

WEEKLY MANAGER'S REPORT TOWN OF LADY LAKE, FLORIDA

By Bill Lawrence, Town Manager

January 4, 2024

DEPARTMENT MANAGER'S REPORT (William Lawrence):

The Town of Lady Lake Highlights for 2023. The Department Managers will go into details.

Lady Lake Library: Library Expansion project was approved by the Commission. The construction design is underway. We expect an RFP to go out in March 2024. Once completed, Growth Management will move over to the first floor of the library and the children's library will expand upstairs. This will leave room at Town Hall for the Finance Department to move upstairs, joining forces with the Utility Department and the Communication Department to move over to the current finance offices.

Lady Lake Library held its first Festival of Trees. The library has continued offering more programs reaching the number two status in Lake County for patron usage.

The Finance Department earned its Certificate of Achievement for their Comprehensive Annual Finance Report for the 28th year in a row. They worked with new auditors this past year. The Water/Sewer Billing Department saw the retirement of Kathy Learn, Customer Service Rep 1 and Mena Bodie was promoted to this position. Rhonda Hernandez was hired to fill Mena's vacant position. Also, Kristyn Evans was hired this year and splits her time between the Finance Department and Human Resources.

Public Works: The Utilities Department began work on wells #4 and #5 that will double the town's water capacity. The Sewer Plant expansion also began, and it too will double the town's capacity to handle wastewater and should be completed in 2024.

Roads & Streets: CDBG Grant was approved for sidewalk work to be done on the south side of Lady Lake.

Growth Management: This year we had the departure of longtime Senior Planner Wendy Then. Becky Higgins has been promoted to this position. The department handled a large amount of permits this year and submitted several development plans to the Planning Board and Commission.

The Police Department: Chief Steve Hunt was sworn in this past year. The Police Department was faced with equipment issues such not having body cams and tasers needing replacement. Chief Hunt worked with the Finance Department and the commission and received funding for the

equipment. Lady Lake has been facing a recruitment issue just like other police agencies across the nation. Our neighboring communities were offering higher pay and we had lost some of our officers to these agencies. The Department was down 10 officers, which is a third of the department. Chief Hunt worked with Elisha Pappacoda to make a police recruitment video and worked with Tamika DeLee to advertise our open positions nationally and requested pay raises that would allow the Town to compete with the other agencies. We have since stopped the bleeding by retaining our great officers and are currently testing 14 candidates. The American Legion held its Officer of the Year award ceremony, receiving recognition was Sgt. Sarakinis and Officer Chausse who both received an award for their efforts in saving a life involving a vehicle fire last year. This year Dennis Pranouskes and Heather Couch were promoted to Patrol Sergeant and Erica Orr to Detective.

Parks and Recreation: Lady Lake Farmers Market made a big comeback this fall. Snooky Park was completed this year at a cost of 1.8 million. The Town was treated to a special July 4th celebration with Lady Lake's first ever fireworks display. The museum received a facelift with a much-needed paint job.

IT Department: Howard Davis was hired this year as our Security Analyst. Howard ensures that we all get security awareness training. Andy Crogan, Systems Administrator, went from part-time to full-time. IT completed software work on Citizen Serve in Growth Management and sent out an RFP for ERP software for the Finance Department.

Human Resources: HR was busy with all the resignations, some terminations, and new hires. These jobs get advertised then interviews must be scheduled, background investigations performed, etc. The wellness programs keep getting better and are scheduled throughout the year. The HR Department covers risk management matters and had an excellent safety program this year. They have helped the police department with their new recruiting efforts which have resulted in an increase in applications.

The New Communication Department was approved in last year's budget process. Elisha Pappacoda was hired as our Communication Director and she established our first Facebook page, submitted numerous press releases, is working on a new Civic Plus website and helped produce the police recruiting video. These are among her accomplishments this past year.

The Town mourned the passing of Commissioner Paul Hannan and former Commissioner Dan Vincent

Commissioner Ruth Kussard after serving many years on the Commission chose to retire, and three new commissioners were elected, Ed Regan, Treva Roberts, and Mike Sage.

CLERK'S OFFICE (Nancy Wilson):

Accomplishments 2023

Except for a few blips, cross-training in our department has been a great success. There was some pushback because both Jackie and Carol like more structure, but we were able to pull it off. So what if now and then we duplicated efforts, it was for a good cause. I feel confident that in most cases, they can handle inquiries judiciously and run the office.

The records program at the library is largely completed, or at least completed to the degree that it can be. We have another records destruction planned for this month so anything remaining at the library after that will have to be shuffled when construction begins. What remains either needs to be stored at Town Hall, put in Thad's new storage area at the library or retained until disposal. The records for disposal will be taken care of over the next couple of years. It was decided that to have them sent to MCCi for scanning was too costly when we would be destroying them so soon. However you slice it, preparing for construction will require some planning related to town records.

One of the best "accomplishments" for the clerk's office in 2023 was the addition of Elisha who has helped the clerk's office immensely. Instead of postings and notifications being provided by our office, she is on top of everything. She lets us know when she needs information and then posts it promptly and properly. It will be great working with her to get out the word regarding the referendum where the residents will vote on moving the commissioners to 4-year terms. This referendum process is misunderstood by the electorate so attacking this from every direction will be necessary.

Finally, the clerk's office was able to lend a hand to other departments, especially Parks and Code Enforcement. I find this kind of "reaching across the aisle" to be an excellent way to coalesce a team of people working toward the same goal which falls in line with branding and identity which I never thought much of in the past, but I have now signed on to it.

COMMUNICATIONS (Elisha Pappacoda):

Social Media

- Created a [Facebook](#) page for the Town of Lady Lake and met the goal of 1,000 followers (1,041) by the end of 2023, all organically with no paid ads.
- **80,000** + reach since March 2023
- **Nearly 400** published posts
- **10,300** interactions
- **16,000** visits

- 1,700 link clicks
- \$0 paid, all organic
- Created a YouTube page for the Town, which hosts six videos and will assist with future live streaming, the [YouTube](#) page has over 1,500 views.
- Increased followers on the Town's existing [LinkedIn](#) Page from 35 to 215; page had a reach of 7,042 over the last year and 390 clicks to our website
- Implemented Smarsh with IT to maintain public records for Town and Library Facebook
- Created social media policies to manage our online presence and protect the Town

Public Relations

- Distributed approximately 45 press releases that received placements in newspapers, blogs, radio and TV stations
- Developed positive working relationships with local media
- Effectuated positive change to the tone of news coverage
- Created a media and outreach list of upwards of 200 recipients

Police Recruitment

- Created a [police recruitment outreach plan](#)
- Produced a [police recruitment video](#) which received more than 2,000 views, all organic
- Created social media campaigns to enhance the image of the department and increase applications
- Secured ongoing positive media coverage to aid in recruitment and reputation-building

Branding

- Participated in the Town's Identity Committee
- Presented to Department Heads on the importance of branding and identity

Design

- Introduced Canva for design and trained staff to work collaboratively
- Created a press release template for the Town and PD
- Designed this year's water conservation materials

Event promotion/outreach

- Worked with leadership on event safety planning and public messaging
- Promoted all Town events with a combination of writing content; issuing press releases; posting to the web and town calendar; posting to third-party calendars; creating graphics of various sizes for web, social and print; distributing printed materials; creating Facebook events and multiple scheduled posts; sharing to Facebook groups; and engaging with media contacts

Farmers Market

- Created logo and landing page for the Farmers Market; ongoing promotions continue to receive placement in local media
- Facebook posts reached over 5,000 people

4th of July event

- 17,945 reach for 16 individual posts on social media posts – all organic
- Fireworks story on website was top-most visited page with 4,204 visits

Not Too Scary Halloween

- Event received 13 media placements; Facebook event had 1,059 RSVPs; 8 posts reached 2,488 people
- Worked with GIS to create Lights of Lady Lake map
- Arranged “Board Shorts” featuring Snooky Park with the County Chairman Kirby Smith
- Helped plan and promote Skyline Hills cleanup
- Assisted the Library with the concept and promotion of the Festival of Trees
- Worked with Animal Control on a strategy to increase pet adoptions

Current Website

- Analyzed the content on the current website and made significant updates to pages including Town Commission, Elections, Finance, Communications, and Garbage Pickup
- Added new pages including Emergency Preparedness, Events, Sports & Active Recreation, Farmers Market and Facility Rentals, [Animal Control and Boil Water notice](#)
- Populated Events calendar and consistently published news stories

Future Website

- Budgeted for and worked with departments to purchase Civic Plus website for Town and PD, and platform add-ons Civic Clerk, Civic Ready, and Civic Optimize

- Secured ladylakefl.gov to enhance security and increase recognizability of the website
- Lead design, content creation and navigation for the Town and PD websites

Emergency Communications

- Received Commission approval for an interlocal agreement with Lake County for full access to the AlertLake mass notification system through the end of 2023
- Created procedures for Communications during an emergency or EOC activation
- Produced ongoing pre and post storm messaging for Hurricane Idalia
- Added an Emergency Preparedness page to the current website
- Implementation of Civic Ready alerts, a mass notification system, in 2024

Professional Associations and Training

- Elected Image Chair of the FPRA Lake County Chapter and joined the FPRA State Board on the DE&I Task Force and Digital Communications Committee
- Attended several training opportunities including the monthly communicators meeting, Sunshine workshops, quarterly PIO training for leaders, JIC Hurricane Preparedness, crisis communications, Emotional Intelligence, Artificial Intelligence, the Trust Transformation, video production, digital tools and more

FINANCE (Pam Winegardner):

The Finance Department has had a very successful year. We received the Certificate of Excellence for our fiscal year 2021-2022 audit for the 28th year in a row which is giving credit to past and present financial teams who made this possible.

We were able to provide a balanced budget again for fiscal year 2023-2024 without raising the millage rate for the 8th year in a row with the last change in millage in 2017 decreased from 3.551 to the current rate of 3.396. Lady Lake has the second lowest millage in Lake County with the lowest being the charming town of Montverde with a population of 1,780 and 1.7 square miles.

In processing the legal aspects of advertising, the budget, presenting it to our commission on two occasions besides a workshop on the budget, the Department of Revenue, TRIM division has approved our process and pronounced all our legal obligations have been met through this long 6-month process.

Our town has grown from October of 2017 having a population of 14,821 and 2,535 utility accounts to November of 2023 with a population of 16,224 and 2,768 utility accounts and another possible 4,000 utility accounts with the future developments that are in process. With this growth,

we would have more work in reading, repairing, and installing meters, taking payments, and answering questions which entailed adding a part-time position. We will not realize the tax revenue growth for many of the new projects until they are complete and the commission with all the new streets, services, and maintenance may have to consider a fractional increase in our millage next year.

We look forward to the fiscal year 2023-2024 to upgrading our financial software and our utility software and to better provide services to our residents.

GROWTH MANAGEMENT DEPARTMENT (Thad Carroll):

In the calendar year 2023, the Growth Management Department processed sixty projects. The projects included three preliminary plats, all of which have been approved, twelve subdivision improvement plans, eight of which have been approved and four currently in process; and six final subdivision plats, two of which have been approved and four still in process.

The department processed four major site plan modifications, three of which have been approved and one is in process. Eleven minor site plan modifications were approved; these applications were administrative approvals. Eight new site plan applications were processed, eight of which have received development orders and four are currently in process.

Growth Management presented ninety-two agenda items in 2023 to various Town boards, including the Town Commission, the Planning and Zoning Board, and the Parks, Recreation and Tree Advisory Committee. The Town of Lady Lake Water Supply Plan was also completed and approved by the Florida Department of Commerce in September. The plan is mandated by the State of Florida and the St. John's River Water Management District, and the findings of the report verified that the Town has sufficient water capacity through 2027/28; however, the Consumptive Use Permit for the Town will be updated prior to that in 2026.

The building department issued 2,240 permits over the course of the year, and 5,495 inspections were conducted collectively by the building inspector and the fire inspector.

The Code Enforcement Division closed 465 complaints and cases in 2023. Senior Code Enforcement Officer Crain completed her Level IV certification through the Florida Association of Code Enforcement (F.A.C.E.). Code Enforcement Officer Williams completed her first module, Level I, as well.

The year was a very busy one for the department, and 2024 is forecasted to be no different. In hindsight, I believe the department's greatest accomplishment was continuing to persevere and get the job done. Despite the loss of our Senior Planner, a 16-year employee, and personnel shortages throughout the year, the staff pressed on ensuring that all tasks were covered; they embodied the true spirit of teamwork and I remain proud and grateful to be part of it.

HUMAN RESOURCES (Tamika DeLee):

The Town of Lady Lake would like to welcome Latricey Jackson to the team. She is our new Customer Service Rep for utilities. Interviews were conducted on Wednesday, January 3rd for Police Officer positions. Three candidates were selected to receive conditional offer letters. An interview was conducted today for the Public Works Operator II position. The HR team will present their fourth wellness presentation on "Walking Your Way to Fitness". This presentation is scheduled for Wednesday, January 10th in the chambers. Interviews are scheduled for Tuesday, January 9th for the Permitting Technician position.

Human Resource accomplishments for 2023. Human Resources introduced a cloud-based application known as NeoGov. This program meets the unique needs of government-sector HR by managing the entire employee lifecycle, streamlining processes, and automating routine tasks. Human Resources is currently using the program for recruiting candidates and we are also currently training in the onboarding new hires module. Since integrating into this program, we have received more applications and views from potential applicants. All our open positions are posted on GovernmentJobs.com. GovernmentJobs.com is the largest public sector job board in the country with thousands of open positions. Applicants can create a free account, upload their resume, and start applying for jobs. We are looking forward to learning and using this application to reach our max potential.

Human Resources introduced PoliceApp for police recruitment and hiring new officers. PoliceApp was Designed by law enforcement professionals and technology experts to simplify the application and recruitment process for applicants and police departments. The PoliceApp platform was created to eliminate process redundancies and common frustrations by:

- Publicizing current law enforcement job openings
- Matching candidates with the police jobs they qualify for
- Allowing for efficient communication between departments & applicants
- Creating consistency across police departments
- Streamlining and organizing the application experience

Since its launch date of November 2023, we have received a total of 15 applications. Two applicants were selected for conditional offers of employment.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY (John Pearl):

When reflecting on this past year, it was a busy and challenging period for the IT Department.

Our primary responsibility is to support town staff, to work together with them, to help them succeed in sustaining or growing their operations and assisting with various technology projects in support of the same. In doing so, we have accomplished the following together: We have continued to maintain a current inventory of client technology equipment and facilitated the migration to a more reliable wireless service provider. We have made many incremental improvements to our enterprise software applications, improving business process efficiency and

service delivery. We are working together with staff to identify and implement additional enterprise software, such as enterprise resource planning software. We worked with staff to implement a document digitization strategy.

We completed the Fiber Optic Wide Area Network (FiberWAN) design and engineering project and completed a small fiber optic conduit construction project. We completed many technical infrastructure improvements.

We have maintained acceptable response times for our employee help desk and responded to many information security challenges and have continued the development of a more mature security program. We were awarded a competitive information security grant and welcomed Howard Davis to the team as a Security Analyst.

As we begin the new year, we anticipate growth challenges to continue but we are confident that by continuing to work together with staff that we will deliver improved outcomes for the town and our community.

On a personal note, I want to publicly thank Patrick, Andy, Leon, and Howard again for their effort this past year. I continue to be grateful for their work ethic, humility, and endurance.

LIBRARY

Our programs attendance doubled from 2022.

- We had 503 programs
- 15,919 people attended
- 158 adult programs
- 2,259 attended adult programs
- 237 children programs
- 8,469 attended children's programs.

We had 162,116 people come visit our library.

Added a supervisor position to the library.

Raised book budget to \$90,000.

147,422 materials were circulated at our library

- 116,570 physical materials
- 30,852 electronic materials

Commissions approved of Library / Growth Management renovation project.

Library shelving project.

- Moved the location of large print books to the front of the library to make it more accommodating for our patrons.
- Added more shelving for Fiction materials.
- Added more seating areas.

Had our biggest Summer Reading program to date.

- June-1542 in attendance
- July-652 in attendance

We participated in Lake County "Food for Fines"

- Collected over 1500 items that was donated to the local food pantry.

We had our first "School Supplies for Fines".

- We collected over 100lbs of supplies and donated it to Villages Elementary of Lady Lake.

Implemented "Festival of Trees" which displayed businesses, organization and patrons in our community.

- We had 14 participants.
- Over 300 votes.
- Many people looking around at the trees.

Another successful year of hosting AARP Tax Aide.

Worked with Orange Blossom Lion's Club and had "Reader for Residents" where residents could get free reader glasses.

Hosted our first "Craft with a Cop"

Participated in many outreach events.

- Town's Easter Egg Hunt
- VELL Literacy Event.
- Not-Too- Scary Halloween Event.
- Little Blessing month story times.
- Little Blessing's Trunk or Treat.
- Reading to VELL 1st Graders.

Youth started a month long program called Dinovember.

Make sure you check out our Facebook page for all the upcoming events.

www.facebook.com/lakelakelibrary225

PARKS AND RECREATION (Mike Burske):

The Parks and Recreation Maintenance Staff have been working to take down the Christmas Lights at the Log Cabin. We are also focusing on the maintenance of the sports fields as we have the season right around the corner. I will be working with the Town Manager and the Communications Director as we will be closing the playground for about a week. My goal is to close it starting January 16th, but a few items need to fall into place, and this may change.

I met with our playground representatives at Top Line Recreation on Wednesday the 3rd. I will be accepting several more proposals for new play structures at Pyramid Park to replace the one I installed nearly 20 years ago. The new structure will have a 15-year warranty on parts. This will prove to be beneficial when we have to replace parts due to wear or vandalism. The structures that I will be looking at will stand up to 20 feet tall and have slides coming out of the upper tiers of the unit. My goal is to have three proposals and to have the children at the elementary school pick which one that they want. This will give the kids ownership in the playground. This project may and probably will cost up to \$250,000.00. I will seek to utilize Parks and Recreation Impact Fees for the funding mechanism for the project.

In this part of the document, I will review what the Parks and Recreation Department has been able to accomplish over the last year. As you will see we had a very busy year and as a team were able to accomplish a lot for the Town.

Events

1. Lady Lake Easter Egg Hunt
2. Daddy Daughter Dance (worked with Julia and Dawn from Town Hall on this event)
3. Mother Son Dance at Community Building with Dawn and Julia.
4. Not Too Scary Halloween Party
5. Lady Lake Christmas Parade
6. Light Up Lady Lake
7. Santa and a Movie (delayed and only had movie night)
8. Choir Night Under the Lights with First Baptist Church (new event)
9. Snooky's Luminary Night

10. Arbor Day 2023

11. Weekly Farmers Market. A huge thanks to Jackie and Julia for this event's programming.

12. The first Fireworks Show and event for Lady Lake

Construction Projects

1. Snooky Park Construction completed for under the bid price. A huge team effort

2. Train Depot Restoration Project completed.

3. Log Cabin and Train Depot Painted back to original CSX colors.

4. Began working on designs for a new play structure at Pyramid Park.

League Support

1. Continued contact and maintenance for the Little League

2. Continued contact and support for the Lady Lake Soccer Association

Planning

1. Worked with Town Engineers for pricing to design the parking area by the Dog Park.

2. Worked with Town Engineers for pricing to perform the conceptual design for the Lady Lake Recreation Center.

Miscellaneous

1. Tree City U.S.A. Certification for the Town of Lady Lake

2. Connected with Snooky Blantons Family and keep in contact with them about events at Snooky Park. Also met with some family members.

Community Building

1. Team effort with Julia Harris, the Community Building made a nominal profit for the first time in my tenure at Lady Lake.

POLICE DEPARTMENT (Chief Steve Hunt):

The holidays are now behind us, and we all survived with little to no drama. I am thankful for all the excitement and possibilities that are endless with a New Year. It is a time to reflect on the past as well as to plan for the future. I take encouragement from Churchill's quote, "Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts." Boy does that ever apply to us. We have had many successes, and several challenges, but we continue...I am so excited for what the future has instore for us here at the PD, in the Town, and in the community that we serve.

Here are just a few of the 2023 Significant Accomplishments:

- 30% payrate increase for all sworn officers
- Purchased Body Worn Cameras, Dash Cameras, and Taser units which included upgraded evidence management system
- Evidence Room Audit which included a significant inventory reduction
- Contracted an independent Internal Affairs Investigator
- Purchased cold weather jackets with grant funding (in progress)
- Augmented hiring process to include Voice Stress Analyzer Exam
- Recruitment Video
- Contracted Police App hiring module
- Purchased Lexipol Training program
- K-9 Program Enhancement
 - Located and contracted with a reputable breeder/training program
 - Purchased new K-9 and trained to best practices/certification
 - Trained the existing K-9 to the same standard
 - Working on continued education/training for the program
- Enhanced Firearms Training
 - Located and contracted with a gun range that provided better use options
 - Department received latest best practice training for Single Response to Active Shooter
- Purchased two radar Speed Sign units
- Purchased 2 TruNarc units with grant money
- Coffee with a Cop Event x2
- Santa's Heroes and Helpers Event
- Thanksgiving Dinner Give Away Event
- Craft with a Cop event
- National Night Out participation
- Fourth of July Fireworks Security and planning
- Hurricane Idalia
- Hired-6

- Promoted-3
- Resigned-8
- Terminated-2

PUBLIC WORKS/UTILITIES DEPARTMENT (C.T. Eagle)

Accomplishments for all Public Works Departments, Utilities and Maintenance in 2023:

1. Continued coordinating Phase Two of the Wastewater Treatment Plant Project, which is projected to be completed in the Summer of 2024.
2. Bid, awarded, and begin construction of Phase Two of the Well #4 and #5/Water Treatment Plant #3 Expansion Project, which includes construction of a new ground storage tank and high service pump. Project is well underway and should be completed the Summer of 2024.
3. Took the first step in implementing a new Stormwater Department by educating the new Town Commissioners and gaining approval for the consultants to begin the Stormwater Utility Feasibility Study.
4. Completed the Annual Street Resurfacing Project. The Town still has an overall pavement condition rating above 80, still a "B" which is outstanding.
5. Coordinated consistently with the Project Managers and Contractor for the FDOT US 27/441 Road Widening Project. This project also includes relocation of Town owned utilities. Project is projected to be completed the summer of 2024.
6. Continued street sign replacement project throughout the Town, this is a multi-year/ongoing project.
7. Successfully worked our way through staff shortages, material shortages, supply chain issues, and challenges with vendors to keep projects going and essential duties completed.
8. Fully staffed the Utilities Department for the first time in many years.
9. Reviewed numerous submitted project plans, coordinated with engineers and developers throughout the process, and we continue to do so. Lots of projects are in the works, big and small.