation \$40  
Reserve your canvas!  
Call 904-347-7758



October 7 & 8, 2022  
Friday & Saturday

Starts at 8:00am  
Household & Kitchen, Furniture, Books, Clothes  
& MORE

**BAKE SALE**  
FOOD for purchase

**THE CHURCH**  
638 CR 309  
WELAKA  
(386) 467-3251

JOIN US!

FAMILY FUN!

# Fall Fest

at THE CHURCH

CAKE WALK

GAMES

HOT DOGS & CHILI

RAFFLE

**Saturday,  
October 29  
6-8pm**

The Church of Welaka  
638 3rd Avenue  
Welaka, FL 32193

Drive Through  
Blueberry Pancake Breakfast  
Saturday, October 15  
8:00-10:00 a.m.  
Welaka Woman's Club  
644 C.R. 309  
\$6 donation

Breakfast includes:  
fresh blueberry pancakes with  
butter/syrup  
bacon or sausage

# 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) 524-4010 Ext. 102  
[townclerk@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:townclerk@welaka-fl.gov)

## Welaka Utility Department

(386) 524-4016 Ext. 103  
[utility@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:utility@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

Justin Morris - Building Inspector  
(386) 524-4013 Ext. 105  
[building@welaka-fl.gov](mailto:building@welaka-fl.gov)

Waste Pro: (386) 328-5445

## 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)

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## WELAKA CHRISTMAS EVENT INFORMATION

**December 10, 2022, Saturday**

### VENDOR FEE:

**\$25 up until November 1, 2022**

**\$30 after November 1, 2022**

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

### CONTACTS:

#### 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)

# OCTOBER 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
25	26	27	28	29	30	1  National Homemade Cookies Day
2 National Name Your Car Day 	3 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	4	5	6  National Noodle Day	7 Welaka Yard Sale THE CHURCH Starts at 8AM <b>FL DUCKS UNLIMITED</b> Dinner Banquet Fairgrounds 6 PM	8 Welaka Yard Sale THE CHURCH Starts at 8AM <b>SIP 'N PAINT</b> Welaka Woman's Club 2-4 PM
9	10 Columbus Day Trash & Recycling Pickup	11 Welaka Town Council Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	12 Charter Review Committee Meeting <b>TO BE CONFIRMED</b> 5:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	13	14 Community Advisory Council Meeting 9:00 AM Welaka Town Hall	15 Blueberry Pancake Breakfast Drive Through Welaka Woman's Club 8-10 AM
16	17 Meter- Reading Day Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	18 National No Beard Day 	19	20 Zoning Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	21 National Apple Day 	22
23	24 Trash & Recycling Pickup	25 Code Enforcement Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	26	27 National American Beer Day 	28	29 Welaka Fall Market Woman's Club 9AM-3PM Welaka Fall Festival THE CHURCH 6PM-8PM
30 Welaka Halloween Golf Cart Parade & Trick-or-Treat Downtown Park to Jefferson Smith Park 12PM	31 Halloween  Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	1	2	3	4	5