

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

June 16, 2025

The special conceptual workshop meeting 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 Ed Freeman presiding. The meeting convened at 5:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

STAFF PRESENT:

Thad Carroll, Growth Management Director; Becky Higgins, Senior Planner; Malina Wright, Development Coordinator; Deputy Chief Jason Brough, Lady Lake Police Department; C.T. Eagle, Public Works Director; and Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk.

Town Attorney Derek Schroth was also in attendance.

Senior Planner Becky Higgins advised that due to the dissolution of the Parks, Recreation and Tree Advisory Board, landscape waivers are now presented at Special Commission Conceptual Workshop meetings.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Consideration of Landscaping Waivers for the Church at the Springs Lady Lake Campus Major Site Plan Modification MJM 01/25-001 – Conversion of an Existing 27,604 Square Foot Industrial Building to an Institutional (Religious) Use Providing 261 Parking Spaces, Storm Water Retention, and Landscaping Buffers, on 5.386 acres zoned Industrial (I), addressed as 600 Rolling Acres Road, within the Town Limits of Lady Lake, Florida (Becky Higgins)

Senior Planner Becky Higgins presented this agenda item stating that this major site plan modification is for a new project for Church of the Springs Lady Lake campus, located at the

northwest corner of Rolling Acres Road and Duck Lake Road. She advised this location was formerly the Daily Sun print shop and has been vacant for several years. The applicant is Stephen Campbell, P.E., and the owner is Villages Operating Company.

Ms. Higgins stated that this application is for the conversion of a 27,604 square-foot industrial building to an Institutional Use/Religious Use, providing 261 parking spaces, storm water retention, and landscaping buffers. The property is zoned Industrial and the future land use is Lady Lake Industrial District. She advised that the Religious Land Use and Institutionalized Persons Act (RLUIPA) allows for religious use within this zoning district.

Ms. Higgins presented the improvement plans that includes a location map of the subject property, site plan and site data, and landscaping plan.

Ms. Higgins explained tables used within the Town's Land Development Regulations to determine which buffers are required. She stated the first waiver is based on the zoning designation of the subject property and the surrounding properties. Because it is an industrial-zoned property, she stated that the applicant is requesting buffer modifications with the north and west buffers. The applicant's justification is that each of these require a Type "C" buffer, which is 30-feet wide per Tables 10-1 and 10-2 of the LDRs. The portions of these buffers that are less than 30-feet wide are proposed to have a six-foot-tall vinyl fence. Per LDR Section 10-3.b)B) a Class "C" buffer is to be 30-feet wide with six canopy trees, four understory trees and a continuous hedge, or an approved fence or wall. The applicant acknowledged that a six-foot-tall vinyl fence is an approved type of fence.

The second waiver request is per LDR Sec 10-3)c)3), which states that a landscape area shall be provided at the end of all double-parking rows. The landscape area will be a minimum of four hundred square feet and shall contain a minimum of two acceptable canopy trees or five acceptable understory trees or palms, ten acceptable shrubs, and ground cover and/or grass. These landscape areas are for pedestrian use.

Ms. Higgins stated that a sidewalk is being added for increased pedestrian safety while traversing the parking lot. The applicant's justification request to waive the landscaping requirements within the parking lot islands, specifically the islands that traverse the center of the "new" parking lot with a sidewalk, is for pedestrian safety.

Commissioner Regan asked if there would be a deceleration lane or a turn lane into the driveway.

Ms. Higgins stated that the review for Rolling Acres Road will be conducted by Lake County.

Commissioner Gourlie asked if the property would change ownership.

Steven Campbell spoke from the audience stating that this property is being leased with an option to purchase.

Commissioner Gourlie inquired as to the fate of the property if the church no longer operates at this location.

Mr. Campbell replied from the audience that he cannot answer that question.

Mr. Carroll advised that any future changeover will be sufficient due to the parking that is being proposed with this application.

Ms. Higgins added that the elevation changes may need to be reviewed if ownership changes. She added that civic buildings are exempt from Chapter 20 of the LDRs (Commercial Design Standards), and Religious Use falls under civic use.

Mayor Freeman inquired about the tax ramifications because this is leased property.

Town Attorney Derek Schroth stated that the property owner is responsible to pay the property taxes. He added that because the lease payments are made by a non-profit organization, sales tax for rental of the property would not be collected.

Mayor Freeman inquired if this church has a facility on CR 25 and are there plans for that property.

Ms. Higgins confirmed that there is a facility on CR 25 as well. Mr. Campbell stated from the audience that he does not know what the plans are for that facility.

Mayor Freeman stated that he is concerned with the tax ramifications with this project because there is a facility on CR 25 that is exempt. He stated that he is concerned with the amount of revenue the town receives. He stated the church on CR 25 was originally a bingo hall and were paying taxes.

Mayor Freeman asked for clarification regarding the changes in the landscape buffers.

Steven Campbell, 9796 Peppertree Terrace, Apt. 306, Wildwood, Florida. Mr. Campbell stated that he represents the engineering company for The Villages, (Clymer, Farner and Barley), and Church at the Springs.

Mr. Campbell clarified that the first waiver request is to determine the buffer class. He stated that he was unsure if a waiver was required because town code permits a six-foot vinyl fence in lieu of a buffer. The request is to ensure all factors are considered.

Mr. Campbell explained the second waiver is to install a sidewalk instead of parking lot landscaping islands.

Mayor Freeman verified with Mr. Carroll that if the commission approves the plans, they are binding.

Mr. Carroll concurred adding that approval would serve as this commission's acceptance of the site plan, provided the plans are not modified.

Commissioner Gourlie made a motion to approve the landscaping waivers for the Church at the Springs Lady Lake Campus Major Site Plan Modification MJM 01/25-001; Commissioner Roberts seconded. Motion passed by a vote of 5-0.

2. Consideration of Landscaping and Commercial Design Waivers for the Lady Lake Warehouse New Major Site Plan MJSP 11/24-002 – A 27,745 Square Foot Warehouse Building, 21 Parking Spaces, Storm Water Retention, and Landscaping Buffers, on 2.17 acres zoned Planned Commercial (CP), Addressed as 109 Griffin View Drive, within the Town Limits of Lady Lake, Florida. (Becky Higgins)

Senior Planner Becky Higgins presented this agenda item stating that this property is currently zoned Planned Commercial and has a Future Land Use is Commercial General Retail Sales and Services. The proposed use is permitted within the Memorandum of Agreement in Ordinance 2023-12. She clarified that the applicant is requesting a landscaping waiver and a commercial design waiver.

Ms. Higgins stated the requested landscaping waiver is LDR Sec 10-3)a)2)B) – In no event shall the number of retained trees be less than twenty-five percent of the total existing trees, and Chapter 20, Section 20-3C).3).A) - New buildings should adopt one of the four architectural styles recommended in the Town of Lady Lake Commercial Design Guidelines Manual: Frame Vernacular, Craftsman/Bungalow, Mediterranean, or Mission.

Ms. Higgins presented a site plan map indicated the warehouse location. She noted that this is an oddly shaped lot and much of the project is located at one side of the property. She stated that the property is surrounded by commercial property, noting multi-family zoning to the west of the property.

Ms. Higgins advised that this property is located within a flood zone and the storm water ponds will be located at the north portion of the property.

Ms. Higgins stated the applicant will remove all trees from the property and there are no historic trees in this location. The applicant's justification statement is that full tree removal

is being requested due to the strict stormwater criteria set forth by St. Johns River Water Management District and the irregular geometry of this site. Being a triangle parcel, the building must be located toward Griffin View Drive which will not affect the trees. As the proposed building finished floor will be one foot above the existing floodplain elevation, adding fill will be required. In the process, all trees will be damaged should they remain in the area. She stated that the applicant will meet the required minimum number of tree inches, which is 352 tree inches. She advised the applicant will provide 362 tree inches.

Ms. Higgins stated that the new landscaping would be installed at the perimeter of the property and in the buffers.

Ms. Higgins stated the next waiver requested relates to commercial design, Chapter 20, Section 20-3C).3).A), which requires new buildings to adopt one of the four architectural styles recommended in the Town of Lady Lake Commercial Design Guidelines Manual: Frame Vernacular, Craftsman/Bungalow, Mediterranean, or Mission.

The applicant's justification for the waiver is that ACG proposes facade elements in accordance with section 20-3C to both elevations facing frontage roads, South Old Dixie Highway and Griffin View Drive. The two exterior elevations not road facing are proposed to not meet facade requirements with section 20-3C as they are not easily visible from the street. Ms. Higgins stated that this is in line with adjacent properties.

Commissioner Roberts stated that there are a few items preserved items on the list of plants. She asked if the applicant is adding to the perimeter plants.

Ms. Higgins replied affirmatively clarifying that the trees will be added that at the perimeter, yet not on their property. She stated that the trees on a small area of property will be retained.

Mayor Freeman stated that it is stated that 25% of the trees will be retained, yet it appears that all the trees are being removed.

Ms. Higgins clarified that town code requires 25% of the trees be retained. The waiver request is to remove all trees.

Mayor Freeman stated that he visited the property and does not agree with this request. He acknowledged removing the invasive trees. However, the trees along the east side next to the retention area appear to be acceptable. He stated that construction plans typically prefer to remove everything and believes leaving some of the property intact is not difficult. He stated he does not like the design of the building. He inquired as to the location of the loading dock.

Ms. Higgins stated that the loading area at the front of the building, with bay doors facing the west portion of the property.

Mayor Freeman stated that he is not in favor of this project.

Commissioner Gourlie clarified that the applicant's justification for removing the trees is due to raising the property approximately one foot by adding large amount of fill dirt. By doing this and leaving the trees, the trees would die because of raising the ground level.

Mayor Freeman stated that he understands the applicant's justification. He stated that developers claim that trees will die if any of the typography is changed. He stated that he would prefer to the advice of a tree expert. He acknowledged the use of the property and reiterated that he does not like the aesthetic of the building and the loss of trees.

Mike Cherry, 1122 Glenmoor Court, Clearwater, FL

Mr. Cherry acknowledged that many trees are impacted by this development. He stated that St. Johns River Management District is requiring that they take on all the storm water from all the adjacent properties, as it is currently, and not make it worse. He stated that there is an existing depression and a larger hole needed to be dug to store the large amount of storm water coming from the multi-family site to the west, as well as the western portion of Old Dixie Highway. Many of the trees being removed are on the north side of the property.

Mayor Freeman stated that trees are always the first to go with new developments. He stated that developers clear a site and start over. He stated that he does not agree with that practice.

Mr. Cherry stated to redevelop the site and get out of the flood zone to not pay flood insurance, the building must be raised out of the flood zone area, which affects the trees. He stated that grading within 12 inches of a tree will kill the root system and therefore it is not permitted.

Mayor Freeman stated that he understands this, which is the scenario of the developers. If soil is added, the trees will die. He stated this works for the developers; it does not work for him.

Commissioner Regan inquired as to the design of the building that is not visible from the roadway.

Mr. Cherry clarified that he is a civil engineer. He stated that this is a typical spec building and the owner does not know what he wants to do with the building. He stated that he wants the flexibility when he receives the end-use permit to give them the space to operate the business.

Commissioner Gourlie asked if cypress trees could be planted.

Mr. Carroll advised that there are currently retention areas in town with cypress trees.

Commissioner Gourlie stated that The Villages has cypress trees around the retention ponds.

Commissioner Gourlie made a motion to approve the landscaping and commercial design waivers for the Lady Lake Warehouse New Major Site Plan, adding that the developer use cypress trees around or near the retention pond; Commissioner Roberts seconded.

Town Attorney Derek Schroth clarified that the motion is to grant or deny the requested waivers. The applicant would have to agree with the modifications proposed by the commission, and a written proposal would clarify the commission's request. He stated that there is a motion on the table and suggested presenting the proposal to the property owner. If they consent to the modification, they can submit a proposal that contains the cypress trees or a rendition of them so the commission can make an informed decision.

Commissioner Gourlie made a motion to withdraw his original motion to approve the proposed waivers with modifications, and to table this agenda item until further information is received. Commissioner Regan seconded. Motion passed 5-0.

PUBLIC COMMENT

No comments.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 5:32 p.m.

s/ Carol Osborne, Deputy Town Clerk

s/ Ed Freeman, Mayor