



Welaka Gazette

May 2022

From The Mayor's Desk

We are entering the month of May, and Spring is in full bloom in Welaka. We are very excited about all the things happening here! The Town of Welaka just finished hosting two successful events. Our First Food Truck Friday was April 1st, and wow, was it a success! We had a fantastic DJ, 8 food trucks, and over 500 people attended the event! Our next Food Truck Friday will be on May 6th and we are excited about it as well. First, from a community standpoint, I have never seen an event in Welaka bring all areas of our community together as it did. We also noticed many residents from our neighboring communities, such as Pomona Park, Crescent City, Fruitland, Georgetown, and even Palatka. This tells me that South Putnam residents want events like this in their community, and Welaka is happy to host them. We did learn a few things from the event, including adding more food trucks to shorten lines, adding more picnic tables, and spraying the field for insects before our events. Public Works also opened a section in Jefferson Smith Park to allow easier access to our restrooms.

On April 23rd, we had our first jazz concert in Jefferson Smith Park. It was also a smashing hit! Our Events Committee worked hard on this event, and we appreciate them for all they do. I would also like to extend a special thanks to Sandra Walker for heading up our Jazz event. We are excited about having more live concerts in our parks in the future.

We are excited about all the Public Works department projects getting accomplished too! Everything from putting up the new lights in the Downtown and Jefferson Smith Parks to installing our new 8 pet waste stations as recommended by our Citizen's Advisory Board. My management style empowers people by allowing them to gather information and make decisions independently. Our new Public Works director, John Stuart, has taken to this very well and is doing an amazing job leading his crew. We are also adding some new equipment to the Public Works Department, such as a new Kubota Utility vehicle that was just received. This allows the Public Works crew to pick up trash quickly and safely on the sides of our streets before they mow. We will also be asking the Welaka Town Council to approve the purchase of a new Kubota Lawn Mower to aid in the maintenance of the Town. Some of our mowers are over 18 years old and starting to give us trouble. We have reached a point where they need to be retired, and new equipment cycled into our fleet.

We are also waiting for our Marine Contractor to start work on repairing the end of our floating dock. The end of the pier has been closed for some time, and I am ready to get it fixed and back open. I am pleased to say that I negotiated with our contractor to train our Public Works Director on how to do annual maintenance on the dock, which will save a significant amount of money in the future. Concerning Public Works, I kept the best part of my update to last. On April 12th, the Welaka Town Council unanimously approved a \$160,000 street repair project to help fix our crumbling roads. It will include using a special grader and road surfacer to break up the millings on our streets. We will

then add fresh millings and lime rock and recompact our streets. After which, a company will seal the streets to help extend their life. When I took office, I promised you that fixing our streets would be a priority, and this will go a long way in keeping my promise while I seek grants to pave our streets. There will be some temporary street closures in the coming weeks. I promise to keep them to a minimum and announce them on Facebook and our website www.welaka-fl.gov before they occur. I ask you to please be patient with us as we work our way through the Town fixing our streets.

On a Utility Front, I am delighted to announce that our Request for Qualifications (RFQs) has gone out for engineers for our new Wastewater Treatment Plant. As you read this, we are receiving responses from engineers interested in helping us with everything from our wastewater plant to our streets. I am also very excited to announce that the Town of Welaka will be seeking a Community Development Block Grant to install auto-read water meters throughout the Town. We are seeking an auto-read meter system because it will help us quickly locate water leaks, saving us time and conserving water while also protecting you from high water bills that come from leaks not being discovered until our next water meter reading. We are also seeking a grant to replace critical sewer service lines and rehab some of our essential lift stations. My promise is to leave Welaka in better shape than I found it, and I intend to keep that promise. I will keep you in the loop as we move forward. I am also excited to announce that Florida Rural Water has completed our Utility Condition Survey, and I expect to be able to release the report to the Town in June. Let me be clear, there are many issues in our utility system we need to address, but we can only do that when we have a clear picture of what we are dealing with. After the Utility Condition Survey is ready, I will be creating a five and ten-year work plan to get our Water and Sewer System up to where it needs to be for the future. You will also notice a special reminder from our Utility Department NOT TO flush any wet-wipes down your toilet. There is a common misconception that they are biodegradable when in reality, they are not. We pull hundreds of pounds of wet-wipes out of our pumps and sewer system each month. This results in unnecessary repair and replacement of our equipment, resulting in you paying higher utility bills. I will give you an example; recently, we had lift station 6 go down on 4th Avenue. This resulted in us calling a septic company to pump out the lift station while removing all the wet-wipes (rags) from our pumps. The trouble is, that sewage does not stop flowing just because our pumps go down because people continue to flush their toilets and wash their clothes. We had to pay over \$2,000 for the pump truck to keep the station pumped down and the labor and parts we needed to get the station back online. The total cost of this incident was close to \$3,000, all because of wet-wipes being flushed down our sewer system. I ask you to please do your part in protecting our water and wastewater system by not flushing anything down the toilet. Remember, only flush the 3 P's: Pee, Poop, and Toilet Paper. Our system belongs to us all, and we are all responsible for protecting it.

We have entirely codified our Welaka Book of Codes on a governmental front, and I expect the Welaka Town Council will be adopting it either in the May or June Town Council Meetings. This new system will allow you to go online and search any Welaka Town Ordinance we have on the books, finding documents easily and quickly. We have also recently purchased a new device that will allow us to broadcast our meetings with better sound and picture quality, so look for that in our May meeting. We also recently hosted our American Rescue Plan Open House, and I am pleased to say we had an excellent turn-out of our residents and some great ideas on how you want us to spend the Town's grant money. The suggestions are in this month's newsletter. Also, if you have any suggestions on how we should spend the ARPA money that the Town received, please email me at jwatts@welaka-fl.gov. I would love to hear from you.

On a government operational front, our Town Clerk and Utility Clerk also recently completed an evaluation of new accounting software that the Town is looking to purchase. The new software will

provide a better, more transparent accounting of your tax dollars. But it will also allow us to offer online building permit services and online code enforcement reporting in real-time, plus the ability to get a copy of your water bill emailed to you as soon as it is posted, along with a paper copy mailed if you so desire. It will also include the ability to make any payments online if you so choose, such as for an occupational license or golf cart sticker renewal. My goal is to make it easier for the residents of Welaka to interact with their government and simplify any process a Town resident needs to work through, such as applying for a building permit or renewing a golf cart sticker.

We will now move to the evaluation phase, which will include us visiting the City of Flagler Beach and the Clay County Utility Authority to see the software in action and get a clear picture if the software is right for us. I will keep you informed of our progress.

We will also be holding our new Golf Cart Ordinance Workshop in May. I apologize it has taken so long to get us to this point; our Town Attorney has worked long and hard to allow for side-by-sides in Welaka. I appreciate your patience.

I realize I covered a lot this month, and I am honestly glad I could because it speaks to all that we are working together to accomplish tasks in Welaka. It continues to be an honor and a privilege to serve as your Mayor. I hope everyone continues to enjoy Spring in Welaka, and I hope to see you at the next Food Truck Friday Event on May 6th. Have a great month, and I look forward to speaking to you again next month.

Best Regards,

Mayor Jamie D. Watts



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 or call her at **(386) 524-4010**



April's Recognitions and Proclamations

- **Proclamation 2022-04** - Proclaiming April as Water Conservation Month
- **Proclamation 2022-05** - 911 Operators' National Public Safety Telecommunications Week

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 or call her at **(386) 524-4010**. 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

SAVE OUR SEWER SYSTEM!

NO WIPES in the PIPES

Only flush
the **three Ps...**
Pee, Poop and
toilet **Paper!**



No matter what the package says,

DO NOT FLUSH THESE PRODUCTS:

- “Flushable” wipes
- Disinfecting and cleaning wipes
- Sanitary products
- Tissues
- Paper towels
- Napkins
- Cardboard and paper products
- Fabrics



Sunday

May 8 - 9:00 AM

Mother's Day

Honoring all women

(with flowers!)

**Emmanuel Episcopal Church
672 3rd Ave (CR 309) Welaka**

*Collecting personal care items
for women in need.*

More information:
Father Les Singleton,
Local Priest
352 208 9582
Les32667@gmail.com



ARPA Open House April 7, 2022 6:00 PM Public SUGGESTIONS & DISCUSSIONS

1. Speed Humps on Shell Street (Calming Devices)
2. Master Plan – Architectural plans for the Town
3. New Welcome Signs for our 3 Town entrances
4. Multi-Used Community Center / Museum / Aquarium
5. Pavilion kitchen upgrade
6. Infrastructure Upgrades – Roads / Lift Stations / Storm Drainage & Run-Off
7. Parking Lots with fence / Security – Foreclosed, over-grown, vacant properties around Town
8. Curbs and sidewalks around Town
9. Finish paving Shell Street
10. Law Department Radio upgrades with designated Town Channel

If you'd like to share your suggestions, please e-mail Mayor Watts at jwatts@welaka-fl.gov

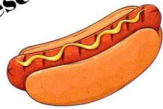
SpringFest

COMMUNITY BLOCK PARTY

Saturday, May 21

10am-1pm

Rescheduled!



FREE



Bounce House * Games * Face Painting
Hot Dogs * Snow Cones * Popcorn

Displays by:

Putnam County Sheriff's Office
Welaka Police Dept.
Welaka Fire Dept.
Welaka National Fish Hatchery
Florida Dept. of Health
Welaka State Forest



THE CHURCH of Welaka
683 C.R. 309, Welaka, FL

GET A PINCH OF PALATKA!

MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND 2022

PALATKA

BLUE CRAB FESTIVAL

FEATURING PERFORMANCES BY:

GINUWINE LITTLE TEXAS

THE ORIGINAL WAILERS

MEACHUM L CLARK &
COMPANY GOSPEL CHOIR

THE BAND BE EASY

FORTUNE CHILD PAPER CUTT

CHILLULA AND MANY MORE

PalatkaBlueCrabFest.com



FOOD TRUCK FRIDAY

MAY 6TH

5:30 PM - 8:30 PM

TOWN OF WELAKA

JEFFERSON SMITH PARK

ACROSS FROM THE DOLLAR GENERAL



FEATURING DJ CHAD



Encore!
Drive Through
Blueberry Pancake Breakfast
Saturday, May 14
8:00-10:00 a.m.

Welaka Woman's Club
644 C.R. 309

\$6 donation at the door



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

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

Public Works Department

John Stuart - General Maintenance Supervisor

Direct Line: (386) 546-2338

jstuart@welaka-fl.gov

Code Enforcement

Pauline Kinney - Code Enforcement Officer

Direct Line: (386) 530-0336

codes@welaka-fl.gov

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

Welaka Town Attorney

Patrick Kennedy - Town Attorney

Direct Line: (386) 244-4910

townattorney@welaka-fl.gov

Waste Management

Putnam County

Direct Line: (386) 328-5445

MAY 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	3 Charter Review Committee Meeting 5:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	4 Special Called Welaka Town Council Meeting 5:05 PM Welaka Town Hall	5	6 Food Truck Friday 5:30 PM - 8:30 PM Jefferson Smith Park	7
8 Mother's Day Emmanuel Episcopal Church 672 3rd Ave. (CR309) Collecting Personal Care Items for Women in need 9AM	9 Trash & Recycling Pickup	10 Welaka Town Council Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	11	12	13 Citizens Advisory Board Meeting 9:00 AM Welaka Town Hall	14 Encore Drive-Through Blueberry Pancake Breakfast Woman's Club 8:00 AM
15	16 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup Water Meter Reading Day	17 Charter Review Committee Meeting 5:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	18	19 Zoning Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	20	21 SpringFest Block Party Welaka Baptist Church 10:00 AM - 1:00 PM
22	23 Trash & Recycling Pickup	24 Code Board Meeting 6:00 PM Welaka Town Hall	25	26	27 Blue Crab Festival DownTown Palatka 6:00 PM to 11:00 PM	28 Blue Crab Festival DownTown Palatka 9:00 AM to 11:00 PM
29 Blue Crab Festival DownTown Palatka 8:00 AM to 11:00 PM	30 Memorial Day Town Hall Closed	31 Trash, Recycling & Yard Debris Pickup	1	2	3	4