

MINUTES OF THE TOWN COMMISSION WORKSHOP TOWN OF LADY LAKE, FLORIDA

May 5, 2025

A workshop of the Lady Lake Town Commission was held in the Commission Chambers at Lady Lake Town Hall, 409 Fennell Blvd., Lady Lake, Florida, with Mayor Freeman presiding.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Freeman called the meeting to order at 4:31 pm.

Commissioner (Ward)	Present
Regan (Four)	YES
Gourlie (Two)	Excused
Roberts (One)	YES
Sage (Five)	YES
Freeman (Three)	YES

Staff present: Bill Lawrence, Town Manager; Mike Burske, Parks and Recreation Director; C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director; Police Chief Steve Hunt, Lady Lake Police Department; Aly Herman, Library Director; Elisha Pappacoda, Communications Director; Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk

Town Attorney Derek Schroth was also in attendance.

AGENDA

Discussion Regarding Building a New Recreation Center

Stockton Reeves, Executive Director with The Center for Public Safety

Mr. Reeves stated that he created a presentation in conjunction with Mr. Lawrence and Mr. Burske on the potential of a new community center. He stated that the goal is to enhance the quality of life by creating a facility that serves residents of all ages. He stated that Mr. Lawrence's desirable theme for the future of Lady Lake is, "The Place To Be".

Mr. Reeves reviewed his experience working with cities and counties for over 35 years throughout the country. His colleague, Bill Barrett, has been a lobbyist at the state and executive level for approximately 30 years. He is an experienced grants consultant and grant writer. He stated their services include staffing studies and space-needs studies.

Mr. Reeves advised that there is approximately \$4 billion available in different federal grant programs. He stressed that there is not a single grant available to fund this entire project. Approximately 28 different federal grant programs will be reviewed to determine how to combine funds from several grants to satisfy the costs of the project. He stated that the federal government has an appropriations committee in the House and the Senate, and each of those has 12 different committees. This means that 12 separate appropriations bills are reported to the House and Senate over the two-year congressional session, and there are various ways to get appropriations through. He stated that a request can be made in late December or early January to Senator Scott. It is reviewed by his staff, and it may be included as a rider amendment to a bill.

Mr. Reeves stated that their sister company, Architects Design Group, helped pay for an emergency operations center in Monroe County, most of which was funded with an amalgamation of different federal grants. He noted that this includes disaster funding for natural storms. If Lake County is included in a presidential disaster declaration, Lady Lake is eligible even if no damage is done. Mr. Reeves reviewed many of their projects throughout the country, many of which are serving local governments, cities, counties, etc. He presented a map of the United States highlighting all the states they have worked.

Mr. Reeves presented an overview of three community buildings, noting that each is designed like constructing a jigsaw puzzle. Each component part needs to fit together and some are more expensive, such as splash pads and pools. These are expensive due to maintenance, operation, mitigation, and litigation issues such as lifeguards. In thinking of the design, consider what the benefit is to the community. The economic benefits when community centers are available are that property values to the surrounding area increase approximately 5%-7%. The town and the homeowners gain by expanding the tax base. There are economic opportunities for construction and facilities management, along with indirect job creation for surrounding businesses.

Mr. Reeves acknowledged that there are several community centers within The Villages. The town's proposed recreation center may offer amenities that will draw not only current and new residents, but people from The Villages and surrounding communities. Also, the center could be a source of revenue by offering rooms to rent for family gatherings, meetings, and educational opportunities.

Mr. Reeves stated that a police department and a community center have common aspects. It is beneficial to have the community center adjacent to the police station. He stated that they are advocates for making the most use of the tax dollars and maximizing the facility's property and usage by identifying multiple uses for spaces throughout the buildings. He noted the other

sources of revenue for the town is by patrons purchasing gas, shopping at local stores and dining at local restaurants. He stated that the construction costs have increased 5%-8% annually since coming out of COVID, and there is no decline in these costs.

Mr. Reeves stated that the price is negotiable, yet experience and qualifications are not. He stated that advertising for a Request for Proposal asks for a price and the selection process becomes based on that price. A Request for Qualifications bases the decision process on qualifications, background, experience, and project examples from past projects. This saves time and money. Mr. Reeves recommends incorporating the construction team, and the architectural and engineering teams at the beginning of the project to ensure all parties are working with the same documents.

Mr. Reeves stated the first step in the staffing study for this project is identifying which amenities will be included in the project. The staffing analysis forecasts future development by examining demographics, population shifts, and who would use the facility to determine the number of employees needed. He stated this is a participatory planning approach in that they desire to work with the input from the commissioners, town staff and members of the public. He stated public meetings could be held explaining the aspects of the project.

Mr. Reeves explained the pre-design studies are the foundational documents that will lead to the architects and the engineers. The studies examine every aspect of the project from office space to janitorial space. These comprehensive studies can be used by any architect to determine the programming needs, such as the location and related space needs within the building. Proprietary algorithms are used as projected models in the staffing research, and the space needs studies examine costs estimates. This will be discussed with local general contractors and civil engineers. The results will be presented in a detailed line-item format as a helpful tool in the planning process for this project. He stated that if the town had a lobbyist, this document could be used to explain to state officials what the town needs, why it's needed, and the costs involved. The one underlying factor with state or federal grant opportunities is that they want to see that the town is taking concrete steps to address this project. Having this document available for a dedicated grant writer will make his job easier.

Commissioner Regan inquired about the construction timeline.

Mr. Reeves responded that the beginning phase could take up to ten months due to having a series of meetings, the bidding process, and hiring the contractors. Once the contractors are in place it could be up to two years to construct the building.

Commissioner Regan stated it may be difficult to hire a contractor due to all the ongoing construction.

Mr. Reeves recommends conducting an open meeting with the contractors and their trades for the architect and engineering team to explain the project. He stated this enables the town to identify which contractor can provide the most accurate costs involved for the different components of the facility, such as pickleball courts. The town can use this to pre-qualify contractors by researching their past projects and their financial records.

Mr. Lawrence asked whether owning the property where the project will be built is an important factor.

Mr. Reeves stated that most federal grants are 75%-25% ratio. He stated that if the town has property for this project and it appraised value meets or exceeds the town's responsibility for the grant, this can be used as the town's 25% match for the grant with no out-of-pocket costs. He stressed that the town must have a clear title to the property. He recommended conducting a level one environmental survey to ensure there are no endangered or protected species on the property.

Mr. Reeves stated one of his projects was a community center/police sub-station. He met with and presented the project to the community officials to alleviate the concerns of residents and answer their questions.

Mayor Freeman stated that staff needs to do some work prior to moving forward.

Mr. Reeves that he is available to begin at any time.

Mr. Lawrence stated that the next phase is the staffing study and asked Mr. Burske if he has funds in his budget for the study.

Mr. Burske stated that he will use the impact fees to finance the study.

Mr. Lawrence stated that there is property available for both projects.

Mr. Burske stated that impact fees would be used to purchase the property to construct the police department and the community building.

Mr. Lawrence stated that he recommends moving forward with the staffing study for the community building.

Commissioner Regan stated that he is in favor of purchasing the land to build the police department and the recreation center.

Commissioner Roberts stated that there were several issues in the legislature this year that would cut funding to municipalities. The legislative session has been extended to June 6, and she is concerned with overall budgeting. She stated this project may be premature and wants to understand the need in the area for this project and is unsure if it is time for a staffing study.

Mr. Burske stated that he has been promoting the need for a recreation center for the last 18 years. He stated that it could have been built for considerably less money around the time that the new library was built. He stated that costs will not go down and to consider the savings if this project is built now. He emphasized that the impact fees must be used for parks and recreation uses, such as these studies and purchasing property. He stated that he is not concerned about what the governor has proposed. He stated that what is best for our community is a priority.

Mr. Reeves stated that everyone fears uncertainty. He stated that he is proposing conducting the staffing and space needs studies to simply provide the commissioners with information to make knowledgeable, data-driven decisions.

Commissioner Sage stated that he is in favor of the studies and purchasing the land. He stated that he likes the idea that both buildings are on one campus. He stated the funds are currently available and the town must prepare for growth and move forward, addressing our needs.

Mayor Freeman stated that he is in favor of moving forward.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:21 p.m.

Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk

Ed Freeman, Mayor